

Early Italy

Benedict: The Man and His Work
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12. ST.

BENEDICT

RULE FOR MONASTERIES

Benedict of Nursia (ca. 480–547) began his religious life as a hermit near Subiaco, a small town near Rome. He went on to found 12 monasteries, the most important being Monte Cassino. His *Rule*, derived largely from an earlier anonymous *Rule of the Master*, first became widely known in the middle of the seventh century. By the ninth century it had become the dominant monastic rule in the West, a position that it holds to the present day.

Source: The Rule of Saint Benedict, trans. Francis Gasquet (London: Chatto and Windus, 1909); rev. Julian Hendrix.
Further Reading: Adalbert de Vogüé, Saint

The Prologue

Listen, my son, and turn the ear of your heart to the precepts of your master.¹ Receive readily, and faithfully carry out the advice of a loving father, so that by the work of obedience you may return to him, whom you have left by the sloth of disobedience. For you, therefore, whosoever you be, my words are intended, who, giving up your own will, takes up the all-powerful and excellent arms of obedience to fight under the Lord Christ, the true king.

First, beg of him with most earnest prayer to finish the good work begun; that he who now has deigned to count us among his children may never be grieved by our evil deeds. For at all times we must so serve him with the good things he has given us, that he may not, as an angry father, disinherit his children, nor as a terrifying lord, provoked by our evil deeds, deliver us to everlasting punishment as wicked servants who refuse to follow him to glory.

Let us, therefore, arise at once, the scripture

stirring us up, saying, "It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep."² And, our eyes now open to the divine light, let us with wondering ears attend to the divine voice, daily calling to us and warning us, "Today if you should hear his voice, harden not your hearts;"³ and again, "He that has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches."⁴ And what does he say? "Come, children, and listen to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord."⁵ "Run while you have the light of life, that the darkness of death may not overtake you."⁶

And our Lord, seeking his workman among the multitude of those to whom he thus speaks, says again, "Who is the man that will have life, and desires to see good days?"⁷ And if you, hearing this, reply, "I am he": God says to you, If you desire to possess true and everlasting life "restrain your tongue from evil, and your lips so that they do not speak deceptively. Turn from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it."⁸ And when you have done this my eyes shall be on you, and my ears shall be open to your prayers. And before you can call upon me, I will say to you, "Behold, I am present."⁹ What can be more agreeable, dearest brothers, than this voice of our Lord inviting us? Behold how in his loving kindness he shows us the way of life.

Therefore, with our loins girded by faith, and by the practice of good works under the guidance of his gospel, let us walk in the path he has marked out for us, that we may deserve to see him who has called us into his kingdom.¹⁰

If we would live in the shelter of this kingdom, we can reach it only by speeding on the way of good works (by this path alone is it to be attained). But let us, with the prophet, ask our lord, and say to him, "Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle? Or who shall rest on your holy hill?"¹¹ And when we have so asked, let us hear our lord's answer, pointing out to us the way to this his dwelling, and saying, "He that walks without stain and works for justice; he that speaks truth in his heart; that has not created deceit with his tongue; he that has not done evil to his neighbor, and has not accepted dishonor against him."¹² He that, casting out of the innermost thoughts of his heart the suggestions of the evil-minded devil trying to lead him astray, has brought them all to nothing; he that taking hold of such thoughts while in their birth has dashed them against the rock, which is Christ. They who, fearing the lord, are not lifted up by their good observance, but knowing that all that is good in them comes not from themselves but from the lord, extol his work in them,



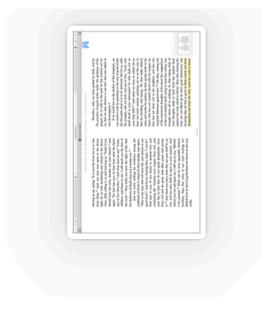
saying with the prophet, "Not to us, oh lord, not to us, but to your name give glory."¹³ Thus the apostle Paul imputed nothing of his preaching to himself, saying, "By the grace of God I am what I am."¹⁴ And again he says, "He that glories, let him glory in the lord."¹⁵

Hence also our lord in the gospel says, "He that hears these words of mine and does them, I will compare him to a wise man who has built his house upon a rock. The floods came, the winds blew and beat against that house, and it did not fall, because it was founded upon a rock."¹⁶ In fulfilling this our lord daily looks for deeds by us that comply with his holy admonitions. Therefore are the days of this life of ours lengthened for a while so that we can make amends for our evil deeds, according to the words of the apostle, "Do you not know that the patience of God will lead you to repentance?"¹⁷ For our loving lord says, "I do not wish for the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live."¹⁸

So questioning the lord, brethren, we have heard on what conditions we may dwell in his temple; and if we fulfill these we shall be heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore must our hearts and bodies be prepared to fight under the holy obedience of his orders, and we must beg our lord to supply by the help

of his grace what by nature is not possible to us. And if, fleeing from the pains of hell, we wish to attain life everlasting, we must, while we yet live in the flesh and the light is still on our path, hurry to do now what will profit us for all eternity.

We are, therefore, now about to institute a school for the service of God, in which we hope nothing harsh nor burdensome will be ordained. But if we proceed in certain things with some little severity, sound reason so advising for the amendment of vices or the preserving of charity, do not, for fear of this, in that very place flee from the way of salvation, which is always narrow in the beginning.¹⁹ In living our life, however, and by the growth of faith, when the heart has been enlarged, the path of God's commandments is run with unspeakable loving sweetness; so that never leaving his school, but persevering in the monastery in his teaching until death, we share by our patience in the sufferings of Christ, and so merit to be participants in his kingdom.²⁰



Chapter I—Of the Several Kinds of Monks and Their Lives

It is recognized that there are four kinds of monks. The first are the Cenobites: that is, those who live in a monastery under a rule or an abbot. The second kind is that of the Anchorites or Hermits, who not in the first heat of conversion, but after long trial in the monastery, and already taught by the example of many others, have learned to fight against the devil, are well prepared to go forth from the ranks of the brotherhood to the single combat of the desert. They can now, by God's help, safely fight against the vices of their flesh and against evil thoughts alone, with their own hand and arm and without the encouragement of a companion. The third and worst kind of monks is that of the Sarabites, who have not been tried under any rule nor schooled by an experienced master, as gold is proved in the furnace, but soft as lead and still in their works sticking fast to the world, are known to lie to God with their tonsure.

These in twos or threes, or more frequently alone, are shut away, without a shepherd; not in our lord's fold, but in their own. The pleasure of carrying out their particular desires is their law, and whatever they dream of or choose, this they call holy; but what they do not like, that they consider to be unlawful.

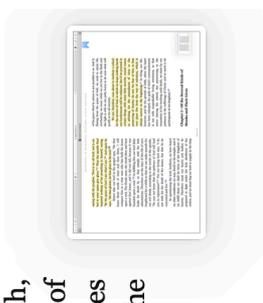
The fourth class of monks is called Gyrovites (or

Wanderers). These move about all their lives through various countries, staying as guests for three or four days at different monasteries. They are always on the move and never settle down, and are slaves to their own wills and to the enticements of gluttony. In every way they are worse than the Sarabites, and of their wretched way of life it is better to be silent than to speak.

Leaving these, therefore, aside, let us by God's help set down a rule for Cenobites, who are the best kind of monks.

Chapter II—What the Abbot Should Be

In order to be fit to rule a monastery, an abbot should always remember what he is called, and in his acts illustrate his high calling. For in a monastery he is considered to take the place of Christ, since he is called by his name as the apostle says, "You have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, by which we cry, Abba, Father."²¹ Therefore the abbot should neither teach, ordain, nor require anything against the command of our lord (God forbid!), but in the minds of his disciples let his orders and teaching be mingled with the leavening of divine justice.



The abbot should always be mindful that at the dreaded judgment of God there will be an inquiry into both his teaching and the obedience of his disciples. Let the abbot know that any lack of goodness, which the master of the family shall find in his flock, will be accounted the shepherd's fault. On the other hand, he shall be acquitted in so far as he shall have shown all the watchfulness of a shepherd over a restless and disobedient flock; and if as their pastor he shall have employed every care to cure their corrupt manners, he shall be declared guiltless in the Lord's judgment, and he may say with the prophet, "I have not hidden your justice in my heart; I have told your truth and your salvation;²² but they condemned and despised me."²³ And then in the end shall death be inflicted as a suitable punishment upon the sheep which have not responded to his care. When, therefore, any one shall receive the name of abbot, he ought to rule his disciples with a twofold teaching: that is, he should first show them in deeds rather than words all that is good and holy. To such as are understanding, indeed, he may expound the lord's commands by words; but to the hard-hearted and to the simpleminded he must manifest the divine precepts in his life. Thus, what he has taught his disciples to be contrary to God's law, let

him show in his own deeds that such things are not to be done, or else by preaching to others "he himself becomes a castaway,"²⁴ and God says to him about his sins, "Why do you declare my justices, and take my testament in your mouth? You have hated discipline, and cast my speeches behind you."²⁵ And, "You, who saw the speck in your brother's eye, have you not seen the beam that is in your own?"²⁶

Let him make no distinction of persons in the monastery. Let not one be loved more than another, save such as are found to excel in obedience or good works. Do not put the free-born before the serf-born in religion, unless there is another reasonable cause for it. If, upon due consideration, the abbot shall see such cause he may place him where he pleases; otherwise let all keep their own places, because "whether bound or free we are all one in Christ,"²⁷ and bear an equal burden of service under one Lord: "for with God there is no regard for persons."²⁸ For one thing only are we preferred by him, which is if we are found better than others in good works and more humble. Let the abbot therefore have equal love for all, and let all, according to their merits, be under the same discipline.

The abbot in his teaching should always observe that apostolic rule which says, "Reprove, entreat,



rebuke.”²⁹ That is to say, as occasions require he ought to mingle encouragement with rebukes. Let him manifest the sternness of a master and the loving affection of a father. He must severely reprove the undisciplined and restless, but he should exhort such as are obedient, quiet and patient, for their better profit. We charge him, however, to reprove and punish the stubborn and negligent. Let him not shut his eyes to the sins of offenders; but, directly they begin to show themselves and to grow, he must use every means to root them up utterly, remembering the fate of Heli, the priest of Silo.³⁰ To the more virtuous and apprehensive, indeed, he may for the first or second time use words of warning; but in dealing with the stubborn, the hard-hearted, the proud, and the disobedient, even at the very beginning of their sin, let him chastise them with whipping and with bodily punishment, knowing that it is written, “The fool is not corrected with words.”³¹ And again, “Strike your son with a rod and you shall deliver his soul from death.”³²

The abbot ought ever to bear in mind what he is and what he is called; he ought to know that to whom more is entrusted, from him more is exacted. Let him recognize how difficult and how hard a task he has undertaken, to rule souls and to make himself a

servant to the temperaments of many. One, indeed, must be led by gentle words, another by rebuke, another by persuasion; and thus shall he so shape and adapt himself to the character and intelligence of each, that he not only suffers no loss in the flock entrusted to his care, but may even rejoice in its good growth. Above all things let him not slight nor make little of the souls committed to his care, heeding more fleeting, worldly and frivolous things; but let him remember always that he has undertaken the guidance of souls, of which he shall also have to give an account. And that he may not complain of the lack of temporal means, let him remember that it is written, “Seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all things shall be given to you.”³³ And again, “Nothing is wanting to those that fear him.”³⁴

He should know that whoever undertakes the government of souls must prepare himself to account for them. And however great the number of the brethren under him may be, let him understand for certain that at the Day of Judgment he will have to give an account to our lord of all their souls as well as of his own. In this way, by fearing the inquiry concerning his flock which the shepherd will hold, he is anxious on account of others’ souls as well as of his



own, and thus while reclaiming other men by his corrections, he frees himself also from all vice.

Chapter III—On Taking Counsel of the Brethren

Whenever any weighty matters have to be transacted in the monastery, let the abbot call together all the community and himself propose the matter for discussion. After hearing the advice of the brethren, let him consider it in his own mind, and then do what he judges most expedient. Often the Lord reveals to a younger member what is best. And let the brethren give their advice with all humble subjection, and not presume to boldly defend their own opinion. Let them rather leave the matter to the abbot's discretion, so that all submit to what he shall deem best. As it becomes disciples to obey their master, so does it become the master to dispose of all things with forethought and justice.

In all things, therefore, everyone shall follow the Rule as their master, and let no one rashly depart from it. In the monastery no one is to be led by the desires of his own heart, nor shall anyone within or outside of the monastery presume to argue recklessly with his

abbot. If he presumes to do so let him be subjected to punishment according to the Rule.

The abbot, however, must himself do all things in the fear of God and according to the Rule, knowing that he shall undoubtedly have to give an account of his whole government to God, the most just Judge.

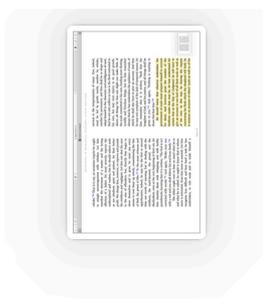
If anything minor has to be done in the monastery, let the abbot take the advice of the seniors only, as it is written, "Do all things with counsel, and you shall not afterwards repent of it."³⁵

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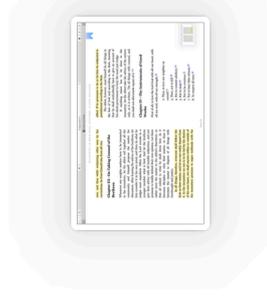
Chapter IV—The Instruments of Good Works

First of all, to love the lord God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength.³⁶

- 2. Then, to love our neighbor as ourself.³⁷
- 3. Then, not to kill.³⁸
- 4. Not to commit adultery.³⁹
- 5. Not to steal.⁴⁰
- 6. Not to be covetous.⁴¹
- 7. Not to bear false witness.⁴²
- 8. To respect all men.⁴³



9. Not to do to another what one would not have done to oneself.⁴⁴
10. To deny oneself in order to follow Christ.⁴⁵
11. To chastise the body.⁴⁶
12. Not to be fond of pleasures.⁴⁷
13. To love fasting.⁴⁸
14. To give refreshment to the poor.⁴⁹
15. To clothe the naked.⁵⁰
16. To visit the sick.⁵¹
17. To bury the dead.⁵²
18. To come to the help of those in trouble.⁵³
19. To comfort those in sadness.⁵⁴
20. To become a stranger to the ways of the world.⁵⁵
21. To prefer nothing to the love of Christ.⁵⁶
22. Not to give way to wrath.⁵⁷
23. Not to harbor anger for any time.⁵⁸
24. Not to foster deceit in the heart.⁵⁹
25. Not to make a false peace.⁶⁰
26. Not to depart from charity.⁶¹
27. Not to swear at all, lest one swear falsely.⁶²
28. To speak the truth with heart and lips.⁶³
29. Not to return evil for evil.⁶⁴
30. Not to do an injury, but patiently to suffer one when done.⁶⁵
31. To love one's enemies.⁶⁶
32. Not to speak ill of those who speak ill of one, but instead to speak well of them.⁶⁷
33. To suffer persecution for justice's sake.⁶⁸
34. Not to be proud.⁶⁹
35. Not to be a wine drinker.⁷⁰
36. Not to be a great eater.⁷¹
37. Not to be given to sleep.⁷²
38. Not to be slothful.⁷³
39. Not to be a murmurer.⁷⁴
40. Not to be a detractor.⁷⁵
41. To put one's trust in God.⁷⁶
42. When one sees any good in



- oneself to attribute it to God, not to oneself.⁷⁷
- 43. That a man recognize that it is he who does evil, and so let him attribute it to himself.⁷⁸
- 44. To fear the day of judgment.⁷⁹
- 45. To be afraid of hell.⁸⁰
- 46. To desire life everlasting with complete spiritual longing.⁸¹
- 47. To have the vision of death before one's eyes daily.⁸²
- 48. To watch over the actions of one's life every hour of the day.⁸³
- 49. To know for certain that God sees one everywhere.⁸⁴
- 50. To smash at once against Christ (as if against a rock) evil thoughts which rise up in the mind.⁸⁵
- 51. And to reveal all such thoughts to one's spiritual Father.⁸⁶
- 52. To guard one's lips from uttering evil or wicked words.⁸⁷
- 53. Not to be fond of too much talking.⁸⁸

- 54. Not to speak idle words, or those that move others to laughter.⁸⁹
- 55. Not to love much or boisterous laughter.⁹⁰
- 56. Willingly to hear holy reading.⁹¹
- 57. Often to devote oneself to prayer.⁹²
- 58. Daily with tears and sighs to confess to God in prayer one's past offenses, and to avoid them for the future.⁹³
- 59. Not to give way to the desires of the flesh,⁹⁴ and to hate one's own will.⁹⁵
- 60. In all things to obey the abbot's commands, even though he himself (which God forbid) should act otherwise, remembering our lord's precept, "What they say, you should do, but what they do, you should not do."⁹⁶
- 61. Not to wish to be called holy before one is so; but to be holy first so as to be called such with truth.⁹⁷
- 62. Daily in one's acts to keep God's



commandments.⁹⁸

63. To love chastity.⁹⁹

64. To hate no man.¹⁰⁰

65. Not to be jealous or envious.¹⁰¹

66. Not to love strife.¹⁰²

67. To not have an arrogant spirit.¹⁰³

68. To revere the old.¹⁰⁴

69. To love the young.¹⁰⁵

70. To pray for one's enemies for the love of Christ.¹⁰⁶

71. To make peace with an adversary before the sun sets.¹⁰⁷

72. And, never to despair of God's mercy.¹⁰⁸

Behold these are the tools of our spiritual craft; when we shall have made use of them constantly day and night, and shall have proved them at the day of judgment, that reward, which He has promised, shall be given to us by our lord, "Which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for those that love him."¹⁰⁹ Steadfastly abiding in the community, the workshop where all these instruments are made use of is the cloister of the monastery.

Chapter V—On Obedience

The first degree of humility is prompt obedience. This is required of all who, whether by reason of the holy servitude to which they are pledged, or through fear of hell, or to attain to the glory of eternal life, hold nothing more dear than Christ. Such disciples delay not in doing what is ordered by their superior, just as if the command had come from God. Of such people our lord says, "At the hearing of the ear he has obeyed me."¹¹⁰ And to the teachers, he likewise says, "He that hears you, hears me."¹¹¹

For this reason such disciples, immediately surrendering all they possess, and giving up their own will, leave unfinished what they were working at, and with the ready foot of obedience in their acts follow the word of command. Thus, as it were, at the same moment comes the order of the master and the finished work of the disciple: with the speed of the fear of God both go jointly forward and are quickly effected by such as ardently desire to walk in the way of eternal life. These take the narrow way, of which the Lord says, "Narrow is the way which leads to life."¹¹² That is, they live not as they themselves will, nor do they obey their own desires and pleasures, but following the



command and direction of another and remaining in their monasteries, their desire is to be ruled by an abbot. Without doubt such as these carry out that saying of our lord, "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me."¹¹³

This kind of obedience will be both acceptable to God and pleasing to men, when what is ordered is not done out of fear, or slowly and coldly, grudgingly, or with reluctant protest. Obedience shown to superiors is indeed given to God, who himself has said, "He that hears you, hears me."¹¹⁴ What is commanded should be done by those under obedience, with a good will, since God loves a cheerful giver.¹¹⁵ If the disciple obey unwillingly and murmur in word as well as in heart, it will not be accepted by God, who considers the heart of a murmurer, even if he does what was ordered. For work done in this spirit shall have no reward; rather shall the doer receive the penalty appointed for murmurers if he does not amend and does not make satisfaction.

Chapter VI—On Silence

Let us do as the prophet says, "I have said: I will keep my ways, that I do not offend with my tongue. I have

been watchful over my mouth; I held my peace and humbled myself and was silent from speaking even good things."¹¹⁶ Here the prophet shows that, for the sake of silence, we are at times to abstain even from good talk. If this is so, how much more needful is it that we refrain from evil words, on account of the penalty of the sin! Because of the importance of silence, therefore, let permission to speak be seldom given, even to perfect disciples, although their talk be of good and holy matters and tending to edification, since it is written, "In much speaking, you shall not escape sin."¹¹⁷ The master, indeed, should speak and teach: the disciple should hold his peace and listen.

Whatever, therefore, has to be asked of the prior, let it be done with all humility and with reverent submission. But as to coarse, idle words, or such as move to laughter, we utterly condemn and ban them in all places. We do not allow any disciple to speak them.

Chapter VII—On Humility

Brethren, Holy Scripture cries out to us, saying, "Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."¹¹⁸ In this it tells us that every form of self-exaltation is a kind of



pride, which the prophet declares he carefully avoided, where he says, "Lord, my heart is not exalted, neither are my eyes lifted up, nor have I walked in great things, nor in wonders above myself." And why? "if I did not think humbly, but exalted my soul: as a child weaned from his mother, so will you reward my soul."¹¹⁹

Therefore, brethren, if we would scale the summit of humility, and swiftly gain the heavenly height which is reached by our lowliness in this present life, we must set up a ladder of climbing deeds like that which Jacob saw in his dream, on which angels were descending and ascending. Without doubt that descending and ascending is to be understood by us as signifying that we descend by exalting ourselves and ascend by humbling ourselves. But the ladder itself thus set up is our life in this world, which by humility of heart is lifted by our Lord to heaven. Our body and soul we may indeed call the sides of the ladder in which our divine vocation has set the diverse steps of humility and discipline we have to ascend.

The first step of humility, then, is reached when a man, with the fear of God always before his eyes, does not allow himself to forget, but is ever mindful of all God's commandments. He remembers, moreover, that

such as condemn God fall into hell for their sins, and that life eternal awaits such as fear him. And warding off at each moment all sin and defect in thought and word, of eye, hand or foot, of self-will, let such a one rouse himself to prune away the lusts of the flesh.

Let him think that he is seen at all times by God from heaven; and that wheresoever he may be, all his actions are visible to the eye of God and at all times are reported by the angels. The prophet shows us this when he says that God is ever present to our thoughts: "God searches the hearts and minds."¹²⁰ And again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of men that they are vain."¹²¹ He also says, "You have understood my thoughts from afar,"¹²² and again, "The thought of man shall confess to you."¹²³ In order, then, that the humble brother may be careful to avoid wrong thoughts, let him always say in his heart, "Then shall I be without stain before him, if I shall keep myself from my iniquity."¹²⁴

We are forbidden to do our own will, since Scripture tells us, "Leave your own will and desire."¹²⁵ And again, "We beg of God in prayer that his will may be done in us."¹²⁶

Rightly are we taught, therefore, not to do our own will, if we take heed of what the Scripture teaches:



“There are ways which to men seem right, the end of which plunges into the deep pit of hell.”¹²⁷ And again, when we fear what is said about the negligent, “They are corrupted, and made abominable in their pleasures.”¹²⁸ But in regard to the desires of the flesh we ought to believe that God is present with us; as the prophet says, speaking to the Lord, “Oh Lord, all my desire is before you.”¹²⁹

We have therefore to beware of evil desires, since death stands close at the door of pleasure. It is for this reason that Scripture bids us, “Follow not your desires.”¹³⁰ If, therefore, the eyes of the Lord see both the good and the bad, if he is always looking down from heaven upon the sons of men to find one who thinks of God or seeks him, and if day and night what we do is made known to him—for these reasons, by the angels appointed to watch over us, we should always take heed, brethren, lest God may sometime or other see us, as the prophet says in the psalm, “inclined to evil and becoming unprofitable servants.”¹³¹ Even though he spares us for a time, because he is loving and waits for our conversion to better ways, let us fear that he may say to us in the future, “These things you have done and I held my peace.”¹³²

The second step of humility is reached when

anyone not loving self-will takes no heed to satisfy his own desires, but copies in his life what our lord said, “I came not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.”¹³³ Scripture likewise proclaims that self-will engenders punishment, and necessity purchases a crown.

The third step of humility is reached when a man, for the love of God, submits himself with all obedience to a superior, imitating our lord, of whom the apostle says, “He was made obedient even up to death.”¹³⁴

The fourth step of humility is reached when anyone in the exercise of his obedience patiently and with a quiet mind bears all that is inflicted on him, things contrary to nature, and even at times unjust, and in suffering all these he neither tires nor gives up the work, since the Scripture says, “Only he that persists to the end shall be saved”;¹³⁵ also “Let your heart be comforted, and await the Lord.”¹³⁶ And in order to show that for our Lord’s sake the faithful man ought to bear all things, no matter how contrary to nature they may be (the psalmist), in the person of the sufferers, says, “For you we suffer death all the day long; we are valued as sheep for the slaughter.”¹³⁷ Secure in the hope of divine reward they rejoice, saying, “But in all things we overcome by the help of



him who has loved us.”¹³⁸

Elsewhere also Scripture says, “You have protected us, Lord; you have tried us, as silver is tried, with fire. You have brought us into the snare; you have laid tribulation upon our backs.”¹³⁹ And to show that we ought to be subject to a prior (or superior) it goes on, “You have placed men over our heads.”¹⁴⁰ And, moreover, they fulfill the Lord’s command by patience in adversity and injury, who, “when struck on one cheek, offer the other”; when someone “takes away their coat let go of their cloak as well,” and who being compelled to carry a burden one mile, go two; who, with Paul the apostle, suffer false brethren, and bless those who speak ill of them.¹⁴¹

The fifth step of humility is reached when a monk manifests to his abbot, by humble confession, all the evil thoughts of his heart and his secret faults. The Scripture urges us to do this where it says, “Reveal your way to the Lord and hope in him.”¹⁴² It also says, “Confess to the Lord, because he is good, because his mercy endures forever.”¹⁴³ And the prophet also says, “I have made known to you my offenses, and my injustices I have not hidden. I have said, I will declare openly to the Lord my injustices against myself; and you have pardoned the wickedness of my heart.”¹⁴⁴

The sixth step of humility is reached when a monk is content with all that is lowly and vile; and in regard to everything enjoined to him accounts himself a poor and worthless workman, saying with the prophet, “I have been brought to nothing, and knew it not. I have become like a beast before you, and I am always with you.”¹⁴⁵

The seventh step of humility is reached when a man not only confesses with his tongue that he is most lowly and inferior to others, but in his innermost heart believes so. Such a one, humbling himself, exclaims with the prophet, “I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.”¹⁴⁶ “I have been exalted and am humbled and confounded.”¹⁴⁷ And again, “It is good for me that you have humbled me, that I may learn your commandments.”¹⁴⁸

The eighth step of humility is reached when a monk does nothing but what the common rule of the monastery, or the example of his seniors, enforces.

The ninth step of humility is reached when a monk restrains his tongue from talking, and, practicing silence, does not speak until a question is asked of him, since Scripture says, “In many words you shall not avoid sin,”¹⁴⁹ and “a talkative man moves



aimlessly upon the earth.”¹⁵⁰

The tenth step of humility is attained to when one is not easily and quickly moved to laughter, for it is written, “The fool lifts his voice in laughter.”¹⁵¹

The eleventh step of humility is reached when a monk, in speaking, does so quietly and without laughter, humbly, gravely and in a few words and not with a loud voice, for it is written, “A wise man is known by a few words.”¹⁵²

The twelfth step of humility is reached when a monk not only has humility in his heart, but even shows it also externally to all who see him. Thus, whether he is in the oratory at the “Work of God,” in the monastery, or in the garden, on a journey, or in the fields, or wherever he is, sitting, standing or walking, always let him, with head bent and eyes fixed on the ground, think of his sins and imagine that he is arraigned before the dreaded judgment of God. Let him always be saying to himself, with the publican in the gospel, “Lord, I, a sinner, am not worthy to lift my eyes to heaven”;¹⁵³ and with the prophet, “I am bowed down and humbled on every side.”¹⁵⁴

When all these steps of humility have been mounted the monk will presently attain to that love of God which is perfect and casts out fear. By means of

this love everything which before he had not observed without fear, he shall now begin to do by habit, without any trouble and, as it were, naturally. He acts now not through fear of hell, but for the love of Christ, out of a good habit and a delight in virtue. All this our Lord will vouchsafe to work by the Holy Ghost in his servant, now cleansed from vice and sin.

Chapter VIII—Of the Divine Office¹⁵⁵ at Night

In the winter time—that is, from the first of November until Easter—the brethren shall get up at the eighth hour of the night by reasonable calculation, so that having rested until a little after midnight they may rise refreshed. Let the time that remains after the Night Office be used, by those brethren who need it, for the study of the Psalter or the readings. From Easter to the aforesaid first of November, let the hour for saying the Night Office be so arranged that after a brief interval, during which the brethren may go forth for the necessities of nature, Lauds, which are to be said at daybreak, may presently follow.

Chapter IX—How Many Psalms Are to Be



Said in the Night Office

In the winter season, having first said the verse, "Oh God, incline unto my aid; Oh Lord, make haste to help me,"¹⁵⁶ the words, "Oh Lord, you shall open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise"¹⁵⁷ are then to be said three times. After this Psalm 3 is to be said with a *Gloria*; after which Psalm 94, with an antiphon, is to be recited or sung, followed by a hymn, and then six psalms with their antiphons. When these are ended and a versicle is said, let the abbot give a blessing; and then, all being seated, let three lessons from the book placed on the lectern be read by the brethren in turns. Between these lessons, three responsories are to be sung, two without a *Gloria*. After the third lesson, however, let the cantor add the *Gloria* to the responsory, and as soon as he begins it let all rise from their seats out of honor and reverence for the Holy Trinity.

Let the divinely inspired books of the Old and New Testament be read at the Night Office, together with their commentaries from the best-known, orthodox, and catholic fathers.

After these three lessons, with their responsories, let six other psalms be sung with the *Alleluia*. A lesson

from the apostle is then to be said by heart, and a verse with the petition of the Litany—that is, *Kyrie eleison*—and so let the Night Office end.

Chapter X—How the Night Office Is to Be Said in the Summer Season

From Easter to the first day of November the same number of psalms as indicated above are to be said. On account of the short nights, however, the lessons are not to be read from the book, but in place of the three lessons let one out of the Old Testament be said by heart and followed by a short responsory. Let all the rest be done as we have arranged above, so that, without counting Psalms 3 and 94, there may never be less than twelve psalms at Matins.

Chapter XI—How the Night Office Is to Be Celebrated on Sundays

On Sunday let the brethren rise earlier for the Night Office, in which the following order is to be observed: when six psalms and the versicle have been sung, as we have before arranged, let all sit down in proper order and let four lessons be read from the book with their responsories, in the manner before prescribed.



To the fourth responsory only let the cantor add the *Gloria*, and when he begins it let all rise at once out of reverence. After these lessons six other psalms follow in order with their antiphons and a versicle as before. Then let four other lessons be read with their responsories in the same way as the former, and then three canticles out of the prophets, chosen by the abbot; these canticles are to be sung with *Alleluia*.

When the versicle has been said, and the abbot has given the blessing, four more lessons from the New Testament are to be read, in the same order as before. After the fourth responsory let the abbot begin the hymn *Te Deum laudamus*, and when that is finished he shall read a lesson from the gospel, with reverence and fear, while all stand. At the conclusion of this let all answer Amen, and let the abbot immediately go on with the hymn *Te decet laus*; after the blessing let them begin Lauds.

This method of singing Matins on Sundays is to be observed always, both in summer and in winter, unless perhaps (which God forbid) they get up late, and the lessons or responsories have to be somewhat shortened. Let great care be taken that this does not happen; but if it does, let him to whose carelessness it is due make full satisfaction to God in the oratory.

Chapter XII—How Lauds Are to Be Solemnized

At Lauds on Sunday let Psalm 66 be first said straight on and without an antiphon. After this Psalm 50 is to be said with *Alleluia*, with Psalm 117 and 62. Then follow the “Blessings” (or *Benedicite*) and the “Praises” (or *Laudate* psalms), a lesson from the Apocalypse [or book of Revelation], said by heart, a responsory and hymn, the versicle and the canticle from the gospel (or *Benedictus*) with the litanies (or *Kyrie*), and so conclude.

Chapter XIII—How Lauds Are to Be Celebrated on Ordinary Days

On ordinary weekdays let Lauds be celebrated as follows: Psalm 66 is to be said, as on Sunday, straight on without any antiphon, and somewhat slowly, to allow for all to be in their places for Psalm 50, which is to be said with an antiphon. After this come two other psalms according to custom: that is, on Monday, Psalm 5 and 36; on Tuesday, Psalm 42 and 56; on Wednesday, Psalm 63 and 64; on Thursday, Psalm 87 and 89; on Friday, Psalm 75 and 91; on Saturday,



Psalm 142 and the Canticle of Deuteronomy, which must be divided into two *Glorias*. But on other days let a canticle out of the Prophets be said, each on its proper day, according to the custom of the Roman Church. After these let the Praises (or *Laudate* psalms) follow, then a lesson of the apostle, said by heart, the responsory, hymn and versicle, the canticle from the gospel (or *Benedictus*), the litanies (or *Kyrie eleison*), and the office is completed.

Lauds and Evensong are never to be finished without the Lord's prayer at the end. This is said by the prior (that is, the superior) aloud, so that all may hear, because of the thorns of scandal which are always cropping up: that the community, by reason of the pledge given in this prayer, in the words, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us," may purge themselves from this kind of vice. In saying the other Hours, however, only the last part of the prayer is said aloud that all may answer, "But deliver us from evil."

Chapter XIV—How the Night Office Is to Be Said on the Feast Days of Saints

On Saints' feast days and on all solemnities let the

Night Office be said in the manner we have ordered for Sunday, except that the psalms, antiphons, and lessons are said which are proper to the day itself. The method of saying them, however, shall remain as before prescribed.

Chapter XV—During Which Seasons Alleluia Is to Be Said

From the holy feast of Easter until Pentecost *Alleluia* is always to be said both with the psalms and in the responsories. From Pentecost until the beginning of Lent let it be said every night at the Night Office only with the last six psalms. On every Sunday not in Lent let the Canticles, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, and None be said with *Alleluia*, but Vespers with antiphons. Responsories, however, except from Easter until Pentecost, are never to be said with *Alleluia*.

Chapter XVI—How the Divine Office Is to Be Said During the Day

The prophet says, "Seven times I have sung your praises."¹⁵⁸ This sacred number of seven will be kept by us if we perform the duties of our service in the



Hours of Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. It was of these daytime Hours that the prophet said, "Seven times a day I have sung your praises," for the same prophet says of the Night Office, "At midnight I arose to confess to you."¹⁵⁹ At these times, therefore, let us give praise to our creator for his just judgments, that is, at Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline, and at night let us rise to confess to him.

Chapter XVII—How Many Psalms Are to Be Said in These Hours

We have already settled the order of the psalmody for the Night Office and for Lauds, let us now arrange for the Hours which follow. At Prime, three psalms are to be said separately, that is, not under one *Gloria*. After the verse, "Oh God, make haste to help me," and before the psalms are begun, the hymn of each Hour is to be said. At the end of the three psalms a lesson is recited, then with the versicle and *Kyrie eleison* the Hour is concluded. The Hours of Terce, Sext, and None are to be said in the same way, that is, the verse ("Oh God, incline," etc.), the hymns of these Hours, three psalms, the lesson and versicle, and with *Kyrie*

eleison they are concluded.

If the community is large, the Hours shall be sung with antiphons, but if it is small they are to be sung without. Vespers shall be said with four psalms and antiphons, after which a lesson is to be recited, then a responsory, hymn, versicle, canticle from the gospel (i.e. *Magnificat*), and it is concluded by the litanies (or *Kyrie*) and the Lord's Prayer. Compline shall consist in the saying of three psalms straight through and without antiphons, followed by the hymn of the Hour, a lesson, versicle, *Kyrie eleison*, and shall conclude with the blessing.

Chapter XVIII—The Order in Which the Psalms Are to Be Said

Let the verse, "Oh God, make haste to deliver me, Oh Lord, make haste to help me," with a *Gloria*, always come first, followed by the hymn of each Hour. Then, on Sundays, at Prime, four divisions of Psalm 118 are to be said; and at the other Hours of Terce, Sext, and None three divisions of the same. On Monday, at Prime, Psalm 1, 2, and 3 are recited, and so on each day until Sunday, three other psalms are to be recited in order up to Psalm 19; Psalm 9 and 17 are each



divided in two by a *Gloria*. In this way the Sunday Night Office will always begin with Psalm 20.

On Mondays, at Terce, Sext, and None, let the remaining nine divisions of Psalm 118 be said, three at each Hour. Psalm 118 is finished on the two days, Sunday and Monday, therefore on Tuesday, at Terce, Sext, and None the three psalms at each Hour shall be the nine from Psalm 119 to 127. And these same psalms are to be repeated at the Hours until the Sunday. A uniform order of the hymns, lessons, and versicles is to be likewise observed, so that Psalm 118 is always begun on the Sunday.

Four psalms are to be sung each day at Vespers. These begin with Psalm 109 and conclude with Psalm 147, omitting those already set apart for the various other Hours, that is to say, from Psalm 117 to Psalm 127; Psalm 133 and 142. All the rest are to be said at Vespers, and because this leaves three psalms short, the longest of them, namely, Psalms 138, 143, and 144, are to be divided. Psalm 116, however, since it is brief, is to be joined to Psalm 115.

The order of the psalms for Vespers being thus arranged, let the other parts, such as the lessons, responsories, hymns, versicles, and canticles be used as discussed before. At Compline the same psalms are

repeated every day, namely, Psalms 4, 90, and 133.

The order of the psalmody for the day office being thus settled, all the rest of the psalms are to be equally divided among the seven night hours (or the Night Office). Those that are too long are to be divided into two; and twelve psalms are to be arranged for each night. If this distribution of the psalms displeases anyone we especially desire him to arrange them otherwise, if he thinks of something better, provided that care be taken that every week the whole Psalter of one hundred and fifty psalms are sung, and that at the Night Office on Sunday the cycle is begun again. Monks, indeed, show themselves in their service to be too negligent and undevout when they sing less than the Psalter, with the usual canticles, once in the week, when we read that our holy Fathers courageously performed in one day what I resolve that we, who are tepid, may do in a whole week.

Chapter XIX—Of the Manner of Singing the Office

We believe that the divine presence is everywhere, and that the eyes of the lord see both the good and the bad in all places. Especially do we believe without any



doubt that this is so when we stand for the Divine Office. Let us, therefore, always be mindful of what the prophet says, "Serve you the lord in fear";¹⁶⁰ and again, "Sing you his praises with understanding";¹⁶¹ and and, "In the sight of the angels I will sing praise to you."¹⁶² Therefore let us consider how it is proper for us to be in the sight of God and the angels, and so let us take our part in the psalmody so that our mind agrees with our voice.

Chapter XX—On Reverence in Prayer

If, when we wish to obtain some favor from those who have the power to help us, we dare not ask except with humility and reverence, how much more reason is there that we should present our petitions to the Lord God of the universe in all lowliness of heart and purity of devotion. We may know for certain that we shall be heard, not because we use many words, but on account of the purity of our hearts and our tears of sorrow. Our prayer, therefore, should be short and pure, unless by some inspiration of divine grace it is prolonged. All prayer made by the community in common, however, should be short; and when the prior (that is, the superior) has given the sign, let all rise together.

Chapter XXI—The Deans of the Monastery

If the community is large, let brethren of good repute and holy lives be chosen from among them and appointed deans. These shall carefully watch over their deaneries in all things relating to the commandments of God and the injunctions of the abbot. Deans are to be chosen on whom the abbot may safely rely to share his burdens, and the choice is not to be determined by their order (in the community) but by the worthiness of their lives and their proved learning. And if perhaps any one of these deans, being puffed up by pride, is found blameworthy, and after being corrected three times will not amend, then let him be put out of office and another more worthy be substituted. We direct the same in the case of the Provost.

Chapter XXII—How the Monks Are to Sleep

All shall sleep in separate beds and each shall receive, according to the appointment of his abbot, bedclothes, fitted to the condition of his life. If it is possible, let them all sleep in a common dormitory, but if their



great numbers will not allow this they may sleep in tens or twenties, with seniors to have charge of them. Let a candle be constantly burning in the room until morning, and let the monks sleep clothed and girded with girdles or cords, but they are not to have knives by their sides in their beds, lest perhaps they are injured while sleeping. In this way the monks shall always be ready to rise quickly when the signal is given and hasten each one to come before his brother to the Divine Office, and yet with all gravity and modesty.

The younger brethren are not to have their beds next to each other, but among those of the elders. When they rise for the Divine Office let them gently encourage one another, because of the excuses made by those that are drowsy.

Chapter XXIII—Of Excommunication for Offenses

If any brother is found to be stubborn, disobedient, proud, murmuring, or in any way acting contrary to the holy rule, or disdain the orders of his seniors, let him, according to the precept of our lord, be secretly admonished by those seniors, once or twice. If he will not amend let him be publicly reproached

before all. But if even then he does not correct his faults, let him, if he understands the nature of the punishment, be subject to excommunication. But if he be obstinate he is to undergo corporal punishment.

Chapter XXIV—What the Manner of Excommunication Should Be

The mode of excommunication or punishment should be proportionate to the fault, and the gravity of the fault shall depend on the judgment of the abbot. If any brother is detected in small faults let him be excluded from eating at table with the rest. The punishment of one thus separated from the common table shall be of this kind: in the oratory he shall not lead either psalm or antiphon; nor shall he read any lesson until he has made satisfaction. He shall take his portion of food alone, after the brethren have had their meal, and in such quantity and at such time as the abbot shall think fit. So that if, for example, the brethren take their meal at the sixth hour let him take his at the ninth; if the brethren take theirs at the ninth, let him have his in the evening, until such time as by due satisfaction he obtains pardon.



Chapter XXV—Of Graver Faults

Let the brother who is guilty of some graver fault be excluded both from the common table and from the oratory. None of the brethren shall talk to him or keep company with him. Let him be alone at the work which is set for him; let him remain in penance and sorrow, and keep before his mind that terrible sentence of the apostle where he says, “Such a one is delivered over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of our lord.”¹⁶³ Let him take his food alone, in such quantity and at such time as the abbot shall think fit. Let no one bless him as he passes by, nor ask a blessing on the food that is given him.

Chapter XXVI—Of Those Who Keep Company with the Excommunicated without the Abbot’s Order

If any brother shall presume, without the abbot’s order, to have interaction in any way with an excommunicated brother, to talk with him or send him any message, let him suffer the same penalty of excommunication.

Chapter XXVII—What Care the Abbot Should Have of the Excommunicated

Let the abbot take every possible care of the offending brethren, for “They that are well need not the physician, but they that are sick.”¹⁶⁴ Like a wise physician, therefore, he ought to make use of every remedy; he should send some of the older and wiser brethren as comforters, to console, as it were, in secret their wayward brother, and convince him to make humble satisfaction. And let them comfort him so that he is not overwhelmed by too great a sorrow, but as the apostle says, “Let charity be confirmed in him and let all pray for him.”¹⁶⁵

The abbot ought to take the greatest care and to use all prudence and industry to lose none of the sheep entrusted to him. Let him know that he has undertaken the care of souls that are sick, and not act like a tyrant over such as are well. Let him fear the reproach of the prophet in which God speaks thus, “What you saw to be fat, you took for yourselves, and what was diseased you threw away.”¹⁶⁶ Let him copy the loving example of the good shepherd, who, leaving ninety-nine sheep in the mountains, went to seek the one that had gone astray, and on whose frailty he took



such compassion that he deigned to lay it on his shoulders and carry it back to the flock.¹⁶⁷

Chapter XXVIII—Of Those Who, Being Often Corrected, Do Not Amend

If any brother does not amend after being often corrected for any fault, and even excommunicated, let a sharper punishment be administered to him, that is, let him be punished with flogging. And if even after this he shall not correct himself, or being puffed up by pride (which God forbid) shall attempt to defend his doings, then let the abbot act like a wise physician. If after applying the poultices and ointments of exhortation, the medicine of the holy Scriptures and the final cauterizing of excommunication and scourging, he find that his labors have had no effect, then let him try what is more than all this, his own prayer and those of the brethren for him, that the Lord, who can do all things, may work the cure of the sick brother. If he is not healed by this means then let the abbot use the severing knife, according to that saying of the apostle, "Put away the evil one from among you";¹⁶⁸ and again, "If the faithless one depart, let him depart."¹⁶⁹ lest one diseased sheep infects the

whole flock.

Chapter XXIX—Whether Brethren Who Leave Their Monastery Must Be Allowed to Return

If the brother, who through his own bad conduct leaves or is expelled from the monastery, desires to return, he must first promise full correction of the fault for which he left it. He may then be received back at the lowest position, so that by this his humility may be tested. If he again leaves he may be received back until the third time, but he should know that after this all possibility of returning will be denied to him.

Chapter XXX—How Young Children Are to Be Corrected

Every age and state of intelligence ought to be governed in the way suitable to it. Thus the faults of those who are children or adolescents, or who cannot understand the seriousness of the penalty of excommunication, shall be punished by rigorous fasting or corrected by harsh floggings.



Chapter XXXI—What Manner of Man the Cellarer of the Monastery Ought to Be

Let one of the community be chosen as cellarer of the monastery, who is wise, mature in character, temperate, not a great eater, not arrogant nor quarrelsome, nor insolent, and not a dawdler, nor wasteful, but one who fears God and is as a father to the community. Let him have the charge of everything; do nothing without the abbot's order; see to what is commanded; and not make the brethren sad. If any of them shall perhaps ask something unreasonable he must not vex him by contemptuously rejecting his request, but humbly and reasonably refuse what he wrongly asks.

Let him look after his own soul, mindful of the apostolic principle, that "they that ministered well, shall purchase for themselves a good degree."¹⁷⁰ Let him take every care of the sick, of children, of guests, and of the poor, knowing that without doubt he shall have to render an account of all these on judgment day.

Let him look upon all the vessels and goods of the monastery as if they were the consecrated chalices of the altar. He must not think anything can be

neglected; he must not be covetous, nor prodigal by wasting the goods of the monastery; but let him do everything with forethought and according to the direction of his abbot.

Above all things let him have humility and give a gentle answer to those to whom he can give nothing else, for it is written, "A good word is better than the best gift."¹⁷¹ Let him take charge of all that the abbot shall commit to him, but let him not meddle with anything which is forbidden to him. Let him provide the brethren with their appointed allowance of food without impatience or delay, so that they are not driven to offend, being mindful of the divine word which declares the punishment he deserves, "Who shall scandalize one of these little ones. It were better for him that a millstone should be hung about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea."¹⁷² If the community is large let him be given helpers, by whose aid he may without worry perform the office committed to him. What is given let it be given, and what is asked for let it be asked for at suitable times, so that no one be troubled or distressed in the house of God.

Chapter XXXII—Concerning the Iron



Tools or Other Goods of the Monastery

Let the abbot appoint brethren, of whose life and moral conduct he is sure, to keep the iron tools, the clothes, or other property of the monastery. To these he shall allot the various things to be kept and collected, as he deems expedient. The abbot shall hold a list of these things that, as the brethren succeed each other in their appointed work, he may know what he gives each and what he receives back from them. If anyone shall treat the property of the monastery in a slovenly or careless way let him be corrected; if he does not amend let him be subjected to regular discipline.

Chapter XXXIII—Ought Monks to Have Anything of Their Own?

Above all others, let this vice be extirpated in the monastery. No one, without leave of the abbot, shall presume to give, or receive, or keep as his own, anything whatsoever: neither book, nor tablets, nor pen, nothing at all. For monks are men who can claim no dominion over even their own bodies or wills. All that is necessary, however, they may hope from the father of the monastery, but they shall keep nothing

which the abbot has not given or allowed. All things are to be common to all, as it is written, "Neither did anyone say or think that anything was his own."¹⁷³ Hence if anyone shall be found given to this most wicked vice let him be admonished once or twice, and if he does not amend let him be subjected to correction.

Chapter XXXIV—Whether All Ought to Receive Necessary Things Uniformly

It is written, "Distribution was made to everyone, according to his need."¹⁷⁴ By this we do not mean that there is to be a personal preference (which God forbid), but a consideration for infirmities. In this regard let him who needs less thank God and not be distressed, and let him who requires more be humbled because of his infirmity, and not puffed up by the mercy that is shown him, so that all the members shall be in peace. Above all things do not let the pest of murmuring, for whatever cause, by any word or sign, be manifested. If anyone shall be found faulty in this let him be subjected to the most severe punishment.

Chapter XXXV—Of the Weekly Servers



in the Kitchen

The brethren are so to serve each other that no one be excused from the work of the kitchen unless on account of health, or because he is occupied in some matter of great utility, for thence great reward is obtained and charity is exercised. Let the weaker brethren, however, have help that they may not do their work in sadness; and let all generally be helped according to the circumstances of the community or the position of the place (i.e., kitchen). If the community is large the cellarer may be relieved from the service of the kitchen, and any others who (as we have said) are engaged in matters of greater utility. Let the rest serve one another in charity. On Saturday, he who ends his weekly service must clean up everything. He must wash the towels with which the brethren wipe their hands and feet; and he who finishes his service, and he who enters on it, are to wash the feet of all. He shall give back to the cellarer all the vessels used in his ministry, cleaned and unbroken, and the cellarer shall hand them to the one entering into the office, so that he may know what he gives and what he receives.

An hour before the meal these weekly servers may receive a drink of water and a piece of bread over and

above the appointed allowance, so that they may serve the brethren at meal time without murmuring or too much fatigue. On solemn days, however, let them wait until after Mass. Immediately after Lauds on Sunday both the incoming and outgoing servers for the week shall cast themselves on their knees in the presence of all and ask for their prayers. Let him who finishes his week say this verse, “Blessed are you, Lord God, who helped me and consoled me”;¹⁷⁵ and when this has been said three times let him receive a blessing. He who enters on his office shall then follow and say, “Oh God, incline to my aid; Oh Lord, make haste to help me”;¹⁷⁶ and this also shall be repeated three times by all, and having received his blessing let him enter into his service.

Chapter XXXVI—Of the Sick Brethren

Before all things and above all things special care must be taken of the sick, so that in truth they are looked after as if it was Christ himself who was served. He himself has said, “I was sick, and you visited me; and what you did to one of these, my least brethren, you did to me.”¹⁷⁷

But let the sick themselves bear in mind that they



are served for the honor of God, and should not grieve their brethren, who serve them, by their superfluous demands. These, nevertheless, must be tolerated with patience, since from such requests a more abundant reward is obtained. Let the abbot, therefore, take the greatest care that the sick suffer no neglect.

Let a separate cell for them be set apart with an attendant who is God-fearing, diligent, and painstaking. Let baths be granted to the sick as often as it shall be expedient, but to those in health, and especially to the young, they shall be seldom permitted. Also for the recovery of their strength the use of meat may be allowed to the sick and those of very weak health. As soon, however, as they mend they must all in the accustomed manner abstain from meat. Let the abbot take special care that the sick are not neglected by the cellarer or the attendants, because he is responsible for what is done amiss by his disciples.

Chapter XXXVII—Concerning Old Men and Children

Although human nature itself inclines us to show pity and consideration to age, to the old, that is, and to children, still it is proper that the authority of the rule

should provide for them. Let their weakness be always taken into account, and let the full rigor of the rule as regards food be in no way maintained in their regard. There is to be a kind consideration for them, and permission is to be given them to anticipate the regular hours.

Chapter XXXVIII—The Weekly Reader

There ought always to be reading while the brethren eat at table. Yet no one shall presume to read there from any book taken up haphazardly; but whoever is appointed to read for the whole week is to enter into his office on the Sunday. Let the brother when beginning his service after Mass and Communion ask all to pray for him, that God may preserve him from the spirit of pride. And let the following verse be repeated three times by all in the oratory, he, the reader, first beginning: "Oh Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise,"¹⁷⁸ then, having received a blessing, let the reader enter into his office. The greatest silence shall be kept, so that no whispering, nor noise, save the voice of the reader alone, is heard there.

Whatever is required for eating and drinking the



brethren shall minister to each other so that no one need ask for anything. Yet should anything be wanted it ought to be demanded by sign rather than by word. Let no one ask any question there about what is being read or about anything else, lest opportunity be given to the evil one; unless, perhaps, the prior shall wish to say something briefly for the purpose of edification. The brother who is reader for the week may take some porridge before beginning to read, on account of holy communion, and in case, perhaps, it may be too long for him to fast. He shall eat afterwards with the weekly servers and kitchen helpers. The brethren, however, are not all to read or sing in turn, but only such as may edify the hearers.

Chapter XXXIX—Of the Amount of Food

We believe that it is enough to satisfy just requirement if in the daily meals, at both the sixth and ninth hours, there is at all seasons of the year two cooked dishes, so that he who cannot eat one may make his meal of the other. Therefore two dishes of cooked food must suffice for all the brethren, and if there is any fruit or young vegetables these may be added to the meal as a third dish. Let a pound of bread suffice for each day,

whether there be one meal or two, that is, for both dinner and supper. If there is to be supper, a third of the pound is to be kept back by the cellarer and given to the brethren at that meal.

If, however, the community has been occupied in any great labor it shall be at the will, and in the power of the abbot, if he thinks it fit, to increase the allowance, so long as every care be taken to guard against excess, and that no monk be incapacitated by overindulging. For nothing is more contrary to the Christian spirit than gluttony, as our Lord declares, "Take heed to yourselves lest perhaps your hearts be over-charged with overindulgence."¹⁷⁹ And the same quantity shall not be given to young children, but a lesser amount than to those older; frugality being maintained in everything. All, save the very weak and sick, are to abstain wholly from eating the flesh of quadrupeds.

Chapter XL—Of the Measure of Drink

"Everyone has his proper gift from God, one thus, another thus."¹⁸⁰ For this reason the amount of other people's food cannot be determined without some misgiving. Still, having regard to the weak state of the



sick, we think that a pint of wine a day is sufficient for anyone. But let those to whom God gives the gift of abstinence know that they shall receive their proper reward. If either local circumstances, the amount of labor, or the heat of summer require more, it can be allowed at the will of the prior, care being taken in all things that gluttony and drunkenness do not creep in.

Although we read that "wine is not the drink of monks at all," yet, since in our days they cannot be persuaded of this, let us at least agree not to drink to satiety, but sparingly, "Because wine makes even the wise to fall away."¹⁸¹

Chapter XLI—The Hours at Which the Brethren Are to Take Their Meals

From the holy feast of Easter until Pentecost the brethren shall have their first meal at the sixth hour and their supper at night. But from Pentecost, throughout the summer, if the monks do not have to work in the fields, nor are oppressed by any great heat, let them fast on Wednesdays and Fridays until None; on the other days they may dine at the sixth hour. Dinner at the sixth hour shall be the rule at the discretion of the abbot, if they have work in the fields,

or the heat of the summer is great. Let the abbot so temper and arrange everything that souls may be saved, and that what the brethren do may be done without just complaint.

From the Ides of September until the beginning of Lent, the brethren shall always take their meal at the ninth hour. During Lent, however, until Easter their meal shall be at dusk; but this evening meal shall be so arranged that they shall not need lamps while eating, and all things are finished in daylight. Indeed, at all times of the year let the hour of meals, whether of dinner or supper, be so arranged that all things are done by daylight.

Chapter XLII—That No One Shall Speak after Compline

Monks should practice silence at all times, but especially during the night hours. On all days, therefore, whether it is a fast day or otherwise (this shall be the practice). If it is not a fast day, as soon as they shall have risen from supper let all sit together while one of them reads the *Collations*, or *Lives of the Fathers*, or some other book to edify the hearers. He shall not, however, read the *Heptateuch*, or *Book of*



Kings, for at that hour it will not benefit weak understandings to listen to this part of Scripture; at other times, however, they may be read. If it is a fast day, let the brethren, when Vespers is over, and after a brief interval, come to the reading of the *Collations*, as we have said. Four or five pages are to be read, or as many as time will allow, that during the reading all may come together, even those that have had some work given them to do. When all, therefore, are gathered together let them say Compline, and on coming out from Compline no one shall be permitted to speak at all. If anyone shall be found breaking this rule of silence he shall be punished severely, unless the needs of a guest require it, or the abbot shall order something of someone. But even this shall be done with the greatest gravity and moderation.

Chapter XLIII—Of Those Who Come Late to the Divine Office or to the Table

As soon as the signal for the Divine Office shall be heard each one must lay aside whatever work he may be engaged upon and hasten to it, with all speed, but still with gravity, so as not to cause any light behavior. Nothing, therefore, shall be put before the Divine

Office. If anyone shall come to the Night Office after the *Gloria* of Psalm 94, which on this account we wish to be said slowly and leisurely, he shall not take his place in the choir, but go last of all, or to some place apart which the abbot may appoint for those that so fail in his sight, and of all the brethren, until the Divine Office is ended and he shall have done penance and made public satisfaction.

We have judged it fitting that these should stand last, or in some place apart, in order that, being seen by all, for very shame they may amend. For if they remain outside the oratory someone will, perhaps, return to sleep, or at least sit outside by himself, or setting himself to idle talk give an occasion to the evil one. Let such a one, therefore, come inside, so that he may not lose all, but make amends during the rest of the Office. At the day Hours, one who does not come to the “Work of God” until after the verse (*Deus in adiutorium*), and the *Gloria* of the first Psalm said after the verse, shall stand last, according to the rule laid down above. He is not to presume to join the choir of singers until he has made satisfaction, unless, indeed, the abbot, by his permission, allows him to do so; but even then on the condition that he shall afterward make satisfaction for his omission.



He who does not come to table before the verse, so that all may say it, and praying together sit down to table at the same time, must be corrected once or twice if this is through his own fault or bad habit. If he does not after this amend he is not to be allowed to share in the common table, but he is to be separated from the company of all the rest and eat alone. Until he makes satisfaction and mends his ways let his portion of wine be taken away from him. He is to undergo the same punishment who is not present at the verse which is said after meals. Let no one presume to take food or drink before or after the regular time; but if something is offered to anyone by the prior, and he refuse it, and afterward wishes to have what he had rejected, or some other thing, let him get neither this nor anything else until he makes proper satisfaction.

Chapter XLIV—How Those Who Are Excommunicated Are to Make Satisfaction

He who has been excluded from the oratory and the table for grievous offenses is to prostrate himself before the door of the oratory, in silence, at the time when the Divine Office is being celebrated; with his

face to the ground let him lie at the feet of all who leave the place. This he shall continue to do until the abbot shall judge that he has made satisfaction. Then, when the abbot ordains, let him cast himself first at the feet of the abbot and then at those of the brethren, that they may pray for him.

Afterward, if the abbot shall so direct, let him be received into the choir and into the place he shall appoint for him. Even so he may not presume to lead a psalm or to read a lesson, or to do anything else in the oratory, unless the abbot again orders it. Moreover, after each Hour, when the Divine Office is ended, let him cast himself on the ground in his place, and in this way make satisfaction until such time as the abbot tells him to stop. Those who are excluded from the table only shall make satisfaction in the oratory, as long as the abbot shall direct, and shall continue to do this until he blesses them and declares it to be sufficient.

Chapter XLV—On Those Who Blunder in the Oratory

If anyone, while reciting a psalm, responsory, antiphon, or lesson, makes any mistake, and does not at once make humble satisfaction for it before all, let



him be subjected to greater punishment, as being one who is unwilling to correct by humility what he has done amiss through negligence. For such a fault let children be whipped.

Chapter XLVI—Of Those Who Offend in Other Ways

If anyone while engaged in any work, either in the kitchen, in the cellar, in serving others, in the bakehouse, in the garden, or in any other occupation or place, shall do anything amiss, break or lose anything, or offend in any way whatsoever, and does not come at once to the abbot and community of his own accord to confess his offense and make satisfaction, if afterward it shall become known by another he shall be more severely punished. If, however, it be a secret sin let him reveal it only to the abbot, or to his spiritual seniors, who know how to heal their own wounds and not to disclose and make public those of others.

Chapter XLVII—On Letting the Hour of Divine Office Be Known

Let the duty of giving warning of the time of the Divine

Office, both night and day, be that of the abbot. Either he himself shall give the signal or he shall assign this task to some careful brother, so that all things be done at their fixed time. After the abbot those appointed are to lead the psalms and antiphons in turns. No one, however, shall presume either to sing or read except such as can do so to the edification of the hearers. Let him to whom the abbot shall enjoin this duty do it with humility, gravity, and fear.

Chapter XLVIII—Of Daily Manual Labor

Idleness is an enemy of the soul. Because this is so the brethren ought to be occupied at specified times in manual labor, and at other fixed hours in holy reading. We, therefore, think that both these may be arranged as follows: from Easter to the first of October, on coming out from Prime, let the brethren labor until about the fourth hour. From the fourth until close upon the sixth hour, let them occupy themselves in reading. On rising from table after the sixth hour let them rest on their beds in strict silence; but if anyone wishes to read, let him do so in such a way as not to disturb anyone else.

Let None be said somewhat before the time, about



the middle of the eighth hour, and after this all shall work at what they have to do until evening. If, however, the nature of the place or poverty requires them to labor at gathering in the harvest, let them not grieve at that, for then are they truly monks when they live by the labor of their hands, as our fathers and the apostles did. Let everything, however, be done with moderation for the sake of the faint-hearted.

From the first of October until the beginning of Lent let the brethren be occupied in reading until the end of the second hour. At that time Terce shall be said, after which they shall labor at the work enjoined to them until None. At the first signal for the Hour of None all shall cease to work, so as to be ready when the second signal is given. After their meal they shall be occupied with reading or the psalms.

On the days of Lent, from the morning until the end of the third hour, the brethren are to have time for reading, after which let them work at what is set them to do until the close of the tenth hour. During these Lenten days let each one have some book from the library which he shall read through carefully. These books are to be given out at the beginning of Lent.

It is very important that one or two seniors be appointed to go about the monastery at such times as

the brethren are free to read, in order to see that no one is slothful, given to idleness or foolish talking instead of reading, and so not only makes no profit himself but also distracts others. If any such be found (which God forbid) let him be corrected once or twice, and if he amend not let him be subjected to regular discipline of such a character that the rest may take warning. Moreover one brother shall not associate with another at unsuitable hours.

On Sunday also, all, save those who are assigned to various offices, shall have time for reading. If, however, anyone be so negligent and slothful as to be unwilling or unable to read or meditate, he must have some work given him, so as not to be idle. For weak brethren, or those of delicate constitutions, some work or craft shall be found to keep them from idleness, and yet not such as to crush them by heavy labor or to drive them away. The weakness of such brethren must be taken into consideration by the abbot.

Chapter XLIX—The Observance of Lent

The mode of a monk's life ought at all times to favor that of Lenten observance. Since few, however, are capable of this we exhort everyone in these days of Lent to guard their lives in all purity, and during this



holy season to wash away every negligence of other times. This we shall worthily accomplish if we restrain ourselves from every vice, and give ourselves to tearful prayer, to reading, to heartfelt sorrow, and to abstinence. In these days of Lent, therefore, let us of our own accord add something to our usual yoke of service, such as private prayer, or abstinence from food and drink. Let everyone of his own will with the joy of the Holy Spirit offer to God something above the allotted measure, that is, let him deny his body in food, drink, sleep, talking or laughter, and with spiritual joy await the holy feast of Easter. On this condition, however, that each one inform his abbot what it is that he is offering, for what is done without leave of the spiritual father will be reckoned presumptuous and vainglorious, and merit no reward. All things, therefore, must be done with the approval of the abbot.

Chapter L—Of the Brethren Who Work at a Distance from the Oratory or Are on a Journey

Those brethren who work at a distance and cannot come to the oratory at the appointed hours, and the

abbot judges that this is so, shall say the Divine Office where they are working, kneeling in the fear of God. In the same way, those who are sent on a journey shall not omit the customary hours, but keep them as best they may, and fail not to accomplish this duty of their service.

Chapter LI—Of Brethren Who Go Only a Short Distance

The brother who is sent on an errand and expects to return to his monastery the same day shall not presume to eat outside his house, even if he is asked to do so by anyone, unless he is so ordered by his abbot. If he does otherwise let him be excommunicated.

Chapter LII—Concerning the Oratory of the Monastery

Let the oratory be what its name signifies, and let nothing else be done or discussed there. When the “Work of God” is ended let all depart in strict silence, in reverence of God, so that the brother who wishes to pray privately may not be hindered by the misconduct of another. If any brother wishes to pray privately let him go into the oratory, without ostentation, and say



his prayers, not with a loud voice, but with tears and an earnest heart. Therefore, as has been said, no one is allowed to remain in the oratory after the Divine Office is ended, unless for the purpose of prayer, lest some other brother is hindered by him.

Chapter LIII—On the Reception of Guests

Let all guests who come be received as Christ would be, because he will say, "I was a stranger, and you took me in."¹⁸² And let appropriate honor be shown to all, especially to those who are of the servants of the faith, and to pilgrims. As soon, therefore, as a guest is announced let him be met by the prior or the brethren, with all marks of charity. And let them first pray together, so that they may associate in peace. The kiss of peace, however, is not to be given until after prayer, on account of the deceptions practiced by the devil. And in the salutation itself let true humility be shown to all guests coming and going. By bowed head, or body prostrate on the ground, all shall adore Christ in them, who, indeed, is received in their persons.

Let guests, after their reception, be conducted to prayer, and then the prior, or anyone he may order,

shall sit with them. Let the divine law be read in the presence of the guest for his edification, and after this let all courtesy be shown to him. For the guest's sake the prior may break his fast, unless it is a major day of fasting, when the fast may not be broken. The brethren, however, shall keep the accustomed fasts. Let the abbot pour water on the hands of the guests, and let him and all the community wash their feet. After this let them say the verse, "We have received your mercy, oh God, in the midst of your temple."¹⁸³ Let special care be taken of the poor and pilgrims, because in them Christ is more truly received, for the very awe of the rich secures respect for them.

Let the kitchen of the abbot and the guests be apart, so that strangers, who are never absent from a monastery, coming in at irregular hours, may not disturb the community. Let two of the brethren, who can perform their duties well, take charge of this kitchen for a year at a time. When they need it they shall be given assistance, so that they may serve without murmuring. In like manner, when they have lighter work, let them labor where they are told. And, indeed, not only in their regard, but also in respect to all the other officers of the monastery let this consideration always be given; when they need help let



them have it, and when, on the other hand, they are free they shall do what they are ordered. Also, let the charge of the guesthouse be assigned to a brother whose soul is possessed by the fear of God. A sufficient number of beds are to be prepared there, and let the house of God be wisely ruled by wise men.

No one, unless ordered, may associate with or speak to the guests. If any one shall meet or see them, after such humble salutation as we have above enjoined, having asked their blessing, let him pass on, saying he is not permitted to talk with any guest.

Chapter LIV—Whether a Monk May Receive Letters or Presents

It is by no means lawful, without the abbot's permission, for any monk to receive or give letters, presents, and gifts of any kind to anyone, whether parent or other, and not even to one of the brethren. If anything is sent to a monk from his parents he shall not venture to receive it unless the abbot is first told. If he orders it to be accepted he may appoint the person to whom it shall be given. And let not the brother, to whom perhaps it was sent, be grieved, lest an opening be given to the devil. He who shall dare to do

otherwise shall be subjected to regular discipline.

Chapter LV—Of the Clothes and Shoes of the Brethren

Let clothing suitable to the locality and the temperature be given to the brethren, for in cold regions more is needed, and less in warm. The determination of all these things is in the hands of the abbot. We believe, however, that in ordinary places it will be enough for each monk to have a cowl and tunic; in winter the cowl being of thicker stuff, in summer of finer or old cloth. He should have also a scapular for working purposes, and shoes and stockings for the feet.

Monks must not grumble at the color or coarseness of these things; they shall be such as can be procured in the district where they live, or such as can be bought at the cheapest price.

Let the abbot see to their dimensions, that they are not too short, but of the proper length for those who use them. When receiving new clothes the monks shall always give back the old ones at the same time, to be put away in the clothes-room for the poor. For it is sufficient that a monk have two tunics and two cowls,



both for night wear as well as for the convenience of washing. Anything beyond this is superfluous, and must be cut off. Their shoes also, and whatever is worn out, they shall return on getting new things. Those who are sent on a journey shall get hose from the wardrobe, which, on their return when washed, they shall restore. Let their cowls and tunics on such occasions be somewhat better than those in ordinary use. These they shall receive from the wardrobe when starting and restore on their return.

A mattress, blanket, coverlet, and pillow are to be sufficient for bedding. The beds shall be frequently searched by the abbot to guard against the vice of hoarding. And if anyone is found in possession of something not allowed by the abbot let him be subjected to the severest punishment. And to uproot this vice of appropriation let all that is necessary be furnished by the abbot, that is, cowl, tunic, shoes, stockings, girdle, knife, pen, needle, handkerchief, and tablets. By this every pretext of necessity will be taken away. The abbot, however, should always bear in mind that sentence in the Acts of the Apostles, "And distribution was made to everyone according to his need."¹⁸⁴ He should, therefore, consider the infirmities of such as need something, and not regard the ill will

of the envious. In all his decisions let him consider the retribution of God.

Chapter LVI—The Abbot's Table

The abbot shall always take his meals with the guests and strangers. But when there are few guests, he may invite any of the brethren he may choose. Let him see, however, that one or two of the seniors are always left with the community, for the sake of discipline.

Chapter LVII—Of the Craftsmen of the Monastery

Let such craftsmen as be in the monastery ply their trade in all lowliness of mind, if the abbot allow it. But if any are puffed up by his skill in his craft, and think the monastery indebted to him for it, such a one shall be shifted from his handicraft, and not attempt it again until such time as, having learned a low opinion of himself, the abbot shall bid him to resume. If anything of the fruit of their labors be sold let them that have the handling of the affair see to it that they do not dare to practice any fraud therein.

Let them remember Ananias and Saphira,¹⁸⁵ lest they, or any who practice any fraud in regard to the



possessions of the monastery, suffer the death of their souls as did they of their bodies. In setting the prices, however, do not let the vice of greed creep in, but let the things be sold somewhat cheaper than they can be by laymen, that in all things God may be glorified.

Chapter LVIII—The Manner of Receiving the Brethren

Anyone on first coming to the religious life should not find the entrance made easy, but as the apostle says, "Try the spirits, if they are of God."¹⁸⁶ If, however, the newcomer continues to knock, and for four or five days shows a patient bearing, both of the harshness shown him and of the difficulty made about admitting him, and persists in his petition he shall then be allowed to enter the guesthouse for a few days. After that let him be in the novitiate, where he shall meditate and eat and sleep.

And let a senior, such as has the skill of winning souls, be appointed to watch carefully over him, to discover whether he truly seeks God and is eager for the Divine Office, for obedience and humiliations. Let all the rigor and austerity of our journey to God be put clearly before him. If he promises to continue in a

steadfast perseverance, at the end of two months the entire rule shall be read to him, and let him be told, "See the law under which you wish to fight, if you can observe it enter into the life; if you cannot you are free to depart."

If he still perseveres let him be brought back to the novitiate and again tried in all patience. And after the passing of six months let the rule be read to him again, that he may fully know the kind of life he is entering into. If he still perseveres, after four months the rule shall be read to him once more. If after due deliberation he then promises to keep the whole law and to do whatever is commanded of him, let him be received into the community, knowing that he is now under the law of the rule, so that he can henceforth neither leave the monastery nor withdraw his neck from the yoke of the rule which after so long a deliberation he was free to have taken or refused.

When he is to be admitted into the community let him in the oratory, and in the presence of all, promise before God and his saints stability, amendment of manners and obedience, in order that if at any time he shall act otherwise he may know that he shall be condemned by him whom he mocks. He shall draw up the form of his promise in the name of the saints,



whose relics are reposing there, and of the abbot there present. Let him write out this form himself, or at least, if he is uneducated another at his request must write it for him, and to this the novice himself shall set his mark and with his own hand lay it upon the altar.

After he has placed it there, let the novice immediately begin the verse, "Uphold me, oh Lord, according to your word, and I shall live, and let me not be confounded in my expectation."¹⁸⁷ The community shall repeat this verse three times, adding at the end, "Glory be to the Father," etc. Then the brother novice shall cast himself at the feet of all, asking their prayers, and from that time he shall be counted as one of the community. If he has any property, he must first either give it to the poor, or by formal gift make it over to the monastery without any reservation for himself, since he must know that he has henceforth no power even over his own body. Let him, therefore, immediately be divested in the oratory of his own garments and be clothed in those of the monastery. The clothes he has taken off, however, are to be kept in the wardrobe, so that if (which God forbid) he resolves, by the persuasion of the devil, to leave the monastery, he may be stripped of his monastic dress and expelled. The form of profession which the abbot took from him at

the altar he shall not receive back, but it shall be kept in the monastery.

Chapter LIX—Of the Sons of Nobles or of the Poor Who Are Offered to God

If any nobleman shall offer his son to God in the monastery, let the parents, if the child himself is under age, make the petition for him, and together with the oblation wrap the formal promise and the hand of the boy in the altar cloth and thus dedicate him to God. With regard to any property let the parents promise in the document under oath that they will never either give or furnish him with the means of obtaining anything whatever, either themselves or by any other person or by any means. Or, if they will not do this, and desire to give some alms to the monastery, as a free gift, let them hand over to the place what they wish, reserving, if they please, the income for themselves. Let all these matters be so managed that the child have no expectations by which he may be deceived and perish (which God forbid), as by experience we have learned is sometimes the case. In the same way let those who are poorer act. But such as have nothing whatever shall simply make the promise



and offer their son before witnesses with the oblation.

Chapter LX—Of Priests Who Wish to Dwell in the Monastery

If anyone in the ranks of the priesthood asks to be received into the monastery let him not obtain permission too quickly. If, however, he persists in his request he shall understand that he will have to keep the rule in all rigor, and that no mitigation will be allowed to him, according to what is written, "Friend, for what have you come?" Nevertheless let him be allowed to stand next after the abbot, to give the blessing or to say Mass, provided the abbot orders him. If not, he may not presume to do anything, knowing that he is subject to the discipline of regular life, and is especially obliged to set an example of humility to all. If perhaps his position in the monastery is given him because of his orders, or for any other reason, he should remember that his proper place is what he has according to the time of his entry to the monastery, not that which is given to him out of respect for the priesthood. But if any clerics manifest the same desire to be admitted into the monastery let them be put into a middle rank, but only if they give

promise of observance of the rule and of their stability to it.

Chapter LXI—Of Monks Who Are Strangers, How They Are to Be Received

If any stranger monk, coming from a distant place, desires to dwell in the monastery as a guest and, content with the customs he finds there, does not trouble the house by superfluous wants, but is simply content with what he finds, let him be received for as long a time as he desires to remain. And if he reasonably and with loving humility blames something, or points out anything amiss, let the abbot prudently consider it, lest perhaps the Lord has sent him there for that purpose. If, also, after a time he wish to make his stay permanent, such a desire should not be refused, particularly since during the time he has lived as a guest his manner of life could be known.

If in that period he shall have been found troublesome or vicious, not only should he not be incorporated within the community, but he should even be told frankly to leave, lest others be corrupted by his ill doing. But if he does not deserve to be sent away, not only if he ask, shall he be received into the



ranks of the community, but he should even be induced to stay, that others may be taught by his example, because in every place we serve a common lord, and fight under the same king.

And if the abbot finds such a monk deserving he may even put him into a somewhat higher rank. And the abbot may raise above the rank of his entry into religion, not only any monk, but also any of the aforesaid priests or clerics, if he considers that their lives deserve it. Let the abbot, however, beware never to receive permanently any monk of a known monastery without the consent of his own abbot, or without letters of recommendation from him, for it is written, "What you will not have done to yourself, do not do to another."¹⁸⁸

Chapter LXII—The Priests of the Monastery

If any abbot desires to have a priest or deacon ordained let him choose from his monks one who is worthy to fill the office of priesthood. Let the monk, however, who is ordained beware of haughtiness and pride, and let him not presume to do anything except what is ordered by the abbot, remembering that he is

now much more subject to regular discipline. Let him not make his priesthood an excuse for forgetting obedience and the rigor of the rule, rather he should strive on account of it to draw more and more toward God.

He shall, moreover, always keep the place he had when he came to the monastery, except in his service at the altar, or if on account of the holiness of his life by the wish of the community and the will of the abbot, he is moved up to a higher place. Even then let him understand that he must keep the rules prescribed for him by the deans or provosts, and if he presumes to act otherwise he shall be judged not as a priest but as a rebel. If after frequent warnings he does not amend his ways, even the bishop shall be brought in to witness to the fact. And if after this he does not amend, and his faults become notorious, let him be expelled from the monastery, if his contempt is such that he will not submit and obey the rule.

Chapter LXIII—The Order of the Community

The brethren shall take their places according to the date of their conversion, the merit of their lives, or the



appointment of their abbot. And the abbot must not disturb the flock committed to him, nor, as it were, by any arbitrary use of his power, ordain anything unjustly. But let him always remember that he will have to render an account to God of all his judgments and of all his works.

Accordingly, in the order he shall appoint, or in that which they hold among themselves, let the brethren receive the Pax,¹⁸⁹ approach Communion, lead a psalm, and stand in choir. In all places, without exception, order shall not be decided by age, for this shall not be a prejudice to anyone, since Samuel and Daniel, though children, were judges of the priests.¹⁹⁰ With the exception, therefore, of those who, as we have said, for some weighty reason, the abbot advances, or for certain reasons puts in a lower place, let all the rest remain in the order of their conversion. For example, one who comes to the monastery at the second hour of the day shall know that he is junior to him who has come at the first hour, no matter what his age or dignity may be. In regard to children, let them be kept by all under discipline in every way.

Let the juniors, therefore, honor their seniors, and the seniors love the juniors. In addressing each other in person no one shall call another by his mere name,

but let the senior call the junior, Brother, and the junior call the senior, Father. But, because the abbot is held to take the place of Christ, he shall be called Sir and Abbot, not out of consideration for himself, but for the honor and love of Christ. He, however, should remember and so conduct himself in order to be worthy of such an honor.

Wherever the brethren meet each other, the junior shall ask a blessing from the senior. When a senior passes by let the junior rise and make a place for him to sit down; neither shall the junior presume to sit unless the senior bid him so to do, in order to fulfill what is written, "In honor preventing one another."¹⁹¹

Little children or adolescents shall keep their respective places in the oratory and at table, under discipline. Outside watch shall be kept over them, everywhere indeed, until they come to an age of understanding.

Chapter LXIV—The Election of the Abbot

In the election of an abbot let the following points be always borne in mind: that he is made abbot whom the whole community, in the fear of God, make a choice of, or a part of it, however small, acting with greater



wisdom. Let him who is made abbot be chosen because of his virtuous life and his wisdom, even if he is the last in the community. And if the whole community (which God forbid) shall unanimously choose one who supports them in their evil practices, and their vicious lives become known to the bishop (to whose diocese the monastery belongs), or to the abbots or Christians of the neighborhood, they shall annul the choice of these bad men and appoint a worthy steward of God's House, knowing that for this they shall receive a good reward, provided they do it with pure intention and through zeal for God, just as, on the other hand, they sin if they neglect to do it.

Let him who has been made abbot always reflect upon the weighty burden he has taken up and remember to whom he shall give an account of his stewardship. Let him know also that it is better for him to profit others than to rule over them. He must therefore be learned in the divine law that he may know when to "bring forth new things and old."¹⁹² He must be chaste, sober, merciful, and always exalt mercy above justice, that he may obtain mercy. He shall hate vice and love the brethren. Even in his correction he shall act with prudence and not try too much, lest while too violently scouring off the rust the

vessel itself is broken. Let him always bear in mind his own frailty, and remember that "the bruised reed must not be broken."¹⁹³

In saying this we do not propose that he should allow vices to spring up, but, as we have declared before, he should seek to root them out prudently and with charity, in the way he thinks proper in each case. Let him aim at being loved rather than feared. He must not be worried nor anxious, neither should he be too exacting or obstinate, or jealous, or oversuspicious, for then he will never be at rest. Even in what he orders, whether it relates to God or to worldly matters, let him be prudent and considerate. In all that he enjoins he should be discreet and moderate, meditating on the prudence of holy Jacob, who says, "If I shall cause my flocks to be overdriven, they will all die in one day."¹⁹⁴ Accordingly adopting these and like principles of discretion, the mother of virtues, let him so temper all things that the strong may have their scope and the weak are not scared. And especially let him keep the present rule in all things, so that when he has administered it well he may hear from our Lord what the good servant heard who gave corn to his fellow servants in due season: "Amen, I say to you, over all his goods will he place him."¹⁹⁵



Chapter LXV—The Provost of the Monastery

It often happens that by the appointment of a provost, grave scandals arise in monasteries. There are some who, puffed up by the evil spirit of pride, and esteeming themselves to be like abbots, take on themselves to act the tyrant, to foster scandals, and promote discord in the community. This is especially the case in places where the provost is appointed by the same priests or abbots who appoint the abbot of the monastery. How foolish this custom is may easily be seen. From the very beginning of the appointment a pretext for pride is given to the provost, since his imagination suggests to him that he is now released from the power of his abbot, for (as it seems to say) “You are appointed by those who created the abbot.” Hence arises envy, quarrels, detractions, rivalries, and disorders. And while the abbot and the provost are at variance it must of necessity follow that their souls are endangered by the quarrel, and that those under them, by taking sides, are going to destruction. The guilt of this danger chiefly weighs on those who were the authors of such appointments.

Therefore we anticipate that for the preservation

of peace and charity it is expedient that the ordering of his monastery depend on the will of the abbot. And, as we have indicated before, if it is possible, let all the work of the monastery be managed by deans, as we have directed, in order that where many are entrusted with the work no one may become proud.

But if the circumstances of the place require a provost, or the community shall with reason and humility ask for one, and the abbot thinks it is expedient, with the advice of the brethren who have the fear of God, let him nominate whomsoever he chooses himself as provost. Let this provost, moreover, reverently do whatever is enjoined him by his abbot, never acting against his will or directions, because the higher he is raised above the others the more careful he must be to keep the precepts of the rule. If this provost is found viciously inclined, or carried away by the haughtiness of pride, or a proven despiser of the holy rule, let him be warned four times; if he does not amend let him fall under the punishment of regular discipline. If even then he is not corrected he shall be deposed from his position of provost, and another who is worthy shall be put in his place. If after this he shall not be quiet and obedient in the community let him even be put out of the monastery. The abbot



nevertheless shall bear in mind that he will have to give an account of all his judgments to God, lest perhaps his soul burns with the flame of envy and jealousy.

Chapter LXVI—The Porter of the Monastery

Let there be stationed at the gate of the monastery some wise old man who knows how to give and receive an answer, and whose age will not allow him to wander from his post. This porter should have his cell near the door, that those who arrive may always find him there to give an answer.

As soon as anyone knocks, or some poor man calls for help, let him reply, "Thanks be to God," or invoke a blessing. And let him in the meekness of God's fear hurry to reply with zealous charity. If the porter is in need of help let him have a junior brother with him. The monastery, however, itself ought, if possible, to be so constructed as to contain within it all necessities, that is, water, mill, garden, and [places for] the various crafts which are exercised within a monastery, so that there is no occasion for monks to wander outside, since this is in no way expedient for their souls. We

wish this rule to be read frequently in the community so that no brother may plead ignorance as an excuse.

Chapter LXVII—Of Brethren Sent on a Journey

When brethren are about to be sent on a journey let them commend themselves to the prayers of all the brethren and of the abbot, and at the closing prayer of the Divine Office let a commemoration be made of all the absent brethren. When they come back from a journey, on the day of their return, at all the canonical hours when the Divine Office is finished, the brethren shall prostrate themselves on the ground and beg the prayers of all for any faults they may have fallen into on the road, by the sight or hearing of evil things, or by idle discourse. And let no one dare to relate to another what he has seen or heard outside the monastery, because this is most detrimental. If anyone shall presume to do this he must be subjected to the punishment prescribed in the rule. In like manner shall he be punished who presumes to break the enclosure of the monastery, or go anywhere, or do anything, however trifling, without the abbot's permission.



Chapter LXVIII—When a Brother Is Ordered to Do the Impossible

If anything hard or impossible is enjoined on a brother let him receive the injunctions of him who orders him in all mildness and obedience. If he sees that the burden altogether exceeds the measure of his strength let him patiently and at the proper time state, without show of pride, resistance, or contradiction, the reason of this impossibility. If after his suggestion the will of the prior still remains unchanged, let the young monk know that it is best for him; and trusting in God's help, through love of him, let him obey.

Chapter LXIX—That in the Monastery No One Presume to Defend Another

Special care must be taken that under no pretext should one monk presume to defend or uphold another in a monastery, even though they may be very close kin. In no way whatsoever let monks dare to do this, because from it an occasion of the gravest scandal may arise. If anyone shall transgress in this way he shall be severely punished.

Chapter LXX—That No One Presume to Strike Another

In the monastery every occasion of presumption should be avoided. We ordain that no one is allowed to excommunicate or strike any of his brethren unless the abbot has given him authority to do so. Those who offend in this matter shall be rebuked before all, that the rest may be inspired with fear. But over children, until they are fifteen years old, let all exercise strict discipline and care, yet this also must be done with moderation and discretion. He, however, who presumes to do so to those above this age, without the abbot's order, or is severe to children beyond discretion, shall be subjected to regular discipline, since it is written, "What you would not have done to yourself, do not do to another."¹⁹⁶

Chapter LXXI—That the Brethren Be Obedient to Each Other

The excellent virtue of obedience is to be shown by all, not to the abbot only, but to the brethren who shall also mutually obey each other, knowing that by this path of obedience they go to God. The commands of



the abbot, or other superiors constituted by him, having the first place (for to these we do not allow any private orders to be preferred) the juniors shall obey their seniors with all charity and diligence. If anyone be found contentious let him be punished.

If a brother is rebuked for even the least thing by the abbot, or by any prior (i.e., superior), or if he perceives that the mind of any superior is, however slightly, moved against him, or in anger with him, let him without delay prostrate himself at his feet, and remain offering satisfaction until the feeling is removed and he receives a blessing. If anyone is found too proud to do this let him be expelled from the monastery.

Chapter LXXII—Of the Good Zeal Monks Should Have

As there is an evil and bitter emulation which separates from God and leads to hell, so there is a good spirit of emulation which frees from vices and leads to God and life everlasting. Let monks, therefore, practice this emulation with the most fervent love; that is to say, let them “in honor prevent one another,”¹⁹⁷ let them bear most patiently with each other’s infirmities,

whether of body or of manner. Let them contend with one another in their obedience. Let no one follow what he thinks most profitable to himself, but rather what is best for another. Let them show brotherly charity with a chaste love. Let them fear God and love their abbot with sincere and humble affection, and set nothing whatsoever before Christ, who can bring us into eternal life.

Chapter LXXIII—That All Perfection Is Not Contained in This Rule

We have written this rule, so that, by its observance in monasteries, we may show that we have in some measure uprightness of manners or the beginning of religious life. But for such as hasten onward to the perfection of a holy life there are the teachings of the holy fathers, the observance of which leads a man to the heights of perfection. For what page or what passage of the divinely inspired books of the Old and the New Testament is not a most perfect rule for man’s life? Or what book is there of the holy catholic fathers that does not proclaim this, that by a direct course we may come to our creator? Also, what else are the *Collations* of the fathers, their *Institutes*, their *Lives*,



and the rule of our holy father St. Basil, but examples of the virtues, of the good living and obedience of monks? But to us who are slothful, and lead bad and negligent lives, they are matter for shame and confusion.

Do, therefore, whosoever you are who hastens forward to the heavenly country, accomplish first, by the help of Christ, this little rule written for beginners, and then at length shall you come, under God's guidance, to the lofty heights of doctrine and virtue, which we have spoken of above.

13. GREGORY THE GREAT

DIALOGUES

The book of *Dialogues* traditionally attributed to Pope Gregory the Great (589–604) spread the fame of Benedict across Europe and was one of the most important hagiographical texts (relating the life and miracles of a saint) of the Middle Ages. The second book, *A Life of Benedict of Nursia*, became a model for lives of monastic saints. In this text, the discussion between a master and his student describes Benedict's life and presents him as a model for ascetic devotional practices.

Source: Odo John Zimmerman (ed. and trans.), *Saint Gregory the Great, Dialogues* (New York: The Fathers of the Church, 1959), 55–110.

Further Reading: R. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge:

