Rule, Constitution and Directory

Monastic and Domestic

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity
at Little Portion Hermitage
350 CR 248
Berryville, AR 72616
(479) 253-7710
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Letter of Approval of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity as a Public Association of the Faithful

DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK
2415 North Tyler Street
P. O. Box 72228, Forest Park Station
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72217

Office of the Bishop

October 4, 1996

John Michael Talbot & Community
The Little Portion
Route 3, Box 608
Eureka Springs, AR 72632

Dear Friends in Christ:

The Feast of St. Francis of Assisi is significant in the life of our Church. Over and over, through our saints, the Lord is calling us to a life of innocence and simplicity. St. Francis is noted for these beautiful virtues.

For your Community, Brothers and Sisters of Charity, the Feast of St. Francis has special significance.

Because I wish to make the Feast even more memorable in 1996, I declare and decree that the Community is now a Public Association of the Faithful. The Canons which govern Public Associations are 312-320.

This declaration takes into account the letter of John Michael Talbot written to me August 27, 1996. It takes into account the canonical opinions given in the following letters:

The Reverend Gilles Bourdeau, O.F.M., General Procurator, Dated 12-9-95

The Reverend Alan McCoy, O.F.M., Dated 9-24-96

The Reverend Stephen E. Kain, O.F.M., Dated 9-21-96

Monsignor Craig A. Cox, J.C.D., Dated 9-20-96

Sister Elissa Rinere, C.P., J.C.D., Dated 9-19-96

I invoke God’s blessings upon the total Community.

Your friend,

+Bishop of Little Rock
DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK
2500 North Tyler Street • P.O. Box 7565 • Little Rock, Arkansas 72217 • (501) 664-0340 Fax (501) 664-8304

Office of the Bishop

November 21, 2011

To whom it may concern:

By means of this letter I would like to express my support for the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. This Public Association of the Faithful established by Bishop Andrew McDonald in 1996 has a monastic Motherhouse, The Little Portion Hermitage and Monastery, near Berryville, Arkansas. The community has a Monastic and a Domestic expression, and is led by its founders John Michael and Viola Talbot.

The members of the Monastic expression of the community at Little Portion live out their call to a deepening relationship with and in Jesus guided by sound monastic principles. They have complied readily with every request I have made of them and are in obedience to the Catholic Church. They live out this obedience in their worship and in everything else they do.

The members of the Domestic expression of the community live under the same Rule and Constitution in their home parishes and dioceses throughout the United States. I am confident that their activities as Brothers and Sisters of Charity are of great service in building up the Church wherever they reside. I support them in their efforts on behalf of the community and the Church.

If you have any questions about this community or its activities on your diocese please feel free to contact me at 2500 N. Tyler, Little Rock, AR 72207.

Sincerely in Christ,

[Signature]

+Anthony Taylor
Bishop of Little Rock
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Introduction

The Scripture Rule is a non-canonical, or non-legally binding, inspirational document. The Constitution is the primary canonical document of the community, and only addresses major and general points of community life. It can only be amended by a General Chapter.

The General Directory gets more specific concerning points of the Constitution. The Monastic and Domestic Directories address the individual aspects of our respective expressions of community life.

The General Directory, and the Monastic and Domestic Directories contain references (for example, “C 1-13”), which refer back to the previous documents. C stands for Constitution, and GD stands for General Directory.

Frequently, the specific document only makes full sense if read as a continuation of the more general reference using the included references.
A Scripture Rule
for the
Brothers and Sisters of Charity
at
Little Portion Hermitage

I The Rule

Gal. 6:14-15 The Rule of the brothers and sisters is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should be troubled about nothing except this all encompassing rule. All that matters is that one be created anew.

II The Call

Mt. 19:21 If you seek perfection, go sell all your possessions, and give to the poor. You will then have treasure in heaven. After that come back and follow Jesus.

Lk. 9:23 Whoever wishes to be His follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in Jesus' footsteps.

Mt. 19:29 Moreover, everyone who has given up home, brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children or property for my sake will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life.

Lk. 5:8-11 With Peter, we might well be sinful men, but do not be afraid. From now on you will be fishers of men. Let us leave everything and become His followers.
III The Life

Lk. 9:1-6  
Jesus calls us together and sends us forth to proclaim the reign of God and to heal the afflicted. Take nothing for your journey, neither walking staff nor traveling bag; no bread, no money. No one is to have two coats. Stay in whatever house you enter and proceed from there. When people will not receive you, leave that town and shake its dust from your feet as a testimony against them. Set out from village to village, spreading the good news everywhere and curing diseases.

IV The Community

Lk. 8:21  
My brothers are those who hear the word of God and act upon it ...

Lk. 14:21  
Go out quickly to the highways and byways of the town and bring in the poor and the crippled, the lame and the blind ...

1 Cor. 1:26  
Not many of you are wise, as men account wisdom; not many are influential; and surely not many are well born.

Mk. 10:29-30  
I give you my word, there is no one who has given up home, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children or property for me and for the Gospel who will not receive in this present age a hundred times as many homes, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, children and property—and persecution besides—and in the age to come, everlasting life.
V Communal Life

Acts 4:32  Let the community be of one heart and one mind. Never claim anything as your own, rather, hold everything in common.

Acts 2:42-47  We devote ourselves to the apostles’ instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Let a reverent fear overtake us all, for many signs and wonders are performed in our midst. We share all things in common, selling our property and goods, and dividing everything on the basis of each one’s need. We go to the temple area together every day, while in our homes we break bread. With exultant and sincere hearts we take our meals in common, praising God and winning the approval of all the people. Day by day the lord adds to our number those who are being saved.

I Cor. 12:4-7  There are different gifts but the same Spirit. There are different ministries but the same Lord. There are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

I Cor. 12:12  The body is one and has many members. But all the members, many though they are, are one body. And so it is with Christ.

I Cor. 12:27-31  You, then are the body of Christ. Everyone of you is a member of it. Furthermore, God has set up in the community first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracle workers, healers, assistants, administrators, and those who speak in tongues. Set your hearts on the greater gifts.
I Cor. 13:1-13 If I speak with human tongues and angelic as well, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries; if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger, neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure. Love never fails. Prophecies will cease, tongues will be silent, knowledge will pass away ... There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love.

Rom. 12:9-21 Your love must be sincere. Detest what is evil. Cling to what is good. Love one another with the affection of brothers. Anticipate each other in showing respect. Do not grow slack but be fervent in spirit. He whom you serve is the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient under trial, persevere in prayer. Look on the needs of the saints as your own. Be generous in offering hospitality. Bless your persecutors, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same attitude towards all. Put away ambitious thoughts and associate with those who are lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never repay injury with injury. See that your conduct is honorable in the eyes of all. If possible, live peaceably with everyone. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves.
Leave that to God's wrath. If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.

Col. 3:12-17

Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another. Forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect instruct and admonish one another. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns and inspired songs. Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through Him.

Phil. 2:1-4

In the name of the encouragement you owe me in Christ, in the name of the solace that love can give, of fellowship in spirit, compassion and pity, I beg you, make my joy complete in your unanimity possessing the one love, united in spirit and ideals. Never act out of rivalry or conceit. Rather, let all parties think humbly of others as superior to themselves, each of you looking to other's interests rather than to his own.

Eph. 4:1-6

I plead with you, then, as a prisoner for the Lord, to live a life worthy of the calling you have received, with perfect humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another lovingly. Make every effort to preserve the
unity which has the Spirit as its origin, and peace as its binding force. There is but one body and one Spirit, just as there is but one hope given all of you by your call. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is over all, and works through all, and is in all.

VI Prayer

Mt. 6:5-9 Whenever you pray, go to your room, close your door, and pray to your Father in private. In your prayer, do not rattle on like pagans. This is how you are to pray: “Our Father ...”

Mt. 7:7 Ask, and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you.

Mk 11:24 If you are ready to believe that you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer, it shall be done for you.

Mk. 11:25 When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive you.

Mt. 5:23-24 If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Mk 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it is still dark, get up, leave the house and go to a solitary place and pray...

Mk. 6:47 When evening comes, be alone...
Lk. 6:12 Go out into the hills to pray, and spend the night praying to God...

Lk. 5:16 Often withdraw to lonely places and pray.

Lk. 22:41 When you pray, stand, kneel, or fall with your faces to the ground.

1 Tim 2:8 In every place let us all offer prayers with blameless hands held aloft.

1 Thes. 5:16-20 Rejoice always, never cease praying, render constant thanks. Do not stifle the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies.

1 Cor. 14:39-40 Do not forbid those who speak in tongues.

Eph. 6:18 Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

Rom. 8:26-27 We do not know what we ought to pray for. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be expressed with words.

Lk. 11:13 The heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

Mt. 18:19-20 If two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatsoever, it shall be granted you by my Father in Heaven. Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in your midst.

Acts 1:14 Join together to devote yourselves to constant prayer...

Jas. 2:1-4 Sit as equals in the assembly...
Acts 2:1 Gather together in one place... Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Express yourselves in tongues and make bold proclamations as the Spirit prompts you.

Eph. 5:18-20 Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms, hymns and inspired songs. Sing praise to the Lord with all your hearts. Give thanks to God the Father always and for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I Cor. 11:20-31 When you assemble is it not to eat the Lord's Supper? I received from the Lord what I handed on to you, namely, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread and after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way after the supper he took the cup saying, “This is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink of this cup, do it in remembrance of me.” Every time that you eat this bread and drink of this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes! This means that whoever eats the bread or drinks of the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first. Only then should he eat of this bread and drink of this cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment of himself. This is why many among you are sick and infirm, and why so many are dying. If we were to examine ourselves, we would not be falling under judgment in this way.

Jas. 5:14-16 Ask for the leaders of the community. They in turn are to pray over those who are ill, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. This prayer uttered in faith will reclaim the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him
to health. If he has committed any sins, forgiveness will be his. Hence, declare your sins to one another, and pray for one another that you may find healing.

Heb. 10:25  We should not absent ourselves from the assembly, as some do, but encourage one another, and this all the more because you see that The Day draws near.

**VII Study**

Lk. 24:27, 44-46  Beginning then with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interprets for us every passage of scripture which refers to Him. Recall the words Jesus spoke when he was on this earth. Everything written about him in the law of Moses and prophets and psalms had to be fulfilled. He opens our minds to the understanding of scripture. It was written that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.

Jn. 14:16-17  Jesus will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you always, the Spirit of truth.

Jn. 16:13-14  When he comes, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but will speak only what he hears, and will announce to you the things to come. In doing this, he will give glory to Jesus, because he will have received from Jesus what he will announce to you.

Acts 2:42  We devote ourselves to the apostle's instruction.

Mt. 28:19-20  We are sent to make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to carry out everything Jesus commanded.
2 Tim. 3:10-17  We must follow closely the teaching and conduct of the apostles. We must remain faithful to what we have learned and believed, because we know who our teachers were. Likewise, we should know the sacred scriptures, the source of the wisdom which through faith in Jesus Christ leads to salvation. All scripture is inspired of God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and training in holiness so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work.

Heb 4:12  God's word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joint and marrow. It judges the reflections of the heart.

2 Pt. 1:20-21  There is no prophecy contained in scripture which is a personal interpretation. Prophecy has never been put forward by man's willing it. It is rather that men impelled by the Holy Spirit have spoken under God's influence.

Rom. 1:19-20  Likewise, since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God's eternal power and divinity have become visible, recognized through the things he has made. Whatever can be known about God is clear to us. He himself has made it so.

Heb. 12: 1-2  Let us consider the faith of the saints. Since we for our part are surrounded by this cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance of sin which clings to us and persevere in running the race which lies ahead. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith.

2 Tim. 2:15  Let us study to show ourselves approved.
Ps. 1:2 Let us meditate on the law of the Lord day and night.

VIII Penance

Mt. 4:17 Reform your lives! The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mt. 5:22-24 Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; and any man who uses abusive language toward his brother shall be answerable to the council, and if he holds him in contempt, he risks the fires of Gehenna. Be reconciled to your brother.

Mt. 5:28-30 Anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his thoughts. If your right eye is your trouble, gouge it out and throw it away! If your right hand is your trouble, cut it off and throw it away! Better to lose part of your body than to have it all cast into Gehenna.

Mt. 5:34-37 Do not swear at all. Say yes when you mean yes and no when you mean no. Anything beyond that is from the evil one.

Mt. 5:39-48 Offer no resistance to injury. When a person strikes you on the right cheek, turn and offer the other. If anyone wants to go to law over your shirt, hand him your coat as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him two miles.

Lk. 6:30-31 Give to the man who begs from you. When a man takes what is yours, do not demand it back.

Mt. 5:44 Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors.

Lk. 6:35-38 Love your enemy and do good for him. Lend without expecting repayment. Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and
you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Pardon, and you shall be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you.

Lk. 7:36-50 We are like the woman known to be a sinner, who went to Jesus while he was dining in a Pharisee's home. We should bring in a vase of perfumed oil and kneel behind him at his feet. We should wipe them with our hair, kissing them and perfuming them with oil. That is why our many sins are forgiven, because of our great love. Little is forgiven whose love is small.

Jn. 8:1-11 Even though we are caught in adultery, Jesus says, “I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

Lk. 18:9-14 Let us go to the temple to pray as the tax collector, rather than the Pharisee. The tax collector kept his distance, not even daring to raise his eyes to heaven. All he did was beat his breast and say, “Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” This man went home justified. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, while he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

Lk. 5:8-11 If we cry out only “Leave me, Lord. For I am a sinful man”, Jesus will say to us, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will be fishers of men.” With that we must bring the boats of our secular lifestyle to land, leaving everything to become his followers.

Rom. 12:1-2 And now, brothers, I beg you, through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect.
Rom. 13:11-14  It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith. The night is far spent. The day draws near. Let us cast off the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us live honorable as in daylight, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarreling and jealousy. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.

2 Tim. 1:6  Fan into a full flame the gift you have received.

I Cor. 3:10-13  Fire will test the quality of each man's work. Everyone must be careful how he builds. If different ones build with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw, the work of each will be made clear.

1 Pt. 2:1-5  So strip away everything vicious, everything deceitful; pretenses, jealousies and disparaging remarks of any kind. Come to him, a living stone, rejected by men, but approved nonetheless, and precious in God's eyes. You too are living stones, built as an edifice of spirit into a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Col. 3:1-10  Since you have been raised up in company with Jesus Christ, set your heart on what pertains to higher realms where Christ is seated at God's right hand. Be intent on things above, rather than on things of earth. After all, you have died! Your life is hidden now with Christ in God. Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires and that lust which is idolatry. These are sins which provoke God's wrath. You must put all that aside now; all anger and quick temper, malice and insults,
foul language. Stop lying to one another. What you
have done is put aside your old self with its past
deeds, and put on the new man, one who grows in
knowledge as he is formed anew in the image of his
Creator.

Eph. 4:22-31 You must lay aside your former way of life and the old
self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, and
acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. You must put
on the new man created in God's image, whose justice
and holiness are born of truth. Put an end to lying, let
everyone speak the truth to his neighbor, for we are
members of one another. If you are angry, let it be
without sin. The sun must not go down on your wrath.
Do not give the devil a chance to work on you. The
man who has been stealing must steal no longer;
rather, let him work with his hands at honest labor so
that he will have something to share with those in
need. Never let evil talk pass your lips. Say only the
good things men need to hear, things that will really
help them. Do nothing to sadden the Holy Spirit. Get
rid of all bitterness, all passion and anger, harsh
words, slander and malice of every kind.

Eph. 5:3-7 As for lewd conduct or promiscuousness or lust of any
sort, let them not even be mentioned among you. Your
holiness forbids this. Nor should there be any
obscene, silly or suggestive talk. All that is out of
place. Instead, give thanks! Make no mistake about
this: no fornicator, no unclean or lustful person—in
effect, an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom
of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with
worthless arguments. These are sins which bring
down God's wrath on the disobedient. Therefore have nothing to do with them.

Eph. 5:15-18 Keep careful watch over your conduct. Do not act like fools, but like thoughtful men. Make the most of the present opportunity, for these are evil days. Do not continue in ignorance but try to discern the will of the Lord. Avoid getting drunk on wine that leads to debauchery. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

1 Jn. 2:1-2 My little ones, I am writing this to keep you from sin. But if anyone should sin, we have in the presence of the Father, Jesus Christ, an intercessor who is just. He is an offering for our sins.

1 Jn. 1:9 If we acknowledge our sins, he who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins.

Jas. 5:16 Hence, confess your sins to one another.

Lk. 15:7 There will be more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to repent.

IX Poverty

Lk. 18:28-30 We have left all we own to become Jesus’ followers. There is no one who has left home or wife or brothers and sisters, parents or family for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive a plentiful return in this age and life everlasting in the age to come.

I Cor. 7:29-31 I tell you solemnly, the time is short. From now on, those with wives should live as though they had none. Those who weep should live as though they were not weeping; and those who rejoice as though they were
not rejoicing. Buyers should conduct themselves as though they owned nothing, and those who make use of the world as though they were not using it, for the world as we know it is passing away.

2 Cor. 8:9-15 You are well acquainted with the favor shown you by our Lord Jesus Christ, how for your sake he made himself poor though he was rich, so that you might become rich by his poverty. I am about to give you some advice on this matter of rich and poor: the relief of others ought not to impoverish you; there should be a certain equality. Your plenty at the present time should supply their need, so that their surplus may one day supply your need, with equality as the result. It is written, “He who gathered much had no excess, and he who gathered little had no lack.”

Lk. 14:27 Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Lk. 14:33 None of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions.

Lk. 16:13 You cannot give yourselves to God and to money.

Lk. 12:22-31 I warn you then, do not worry about your livelihood, what you are to eat or drink or use for clothing. Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. As for clothes, why be concerned? Learn a lesson from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work, they do not spin. Yet I assure you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was arrayed like one of these. Stop worrying then over questions like, what are we to eat or what are we to drink or what are we to wear? The unbelievers are always running after these
things. Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first His kingship over you, His way of holiness.

Phil. 3:7-8 Those things I used to consider as gain I have now reappraised as loss in the light of Christ. For his sake I have forfeited everything. I have accounted all else as rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth.

I Cor. 4:9, 13 God has put us at the end of the line. We have become the world's refuse, the scum of all; that is the present state of affairs.

Acts 4:32, 34-35 None of us can claim anything as our own, rather, everything is held in common. Nor is there anyone needy among us, for all who own houses or property sell them and donate the proceeds and lay them at the feet of the apostles to be distributed to everyone according to each one's need.

**X Chastity**

Mt. 5:27-28 You have heard the commandment, you shall not commit adultery. What I say to you is: anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his thought.

Mt. 19:12, 29 Some men have freely renounced sex for the sake of God's reign. Let him accept this teaching who can. Everyone who has given up home, wife or children or property for my sake will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life.

Mt. 20:16 Many who are first shall come last, and the last shall come first.
I Cor. 7:17-27  Each one of you should lead the life the Lord has assigned him, continuing as he was when the Lord called him. Are you bound to a wife? Then do not seek your freedom. Are you free of a wife? Then do not go in search of one.

1 Cor. 7:32-35  I should like you to be free of all worries. The unmarried man is busy with the Lord's affairs, concerned with pleasing the Lord. But the married man is busy with this world's demands and occupied with pleasing his wife. This means he is divided. I am going into this for your own good. I have no desire to place restrictions on you. To sum up: the man who marries acts fittingly; the one who does not will do better.

Heb. 13:4  Let marriage be honored in every way and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.

**XI Obedience**

1 Sam. 15:22  Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice.

Mt. 12:50  Jesus says, “If anyone loves me he will obey my teaching. Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is brother and sister and mother to me.”

Jn. 15:10  “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.”

Heb. 5:8-9  Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and when perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.
1 Pt. 5:5 You younger men must be obedient to your elders.

Rom. 13:1-5 Let everyone obey the authorities that are over him, for there is no authority except from God, and all authority that exists is established by God. As a consequence, the man who opposes authority rebels against the ordinance of God. You must obey them not only to escape punishment, but also for conscience's sake.

Heb. 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over you as men who must render an account. So act so that they may fulfill their task with joy, not with sorrow, for that would be harmful to you.

Mt. 23:1-3 Even in the case where a leader is a scribe or a Pharisee, Jesus says, “The scribes and the Pharisees have succeeded Moses as teachers. Therefore, do everything and observe everything they tell you, but do not follow their example.”

XII The Leader

Lk. 14:8-11 When you have been invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when Jesus approaches, he will say, “My friend, come up higher.” This will win you esteem from your brothers. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

Mt. 18:3-5 Unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of God. Whoever makes himself lowly, becoming like a child, is of greatest importance in the community.

Mt. 10:1 Jesus summons his apostles and gives them authority.
Acts 1:21  It is entirely fitting that one who was of our company from the beginning be named... Oh Lord, make known to us which of those you choose for apostolic ministry.

Mt. 20:25-26  Earthly kings lord it over their people. It cannot be that way with you. Let the greater among you be as the junior, the leader as the servant.

Acts 14:23  In each community, those with apostolic authority install elders and, with prayer and fasting, commend them to the Lord in whom they put their faith.

Eph. 4:11-12  It is he who gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in roles of service for the faithful to build up the body of Christ.

1 Pt. 5:1-4  To the elders: God's flock is in your midst. Give it a shepherd's care. Watch over it willingly as God would have you do, not under constraints, and not for shameful profit either, but generously. Be examples to the flock, not lording it over those assigned to you, so that when the chief shepherd appears, you will win for yourselves the unfading crown of glory.

1 Tim. 3:2-7  An elder must be irreproachable, of even temper, self-controlled, modest and hospitable. He should be a good teacher. He must not be addicted to drink. He ought not be contentious, but rather, gentle, a man of peace. Nor can he be someone who loves money. He must be a good manager of his own affairs, for if a man does not know how to manage his own affairs, how can he take care of the family of God? He should not be a new convert, lest he become conceited and thus incur the punishment once meted out to the devil. He must also be well thought of outside the
community, to ensure that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap.

XIII Correction

Mt. 18:15-17 If your brother should commit some wrong against you, go and point out his fault, but keep it between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. If he does not listen, summon another, so that every case may stand on the word of two or three witnesses. If he ignores even the community, then treat him as you would an outsider.

Lk. 17:3-4 If your brother does wrong, correct him. If he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times a day, and seven times turns back and says “I am sorry,” forgive him.

1 Cor. 5:11-13 But do not associate with anyone who bears the title "brother" if he is immoral, covetous, an idolater, an abusive person, a drunkard or a thief. Is it not those inside the community you must judge? God will judge others. Expel the wicked man from your midst.

2 Cor. 2:6-8 Yet, the punishment inflicted by the majority on such a one is enough. You should later relent and support him so that he may not be crushed by too great a weight of sorrow. Reaffirm your love for him.

Titus 3:10 Warn a heretic or a derisive member once and then a second time; after that, have nothing to do with him.
XIV Candidates

Jn. 1:35-39 When Jesus noticed the first disciples following him, he asked them, “What are you looking for?” They said, “Teacher, where do you stay?” “Come and see,” he answered. So they went to see where he was lodged, and stayed with him that day.

Jn. 6:60-70 After hearing his words, many of his disciples remarked, “This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?” From this time on, many of his disciples broke away and would not remain in his company any longer. Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to leave me, too?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Jesus replied, “Did I not choose the twelve of you myself? Yet one of you is a devil.”

Mt. 22:9-14 You must go out into the byroads and invite to the wedding anyone you come upon. Yet the invited are many, the elect are few. Many are called, few are chosen.

1 Tim. 3:8-10 Candidates must be serious, straightforward and truthful. They may not overindulge in drink or give in to greed. They must hold fast to the divinely revealed faith with a clear conscience. They should be put on probation first. Then, if there is nothing against them, they may be accepted as members.

XV Commitment

Jn. 3:22 Jesus and his disciples came into Judean territory, and he spent time with them baptizing.
Jn. 4:1-2  (In fact, however, it was not Jesus himself who baptized, but his disciples.)

Acts 2:41  Those who accepted the disciples' message were baptized.

Acts 10:47  What can stop these people who have received the Holy Spirit from being baptized?

Rom. 6:3-4, 8-11  All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have clothed ourselves with him. Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death, we were buried with him, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have died with Christ, we believe that we are also to live with him. In the same way, you must consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

Col. 3:1-3  Set your heart on what pertains to higher realms. Be intent on things above rather than on things of earth. After all, you have died!

Phil. 1:21  For us, life means Christ.

2 Cor. 5:6-9  We know that while we dwell in the body we are away from the Lord. We would much rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. This being so, we make it our aim to please him whether we are with him or away from him.

2 Cor. 5:17  If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away. Now, all is new!

Lk. 1:15-17, 31-32  Like John the Baptist and Jesus, we have been set apart to be filled with the Spirit from our mother's
womb.

1 Sam. 1:22 With Samuel we will appear before the Lord to remain in the Lord's service forever. We are offered with a perpetual vow.

XVI Food

Lk. 10:7-9 Stay in a house eating and drinking what they have, for the laborer is worth his wage. Eat whatever they set before you and cure the sick there.

Acts 10:9-15 Peter went up to the roof to pray. He became hungry and asked for some food, and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open and an object come down that looked like a big canvas. Inside it were all the earth's four-legged creatures and reptiles and birds of the sky. A voice said to him, “Get up, Peter! Slaughter, then eat.” He answered, “Sir, it is unthinkable! I have never eaten anything unclean or impure in my life.” The voice was heard a second time, “What God has purified you are not to call unclean.”

Rom. 14:14-19 I know with certainty on the authority of the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. It is only when a man thinks something unclean that it becomes so for him. You must not let the food you eat bring to ruin him for whom Christ died. The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking, but of justice, peace and the joy given by the Holy Spirit. Let us then, make it our aim to work for peace and to strengthen one another.

1 Cor. 9:19-22 Although we are not bound to anyone, we make ourselves the slaves of all so as to win as many as
possible. We become a Jew to the Jews in order to win the Jews. To those bound to the law we become like those who are bound, that we might win those bound by the law. We have made ourselves all things to all men in order to save at least some of them.

1 Tim. 4:4-5 Everything God created is good. Nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by God's word and prayer.

Lk. 5:33-35 The disciples do not seem to fast. On the contrary, they eat and drink freely. Can you make guests of the groom fast while the groom is still with them? But when the days come that the groom is removed from their midst, they will surely fast in those days.

Mt. 6:16-18 When you fast, see to it that you groom your hair and wash your face. In that way no one can see that you are fasting, but your Father, who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

Mt. 4:1-2 We should be led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. During that time we fast for forty days and forty nights.

XVII Clothing

Mk. 6:8-9 Take nothing for your journey but a walking stick—no food, no traveling bag, not a coin in the purses in your belts. You are, however, to wear sandals. Do not bring a second tunic.

Lk. 22:35 When I sent you on a mission without purse or traveling bag or sandals, were you in need of anything? “Not a thing,” they replied.
Lk. 12:27-28 Learn from the lilies. They do not spin, they do not weave. But I tell you, Solomon in all his splendor was not arrayed like any one of these. If God clothes in such splendor the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown on the fire tomorrow, how much more will he provide for you, oh weak in faith!

1 Pt. 3:3-4 The affections of an elaborate hairdress, the wearing of golden jewelry or the donning of rich robes is not for you. Your adornment is rather the hidden character of the heart, expressed in the unfading beauty of a calm and gentle disposition. This is precious in God's eyes.

Mt. 23:2-6 Beware of the scribes who like to parade around in their robes, and love marks of respect in public, front seats in synagogues and places of honor at banquets. Everything they do is to attract attention. They widen their garments and wear huge tassels. Yet as penitents we should clothe ourselves in sackcloth.

2 Kngs. 1:8 As prophets we wear “a hairy garment with a leather belt.” As those vowed to the Lord's service, we separate ourselves from the world for the sake of the world.

1 Cor. 4:11 So, up to this hour we go hungry and thirsty, poorly clad, roughly treated, wandering about homeless.

Heb. 11:37-38 We go about garbed in the skins of sheep or goats, needy and afflicted. We wander about in deserts and on mountains. We dwell in caves and in holes of the earth.

Mt. 3:4 Like John, we are clothed in a garment of camel's hair, and wear a leather belt around our waist.
1 Tim. 6:7-8 We brought nothing into this world, nor have we the power to take anything out of it. If we have food and clothing, we have all that we need.

**XVIII Shelter**

Lk. 2:7 Even at Jesus' birth, Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the place where travelers lodged.

Lk. 9:58 During Jesus' ministry he said, “the foxes have lairs, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

Lk. 9:4-6 He tells us, “stay at whatever house you enter and proceed from there. When people will not receive you, leave that town. So set out from village to village, spreading the good news everywhere and curing diseases.”

Lk. 10:5-7 On entering any house, first say, “Peace to this house.” Stay in the one house eating and drinking what they have. Do not move from house to house.

1 Cor. 4:9-11 God has put us at the end of the line. We are fools on Christ's account. Up to this very hour we go hungry, poorly clad, wandering about homeless.

Heb. 11:38 We wander about in deserts and on mountains, we dwell in caves and in holes of the earth.

Heb 11:13-16 By acknowledging ourselves to be strangers, we show we are seeking a heavenly homeland.

1 Pt. 2:11 Beloved, we are pilgrims and strangers in exile, hence I urge you not to indulge your carnal desire.
Heb. 12:22-24  Now we have drawn near to Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to myriads of angels in festal gathering, to the assembly of the first-born enrolled in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of the just men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant.

Mt. 4:1-2  With Jesus we are conducted by the Spirit into the desert for forty days.

Mt. 4:23  Then we tour all of the area, teaching in the churches, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom.

Lk. 5:16  We often retire to deserted places to pray.

Lk. 6:12  We go out to the mountain to pray, spending the night in communion with God.

Lk. 8:1  After this we journey through towns and villages preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.

Lk. 9:28  We go together up into a mountain to pray to see Jesus transfigured.

Lk. 10:38-42  Accept the hospitality of Martha and Mary in Jerusalem.

Lk. 22:39-44  Then go out and make your way, as is the custom of Jesus, to the Mount of Olives, your brothers accompanying you. Withdraw from them about a stone’s throw, then go down on your knees and pray. Be strengthened by angels. In anguish pray with great intensity, and your sweat will become like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Lk. 22:54, 66  Then be led to the house of the high priest and be brought before the council.
Lk. 23:1 Then be led before Pilate.

Lk. 23:26-56 After that prepare yourself to walk the way of the cross to be crucified and laid in another's tomb.

Lk. 24:1-6 From there you will rise...

Jn. 14:2-3 And go to the dwelling place prepared for us by Jesus in his Father's house, where there are many mansions.

**XIX Ministry**

Mt. 9:37-38 The harvest is great but the laborers are few. Beg the harvest master to send out laborers to gather his harvest.

Mt. 10:1, 5-8 Jesus summons us and gives us authority to expel unclean spirits and to cure sickness and disease of every kind. Jesus sends us on a mission after giving us the following instructions: Do not visit 'pagan' territory and do not enter a 'Samaritan' town. Go instead after the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel'. As you go, make this announcement: "The reign of God is at hand!" Cure the sick, raise the dead, heal the lepers, expel demons. The gift you have received, give as a gift.

Lk. 10:1 He sends us out in pairs before him to every town and place he intends to visit.

Mt. 28:19-20 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, yes, even until the end of the world!
Rom. 10:13-15  Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe unless they have heard of him? And how can they hear unless there is someone to preach? And how can men preach unless they are sent?

Gal. 1:11–2:9  The Gospel we proclaim is no mere human invention. We did not receive it from any man, nor were we schooled in it. It comes by revelation from Jesus Christ. Without seeking human advisors or even going to "Jerusalem" to see those who were pillars or apostles before us, we went off into solitude, or "Arabia". Prompted by revelation, we later must go up to Jerusalem and lay out for scrutiny the Gospel as we present it, all this in private conference with the leaders, to make sure the course we are pursuing, or have pursued, is not useless. Those who are acknowledged successors to the apostles must give us the right hand of fellowship, if we are to continue in ministry.

1 Cor. 12:4-11  There are different ministries but the same Lord. To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge. Through the Spirit one receives faith. By the same Spirit another is given the gift of healing, and still another miraculous powers. Prophecy is given to one, to another power to distinguish one spirit from another. One receives the gift of tongues, another that of interpreting tongues. But it is one and the same Spirit who provides all these gifts, distributing them to each as he wills.

2 Tim. 1:6-7  Stir into flame the gift of God bestowed when hands were laid on you. The Spirit that God has given us is
no cowardly spirit, but rather one that makes us strong, loving and wise.

2 Tim. 2:2 The things you have heard through the apostles, you must hand on to trustworthy men who will be able to teach others.

2 Tim. 2:14 Keep reminding people of the Gospel and charge them before God to stop disputing about mere words.

2 Tim. 2:16 Avoid worldly, idle talk, for those who indulge in it become more and more godless.

2 Tim. 2:23-25 Have nothing to do with senseless, ignorant disputations. As you well know, they only breed quarrels, and the servant of God must not be quarrelsome, but must be kindly toward all. He must be an apt teacher, patiently and gently correcting those who contradict him.

2 Tim. 4:2 I charge you to preach the word, to stay with this task whether convenient or inconvenient, correcting, reproving, appealing, constantly teaching and never losing patience.

Lk. 14:12-14 Whenever you give a lunch or dinner, invite beggars and the crippled, the lame and the blind. You should be pleased that they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just.

Mt. 25:35-40 Jesus was hungry and you gave him food, he was thirsty and you gave him drink. He was a stranger and you welcomed him, naked and you clothed him. He was ill and you comforted him, in prison and you came to visit him. As often as you did it for the least of his little ones, you did it for Jesus.
Lk. 7:22-23 The blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them. Blest is the man who finds no stumbling block in Christ through our ministry
Constitution
of the
Brothers and Sisters of Charity
at
Little Portion Hermitage

Chapter 1: Basic Principles and Visions

1. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity is a Catholic community of singles, celibates, and families called as a monastic and domestic spiritual family into deep love relationships with, and in, Jesus Christ. We also include non-Catholic participants in a way that respects and insures the integrity of the religious beliefs and freedom of all according to the norms of the Catholic Church. Jesus is our primary example; the Scripture is our primary rule; our primary law is love.

2. The primary charism of this community is love. In order for this divine love to avoid being only misdirected, human emotion, it is guided by divine truth which comes to us from God through the church.

3. This life of love and truth is formed and fostered through a balanced life of prayer and study, which overflows into apostolic service.

4. The primary expression of this charism of love is integration. Guided by official Catholic teachings on ecumenism and interfaith relations, we integrate all religions from a uniquely Christian base, all Christian faiths from a uniquely Catholic base, and all religious and monastic traditions from a uniquely Franciscan base.
Franciscanism is our mother, but we are a child born from this heritage that is unique and new.

5. On other levels, we integrate the charismatic and contemplative spiritualities, socio-eremitical solitude and cenobitical community, and a primary call to contemplative community with a mandate from the gospel to the apostolic action of the evangelical life.

6. We also integrate our specific and unique call to live in the single, celibate, or married, the clerical or lay states, with the monastic or domestic expressions both locally and internationally. As such, we build on the monastic tradition, which looks towards the future as a microcosm of the entire community of faith.

7. The community is composed of a monastic and domestic expression. Its base and center is monastic. The full monastic expression is integrated. The integrated monastic motherhouse of the entire community is the Little Portion Hermitage 350 CR 248, Berryville AR, USA, in the Diocese of Little Rock.

8. The monastic expression consists of single, celibate, and family members, who live in a monastic setting patterned after the classical socio-eremitical skete or laura, or the house of prayer of the kellion. The domestic expression generally live in their own homes in less externally intense manifestations of intentional community.

9. While recognizing the goodness of all creation and humankind, the lifestyle of the community is intentionally counter-cultural. We are an alternative society living within and alongside of modern society. We are also an expression of renewal and reform within the church.

10. This incarnational and counter-cultural life is realized by embracing the three evangelical counsels according to one's own state of life. We embrace the poverty of Jesus in the midst of modern
materialism and consumerism. We embrace gospel chastity in the midst of modern sexual promiscuity. We embrace gospel obedience in the context of church and community in the midst of modern individualism.

11. We also embrace the ancient commitments of stability and conversion of manners from western monasticism. We seek to bring stability to the instability of our transient world, and true conversion of our whole life to a world that so desperately needs to turn to God.

12. We do all of this by simply seeking to live the evangelical and gospel life of Christ and his apostles, which integrates harmoniously seeming opposites into a manifest and living whole.

13. In light of the gospel admonitions to go and teach all the nations, the scope of the community is immediately international. By its nature the community is free to make foundations and to carry out ministries in any diocese where it is made welcome by local bishops or other competent church authority.

Chapter 2: Communal Life

14. As the name Brothers and Sisters of Charity implies, we are a spiritual family, bound in the love of Jesus Christ. As a true spiritual family in Christ, the community is incarnationally guided by the leadership of a Spiritual Father and a Spiritual Mother, who act as spiritual parents and whose job it is to develop attitudes and relationships of interdependence, rather than codependency or independency, within the community.

15. Both expressions of community, monastic, and domestic, exist under their own leadership and Particular Directory, but are united by one Scripture Rule, this Constitution, and one General Leadership.
16. This attitude of family relationship reaches out to all branches of the Franciscan family tree, to all religious and monastic communities, to the entire church, and to all of creation, human and non-human, animate and inanimate.

17. We are always to be united with the church Jesus founded. The Franciscan tradition, moreover, binds us to a special reverence for the pope, and complete obedience to him. According to our monastic traditions, let us show respect for each individual bishop as the successor of the apostles. Likewise, as was the desire and example of St. Francis, we give due respect to all priests, deacons, and religious. We likewise show respect for all the various ecclesial communities which call upon Jesus as Lord. We show respect to all the people of God as members of Christ's body, all people on earth as created in God's image, and all creation as bearing traces of God. We try to bring the unity of Jesus Christ to and with all.

Chapter 3: Prayer

18. Our monastic base inspires us to seek “God alone.” The most important task of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is to prayerfully worship God. Our approach to prayer embodies an integration of many spiritual traditions. Inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, we seek not so much to pray, as to become a prayer.

19. Eucharist
Essential to all of our devotions is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist daily, if possible. When a priest is not available, we receive during communion services presided over by a deacon or extraordinary minister.

20. Divine Office
After the example of St. Benedict, nothing is to be preferred to the work of God. The Liturgy of the Hours is a school of continual
prayer and a priceless component in the monastic way of life. After the example of the entire monastic and Franciscan heritage, the community prays the Liturgy of the Hours in common daily, wherever the brothers and sisters live together, or wherever they come together. Ordinarily the preferable place for this is a church or oratory. Upon communal discernment, the formal liturgical office may be substituted by a totally spontaneous common prayer and for various periods of time. However, let the preeminence of the Divine Office always be preserved and practiced.

21. **Charismatic**
In the common prayer of the community, we are open to expressions of the Holy Spirit as found in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. In this freedom to move in the Holy Spirit, let reason and reverence be safeguarded through grace and discernment on the part of both the community and leadership.

22. **Devotions**
In our devotions we give special attention to those reflecting on the mysteries of the life of Christ and His Blessed Mother. We also honor the saints who are given to us as examples of the following of Christ. All devotions are guided by the wisdom of the Scriptures and the magisterium of the church.

23. **Contemplation**
The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are helped toward the stage of contemplation through teaching and practice.

a. *Teaching*: the writings of the mystics of the church, especially those of the Franciscan and monastic tradition, are to be used as often as possible.

b. *Practice*: Both private and communal times of retreat in solitude and silence are provided.
24. The ancient monastic custom of Lectio Divina, or sacred reading, which leads on to meditation and contemplation, is emphasized as well as the Jesus Prayer of the Hesychast, or silent and still, tradition of the Christian monks of the East. The later division of the Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive stages along with the various active and passive dark nights of the senses, soul, and spirit are also helpful. But each individual is free to engage in the approach best suited for him or her. The modern integration of Christian Breath Prayer, as taught by the founder, is also encouraged with the help of good spiritual direction from within or without the community.

Chapter 4: Life of Penance

25. We are called to live a life of daily self-denial and continuing conversion, so that others might turn daily to the comfort of the Spirit of Christ in their lives. The brothers and sisters fast according to the laws of the church and monastic tradition. Furthermore, all who are able are encouraged to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Chapter 5: Formation

26. Both initial and ongoing formation of the community are centered on a balanced understanding of sacred Scripture and authentic church teachings, with a special emphasis on our religious, monastic, and Franciscan heritage. Candidates are introduced into a prayer life in the overall tradition of the church. We also study both the writings and the oral teachings of the founder and foundress. All members are expected to spend some time each day in both religious and secular study.
Chapter 6: Apostolic Service

27. The most basic apostolate of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is to simply live the Gospel with a humble and joyful heart. This is the ministry of presence.

28. The most apparent manifestation of this ministry of presence is the itinerant ministry based on the total poverty and availability of Matthew 10 and 19. Due to the non-institutionalized character of this ministry, it is more manifestly true to the existential wind of the Spirit from day to day.

29. There are also more stabilized ministries which need some planning and institutional organization at both the community and at places to which we go. Due to the need for money to maintain these ministries, they are patterned on the common life of Acts 2 and 4. According to circumstances, these two patterns might be combined to greater or lesser degrees to more effectively meet the needs of a particular area.

30. Specifically, we try to live out in a more intense way the magisterial teaching of the church as a way of life. This includes every aspect of basic life: the ways in which we pray, study, evangelize, and work.

31. The Divine Office is a way to publicly embody in the monastery, the domestic family and itinerant ministry teams the official prayer of the church and to manifest and offer it to all.

32. We study the teaching of Christ through the church so to more radically live the gospel, and so go out to preach to all through example and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

33. We support ourselves in the basic needs of the community in ways sensitive to the socio-economic and ecological issues of our time and so preach by embodying the teaching of the church as an alternative society within society.
34. Our ministry teams go forth to evangelize in diocesan and parish churches through leading musical worship, teaching, preaching, giving witness, and through humble service in even the most menial tasks.

35. **Authority**
The leadership of the community discerns all formal ministries of the community. In our apostolic work, we are obedient to proper church authority. We recognize the authority of the Bishop of Rome and of all bishops with whom we work. Likewise, we recognize all priests and deacons as those to whom ministerial faculties have been granted by the bishops. Furthermore, when ministering in a non-Catholic church or parish, we recognize and respect the legitimate and appropriate authority of each ecclesial community's leadership.

36. The monastic members who are ordained do not ordinarily take on institutional responsibility outside of the direct institutional outreaches of the community.

37. **Period of Ministry**
The community seeks a peaceful and evangelical balance between prayer and activity, yet the primacy of prayer is always recognized and protected. The rhythm of the Spirit leads us from prayer into action, and from action back into prayer.

**Chapter 7: Poverty**

38. The brothers and sisters work to be as free as possible from the cares of the world, so that their hearts may be fixed only on heaven. They embody the three New Testament models of poverty according to the various states of life and particular expressions of community found within their overall community.

39. The first Scriptural model is found in Matthew 10 and 19, which describes the itinerant life of Jesus and the apostles. We live out
this model when we embark on our itinerant ministry. We carry only the bare essentials of life on our backs, heading out on foot from place to place, not knowing where we will rest our heads, what we will eat, or where we will minister from day to day.

40. The second Scriptural model is found in Acts 2 and 4, describing the common life of the first Christian church in Jerusalem. The celibate brotherhood and sisterhood observe this expression of Gospel poverty. The individual brothers and sisters renounce all claims to personal possessions, but the respective expression of community may own property and possessions in common. However, the whole community is bound to solidarity with the world's poor and to a lifestyle that is truly simple. For the individual of the community, this life of strict renunciation of individual ownership and strict poverty is entered into gradually, according to the particular directory of the celibate brotherhood and celibate sisterhood, respectively.

41. The third Scriptural model of poverty is found in 2 Corinthians 8, where Paul describes the more domestic approach to Christian living. In this expression, the individual and families may retain private property, but they are called to share that property with their brothers and sisters in Christ, according to the particular directory of their particular expression of community.

42. **Community Goods**
   In the spirit of St. Francis, we seek to be poor and simple in all personal and community goods. After the example of St. Benedict, we treat all community goods with the same respect we show the vessels of the altar.

43. **Food**
   In the spirit of environmental and ecological sensitivity, we also do our best to produce and serve only good, healthy food at our table. Whenever possible, we acquire food from simple gardens,
maintained by our own hands, or from low-priced markets easily accessible. Also, according to the particular directory and suitable to local conditions, we are not ashamed to go to the table of the Lord as mendicant beggars.

44. **Clothing**
   We are called to dress ourselves simply and humbly as a sign and symbol of Gospel poverty in the midst of a materialistic world. The brothers and sisters wear the habit of their own expression, according to their particular directory.

45. **Shelter**
   We use forms of shelter that are both economically and energy efficient. We also investigate alternative forms of energy production proper to our culture and time.

**Chapter 8: Chastity**

46. For the celibate, the vow of chastity calls us to give up our right to marry and parent children in order to more fully espouse Christ alone. For the married brother or sister, the covenant of chastity calls us to enter fully into the sacrament of matrimony, which in a most perfect way manifests incarnationally the mystery of the love union between the church who is the bride of Christ, and the groom who is Christ Jesus himself.

**Chapter 9: Obedience**

47. In our covenant of obedience, we are primarily called to obey God. We also obey God in the mediated authority He has established on earth through the church, and the ministers and leadership of the community. We also do well to obey the civil authorities whenever their law does not conflict with the law of God and the church. Ministers strive to create relationships and atmospheres where open dialogue is fostered.
48. Obedience is a direct outgrowth of humility, and humility is a direct outgrowth of the realization of the truth of the interdependence of the entire created world and the love which comes from God. Therefore, all obediences are to build healthy relationships of interdependence.

49. In our relationships of obedience, we recognize a hierarchy of priorities between the various social bodies of community that exist within the Christian faith. Our first priority is God; next is the Church Catholic, which includes every aspect of our life. After God, and the Church, comes the nuclear family, which is the most primary and natural expression of community in a person’s life. Next comes the support group, which in this case is the community of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, followed by any other para-church organizations. After that comes the local parish in which the individual and the community actively participate in support. Lastly comes the whole world with which the whole church, including our community, shares the good news of Jesus Christ through work and word.

50. Within the specific community of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity the covenant of obedience will be lived out in various ways, according to the various states of life, each expression of our community, and their particular directory.

Chapter 10: Entrance Into The Community

51. When an individual hears God's Spirit calling him/her to investigate membership in our community, he/she undergo a process of mutual discernment between themself and the community to discern the will of the Spirit. This time is not intended to test the quality or worth of a person before God, or even necessarily to test ones overall call to community or religious life. It is meant only to discern his/her specific call to be a brother or sister in our community. Once discerned that a person should pursue
membership within the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, we must further discern as to which of these particular expressions of community a brother or sister is called, i.e., single life, celibate brotherhood, celibate sisterhood, the family monastic, or the domestic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. Each particular expression of our community receives a brother or sister according to their own approved directory.

52. All expressions undergo the following process to provide time to judge the ability and vocation of the candidate. It is also meant to ease the candidate into the lifestyle of the community. The steps of entrance into the community are as follows:

a. **Candidacy:** This period extends to the beginning of the postulancy and calls for an appropriate amount of time visiting with and living the normal schedule of our life.

b. **Postulancy:** This is a six to twelve month period to get to know the life of the community in both ideals and practices. During this time the candidate lives with the community, becomes acquainted with the vision and spirit of the community, works in community apostolate, and is given an orientation to community life. He/she receives spiritual guidance for growth in prayer and the interior life.

c. **Novitiate:** After the postulancy, the individual enters a novitiate period of one to two years. During this time the novice is instructed more intensely in the particular charism of the community.

d. **Profession:** After the novitiate, the individual is asked to covenant for a period of three years. This may be repeated once, and twice under extraordinary circumstances. For those who have lived in community for at least four and one-half years, under temporary commitment, novitiate, and postulancy, a lifetime covenant promise may be made.
Chapter 11: Government

53. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are a spiritual family in Christ, raised up by the Spirit in the church, integrating the single, celibate, and married states of life, as well as those who live in intentional monastic community with those who live the domestic life in their own homes. As such, a General Chapter is the supreme governing body of the community.

54. *The General Chapter*
Supreme authority in the community resides in the General Chapter. The General Chapter consists of the permanent professed monastic and domestic members either personally or through delegates. Care is taken to protect the monastic origins and centrality in the nature of the General Chapter. Other representatives may be added as other expressions develop.

55. The General Chapter exists under the direction of the General Minister and the Vicar General Minister, the Scripture Rule, and these Constitutions. If at any time the founder and foundress become unable to actively govern, their lawful successors will take their place, but, even then, they have a permanent place of honor in the Chapter and on the Council with consultative voice.

56. The General Chapter has the power to govern, proper to the general visionary concerns and goals of the community. This primarily includes the direction of any general ministries or foundations and any necessary amendments to the general constitutions. Particular concerns proper to the various states of life are left up to the directory and leadership of each respective expression. The General Minister and Council normally convene the General Chapter every five years. They may call an extraordinary Chapter in cases of necessity.

57. *The General Minister*
The General Minister enjoys ordinary authority over each and
every brother and sister, as well as over the particular expressions of the community. Normally, the General Minister exercises authority through the leadership of each particular expression of community, but may act alone under extraordinary circumstances. Therefore, the General Minister exercises this authority alone or with the General Council in accordance with the norms of this Constitution. The General Minister is the spiritual father or mother of the community.

58. **The Vicar General Minister**
The Vicar General Minister assists the General Minister in everything, but when the General Minister is present, the Vicar performs only what has been assigned. When the General Minister is absent or impeded, the Vicar governs the community with ordinary authority in accord with the above articles. The Vicar succeeds to the office of Minister if it becomes vacant until the new General Minister is elected. When the General Minister is absent, the Vicar can do only what cannot be postponed until the General Minister's return. The Vicar should make no innovations known to be contrary to the General Minister's wishes. The Vicar General Minister is the spiritual father or mother of the community.

59. **The Founder/Spiritual Father**
The founder, the first General Minister, is the Spiritual Father of the whole community during his lifetime.

60. **The Foundress/Spiritual Mother**
The foundress, the first Vicar General Minister, is the Spiritual Mother of the whole community during her lifetime.

61. **The General Council**
The General Council consists of the General Minister, the Vicar General Minister, and the elder brothers and sisters of each particular expression. The domestic elder brothers and sisters enjoy consultative voice and may be consulted without their
personal presence, in case of necessity. This consultative voice must be seriously considered. The General Council's role is to generally govern the whole community in an ongoing way. It may also take general disciplinary action directed towards any particular leader or particular expression as a whole. However, the direct disciplinary action concerning individual members is ordinarily left to leadership of the particular expression. The General Council meets as frequently as necessary during the year.

62. *The Plenary Council*
The Plenary Council consists of leadership representatives from all particular monastic and domestic expressions. Its role is to help plan for the annual general gathering and interpret and implement these constitutions and the decisions of the past General Chapter. The decisions of the Plenary Council remain in effect until the next Plenary Council or General Chapter, but must be confirmed by the General Chapter. The Plenary Council meets once a year.

63. *Particular Expressions*
Each particular expression of community, i.e., celibate brotherhood, celibate sisterhood, single, family monastic, and domestic family expressions, exists under their own respective leadership and directory. These particular directories must be approved by the General Minister and the General Council whenever possible. Likewise, the General Minister of the whole community must confirm all particular leadership in order for that leadership to be legally validated. In emergency situations, the General Minister may appoint interim leaders until such time as proper vote may be taken by the particular expressions.

64. *Higher Authority*
The general leadership of the whole community, including the founder and the foundress, exists under higher authority. This authority includes the Bishop of Rome and the Bishop of the Diocese in which the motherhouse exists, concerning things
Catholic; and the Board of Directors of the Little Portion, Inc. concerning things temporal. The leadership of the community is free to direct the community wherever they discern the Spirit to be leading within these general parameters.

65. **Appropriate Dialogue**

When a brother or sister disagrees or has difficulty with leadership, he/she is to use appropriate attitudes and channels for dialogue. Members are encouraged to speak freely, yet respectfully, to their own respective and immediate leadership, the leader with whom they disagree, or to a spiritual director or confessor. They may also speak to other community members who are directly involved as long as they speak respectfully and in confidence. Any involvement of others, inside or outside the community, is considered insubordinate and gossip, and therefore an offense against leadership and their covenant of obedience.

66. **Elections of General Minister and Vicar General Minister**

The terms of the founding Spiritual Father and Mother are indefinite. For reasons of death, resignation, or the extraordinary desire of the community, a General Chapter of elections may be called. If eligible, the Spiritual Father and Spiritual Mother may be re-elected by the Chapter at that time. The term of office may be permanent or temporary according to the decision of the General Chapter and the general directory. Only permanent professed members may vote, being careful to maintain the monastic origins and centrality of the community. The General Minister and Vicar General Minister are chosen from the monastic expression. All permanent professed members of the monastic expression have passive voice (i.e., can be elected), unless disqualified by law.

67. In the event of the death of the General Minister, a special election of the General Chapter is called by the Vicar General Minister within three months. Likewise, the General Minister calls a special
Chapter of Election in the case of the death of the Vicar General Minister.

68. **Terms, Conferring of Offices**
Offices and positions in the community are conferred either by election, which is duly confirmed, or by appointment.

All offices are for a three to six year term, except for the Spiritual Father and Mother who have an indefinite term.

The election takes place, ordinarily, at the General Chapter or at a meeting of the particular chapter of a particular expression of the community, according to their particular directory. The General Minister, either personally or through a delegate, presides at the election of officers. In the spirit of co-responsibility and communal service, the brothers and sisters accept election to the offices mentioned unless absolutely impossible. All permanent professed members are eligible for the offices and positions of the community, as long as they have the requisites and qualifications established by common law and these constitutions. Unless otherwise provided, one who has been elected cannot exercise authority until confirmed by the General Minister or delegate, who presides at the election.

69. **Loss and Vacancy of Offices**
Offices are lost by expiration of term of office, by acceptance of an incompatible office within or without the community, by a resignation that is accepted, or by removal and deprivation.

70. **Prolongation:** All offices and positions conferred by election or by appointment always become vacant at the time of the General Chapter, unless other provision is expressly made. The General Minister with the advice of the General Council can decree the prolongation of an office or position. This is done with consideration of the vote of the Council of the respective particular expression of community.
71. **Resignation**  
The Council of a particular expression of the community, after consulting with its members, can accept the resignation of an office that has been conferred by that same Chapter. The General Council may accept the resignation of the General Minister and Vicar General Minister. It may also accept the resignation of the elected leadership of a formal expression of the community outside of their particular Council. The General Minister may accept the resignation of offices conferred by appointment.

72. **Removal**  
For a grave reason and with the advice of the Council, the General Minister may remove from office any leader of any particular expression of the community represented within the Council.

73. **Conclusion**  
All leaders in the community must be both good followers and good leaders. They must be willing to listen, yet able to teach. They must be knowledgeable of Catholic Christian doctrine and Franciscan monastic spirituality from both study and experience. The Ministers are subject to the guidance of the church, and thus guide the brothers and sisters by both example and work.

**Chapter 12: Withdrawal and Dismissal**

74. All cases concerning withdrawal or dismissal are conducted according to general and particular directories. Care is taken to protect the integrity and rights of the church, the community, and each individual.

**Chapter 13: Dissolution and Suppression**

75. The community ceases to exist when the low number of members renders the purpose of the community no longer viable in the judgment of the ordinary.
76. For activities that cause serious harm to ecclesiastical doctrine or discipline or are a scandal to the faithful based on real unlawful action or conduct, the community may be suppressed by competent authority. In the case of dissolution or suppression, the goods the community uses return to their lawful owner. If the community has acquired ownership through legal incorporation, those goods acquired are dealt with according to the norms of civil incorporation whereby they return to proper church or church-related organizations. Specifically, this refers to the Diocese of Little Rock and any other Church related organization approved by competent authority.

77. Though the community submits itself to church discipline, competent church authority is not liable for any civil transgressions on the part of community leadership or membership.

Chapter 14: Our Own Laws As Community

78. The General Chapter, with the confirmation of the local Bishop, is competent to establish and repeal constitutions. Even the General Chapter and the successors to the founding Spiritual Father and Mother may not change anything essential to the founding charism of the community contained in these constitutions. Interpretation of laws established by the General Chapter falls within the competence of the General Chapter. Outside the General Chapter interpreting is entrusted to the Councils of the particular expressions of our community, with consultation with and confirmation from the General Minister. An interpretation made outside of the General Chapter by the General Council has authority until the next General Chapter, unless the General Chapter approves it.

79. It is the role of the General Constitutions to offer norms necessary for good order in the lifestyle of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, wherever we may be.
80. It is the role of the leadership of the particular expressions of our community to establish particular directories in light of personal and local needs or circumstances. These may never be contrary to the norms of the General Constitution, and must be approved by the General Minister.

81. For a just reason, the Minister can dispense from laws of discipline enacted by the community, even in habitual and particular cases, but not those laws expressly excluded:

   a. The General Minister with respect to individuals and the whole community.

   b. The Minister for his own particular expression of community wherever they may live.

82. However, a habitual dispensation in favor of the brothers and sisters of an entire particular expression of community is reserved to the General Minister.

83. No Minister of the community has the power to dispense from what touches the very substance of our community life, or unless expressly stated otherwise, from the laws of these Constitutions, namely, those pertaining to structures or government, even enacted by the Chapter.

84. The laws contained in these general constitutions do generally bind in conscience since faithfulness to the Gospel can scarcely be attained in a way proper to this community without faithful observance of these laws. We should strive to keep them with the greatest care.
Chapter 1: Basic Vision (C 1-13)

1. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity is a brotherhood and sisterhood in which one declares before the whole community and the church his/her intention to live the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by their profession. A common Rule, Constitution, and General Government unite us as brothers and sisters in the charity of Christ, the Church, and the community. Each expression of community enjoys a measure of autonomy as to the specifics, which are unique to their own character. This is done according to the particular directory and leadership. For continual renewal of spirit, ministers take care that in an acceptable time and in appropriate gatherings the Rule, Constitutions and Directories are read and explained in dialogue.

2. Monastic
   The base and center of the whole community is monastic. Its expression is integrated, reaching out to the monastic and domestic expressions.

3. Socio-Eremetical
   The inspiration of the life of the community is socio-eremetical. Our way of life is structured to protect the need for socio-eremitical solitude and silence. Yet the authentic socio-hermetical way of life remains a life of family relationships. Our way of life leads us into
solitude, but from solitude we flow back out into healthy human relationships in Christ.

4. **Clerics**
   In keeping with the ancient monastic tradition, the brotherhood is neither clerical nor lay exclusively.

5. Those who are clerics are considered brothers first and clerics second. The title “brother” is the preferred title of all. While the clerics are honored in light of their ordination, they hold no right to special position.

6. **Contemplative Apostolic Mix**
   The life of the brothers and sisters is an intentional combination of contemplation and apostolic action. Our apostolic work flows forth from prayer and leads both ourselves and others back to prayer, and it is through the idiorhythmic life of prayer and action that we come into union with Jesus.

7. Our response to the gospel call brings forth fruit in the apostolic life in the church and the world only to the degree that we combine contemplation and action as Jesus himself constantly joined prayer and activity for our salvation. In this way, our life of prayer is charged with an apostolic spirit and prayer inspires our apostolate.

**Chapter 2: Community Life (C 14-17)**

8. Consecrated to God through their profession of obedience according to the same Rule and Constitutions, all the brothers and sisters are built up in the one community. Experiencing Jesus individually through prayer, study, and apostolic work, the brothers and sisters join together to support one another on their spiritual journey. Even in the solitude of one's dwelling or hermitage the life of the community is primarily communal. For this reason, although the individual members may differ by reason of nature, they keep the grace-filled unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. To
facilitate this unity still more, let the brothers and sisters anticipate each other in mutual love. Let them serve each other with a ready heart. Let them encourage wholesome undertakings, and let them genuinely find joy in the success of one another’s work.

9. The priorities of community life are as follows:
   a. God is first.
   b. The church comes next as an umbrella governing every aspect of our life on earth.
   c. Within the umbrella of the church comes the nuclear family, and the monastic and domestic community.
      i. The nuclear family composes what the Church calls the most basic expression of God’s ordained natural community for humanity, and the domestic church.
      ii. For celibate monastic members, the monastic community becomes their primary family circle, as in any traditional community of consecrated life.
      iii. For the monastic and domestic single and family members, the community becomes the privileged place for nurturing the family.
   d. Lastly, comes the local Church of the diocese and parish.
   e. From the church, we overflow to minister to the whole world.

10. The community strives to provide for a familial lifestyle that nurtures mature and interdependent relationships in Christ, especially with those of one’s own particular expression. Each and every brother, sister, and family shows a special sense of respect and gratitude to the senior brothers, sisters, and families, as well as to their ministers. One’s stage of entrance, and the date of one’s entrance into the community determine seniority. The elderly are also shown special concern and respect.

11. Noteworthy events about the community are communicated to the brothers and sisters as well as to others through letters, bulletins and newsletters. Likewise, efforts are made to preserve our
posterity so that we will have a record of past achievements through chronicles and archives.

12. The brothers, sisters, and families live with a single-hearted observance of the Rule, Constitution, Directories, similar lifestyles and participation in the activities of the community.

13. Beyond the normal monastic schedule, each member discerns a daily discipline and schedule for themselves to help insure that proper time is given to each aspect of their gospel life. The daily schedule is kept flexible in keeping with different circumstances and work, but work is not to impede our more primary commitment to a life of solitary and communal prayer. For monastic members this is discerned with the Spiritual Father and/or Mother.

14. The minister, along with the appropriate chapter or council, arranges a place and time for common recreation and shall strive to supply whatever will facilitate a close contact between the brothers and sisters. According to the norms set forth in the appropriate chapter or council, silence is kept at fitting times and places as a condition for encouraging prayer and a requirement of work and quiet.

15. **Ministers**

The ministers live in close union with the brothers and sisters committed to their care and so enhance the common life, keeping in mind the proper privacy and autonomy needed for both the brothers and sisters and the families. The spirit of service is their norm for effective use of authority.

16. To promote responsible and active obedience the ministers dialogue with the brothers and sisters and actively seek their opinions as individuals and as a group in chapter; still, the actual decisions belong to the minister.
17. The brothers and sisters consider the minister as the one on whom the greater burden is laid, and they freely offer their assistance, making their views known, and putting the minister's decisions into practice in a spirit of trust and wholeheartedness.

18. Ministers are alert to the needs of each brother or sister. They provide what is needed on an individual and family basis and in so far as local circumstances permit so that there will be neither excess permissiveness nor the denial of a legitimate need.

19. **Sick**
   Brothers and sisters bear their sicknesses with patience and humility as a share in the cross of Christ. Ministers, with the assistance of the other brothers and sisters, are to show concern for the spiritual and material well being of the feeble and sick brothers or sisters wherever possible, and whenever absolutely necessary.

20. **Traveling**
   As we go about the world we are faithful to the norms of our Rule, Constitutions and Directories. In a spirit of poverty we offer witness to the gospel in both our means of travel and in the way we supply for our needs of room and board.

21. When traveling in conjunction with ministry, the brothers, sisters, and families stay with other members of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, in Franciscan, religious, or monastic houses, or in rectories associated with the parish in which they minister. When these are not suitable, we may stay in the homes of honest and reputable lay people or commercial lodging of moderate cost for the purpose of adequate privacy for solitude and silence.

22. **Relationship With Other Expressions**
   The ministers and all the brothers, sisters, and families freely make every effort to meet and cooperate with the other expressions of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. As conditions
allow, we meet together to unify efforts on our way of life and apostolate on a national or regional basis. We are quick to offer assistance to these meetings once they have begun.

Chapter 3: Prayer (C 18-24)

23. We place the highest value on the sacred liturgy, which is the exercise of the priestly function of Jesus Christ, the summit of all the church’s activity and the source of Christian life. Individually and in common we devote serious effort to nourish our spiritual life with the liturgy and to open its treasure to the faithful. For that reason we cherish the mystery of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours. The monastic founders and St. Francis wanted the entire life of the community to be shaped by them. With due primacy given to monastic liturgical customs for the monastic expression, the brothers and sisters also adapt themselves, to regulations given by competent ecclesiastical authority of the region.

24. Liturgy of the Hours: (C 20)

In the Liturgy of the Hours we speak to God with His own words taken from the scriptures, and in His word God Himself meets us and speaks to us. So that the word of God celebrated in the office may penetrate our hearts more deeply, and shape our life and activity more effectively, it is sung or spoken and heard with reverence. Whenever possible the brothers and sisters should sing the psalms, since they were originally sacred songs. In accordance with the early monastic customs appropriate silences are also introduced into the offices after each psalm to allow the words to soak in slowly, steadily, and surely. For this reason we pray the psalms slowly and mindfully. Let us try to sing to God more with our hearts than with our lips lest we incur our Savior’s reproach to the Pharisees, “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” As St. Francis says, “Say the
office, not concentrating on the melody, but being careful that our hearts are in harmony so that our words may be in harmony with our hearts and our hearts with God.”

25. *Eucharist and Communion: (C 19)*
We participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice as fully, actively, and consciously as we can since we are celebrating the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ until He comes. We keep nothing of ourselves for ourselves in this offering so that He may receive us totally, who gave Himself totally to us.

26. As the one Bread, broken for many, brings many into unity, so do our lifestyle and liturgical celebrations manifest both sacrifice and unity.

27. With the approval of the minister, the appropriate chapter can determine the time and other circumstances of the celebration of the Eucharist, the Communion Service, the Liturgy of the Hours, the celebration of the Word of God, and all other forms of prayer in common. These must always be in tune with the true gospel spirit, the Franciscan and monastic traditions, and the directives and norms given by competent church authority.

28. *Charismatic: (C 21)*
Since the community was birthed out of both the religious and charismatic traditions of the church, openness to the charismatic gifts is always prevalent during common prayer.

29. *Contemplation: (C 23-24)*
The spirit of prayer and devotion, encouraged by our Franciscan, socio-eremitical and monastic traditions, demands that the brothers, sisters and families spend a substantial amount of their time in more contemplative prayer.

30. *Renewal and Recollection*
Silence faithfully guards the interior spirit and is required by charity
in community life. We, therefore, cherish silence in our communities to support a life of prayer, study, and reflection.

Chapter 4: Study (C 26)

31. **Balance**
   When engaged in studies, brothers and sisters carefully develop their minds and hearts so that in keeping with the attitude of the monastic founders, St. Francis and St. Clare, they conform themselves to Christ in every way.

32. We love the truth and are to pursue it ardently. At the same time we frankly acknowledge the limitations of human knowledge, which is far surpassed by the grace of faith and divine knowledge.

33. To achieve a healthy human balance, the brothers and sisters seek to advance their vocations as well as in human and divine learning, also cultivating community life, contemplative prayer, and participation in Sacred Liturgy.

34. **Pastoral Ministry**
   Because our community is both contemplative and apostolic, a balanced pastoral concern is part of the entire formation program, to prepare brothers and sisters adequately for service in the church as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is priest, prophet, and shepherd. The art of exercising the apostolate is taught through gradual practice as well as theory.

35. The pastoral needs of the region, as well as missionary and ecumenical aspects, receive special attention.

36. **Personal Talents & Responsibilities**
   The brothers and sisters engage in studies according to their God-given abilities and capacities by embracing a spirit of discipline and self-denial. They strive onward and upward in their own
personal, spiritual and intellectual development as mature and well-balanced human beings.

37. The brothers and sisters realize that they bear the main responsibilities for study, and are themselves the principal agents for reaching their desired goal. This is only properly accomplished by an attitude of trust and wholehearted cooperation with teachers and both the ministers and members of the whole community.

38. In this way, a healthy balance between personal and communal development is achieved and maintained. In a spirit of gospel self-sacrifice, the individual studies are for the good of the community, the church, and the world.

39. *The Church and the World*
Our study is primarily undertaken in order to deepen, develop, and explain the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. As such, it is encouraged in light of, within, and subject to the teaching authority of the Catholic Church. In the study of secular or religious arts and sciences, the brothers and sisters are always faithful to the Christian worldview, which is incarnational, but can also be counter-cultural. Even when a predominant worldview is in conflict with the teaching of the gospel and the church, the brothers and sisters are called upon and are not ashamed to take a stand that is obedient to the church, becoming counter-cultural and non-conformists to the world.

40. *Ongoing Formation*
The formation of the brothers and sisters is not ended at the completion of formal formation, but is seen as continuing. Ministers take care that their brothers and sisters constantly perfect their spiritual, doctrinal, and even professional formation.
Chapter 5: Apostolic Service (C 27-37)

41. Committed to a more intense service of Christ, the church and the world, the brothers, sisters, and family members direct their whole life and work to revealing the glory of God in this world. In word and in work they give witness to the presence of Christ and the eminent Kingdom of God.

42. The apostolate of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, both within the church and the world, manifests itself in different ways.

43. Within the community, the apostolate is lived out by lives of conversion and contemplation, or by different tasks performed for the community. Outside the community, the apostolate is lived out by intellectual and material service to society at large, as well as by missionary-pastoral service in parishes and other apostolic institutions. Finally, the apostolate is lived out by lives of simple gospel presence, which looks to the dawn of the Kingdom of God.

44. Every apostolate is such that it prompts us to develop the talents we have received from God, and enable us to fully develop personality to the extent that we return our talents and increase to the Lord. The brothers and sisters entrusted with the ministry of the work of the apostolate remain faithful to the life of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity and their particular expression in which they live, as well as to their ministers.

45. Primacy of Common Life

The ministers insure that the brothers and sisters are not tied down by obligations inconsistent with the life described for us in the Rule, Constitutions or the Directory.

46. Team Ministry

In faithfully carrying out whatever duty is entrusted to them, all the brothers and sisters share in the apostolic call of the community. Therefore, whatever we do is done in such oneness with the
community that it is a sign and leaven of the oneness of the brothers and sisters with each other and God.

47. Normally, apostolates are a team effort of at least two brothers or two sisters. The case of a solo ministry is not normal. When it does occur, it must be done in oneness with the whole community.

48. Whenever possible, the ministry team includes representatives from each expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, i.e., single, celibate brothers, celibate sisters, and family members.

49. **Manual Labor**
The brothers, sisters and families are ready to do manual work in accord with the earliest Franciscan and monastic tradition when love for the brothers and sisters or obedience requires, provided that the particular duties of each are not neglected.

50. Manual labor is well suited for the contemplative life, for it nurtures a spirit of humility, simplicity, and inner solitude and silence. It places us in solidarity with the world’s poor, who do manual labor every day in order to feed their families. It is especially helpful to foster humility and a break with the pride of the world during formation.

51. The brothers and sisters are quick to help and support one another through mutual service, even in doing domestic chores. When opportunity exists, they function as a team.

52. **Work Mentality**
Because of our socio-eremitical, monastic, and contemplative monastic base, every brother and sister responsibly helps the community avoid an undue work mentality, whether caused by the amount or the variety of work. Sooner or later this mentality will dissolve their community and their individual health of body, soul, and spirit. Consequently, it can threaten to destroy the whole gospel witness of our way of life.
53. However, this does not mean that we are not available to do even lowly, manual labor that is not part of our formal training when the legitimate needs of the community and decision of our ministers require such.

54. Favoritism and partiality by no means result in our community from the type of work that one does, the status or position they may hold, nor the salary they may earn.

55. The financial support of the community, family, or oneself is not the primary purpose, nor the only norm for choosing an apostolate or work. There are, however, financial considerations, which must be dealt with realistically in all of these in community life.

56. *Choice of Work*
Exercising the gospel freedom of communal obedience that the Franciscan and monastic tradition affords in selecting an apostolate, the brothers and sisters always choose those works that the signs of the times indicate are most in need of our witness in a given region. We do not meddle in affairs that are unrelated to the nature of our community.

57. The brothers and sisters are not attached to any type of apostolate as if it were their own. They are ready to leave to others the apostolates and places they have established and begin anew in new apostolates that are needed more.

58. The real needs of people, the church, the community and the individual brothers and sisters is the norm when selecting any apostolate.

59. When ministers discern the gifts and capabilities of individual brothers and sisters and the needs of the community and the church, they give the professed brothers and sisters, as far as possible, the opportunity to become proficient in specific fields and willingly provide them with the time and support needed for them.
The good of the church, the community, and the brothers and sisters themselves, requires that when assigning offices and duties the ministers are careful to take into account the aptitude and skill of each one; nor shall they easily change a brother or sister from the work in which he/she is expert.

60. Since we are dedicated to the church and the world, the brothers and sisters accustom ourselves to reading the signs of the times in which God's plan can be discerned with the eyes of faith.

61. Responding to the call of Jesus in the church to evangelize the whole world, the brothers and sisters, together and individually, use whatever talents we may have to undertake any type of work whatsoever, always giving priority to the needy and to those who have not yet received Jesus' message of salvation.

62. The brothers, sisters, and families promote traditional works of the apostolate, such as missions, retreats, and the administering of the sacraments. We give a special care to the building up of various expressions of basic Christian communities, especially promoting the spread of our own community.

63. Filled with a missionary spirit and mindful of those individuals and groups who have fallen away from the church, the brothers, sisters, and family members try to adapt their apostolic efforts to new circumstances.

64. We are also actively involved in the Christian ecumenical dialogue of truth, charity, and prayer with our separated brothers and sisters, in order to share in the church's efforts at restoring Christian unity. We strive to uproot from our own lives any obstacles to that hoped-for unity.

65. At the same time, we engage in beneficial interfaith dialogue and cooperation, according to the norms of the church, with those who
are not Christians, and with non-believers among whom we live or to whom we are sent.

66. Mindful of our own call, we are one with all people of good will in efforts of charity, social assistance, and international solidarity, in which the possibility of human and economic growth is offered to individuals and nations caught in need.

67. *Periods of Ministry: (C 37)*
Both the ministers and the other brothers and sisters so live their lives that prayer will make their work holy and effective, and that work will not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion, but will add all the more new power and strength to prayer. Yet, the primacy of prayer and family is always recognized and protected. A rhythm of the Spirit leads us from prayer into action and from action back into prayer. This rhythm exists on communal, family, and individual levels, allowing more individual freedom as time goes on, to test an individual's maturity and sense of responsibility. To begin, however, a brother or sister spends part of each day in prayer and study, and the rest in active ministry and apostolic action.

68. *Recreation*
The community is careful that suitable and appropriate communal and private periods of recreation are provided for.

**Chapter 6: Poverty (C 38-45)**

69. As the faithful steward, each brother or sister answers for the community goods they use and enjoy.

70. In keeping with poverty, all labor or ministry by the members of the community is approved or appointed by the community leadership. In doing so the natural gifts and talents of the individual is considered by the leadership and community, but the member
does not claim any ministry or labor as their own. They are willing to lay it aside without murmuring or bitterness at any time.

71. **Work and Social Assistance**
The work of the brothers and sisters is the ordinary and chief means of providing needs for our life and apostolate.

72. Where such things are commonly used by the poor, it is lawful and fitting that the brothers and sisters take advantage of laws which afford social assistance, such as Social Security and provisions as well as pensions.

73. If an apostolic ministry brings in no support, it is advisable for those engaged in such ministry to follow the example of Paul's tent making by doing extra manual labor in the community. This helps pay the minister's home expenses. It also keeps the minister in touch with the basic realities of life, which constantly face the humble manual laborer. In turn, this strengthens his ministry to the average worker, and frees his ministry from the bondage of having to support home debt.

74. **Buildings: (C 45)**
Buildings constructed for the brothers and sisters, and everything they acquire and use, harmonizes with a poor life within the framework of local and temporal conditions. What is no longer of any use is converted to other uses.

75. Dwellings of the brothers and sisters are simple and inexpensive so as to be in keeping with the charitable poverty of the gospel of Jesus.

76. **Socio-Eremitical Pattern**
Normally, the brothers and sisters, being adapted to one’s state of life, retain the socio-eremitical pattern of building.

77. The monastery and family dwellings are made up of areas for common and private use. If we do not allow for private time,
private space, and private prayer we will eventually create emotionally imbalanced individuals who will, in turn, destroy the community. According to the earliest monastic customs, we use community spiritual direction from our Spiritual Father and Mother and elder brothers and sisters, to help keep these private prayer periods to stay on course in a healthy way.

78. **Décor and Furnishings**
Décor and furnishings are to be poor to glorify only the cross of our Lord, who died to his own desires so the needs of others might be fulfilled. The neatness and order reflecting the peace of God is to be manifested in every cell, where heaven comes down to earth to make all a sacred space in the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit. In all matters, while care is called for, scruples are not, since they distinctly undermine the purpose of such legislation, which is freedom of heart.

79. **When and Where to Wear the Habit: (C 44)**
Remembering that our religious clothing is symbolic of consecration made to God and of our brotherhood or sisterhood, the brothers and sisters wear the habit both inside and outside the community. The habit is especially worn during liturgical gatherings or public ministries as a constant reminder of our call to a life of prayer. Thus, we never forget that public ministry without prayer is virtually powerless—for one cannot give to others what one does not possess.

80. For reasons of a sign of poverty, the habit is worn whenever use of work clothing is not necessary. Though properly worn during liturgical worship and ministry, the habit is not primarily a liturgical garment or vestment. It is the normal clothing of the brothers and sisters.
81. Likewise, because the habit is a sign of penance, it is worn even if by nature it seems a sacrifice. In cases of ill health leadership can dispense this.

82. However, if the wearing of the habit becomes an occasion for pride or self-righteousness, the use of secular clothing can be resumed temporarily. The habit should be a sign and an aid in nurturing an inner attitude of poverty and prayer. If it ceases to do this, it becomes worthless and vain. Any clothing for clothing's sake is incompatible with our call. Community leadership discerns this.

83. **Secular Clothing**
Work and recreation that require the use of casual clothes is accepted with the approval of leadership within the spirit of our calling. Thus, all secular clothes still retain a witness of poverty and modesty.

84. **Grooming**
In light of the ascetical practices of both the monastic and Franciscan traditions, the brothers and sisters do not groom themselves according to fashion and style, but rather they groom themselves according to simplicity, modesty, and practicality.

**Chapter 7: Chastity (C 46)**

85. In order to preserve chastity, let all the brothers and sisters, with the minister's encouragement, equally support one another through love, companionship and service.

86. The brothers and sisters love everyone in Christ. Through mature interdependence, familial and friendly relationships they lead others to share in the kingdom of God. Our attitude towards those of the opposite sex, especially those who are consecrated to God, is characterized by courtesy, respect, and appropriate caution. In our use of books, television, movies, the Internet etc., we use
moderation and a mature standard of selection. We carefully avoid whatever would be harmful to faith, morals, or the consecrated life.

87. Spiritual friendships between all the members of our community are encouraged; however, exclusive or codependent friendships are not, inasmuch as they lead to cliques and inappropriate romantic relationships. The ministers reserve the right to use appropriate disciplinary measures to correct abuses in these areas.

Chapter 8: Obedience (C 47-50)

88. The brothers and sisters are bound to obedience to the ministers in all areas referred to in the Scripture Rule, Constitutions, General Directory and Particular Directories of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, when it does not go against the teaching of the church in matters of faith and morality, and does not conflict with one's conscience.

89. If a brother or sister finds his/her conscience at variance with either the teaching authority of the church in matters of faith and morality, or the directives of their minister in matters regarding the Scripture Rule, Constitutions, General Directory and the Particular Directories, they are free to follow their conscience, but must be willing to bear the consequences of their action, either within or without either the church or the community. They must also humbly and seriously consider the position of the minister with a docile spirit, and be willing to let go of the old self through mediated authority, in light of their profession of obedience.

90. If a minister commands contrary to the directives of the Rule, Constitutions or Directory, or of the teachings of the church on matters of faith and morality, the brothers and sisters are not under obligation to obey, even though in these circumstances they do not spurn the authority of the minister. These situations must be
serious and habitual in nature. If this situation becomes habitual, the brother and/or sister are free to recourse to higher authority for the good of the community. If the minister commands in compliance with the Rule, Constitutions and Directories, and the teaching authority of the church regarding matters of faith and morality, but the brother or sister disagrees with the wisdom of their particular command and if this is of major consequence or habitual, they are to make this known to the minister through loving and respectful dialogue. But they are still to obey and fulfill the command with a willing and ready heart.

Chapter 9: Covenant Promises (C 51-52)

91. The promises of the evangelical counsels within the Brothers and Sisters of Charity are a new, yet ancient expression of commitment to the essentials of religious life in the church. These promises have canonical force because of the canonical status of the community. They bind in conscience because of their moral character. These promises are directly active upon profession. Profession is preceded by a candidacy, postulancy, and a novitiate, as outlined in our constitutions.

92. Postulancy
During the postulancy the individual lives with the community according to the Rule, Constitutions and Directories, but is not considered a formal member of the community.

93. Novitiate
Membership in the community begins with a one to two-year novitiate. While this initiates membership into the community, by its nature it identifies an individual as a new member and is seen as a probationary period to train the individual through experience and teaching in our way of life.
94. The novitiate is a time of more intense formation set up in order that the novice may come to know and live the life and values of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

95. Assessment
Twice a year the novice director renders a judgment on the fitness of each novice. A report of the novice is sent verbally or in writing to the minister.

Chapter 10: Charismatic Gifts and Leadership (C 53-84)

96. While recognizing that the spiritual or charismatic gifts operate freely in the whole community, we also recognize that these gifts are given to those who lead the community in an extraordinary way to help them in their ministry.

97. When electing or appointing leadership, those who have the power to elect or appoint should look for the presence of these gifts already working in a person's life. At the conferral of office, special prayers should be prayed for the reception and strengthening of all the spiritual gifts necessary for the carrying out of each office.

98. Though not exclusive or exhaustive, the scriptural list of these gifts is:

a. 1 Cor. 12:28
   i. Apostles
   ii. Prophets
   iii. Teachers
   iv. Miracle workers
   v. Healers
   vi. Assistants
   vii. Administrators
   viii. Tongues

b. Romans 12:6-8
i. Prophecy with faith
ii. Ministry for service
iii. Teacher
iv. Exhortation
v. Alms with generosity
vi. Ruler with care
vii. Mercy with cheer

c. Eph. 4:11
i. Apostles
ii. Prophets
iii. Evangelists
iv. Pastors
v. Teachers
d. 1 Tim. 3:1-13
We also look for the personal qualities mentioned here.

99. *Election, Appointment, and Terms*
We recognize that the scriptural model for leadership is divine appointment either directly or through a personal mediator. Moses appointed the seventy elders and Joshua his successor (Ex. 18:17-23, Dt. 31). Elijah appointed Elisha as his successor (2 Kings 2). The apostles appointed elders in the early churches (Acts 6:1-6, Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5-9).

100. We also recognize that the early church sometimes elected its leaders (Didache 15:1).

101. Furthermore, we recognize the entire monastic tradition that has developed from life terms and appointment of successors, to definite terms in some cases and election by a chapter.

102. As a monastic-based community, we are a quasi or para-church. Therefore, we take our lead from the church Catholic, which appoints her bishops for an indefinite term under certain qualifying conditions of elections, removal, and resignation. In obedience to
that same church, we use the electoral procedure for a term in office unless otherwise stated.

103. Therefore, we use a combination of these scriptural and ecclesiastical models in our approaches to appointment, election, and term of office.

104. Government—General Chapter: (C 54-56)
If there are under thirty permanent professed monastic members, they will be represented personally at the General Chapter. If there are thirty or more permanent professed monastic members, they will be represented through delegates proportionate to the nature and dynamics of the monastic community as decided by the General Council.

105. The domestic members are represented by their own Minister. Other domestic representatives may be added by the consent of the General Chapter.

106. Government—General Council: (C 61)
The domestic expression is represented by the its Minister. Other domestic representatives may be added or substituted according to need—with the approval of the General Council.

107. Government—Plenary Council: (C 62)
Its Minister and the Vicar Minister represent the domestic expression. Other domestic representatives may be added or substituted according to need—with the approval of the General Council.

108. Spiritual Father—Decrees: (C 57, 58 & 78)
The General Minister, with the advice or consent of the General Council, can promulgate decrees that are obligatory for the whole community. These decrees are effective only until the Plenary Council, but if the Plenary Council confirms them at the time of that conference, they remain in effect.
109. The General Minister, with the advice of the General Council, can promulgate decrees for the particular expressions of the community. However, he may do this only after consulting the respective leadership of each particular expression. Such decrees may even be given permanent force until they are revoked.

110. Favors and Dispensations: (C 81-83)
The General Minister has authority to grant favors, dispensations, or other concessions of any kind in writing, either to individual brothers or sisters, or to the particular expressions of the community. These do not terminate when the one who granted them no longer has the right to do so, unless added clauses specify otherwise. Even though mention is made of the previous refusal, a favor denied by the General Minister cannot be obtained validly from the Vicar without the consent of the General Minister.

111. Visitations
The General Minister, either personally or through a delegate, makes visitations of all the particular expressions of the community on a regular and frequent basis. Ideally this is done once a year.

112. Absent
When the spiritual father, as General Minister, is absent or impeded, the spiritual mother as Vicar governs with ordinary authority. However, she must not use her authority contrary to the mind and will of the Spiritual Father. If the Spiritual Mother, as Vicar, is also absent or impeded, the next officer takes his/her place with the name and office of Pro-Vicar.

113. General Elections: (C 66-67)
The “extraordinary desire of the community” (GC 66) to call a General Chapter of Elections would happen when two thirds of the permanently professed members of the monastic community petition the general visitator in writing to assemble together and in assembly request by unanimous vote that the General Vicar
convoke a chapter of elections. From the date that the petition is received, the Vicar General would have to inform the bishop within one week of an impending Chapter of Elections and would have to convene the Chapter of Elections within three months. When two-thirds of the General Chapter of Election desire it, it is possible to elect the General Minister and the Vicar General Minister for a definite term of six years, or for the remainder of the predecessor's term if it is more than three years.

114. In subsequent elections, so long as the community has not reverted to an unrestricted term, an absolute majority is sufficient.

115. Before the election, the president of the election has the obligation to ask the General Chapter if they wish to elect the General Minister and the Vicar General Minister for a definite term.

116. Those elected for a definite term can always be re-elected. However, after fifteen years in office, a two-thirds majority is needed for re-election.

117. Since the General Minister and the Vicar General Minister are the Spiritual Father and Mother respectively, a male and female must always succeed to the offices of General Minister and Vicar General Minister, though not necessarily respectively.

118. Terms, Conferring of Offices—Particular Council of Elders: (C 68) A leadership council of Elder brothers and/or sisters, called Council of Elders, represents each particular expression of the community.

119. If there are twelve or more permanent professed members, the Council of Elders will consist of an elected Minister, a Vicar, and a Secretary/Treasurer. More officers may be added if needed, with the consent of the General Council.

120. If there are less than twelve permanent professed members, a Minister and a Vicar are appointed by the General Minister or the
Vicar General Minister, with the advice of the General Council, keeping in mind the wishes of the permanent professed members. Only a male may appoint leadership for the celibate brothers, and a female for the celibate sisters.

121. If there are less than three permanent professed members of any expression, the General Minister or the Vicar General Minister may act as a Minister of that particular expression. Only a male may act as a Minister over celibate brothers, and a female over the celibate sisters.

122. All offices of the Elder brothers and sisters are for a three to five-year term. Elders may always be re-elected, but after fifteen years require a two-thirds majority. If an office falls vacant, the General Minister may appoint a successor for the duration of the term after consulting the General Council and the Particular Chapter of Elections.

123. Elections ordinarily take place at the Particular Chapter of each particular expression of the community. This Particular Chapter ordinarily coincides with the convening of the General Chapter.

124. **Conferring of Offices—Particular Chapter: (C 68)**

   The Particular Chapter consists of all permanent professed members either personally or through a delegate. If there are less than thirty permanent professed members, they are represented personally. If there are thirty or more permanent professed members they are represented by delegates proportional to the nature and dynamics of the community as decided by the Particular Council and approved by the General Council.

**Chapter 11: Correction and Discipline**

125. Jesus tells us that we are to forgive a repentant brother or sister until seven times seventy. He also tells us that when there is an offense within the community, we are to go first to the brother or
sister by ourselves, then with a witness, and finally, with the leaders of the community. After that, if the brother or sister does not repent, they are to be treated like a tax collector or a publican. Likewise, Paul commands us that while we are not to judge those who live outside of the community, we have the obligation to judge those within the community both for the sake of the community at large, and the soul of the individual themselves.

126. When there is a behavior or disciplinary problem within the community, we first go and speak to the brother or sister with whom we have a fault, or whom we believe has a fault with us, and talk with them privately about the matter. Next, we go with one or two witnesses, but even this must be kept very private and confidential. If the individual still does not respond, then the matter should be brought to community leadership, who are duly established by norms approved by the church.

127. The ministers show fatherly and motherly compassion to brothers and sisters who sin, or who are in danger of sinning, in order to give them appropriate and effective help in the Lord Jesus. Ministers do not impose formal penalties unless this is absolutely necessary. Likewise, they are prudent and charitable in imposing corrective punishment when needed.

128. Communal correction is only undertaken for the genuine spiritual welfare of both the individual and the community. Great care is taken to protect the basic human rights of the individuals in question, while also preserving the discipline and welfare of the community. If the good of individuals or of the community forces ministers to admonish, correct, or punish, they offer this service kindly and lovingly in accordance with the norms of the Scripture Rule, these Constitutions, and Particular Directories. This is a sign of the minister’s selflessness. However, the minister may use strong tones and measure if they discern that this is needed.
129. **Withdrawal and Dismissal**
All cases concerning withdrawal or dismissal are conducted according to general and particular directories. Care is taken to protect the integrity and rights of the church, the community and each individual.

130. Novices may withdraw freely from the novitiate according to their consciences. However, they are encouraged to be patient and seek direction from their formation director and superior as well as from a spiritual director or confessor over a substantial period of time of approximately three months before taking action.

131. A novice may be dismissed for flagrant violations against our way of life, or if discerned that this way of life is simply not God's will for them. A grave reason is not needed. However, the formation director and a major superior must seriously discern this in order to be valid.

132. Temporary professed may withdraw only after full dialogue with their major superior and a spiritual director or confessor, for a period of one year. It must be discerned that a major incompatibility exists between the individual and the community. Only the General Minister of a particular expression may dispense an individual from temporary profession, and must be confirmed by the General Council.

133. A member in temporary profession may be dismissed at the end of their profession for a grave reason. They may be dismissed during the period of profession for a habitual grave reason. This includes violations against our Rule, Constitution, and Directories, or the magisterium of the church, with special ecclesial considerations given to ecumenical members. The General Minister of the particular expression must agree to give a decree of dismissal to the individual I order for it to be valid. The General Council must confirm the decree of dismissal for it to be valid.
134. A member in permanent profession may withdraw only after serious dialogue with their Major Superior, spiritual director and confessor, for a minimal period of three years.

135. After this if it is still discerned that a serious incompatibility exists, the General Minister of their particular expression may dispense them of their profession. This must be done in writing and must be confirmed by the General Council and the Bishop in the case of monastic members, and by the General Council for domestic members.

136. To dismiss a member in permanent profession, habitual, grave cause is needed. This includes failure to live according to our Rule, Constitutions and Directories, and the magisterium and norms of the church. This grave cause must be documented before witnesses.

137. A letter of dismissal is then sent by the General Minister of a particular expression. The General Council must confirm this letter, along with the Bishop in the case of permanent professed monastic members.

138. In the case of grave scandal or grave and imminent harm to the community, the member can be expelled forthwith by the General, Regional, or even the local Minister, with the consent of the General Council.

139. A member has the right of recourse to higher authority to defend himself/herself. The right to recourse must be exercised within ten days of reception of the decree of dismissal. The decree of dismissal has no juridical effect while the recourse is pending.

140. Those who withdraw or are dismissed may not claim any indemnity for services rendered during their time of membership within the community.
141. Any member who has canonically withdrawn or been dismissed is by that fact dispensed from their commitment of promise or profession to the community. All rights and obligations proper to the community, likewise cease.

142. In any case pertaining to withdrawal or dismissal, the brother or sister concerned shall be treated with pastoral care regarding basic human respect and Christian charity.

143. The General Minister of the particular expression shall normally determine the extent of the spiritual, social, and temporal assistance needed to help the ex-member make the transition to normal life outside of the community.

144. In certain circumstances, and according to the nature of the ex-member's offense, the General Minister and the General Council may ask the community to discontinue normal social intercourse with the ex-member, both for the good of the ex-member and for the good of the community. This does not apply to emergency or extraordinary circumstances where charity demands. Furthermore, the General Minister or a strong and mature delegate continues to exercise charity in pastoral care towards those who withdraw or are dismissed.

Chapter 12: Our Own Laws as Community (C 78-84)

145. The General Council is competent to establish as well as to repeal directives of the General Directory. Interpretation of laws established by the General Council falls within the competence of the General Council. Even the General Council may not change anything essential to the founding charism contained in this General Directory.

146. The General Council of each particular expression is competent to establish, repeal and interpret Particular Directories. These must
be reviewed by the overall General Council and approved by the overall General Minister.
Chapter 1: Basic Vision (C 1-13, GD 1-7)

1. The monastic expression constitutes the base and core of the whole community due to the monastic origins and centrality in its development.

2. We draw inspiration from the monastic tradition of the hermits, symbolized by St. Antony of the Desert, who sought to follow “God alone”; the cenobites, symbolized by St. Pachomius, who sought to live in the koinonia fellowship of seeking “God alone together”; the monks of St. Basil, who sought the more evangelical life of scripture; and the monks of St. Augustine, who sought the “monos” of being “one” and “united” according to Acts 2 and 4. Of course, the Rule of St. Benedict calls us to prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and our Franciscan base calls us to an evangelical life in imitation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. Regarding personal imitation of Christ and apostolic ministry, we find primary inspiration from St. Francis. Regarding orderly community life in the integrated monastery, we find our greatest inspiration from the Rule of St. Benedict. Of course, the desert fathers and mothers who preceded them both are of great importance as an inspiration for our life.

4. The monastery is a school of the Lord's service. The brothers and sisters give themselves to God alone and are formed into true
disciples of Jesus Christ through a more intense participation in the life of the church through monastic profession, the teaching of the Spiritual Father and Mother, and the communal life of our monastic family. We are an eschatological sign of things to come.

5. The monastery is socio-eremitical, integrating the eremitical and cenobitical ways of life in the classical pattern of the skete or laura. As such, isolated cells are grouped around common buildings and a chapel. Separate enclosed areas are maintained for the celibate brothers, celibate sisters, singles and family expressions. Each family and professed member lives in their own cell.

6. The monastery is the alternative stable base from which various ministries proceed into the church and the world. As such, it is supported by its own alternative industry and the more institutional ministries directly related to it. Members may work off the property when necessity demands.

7. The monastery is an image of the mystery of the church, so that it forms monastic, or quasi, church. While not part of the hierarchical structure of the church, its religious nature is a charismatic gift of God to the church. Therefore, the church recognizes and supports its consecration through the public profession of the evangelical counsels within the monastic expression.

a. *Celibate*
   The community members who are part of the celibate expression make a traditional religious profession of the evangelical counsels for the consecration of their life.

b. *Family and Single*
   The community members who are part of the family and single monastic expression profess the evangelical counsels for a consecration of their life in a way proper to their state in life in this community. Specifically, and most obviously, chastity means simply extra effort for fidelity to one’s matrimonial vows,
poverty allows for the physical things needed for the raising of children, and obedience does not violate the more primary domestic church of the family in community and the Church.

8. **The Integrated Monastery**
   As St. John Chrysostum says, “The holy scriptures do not know any distinctions. They enjoin that all lead the life of monks even if they are married.” Therefore, our monastic expression is integrated.

9. As consecrated life traces its origins to Jesus and the disciples, who were both celibate and married, and developed primarily but not exclusively with celibates (from monks and mendicants, to include those in societies of the apostolic life without vows, and secular institutes without common life), so do we now include both celibates and families in our new but ancient form of consecrated common life as a true development of that sacred tradition. We continue to emphasize and foster the celibate life as the primary and more traditionally accepted form.

10. As monastic life traces its origins to the hermits who lived alone and developed with the cenobites who lived in the koinonia fellowship of community, so do we now include the socio-eremitical approach for monastic celibates and families, as a true development of those who seek to live for “God alone.”

11. The integrated monastery is the most basic expression of the celibate, family, and single community. The integrated monastery includes each monastic expression. Other less integrated local configurations may occur in mission houses and houses of prayer.
   a. **Family**
      Following this Celtic pattern, the family way of life is also monastic. This means that the entire family area is structured to environmentally assure an attitude and lifestyle of prayer. Each family dwelling or hermitage provides a place where heaven
can come to earth through the places in which we dwell. Thus, a true environment of moderation, simplicity, and discipline will help lead the family members into both solitude and silence, where they will find the companionship of the Living Word.

b. Both the socio-hermetical and the monastic patterns of living, which are normative for the celibate brothers and sisters, must be both moderated and adapted to meet the normal and healthy interaction of family living.

c. *Single*  
Following the monastic tradition of the Gregorian Reform, our way of life includes not only those called to the religious profession of the evangelical counsels in consecrated life, but those who live the spirit of these counsels in a less externally intense way as singles. Though not living the evangelical counsels as external and intense as the celibate brothers or sisters, the single brothers and sisters are considered an important expression of the whole community.

d. The more intense monastic and socio-hermetical patterns of living are moderated to meet the normal and appropriate way of life of the single and family brothers and sisters.

12. The integrated monastery is an alternative society formed by Christ within the society of the church and this world, comprising all states of Christian life. As such, it is an alternative loaf to the loaf of this world. It is also a leaven within the dough of the church and the world to keep both from falling. As an alternative society, all that is necessary for basic life is substantially contained within the monastery.

13. *Clerics: (GD 4-5)*  
According to the individual's call from God and the needs of the community, the minister may present some of the brothers for clerical ordination. However, ordination is not a general right
inherent with the call to and the charism of the brotherhood. It is extraordinary.

14. **Profession**
This Christ-centered consecrated life of loving contemplation and apostolic action is sought under the profession of the evangelical counsels proper to each state of life.

a. **Celibate**
By the religious nature of the brotherhood and sisterhood, this profession requires a more intense living out of each respective covenant of poverty, chastity, and obedience in religious and intentional community life.

b. **Family**
By the more domestic nature of the family monastic community, this profession demands a less intense living out of each respective covenant than in the religious expression of our community. However, it requires a more intense living-out of each respective covenant than the non-monastic expression of our community.

c. **Single**
By the more secular nature of the single monastic community, this profession demands a less intense living-out of each respective covenant than in the religious expression of our community. However, it requires a more intense living-out of each respective covenant than the non-monastic expression of our community.

15. **Public Profession Formula:**

I, (Brother/Sister) _______________________________________, inspired by the Holy Spirit to live the gospel of Jesus Christ more intently by public profession within the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, by an act of my own free will promise and
covenant to God and this community in the presence of the Church and into your hands (Monastic Father/Mother or Brother/Sister Minister) ______________________________, to live the life of charity in religious obedience, consecrated (celibate/marital/single) chastity, and evangelical poverty, as a part of the (celibate brotherhood/celibate sisterhood/family/single) monastic expression for (three years/life) according to the Scripture Rule, the and the leadership of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

Chapter 2: Community Life (C 14-17, GD 8-22)

16. The Monastery is a family of God within the church. As such it is lovingly and surely guided by a spiritual father and mother under the direction of the church and is willingly embraced by elder and younger brothers and sisters as a sign of stability in our unstable and dysfunctional world.

a. **Celibate**
   The brotherhood and sisterhood become the primary family for the celibate expression.

b. **Family**
   This community is evidenced first in the family itself and secondly, in the community of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity as an extended family.

Consequently, the community of the family is seen as a more primary expression of community than the community of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity itself. Any commitment within the Brothers and Sisters of Charity serves to strengthen the family commitments within the overall call to the married monastic life. If there is a habitual tension between these two calls, especially during initial formation, except in matters of faith and morality as dictated by the church, the family must
seriously consider the possibility that God might be calling them out of the community. However, this must not become an excuse for the “independence” mentality that so quickly makes communal input into a member's lifestyle impossible.

The family monastic community members live the common life and participate in the activities of the community, especially common prayer and the apostolate.

c. Single
The single brothers or sisters still see their own family with their own private lives as a more primary expression than the community of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity itself. However, the single member looks to the community as a more intense expression of “family” than the family monastic members, while retaining a less intense approach than the celibates. If ever there is a habitual tension between these two calls, except in matters of faith and morality as dictated by the church, the single member must seriously consider the possibility that God might be calling them out of the community.

17. Ministers: (GD 15-18)
When urgent necessity, Christian charity or some obvious useful service demands that ministers be absent at times for a lengthy period, such reasons must be approved by a major minister. Before leaving, however, they should be mindful of providing for their absence through a Vicar so that the brothers or sisters suffer no harm or inconvenience.

18. Sick: (GD 19)
To provide for the care of the sick and the elderly, it is right to take advantage of the provisions of social security and other means of assistance.

**Family and Single**
Each individual and family is responsible for his/her own medical
care. The community may make any communal health plans or resources available to each respective family or individual as needs arise.

19. **Solitude and Separation from the World**
   According to Evagrius Ponticus, the monk is one who is “separated from all and united to all.” This implies a degree of physical separation from the world. Therefore, the monastery is built in such a way to safeguard the quiet and solitude of those who dwell there.

20. The monastic enclosure area where monastic members live is strictly reserved for them, according to their state of life and the directives concerning cloister.

21. To retain monastic solitude, and out of familial courtesy, the appropriate minister's permission is necessary to leave the monastery, or to receive guests, for an adequate reason.

22. **Monastic Attitude and Action**
   After the example of the Rule of St. Augustine (RA1), we value the common life and goods as a primary motivation of our way of life. After St. Benedict (RB7, 8th degree of humility), we seek to do nothing except what is found in the common rule of the community and the example of the seniors. After St. Francis (2C 208, 209), we so value our common rule and life that we see it as the very marrow of the gospel, call it constantly to mind, and put nothing between ourselves that would hinder us from following it together without hesitation or reserve.

23. Within the monastery we seek to live out the attitudes spoken of in the Rule of St. Benedict, specifically under The Instruments of Good Works, Of Obedience, Of Silence, and Of Humility. Concerning the prosperous external function of the monastery we especially value the steps Of Humility dealing with cheerful and ready obedience, being content with all that is poor and mean,
doing nothing except what the common rule of the monastery and 
the example of the elders direct, and moderate speech and 
decorum. From the Franciscan tradition we gain similar inspiration 
from the Admonitions of St. Francis.

24. **Traveling:** (GD 20-21) 
Members do not seek permission for travel that ministers cannot 
give without much difficulty. Ministers give this permission only if 
travel is done in keeping with the spirit of poverty.

25. Even during vacations, the monastic members keep in mind a true 
spirit of poverty, moderation, and simplicity, as well as a modesty 
befitting the gospel of Jesus Christ.

26. Vacations are limited to two weeks a year in the time frames that 
follow:

a. **Postulancy of six to twelve months:**
   i. One week after six to nine months of postulancy.
   ii. Two weeks after ten to twelve months of postulancy.

b. **Novitiate of one to two years:**
   i. Two weeks after the first year.
   ii. Two weeks after the second year.
   iii. Novitiate not to be interrupted by vacation in case of two 
       year novitiate.

c. The vacation schedule is to be staggered. Not all are taken at 
   the same time.

27. Time spent with immediate family members in cases of sickness 
and/or funerals is not to be counted vacation days.

28. According to the discernment by the Minister, we may make 
occasional short visits to our family friends whenever charity or 
necessity requires.
29. *Relationship With Other Expressions* (GD 22)
Inner-community expression relationships take place especially with the single, celibate, or family monastic expressions of our community. Whenever possible, our hermitages are situated in such a way that are close and complimentary while respecting a measure of autonomy and proper privacy. Meetings are held regularly by mutual consent under the general direction of monastic leaders in order to nurture and maintain this relationship, keeping in mind the church’s due caution regarding inappropriate relationships between the various states of life.

30. In order to foster the solidarity of each particular expression and in order to avoid co-dependent or inappropriate particular or exclusive relationships, the formation period of postulancy and novitiate limits any extraordinary social or spiritual visits that are not part of our normal schedule with those outside of their respective particular expression to groups of more than two people or more than one family to one single or celibate person with general permission of leadership.

31. *Relationships With Relatives and Benefactors*
Ministers and other brothers and sisters conscientiously fulfill their personal obligations towards parents, relatives, and benefactors of the brotherhood and sisterhood, and include them in the prayers of the community.

32. Needy parents of brothers and sisters can receive a subsidy according to their need and as the ministers judge fitting.

33. Parents and benefactors, living and dead, participate in the prayers and offerings performed in the communities of the brotherhood and sisterhood.

34. Family members are always welcomed as guests into our midst, and may stay for a visit for an appropriate amount of time. During this time there is no undue disruption of the normal community or
family life. Leadership and community are always advised of all such visits and reserve the right to deny the request for valid reasons.

**Family and Single**
Family and friends may stay in the personal residence with communal approval.

35. **Guests and Visitors**
After the example of Scripture and St. Benedict, guests are to be treated as an angel of God or Christ Himself. We show friendliness and hospitality to visitors to the monastery. Normally, overnight guests in the hermitage are limited to candidates to our way of life, religious, clergy or those who do not disrupt the stability of our monastic way of life. Others are cared for in our retreat and guest facilities.

**Chapter 3: Prayer (C18-24, GD 23-30)**

36. **Liturgy of the Hours:** (GD 24)
Normally, the monastic members pray the Liturgy of the Hours together in common at least twice a day in morning and evening prayer. Compline and Vigils also hold a special place in monastic and Franciscan traditions.

**Family and Single**
With due permission from leadership, an individual or a family may be dispensed from one of these normal common prayer hours.

37. **Eucharist and Communion:** (GD 25-27)
So that it may be more obvious that in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread we are brought into communion with Christ and with one another, each local community celebrates daily a community mass or communion service in which all participate whenever possible.
38. To demonstrate the unity of sacrifice and of priesthood, it is praiseworthy to concelebrate when individual celebration is not really necessary.

39. *Contemplation:* (GD 29)
This time is evidenced on a daily and weekly basis. Each month there is a day of recollection and each year a retreat. The minister in union with the house chapter shall determine the time for contemplative prayer, the day of recollection, and the annual retreat.

40. Ministers have the duty to provide each brother or sister with books, time, and whatever else is necessary for contemplative prayer. Moreover, they see to it that the activity of the brotherhood and sisterhood is scheduled so that the life of prayer suffers no harm because of an overactive life.

41. *Silence and Moderation of Speech*
Moderation of speech is a priceless monastic value. Silence assures us solitude, even in the midst of community, fosters mindfulness of God's mystical communion among brothers and sisters, and opens the heart and mind to the Holy Spirit. It is practiced throughout the day in spirit, at fixed times of sacred silence, even during work, and especially at night during grand silence.

42. Grand Silence is observed from 10:00 p.m. until Morning Prayer. Silence is generally observed in and around the Chapel. An attitude of silence permeates even our speech so that the sacredness of the spoken word is preserved.

43. *Renewal and Recollection:* (GD 30)
To renew our life continually, all brothers and sisters make a retreat each year and make use of periods of recollection between retreats. Ministers provide the time and opportunity for these purposes.
44. Ministers, with appropriate input from chapters, draw up norms which protect the atmosphere of prayer, work and quiet in our hermitages and houses, particularly norms concerning the use of television, radio, stereo, Internet, and the like.

45. During the Day of Recollection, or at other opportune times, ministers provide for Monastic House Chapters on the renewal of our life.

46. A reconciliation service presided over by the Minister in the tradition of the monastic chapter of faults is celebrated weekly on Friday if possible. This time is meant to free guilt, not increase it. Likewise it is meant to enrich and prepare for the sacrament of Penance, not to replace it.

47. Ministers see to it that there is ample time for spiritual reading at table, especially from our Scripture Rule, our Constitutions, and from appropriate Franciscan, monastic, or other religious sources.

48. Ministers see to it that confessors and spiritual direction is available to monastic members. Ministers may choose appropriate avenues and individuals for spiritual direction, keeping in mind the ancient monastic heritage of spiritual direction in both the east and the west.

49. *Regular Prayer Life*

We use all available prayer time in our regular schedule to glean the most of what is readily made available to us through the normal community life and schedule. Singularity or innovations outside of, or to the detriment of, regular life is discouraged in that they often lead to factions, pride and dissipation.

50. According to monastic custom, extraordinary prayer devotions are undertaken with full knowledge of one's immediate leadership, with those of one's own state of life group (i.e.: single, celibate brothers, celibate sisters, and families) unless specifically
approved on a case-by-case basis, and with the avoidance of any quasi-spiritual direction positions developing among those still in formation.

Chapter 4: Study (C 26, GD 31-40)

51. *Professional Study*
The community is responsible for the religious formation of the brothers and sisters, and also for their education in the arts and sciences whenever appropriate. This is done as the needs of the community require and according to the grace working which each has received, bearing in mind the aptitude and God-given gifts and talents of each individual.

52. Due to our emphasis on both contemplative prayer and apostolic poverty, professional or formal study are not a primary concern for the brothers or sisters. The expense of professional education is often prohibited to a community dedicated to poverty. Likewise, the time and housing style involved in professional study is often prohibitive to a community dedicated to the eremitical life of contemplative prayer. Such study is normally only possible as the donations of benefactors and the permission of community leadership are sought and acquired.

53. The inclusion of formal professional study and ministry must not shape us into a community of 'professional religious'. The informal familial lifestyle and identity of brothers and sisters permeate throughout all aspects of the brotherhood and sisterhood, and the entire community.

54. *Personal Talents and Responsibilities: (GD 36-38)*
The minister and community leadership discern and always keep the entire personal development of the brothers or sisters close to the heart.
55. *Theology*

Theological education is encouraged in the community, but with a special care for the contemplative life. A program of philosophical and theological studies based chiefly on Franciscan, monastic, and religious tradition gradually and harmoniously reveals the mystery of Christ to our brothers and sisters. The brothers and sisters acquire a solid, coherent understanding of human nature, the world, and God through their studies.

56. Theology is taught in such a way that the students may accurately draw Catholic and Christian doctrine from divine revelation. Sacred Scripture, which is the soul of all theology, is taught with special care. Likewise, because of our Catholic base, Catholic orthodoxy is maintained while respecting the integrity of the difference of opinion with our non-Catholic members.

57. *Hermetical and Monastic Emphasis*

Study outside of the socio-hermetical environment is not normally encouraged unless for temporary periods of time, and if the contemplative dimension of the brotherhood and sisterhood is not jeopardized. Likewise, poverty is always maintained and protected. Ideally hermitages or houses of prayer may be established close to centers of learning.

58. *Holy Orders*

The brothers who are called to sacred orders are trained as directed by the church, with due consideration given to the specific hermetical and monastic character of our order.

**Chapter 5: Apostolic Service (C 27-37, GD 41-68)**

59. *Primacy of Common Life: (GD 45)*

The ministers do not impose on the brothers and sisters anything at odds with the duties entrusted to them.
a. **Family**
   The apostolate is especially manifested for the family monastic members in bringing the Good News to their family.

b. Within the family, the love of a husband and wife for their spouse is a symbol of the love between Jesus and his church. The love of a parent for a child is a symbol of the love of our Father-God and our Mother Church for all the individuals of the church.

c. Those entrusted with an apostolic ministry remain faithful to their family commitments and to the life of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

60. The difficulty of reconciling some temporary work with responsibilities of community or family life is not in itself sufficient reason to bar a certain kind of suitable temporary activity as long as the time involved is brief, or other means have been employed to facilitate participation in the life of the community for the sake of clarification and approval by leadership.

61. **Work Mentality: (GD 52-55)**
   As long as they have their minister's permission, the brothers and sisters can be available to offer their service especially to the poor and needy, even without accepting wages.

62. **Manual Labor**
   Manual labor holds a preeminent place of importance in both the monastic and Franciscan traditions. It is perhaps the best suited for prayer and contemplation. It is also most helpful in establishing humility and the necessary break with the pride of the world during formation. It is highly regarded by all.

63. **Choice of Work: (GD 56-66)**
   Such a choice always comes from mutual consultation in community from which apostolates will be assigned by ministers
and accepted by the brothers and sisters committed to the apostolates.

64. *Parishes and Institutions*
Due to the primary charism of poverty and itinerancy in our apostolic work, the brothers and sisters do not normally accept the care of parishes or institutions. Our call is to freely go as missionaries to parishes and existing institutions, but we must not take any on-going pastoral responsibility for them. We are a leaven in the dough of the church and the world; a catalytic presence to bring together the active agents of the spiritual and social chemistry of the church in the world. We are called to help accomplish great things while we ourselves are to remain small and invisible.

65. *Periods of Ministry: (GD 67)*
The community seeks a peaceful balance spending approximately two-thirds of its time in work and about one-third of its time in prayer. The traditional graduation from cenobitical training in common life, to socio-eremitical and eremitical life of solitude and reclusion is observed in integrating new candidates and community members into our life.

**Chapter 6: Poverty (C 38-45, GD 69-84)**

66. a. *Celibate*
   i. Jesus has called the brothers and sisters of the celibate expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity to a life of strict poverty based on Matthew 10 and 19, and Acts 2 and 4. The goal of the brotherhood and sisterhood will be to give to the poor and to hold all things in common, respectively. The members may not acquire anything as their own.
   ii. Since the brothers and sisters have given up personal ownership, we share the goods the community uses.
iii. Let us observe the common life and gladly share with one another whatever income the brothers and sisters obtain as wages for their work, or for any other reason. Such income is used in accordance with this directory and must be given over for the use of the community.

iv. All gifts of money or goods are turned over to the community. The minister, however, gives members small gifts from family or friends, who use the gift in keeping with the spirit of poverty they have promised. Gifts of large substance are kept by the community for the common good, or for the poor, as discerned by community leadership.

v. To preserve poverty, the brothers and sisters do not ask their friends, parents, or relatives for money or their things without permission.

b. Family and Single

i. The New Testament calls the brothers and sisters of the family monastic and single monastic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity to an individual, family, and communal poverty based on 2 Corinthians 8 and Acts 2 and 4.

ii. 2 Corinthians 8 allows for private ownership, but encourages a certain equality between the rich and poor based on charity and love. Acts 2 and 4 calls both celibates and married couples into a strict community of goods. This response is voluntary. The family monastic and single monastic expressions of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity build upon these two principles. Therefore, we may retain private ownership, but the communitarian nature of our private possessions is always retained in our heart and manifested by our actions.

iii. It is recognized that the family and single expressions are unique to the rest of the community and necessitates the ownership and use of certain goods, furnishings, services, and funds. Therefore, families and single members may maintain and obtain possessions, goods, and services con-
sistent with moderate Christian living, in accord with our Rule, Constitutions, and Directories, always keeping in mind the simplicity of the gospel call.

iv. Families and single members work for the community cheerfully and honestly to the best of their ability. Family members who work outside the community in jobs and employment donate a minimum of one-third of their income to the community and single members donate a minimum of two-thirds. Depending upon circumstances and community leadership discernment, more may be asked for, with leadership always keeping in mind the primacy of the family and the needs of the single individual as well as the needs of the community. Those who work outside of the community may also be asked to subsidize their outside work through job assignments within the monastic compound.

v. The families and single members are responsible for the general cleaning, maintenance, grooming, and beautification of their assigned residence and grounds. This is done according to a minimal standard set by community leadership. Failure to maintain this minimal standard through neglect is seen as a grave offense against the community.

vi. The education and health care of each family and single member is primarily the responsibility of the family or single member. However, as stated under the directories concerning study and community life, the community is also responsible in appropriate situations, keeping in mind the more primary place of family within priorities.

c. Each brother, sister, or family member is called to stewardship concerning community goods entrusted to their use. They do not discard these goods nor do they donate, sell, or exchange them without the permission of their minister.

d. All gifts to the community of money or goods are turned over to the community.
67. Mendicancy and Religious Begging

a. **Celibate**
   The mendicant tradition of Christianity, and other monastic expressions from other religions value religious begging and itineracy. When payment for their work and ministries are not enough, the brothers and sisters may, according to local conditions and with the permission of their ministers, have recourse to benefactors.

b. Wherever the minister judges begging from door to door necessary, fitting and appropriate for bearing witness, let the brothers and sisters go confidently for alms.

c. We seek ways of begging which are edifying to the society in which we live. This concerns the primary areas of food, clothing, and shelter.

68. **Use of Money**

a. **Celibate**
   Since the use of money is not forbidden by the gospels or the example of the apostles, and since the use of money is necessary today as a means of exchange even for the poor, it is lawful also for the brothers and sisters. The brothers and sisters use money in a way befitting poor people, with a strong sense of responsibility to the community.

b. The brothers and sisters are accountable to the ministers in the use of money. This includes both seeking permission and accurately accounting for income and expenses. Ministers avoid all hoarding and business and spend only what is needed, together with supporting Christian and charitable efforts.

c. Bearing in mind the above article, it is allowable to cautiously deposit money in banks for customary interest. However, the
brothers and sisters must carefully avoid speculative financial investments and operations and even the appearance of profit, hoarding, and gain.

69.  *The Renunciation of Ownership*

a. *Celibate*
   Before temporary profession, candidates for the community dispose of their possessions in such a way that while they retain ownership for themselves, they consign the administration and use of these goods during the post-novitiate formation period to whomever they please. This may be done by a valid document.

b. Before permanent profession, each brother or sister must transfer in writing to any persons of their choice, the ownership of all that they actually possess or may possess through inheritance. By doing this, they should show a special concern for the poor. It is not lawful to keep anything for oneself.

c. Under no pretext whatsoever does any brother or sister dare to pressure one to be professed to leave anything to oneself or to the community. However, if a brother or sister wants to freely give something as alms to the community or its work, the minister may accept this.

d. After permanent profession, everything necessary for the civil effects of disavowal of goods is done immediately. If such valid disavowal is not immediately possible, it is done within the time limitations set by the minister.

70.  *Socio-Eremitical Pattern: (GD 76-77)*
   Ideally, each cell is a separate building clustered around a larger common building and chapel. The hermitage is patterned after the classic skete or laura of the desert fathers and the early Franciscan hermits. However, foundations in the cities may modify
this pattern to that of a House of Prayer as long as privacy is insured.

71. Every house and community of the monastic expression is a House of Prayer and wherever possible, we live in hermitages.

*Celibate*

After the example of the desert fathers and mothers, not all of the hermits always dwell alone in a cell. Ideally during the postulancy, there may be as many as three in a cell, during the novitiate, two in a cell, and upon profession, one resides alone in a cell. Under the extraordinary circumstances, the traditional dormitory style of accommodations may be used.

72. *Monastic Enclosure*

To safeguard the close-knit life of the brotherhood and sisterhood, each individual family, and single brothers and sisters, the monastic enclosure is observed respectively. The enclosure may be defined in terms of space and time.

73. It is up to the minister to define or to change the extent of the enclosure after listening to the House Chapter. He may for an important reason suspend the enclosure itself for a time. The minister can exchange the extent of the enclosure and even lift it, but only for a specific time and for an important reason.

74. *Simplicity*

The monastic lifestyle is to be characterized by joyful simplicity and frugality, so as to better reflect and lead us to God who is Himself beautifully simple. Everything in the household of God conforms to the way of simplicity. This simplicity and goodness is evident in the buildings and furnishings, in food and clothing, and in the celebration of the liturgy.
75. *The Chapel*
Since prayer is the primary vocation of the community, a common chapel, oratory, or prayer room is maintained.

76. These chapels are to be simple, dignified, and clean. Care should be taken that they are suitable for the celebration of liturgical functions and for encouraging the active participation of the faithful. Sacristies are to be suitable for their purpose and sufficiently provided with all the requisites for divine worship. The things used in divine worship are to have dignity and conform to liturgical laws, but without detriment to poverty and simplicity.

77. *Common Buildings*
Since the human being is a unity between body, soul, and spirit, other areas to meet our temporal needs are proper and necessary. A dining area and kitchen will serve to feed our bodies and build up both spirit and soul in the communal dimension of the body of Christ. Since a healthy, well-balanced social life is a natural outgrowth of Christ-like love, a common recreation room is maintained. Since God has created us not only with a heart but with a mind as well, a common library is also provided, if space allows.

78. For serious deliberations of community, a chapter room is also permissible. An area for the existence of a particular work or apostolate might be necessary, but is not considered a 'private area'. It is for community use. In all these things, a moderation and neatness befitting holy poverty and Godly order is exercised.

79. *Décor and Furnishings: (GD 78)*
Simplicity and moderation are maintained both as an environmental aid to nurturing interior poverty and as an external manifestation to others of that interior poverty. Exterior clutter and visual “noise” often betray and effect interior clutter and noise.
80. A systematic check by the ministers of what is being retained in one's cell is made with reasonable regularity.

a. *Celibate*
   A simple bed and bedding normally available in a monastic place will more than suffice. A small desk and chair are helpful for a study place, plus an extra chair or place to sit for visitors.

b. Wall hooks or a small closet will do for the few clothes we possess. Either a common or private bath or toilet as well as a sink and mirror for grooming will be necessary. A few devotional pictures are also good to remind us of our calling plus a few books that aid in prayer or in the study of a hobby. All books are held in common and belong to the community library for community use, study and devotion.

c. The use of a small radio/cassette or CD player is sometimes permitted when used to nurture either knowledge of music or secular news, or to aid in prayer life by the playing of sacred music. However, these devices are to be inexpensive or second-hand and must never be played at the expense of another's need for solitude or silence. Headphones are advisable in close quarters. The use of these is discontinued if the contemplative life becomes either dependent upon their use or possibly stagnates by over-reliance on their use.

d. A common television is also permitted for community use primarily in viewing educational or religious programs. Expensive media equipment is permissible only when absolutely necessary for the continuance of a media ministry by the community. Strict moderation is maintained in the acquiring and using of any media product, and complete abstinence is sometimes preferable for the contemplative.

e. For postulants and novices who have not yet completed their first year and six months in the community, all excessive private
belongings are stored away until after the trial period. In keeping with gospel poverty, they detach themselves from all personal belongings. Any private belongings brought to the hermitage must be submitted for approval by community leadership. This keeps the hermitage free from undue clutter; yet will not leave the postulant without the things they might need if they decide not to stay in community. An individual out of private means substantially meets any storage expense. Th expense is met by the community only upon approval by community leadership.

f. Family
We keep in mind the legitimate needs of the family unit beyond those of celibates and singles.

81. Clothing: (GD 79-83)

a. Celibate
i. The habit of the celibate brotherhood and sisterhood within the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is the normal clothing of the brothers and sisters, respectively. It consists of an ankle-length tunic with a cincture and monastic hood for the celibate brothers. The celibate sisters wear the veil and a tunic shirt and long. The traditional ankle length tunic may be worn upon agreement with the leadership of the Sisterhood. The habit is received upon entering the novitiate as a sign of membership in the community.

ii. During the novitiate, the sisters wear a white veil, and upon profession they wear either a dark brown veil or one the color of the respective habit they have permission to wear. Upon profession, the brothers and sisters will receive a prayer shawl that consists of a long flowing cloak, open down the front with an attached hood. At postulancy, the brothers receive a short tunic shirt, and the sisters receive a short tunic shirt with a skirt. These may be retained through novitiate
and after profession and worn under the habit and prayer shawl, or used as work or leisure clothes.

b. *Family and Single*

The clothing of the family and single monastic expressions of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is to reflect gospel simplicity and modesty. The brothers and sisters wear the habit of their expression as their normal day-to-day clothing according to community policies.

i. *Family*

The habit of the family monastic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity consists of the tunic shirt (and skirt for women).

The tunic shirt (and skirt for women) is received upon entering the postulancy. Upon profession, the brothers and sisters receive a prayer shawl that consists of a long, flowing cloak opened down the front with an attached hood. The ankle length tunic may be received at an appropriate point in time after entrance into the novitiate upon discernment with, and permission by, leadership.

Due to the unique nature of families other provisions may be made by leadership regarding the time of receiving the monastic clothing.

Jewelry such as earrings, finger rings beyond wedding bands, necklaces, etc., is incompatible with the wearing of the monastic habit.

Makeup is normally avoided, but can be worn by exception in a way that is moderate and minimal enough so as not to be noticed.
ii.  ***Single***

The habit of the single monastic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity consists of the tunic shirt (and skirt for women). The tunic shirt (and skirt for women) is received upon entering the postulancy as a sign of greater participation in the community. Upon profession the brothers and sisters receive a prayer shawl that consists of a long, flowing cloak opened down the front with an attached hood.

82. The habit may range in color from off-white to dark brown, depending upon the season, the culture in which they live, the availability and price of cloth, and the decision of community leadership.

83. The heart-tau is worn by all professed members. Postulants and novices wear the simple tau cross.

84.  ***Prayer Shawl***

The prayer shawl is worn primarily during liturgical or public worship. It may also be worn during times of community ministry. It may be worn for appropriate reasons at other times, but is not mandatory and at times may not be recommended. This is done according to the directives of community leadership.

Chapter 7: Chastity (C 46, GD 85-87)

85. a.  ***Celibate***

Throughout our lives, we develop proper psychological maturity by controlling our drives and emotions. Besides controlling our feelings and affection, we apply ourselves diligently and cheerfully to our work, living in humility and penance and using the means necessary for good mental and physical health.

While transferal from the celibate to the single expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is possible, the pursuit of exclusive friendships that lead to romantic involvements are not
permitted while one is living in the celibate brotherhood or sisterhood.

b. Family
The covenant of chastity for the family monastic brothers and sisters is meant to increase their faithfulness and fidelity to one another as husband and wife, keeping in mind that for all of us, whether single, celibate, or married, our one true spouse is Jesus.

Therefore, our covenant of chastity as family monastic members of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is meant to increase the faithfulness and fidelity of marital chastity within the church.

The pursuit of exclusive friendships that lead to inappropriate, romantic involvements are not permitted while one is living in the family monastic state. Single parents function under the same dating policies as the single monastic members.

c. Single
The covenant of chastity for the single monastic brothers and sisters is meant to increase their faithfulness to their one true spouse, Jesus, while encouraging holy and appropriate relationships with other brothers and sisters from various states of life. The single members are free to engage in romantic relationships that may lead to marriage according to the dictates of these directories and the pastoral discernment of their ministers.

The pursuit of non-exclusive friendships that lead to romantic involvement are done according to pastoral discernment on the part of the ministers and according to these directories. Professed single brothers and sisters may date other single Christian men and women inside or outside of the community.
In light of our monastic emphasis, dating is limited to two nights a week, and only with the full knowledge of the ministers and the community in general.

In order to better focus on the discernments and transition into community life, there is no dating during the initial formation period of postulancy and novitiate.

86. Monastic Enclosure is observed in all hermitages to safeguard religious and family life. To foster the privacy and quiet necessary for family life, prayer, and study, visitors may be received in hermitages but ordinarily in visiting rooms, or in common visiting rooms in the common buildings of the community.

Chapter 8: Covenant Promises (C 51-52, GD 91-95)

87. Postulancy

Celibate

a. During this time, they may keep their own bank account and are responsible for the incidentals of their life with the community. This includes major medical expenses and insurance.

b. However, during this time individuals are encouraged to begin detaching themselves more and more from their possessions, if it is mutually discerned between the individual and the leaders of the community that God could be calling them further into novitiate.

88. Novitiate: (GD 93-94)
The following are requisites for admission to the novitiate:

a. Right intention, freedom of choice, spiritual, intellectual, and social fitness.

b. Sound physical and mental health, considering also possible hereditary dispositions.
c. Personal maturity.

d. Appropriate intellectual or professional training.

89. Each one admitted to the novitiate must declare in writing that:

a. They do not suffer from epilepsy or a contagious disease or from any grave or habitual sickness, and that they know the reception and profession will be considered null should they conceal this fraudulently.

b. They are entering the brotherhood or sisterhood of their own free will.

c. They are ready to render all their services gratis as the minister may dispose. They may not demand financial recompense if at any time they should leave the community or be dismissed by the minister.

Family and Single

a. Must be Christians of good standing and able to profess either the Apostle's or Nicene Creeds in both their content and their historical context.

b. Must be at least twenty-one years of age, with proof of marriage, annulment, or widow/widower with dependent or grandchildren residing with them.

c. Children over eighteen years of age, and not full-time students who wish to reside in community with their parents, must come with parents to seek approval of family leadership prior to approaching others in the community. Then upon recommendation, leadership will make determination.

d. Each individual, couple and family is to comply with the Rule, Constitutions, and Directories of the community, as well as all
further policies, procedures, and regulations included in the Directory of the community.

e. Each candidate must fill out all proper forms, complete all the candidate visits, normal testing and screening procedure, and in the interim, living arrangements are made by mutual discernment.

90. The declarations mentioned above are to be signed by the minister and one other witness, as well as by the candidate and are to be kept in the archives.

a. *Celibate*
   To be valid, the novitiate is made in a house duly designated for this purpose. It is up to the minister with his council to designate the house.

b. The novitiate is carried out in a community or a group of novices under the supervision of a novice master or mistress. In an exceptional case, the minister with his council may allow an individual candidate to make this novitiate validly outside the house of novitiate in another house of the order, under the guidance of an experienced brother or sister who is competent to exercise the function of novice master or mistress.

91. During the novitiate some studies are permitted and prescribed:

a. Theology of our Rule, Constitutions, and Directories, as well as the general theology of monastic, Franciscan, and the subsequent development of consecrated life.

b. The Sacred Scriptures and the apostolic tradition of the Church from which they came and so authentically describe the various ways of prayer included in our Rule and Constitutions.

92. *Formative Activity*
   To round out the training of the novices, one or several periods of
other types of formative activity may be allowed. This formation activity primarily involves participation in apostolic ministries of the community that require more lengthy absences from the house of novitiate.

a. *Celibate*
   
   The length of time devoted to formative activity away from the novitiate house can be divided into several stages. However, the total time which the novices spend outside the house of novitiate for such formation must, for the validity of the novitiate, be added to the twelve months prescribed by the novitiate. The duration of the entire novitiate must not exceed two years.

b. The formative activity is so arranged that it does not begin until after the first three months of the novitiate, that the novice spend six continuous months in the novitiate, and that they return at least one month prior to first commitment by profession of covenants. One or several periods of formative activity may be granted at the discretion of the director of novices and with the consent of the competent minister.

93. *Assessment: (GD 95)*

   The novitiate is interrupted and must be started anew and completed if a novice is absent from the group and house of novitiate for more than three months continually or at intervals, except in the case of an absence for formative activity or if the novice takes leave of the house without the minister’s permission with the intention of not returning. If the novice is gone from the novitiate for a period of more than fifteen days these days must be made up. If the absence, however, is for fifteen or fewer days the General Minister may decide in each individual case, after mutual discernment with the Novice Director, whether the length of the novitiate should be prolonged.
94. The novitiate is terminated if the novice makes any formal overtures towards leaving, either through letters or personal visits with vocational type institutions outside of the community without the novice master's permission.

Chapter 9: Correction and Discipline (GD 125-128)

95. Traditional disciplines may also be imposed as a last resort if more private verbal correction and encouragement have repeatedly come to no avail. These disciplines must be moderate, creative, and educational in their nature and must be sensitively applied for the genuine good of the individual and the community with special respect for the basic human rights of the individual.

96. We draw from New Testament scripture and monastic sources as examples of such discipline, except the use of corporal punishment and the primitive application of other monastic discipline. Specifically, these disciplines include public correction, a lower seat in statio in community activities, and moderate and educational manual labor.

97. Withdrawal and Dismissal
For the permanently professed who wish to withdraw, a sabbatical period of six months to one year must be tried during which an individual no longer participates in the life of the community. A leave of absence of one to three years must also be tried during which a member is even released on the non-essential obligations of their profession.

a. Single
   In every case wherever possible, exceptions being determined by leadership, a two-week termination notice is given.

b. While normally striving to live the general legislation in this matter, single members are free to withdraw from community for exceptional reasons with counsel from leadership. It is
proper for them to give a formal two-week written notice with explanation. Readmittance to community is up to community discernment.

98. A sabbatical must be approved by a major superior and confirmed by the General Minister and Council of a particular expression.

99. A leave of absence must be approved by the General Minister and Council of the particular expression and confirmed by the General Council of the entire community.

100. Dismissal must be preceded by two warnings from a major superior before two witnesses, or in writing, and the member must have full opportunity for defense or repentance. If after two such warnings defense is insufficient and repentance is not forthcoming, the written acts of the process are sent to the General Minister of the particular expression. He, in turn, must weigh the matter with the General Council of the entire community. Fifteen days must elapse between each step.

101. **Children**

After the example of St. Benedict, the Celts, and the ancient monks of the desert, children are included in the monastery. We do this with the family monastic expression. Special care is given to them and they are regarded by all with the same love we give to the Christ Child. We also follow the scriptural admonitions for love and discipline of children. We acknowledge the modern problem of both child abuse by adults, and lack of respect for adults by children, and try to overcome these extremes by following these communal norms.

102. Families with children moderate the normal celibate monastic routine of solitude, silence, etcetera, to insure the children have ample time and space for education and recreational play.
103. A monastery play area is provided in such a way and place to insure the solitude and silence of the cloisters, common areas and the chapel.

104. A monastery school may similarly be established if the community is able to properly meet the spiritual, educational and temporal requirements of church and state.

105. The community provides for special children's activities such as plays, games, parties, etc., at appropriate times and places, and under appropriate guidance.

106. Children always show special respect for the adults of the monastery, as well as to each other. This primarily includes deference in respect to speech, common courtesy, and places in various lines and ranks of seating and standing. As St. Benedict says, children are kept in rank and under discipline and are to be supervised and under control until they are old enough to be responsible.

107. They also show respect for special areas. This primarily includes the chapel, common areas and cloisters.

108. Silence and moderate decorum is always kept in and around the chapel. Likewise, there is no rambunctious play, running or shouting in the common areas. The cloister areas of the celibates and singles are off limits to children except by permission of the ministers. Special work areas require the accompaniment of a responsible adult.

109. If younger children are unable to maintain proper silence and stillness and so disrupt community worship and meetings, parents care for them in special areas or in their own family cell.

110. Children old enough to be responsible participate in a minimum of two Morning Prayer services a week. Evening Prayer is encouraged more frequently.
111. Parents discipline their children as an act of love according to balanced scriptural teachings so as to teach them the responsibility of consequences for their actions and so prepare for adult life.

112. Community members may discipline children lovingly concerning these and other matters of common sense in community areas or ministries. More serious discipline is left to the parents, but may be used extraordinarily by those to whom the parents give permission.

113. Discipline is balanced by love and real appreciation on the part of adults towards children and children towards adults.

114. It is understood by all adults that children often learn by making mistakes. Therefore, gentle correction is the norm. Scrupulosity in these matters is avoided, as it can become a source of agitation to all.

Chapter 10: Government (C 53-73, GD 96-124)

115. The Monastic Father and Mother
According to the desert tradition of the Abba and Amma, and the western tradition of the Abbot and Abbess, the monastic family is spiritually parented by a Monastic Father and Monastic Mother, keeping in mind that God is our ultimate Father, and the Church, typified by Mary, is our ultimate mother. Moreover, the Franciscan tradition reminds us that even the General Minister is a brother among brothers and sisters and the servant of all.

116. According to monastic tradition they are believed to act as representatives of Christ to the community, keeping in mind all Christians are to be “like Christ” to one another.
117. According to Eastern monastic tradition, the “Hegumen”, or leader, is one who points the way to Christ on the spiritual journey of all the monks.

118. They act with pastoral care towards both the monastic family and the individual sons or daughters entrusted to them. They strive to be loved more than feared and adapt themselves to the character of each brother or sister and pray for each that they may joyfully follow Christ as God has called them.

119. They fulfill their roles as teachers of God's word in the school of Christ, both through personal example and spoken word, through individual and community work, and conference.

120. They are available for personal dialogue with the brothers and sisters through both group and personal conferences. According to ancient monastic tradition, the brothers and sisters can voluntarily and without constraint manifest their thoughts, feelings and actions to them as if to a loving father and mother. However, conferences are a time to work on one’s own spiritual life under the direction of the Spiritual Father or Mother or Elder brother or sister, not to criticize others. Excessive words are not usually needed.

121. They fulfill their roles as good physicians by bringing spiritual, emotional and physical healing to both the individuals and the family entrusted to their care through guidance, correction and reconciliation. As good shepherds they lay down their lives for the sheep of their flock. When the situation warrants, they may call on the help of the elders and spiritual seniors.

122. The Monastic Father and Mother are the Spiritual Father and Mother of the monastery and are responsible for the spiritual and temporal well being of the monastic community as a whole and as individuals.
123. According to the election by the Monastic Chapter and confirmation by the General Council, either the Monastic Father or Mother will hold the position of Minister and the other as Vicar, respectively, in the monastery.

124. *The Monastic Chapter*
The Monastic Chapter is composed of the permanent professed monastic members of the monastery. They are represented personally if under thirty members, or through proportionate delegation if thirty or more members. Its primary role is to offer consultation to the Monastic Father and Monastic mother in areas of major importance. These areas include:

a. The establishment of a new monastic foundation as a daughterhouse.

b. The raising of a Mission to an Integrated Monastery, with the approval of the General Chapter.

c. The re-admission of a professed member who left the monastery.

125. *The Monastic Council*
The Monastic Council is composed of the Monastic Father and Mother, and the elder brothers and sisters of the single, celibate brothers, celibate sisters, and family monastic expressions. Its role is to assist the Monastic Father and Mother through consultation in the day-in and day-out governance of the monastery. These areas include:

a. The admission of novices to temporary profession.

b. Naming members to a new foundation.

126. *Other Officials*
Other monastic officials may be added as needed, keeping in mind the traditional roles of service such as dean, prior, senior, and the
practical roles of cellarer, porter, kitchen servers, readers, guestmasters and formation directors and how they are to be applied to our own way of life.

127. **The Integrated Monastery**
The Integrated Monastery is a substantially self-sufficient unit of the monastic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity in all areas of existence, spiritual, temporal, pastoral and ministerial.

128. The Integrated Monastery is composed of professed monastic members representing the celibate brother, celibate sister and family monastic expressions together in one place. The single expression is optional.

129. It is governed by a Monastic Father and Mother with a Monastic Council and Chapter and is able to accept new members by its own authority, establish daughterhouses and engage in major ministries, with the approval of the General Chapter of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

130. It is the fundamental unit of the monastic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

131. **The Mission**
The Mission is an extension of the Integrated Monastery. It is composed of at least two professed monastic members from the same expression, but can include any or all expressions.

132. The Mission is governed by a local chapter and minister. A local council, made up of representatives from each monastic expression, is established if more than one exists. If there are six or more members and at least two monastic expressions, a Vicar is also established.

133. At first, all officers of the Mission are appointed by the motherhouse. After a sufficient amount of time, and numbers establish stability, they may be elected for a three-year term.
134. The Mission is to foster vocations, but cannot receive new members except through the motherhouse.

135. *Election of the Monastic Father and Mother*

The founder and foundress of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity at the Integrated Monastery of the Little Portion Hermitage are the Monastic Father and Mother with an unrestricted term.

136. The subsequent Monastic Father and Mother are elected by the permanent professed of the Monastic Chapter acting collegially, together with the superiors of the daughterhouses. An absolute majority is required for election.

137. The General Minister, or his delegate, presides at the election. In the case where the General Minister is eligible for election, the canonical Visitator presides.

138. The Monastic Father and Mother can be elected for an unrestricted term.

139. When two-thirds of the Monastic Chapter desire it, it is possible to retain from the General Minister and the General Council permission to elect a Monastic Father or Mother for a term of six years.

   a. In subsequent elections, so long as the community has not reverted to an unrestricted term, an absolute majority is sufficient to obtain this permission.

   b. Before the election, the president of the election is obligated to ask the Monastic Chapter if it wishes to elect for a definite term.

   c. A Monastic Father or Mother elected for a definite term can always be re-elected.

140. The election is confirmed by the General Minister or the canonical Visitator.
Domestic Directory
of the
Brothers and Sisters of Charity
at
Little Portion Hermitage

Chapter 1: Basic Vision (C 1, GD 1)

1. The community members who are part of the domestic expression profess the evangelical counsels in a way proper to their state of life in this community.

2. The domestic community comes together on international, national, regional, and local levels for mutual support. The first three are through gatherings, chapters and councils. The local level gathers more frequently in the local cell group.

3. The domestic home is considered a most important unit of the community, for it is here that the nuclear family dwells as the most primary expression of community within the human society and the church. It is here that the day-in and day-out lifestyle of the domestic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is lived. Next, come the local cell group, the regional, national and international gatherings, chapters and councils.

4. *Domestic*
   The way of life of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity Domestic expression is essentially domestic. The brothers and sisters are called to live and work in the midst of the secular world in order to instill and offer religious values to all. In this, the brothers and sisters are called to obey Jesus who says to “live in the world without being of the world.”
5. We are also inspired by the rich tradition of those associated with the various monasteries and religious orders and congregations while living in their own homes throughout Catholic Christian history. We also respect the tradition of simple gospel living coming to us through other various alternative Christian movements and groups. We do this respecting the monastic and Franciscan origins and inspiration of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

6. *Cleric: (GD 4-5)*
   According to the individual's call from God, they may seek clerical ordination.

7. *Profession*
   This Christ-centered life of loving contemplation and apostolic action is sought under the profession of the Covenant Promise. By the nature of the domestic community, this profession demands a less intense living-out of each respective covenant than in the monastic expressions of our community, yet more intense than the average lay expression of the church.

8. **Public Profession Formula**

   I, (Brother/Sister) __________________, inspired by the Holy Spirit to live the gospel of Jesus Christ more intently by public profession within the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, by an act of my own free will promise and covenant to God and this community in the presence of the Church and into your hands (Brother/Sister Minister) __________________, to live the life of charity in religious obedience, chastity and evangelical poverty as part of the domestic expression of this community for (three years/life) according to the Scripture Rule, the Constitutions, and leadership of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.
Chapter 2: Community Life (GD 9)

9. This community is evidenced first in the nuclear family itself and secondly, in the community of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. The cell group is the most basic unit of the community beyond the family.

10. For the domestic expression, the community of the nuclear family is seen as a more primary expression of community than the community of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity itself. Any commitment within the Brothers and Sisters of Charity serves to strengthen the family commitments within the overall call to domestic life. If ever there is a habitual tension between these two calls, except in matters of faith and morality as dictated by the church, the family must seriously consider the possibility that God might be calling them out of the community. However, this must not become an excuse for the “independence” mentality that so quickly makes communal input into a member’s lifestyle impossible.

11. Domestic community members are especially encouraged to join the community at large in prayer and service, and by attending chapters, gatherings, cell groups and other available meetings.

12. Domestic cell groups meet on a monthly, bi-monthly, or weekly basis depending on the geographic proximity of its members. Ideally, the cell group meets weekly to build real community relationships based upon the charism and guidelines of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. We also recognize the existence of isolated members who meet with community less frequently.

13. Gatherings, meetings, and ministries are arranged by the minister, along with the appropriate chapter or council, to facilitate a closer contact amongst the community members.
14. Church activity outside of the community is encouraged as an evangelistic ministry. This is done to draw people into relationship with God and one another through Christ, the Church and, when appropriate, this community. Normally, one extra church-type meeting per week beyond the cell group, plus regular parish or church attendance at Sunday and Holy Day worship, is encouraged with a special care for the time demands of the nuclear family.

15. Membership in other associations or communities is possible and encouraged as long as they are mutually compatible and complementary without habitual conflicts in vision or time. Priority is given to the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

16. Domestic houses of prayer may be established under policies and guidelines approved by the General Council, for more intense living out of our way of life that is yet distinct from the monastic expression.

17. Domestic Houses of Prayer embody certain aspects of the monastic expression in less intense lifestyle applications. However, they live the call to intentional community, public and private prayer, and ministry in more intense way than the normal domestic expression. Each House of Prayer draws up its own norms with confirmation from the General Minister and Council and is under their direct authority.

18. Domestic members in residence at the monastery are under direct monastic leadership.

19. Ministers: (GD 15-18)
The ministers keep in mind the proper privacy and autonomy needed for the nuclear family itself.

20. Traveling: (GD 20-21)
Even during vacations, the domestic community members keep in
mind a true spirit of poverty, moderation, and simplicity, as well as a modesty befitting the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3: Prayer (GD 23-30)

21. **Liturgy of the Hours:** (GD 24)
Normally, the domestic expression prays in common at gatherings and in cell groups. When possible, we recommend appropriate family devotions on a daily basis. The Liturgy of the Hours is also encouraged for private use according to sound church and liturgical norms. We also encourage each family to establish and maintain healthy and balanced prayer places and times in the home. Prayer is to be made an integral part of a brother's or sister's daily life, keeping in mind that prayer binds our mystical body in Love.

22. **Eucharist and Communion:** (GD 25-27)
So that it may be more obvious that in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread we are brought into communion with Christ and with one another, each local community celebrates as often as possible a community mass or communion service, in which all participate.

23. **Contemplation:** (GD 29)
At least once a year there is a regional gathering and national gathering, or chapter, including teaching and prayer. The minister, in union with the BSCD council, shall determine the time for the Chapter, and the Regional Ministers shall determine the time for the regional gatherings.

24. **Renewal and Recollection:** (GD 30)
To renew our community life continually, all brothers, sisters, and families attend gatherings and make use of periods of recollection between retreats. Ministers provide the time and opportunity for these purposes.
25. With the appropriate input from community leadership, each family or individual may draw norms which protect the atmosphere of prayer, work, and quiet in our dwellings, particularly concerning the use of television, radio, and the like.

26. Brothers and sisters make ample time for spiritual reading, especially from our Scripture Rule, Constitutions, Directories, and from appropriate Franciscan, monastic, and other religious sources.

Chapter 4: Apostolic Service (GD 41-68)

27. The apostolate is especially manifested for the domestic brothers and sisters in bringing the Good News to their own families and local community.

28. Within the family, the love of a husband and wife for their spouse is a symbol of the love between Jesus and his church. The love of a parent for a child is a symbol of the love of our Father-God and our Mother Church for all of the individuals of the church.

29. Those entrusted with an apostolic ministry remain faithful to their family commitments and to the life of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

30. Primacy of the Family and of Community Life: (GD 45) The ministers insure that the community members are not tied down by obligations inconsistent with the family or communitarian life described in the Rule, Constitutions, or these Directories.

31. Choice of Work: (GD 56-66) Such a choice always comes from mutual consultation in community.
Chapter 5: Poverty (GD 69-84)

32. The New Testament calls the brothers and sisters of the domestic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity to an individual, family, and communal poverty based on 2 Corinthians 8. 2 Corinthians 8 allows for private ownership but encourages a certain equality between the rich and poor, based on charity and love. The domestic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity builds upon this principle. Therefore, we may retain private ownership, but the communitarian nature of even our private possessions is always retained in our heart and lived out in very manifest ways in our actions.

33. It is recognized that the domestic expression is unique to the rest of the community and necessitates the ownership and use of goods, furnishings, and funds to maintain the family unit. Therefore, domestic brothers and sisters maintain and obtain possessions, goods, and services consistent with moderate Christian living, in accord with our Rule, Constitutions, and Directories, always keeping in mind the simplicity of the gospel call.

34. The domestic brothers and sisters donate some portion of their income to the community for its maintenance. Depending upon circumstances and community leadership discernment, more may be asked for, with leadership always keeping in mind the primacy of the family as well as the needs of the community.

35. In keeping with poverty, all labor or ministry by the domestic brothers or sisters is entered into as being the Lord's work. In doing so, the natural gifts and talents of the individual are considered.

36. Socio-Eremitical Pattern: (GD 76-77)
The dwelling is patterned after the classic kellion or prayer cottage
of the East. Every house and community of the domestic expression should be a House of Prayer.

37. *Décor and Furnishings: (GD 78)*
Keeping in mind the legitimate needs of the family unit, simplicity and moderation are maintained even in the home, both as an environmental aid to nurturing interior poverty, and as an external manifestation to others of that interior poverty. Every home is called to reflect the peace of God through neatness and order, establishing a sacred space which manifests the fruits of the Spirit.

38. *Clothing: (GD 79-83)*
The clothing of the domestic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is to reflect gospel simplicity and modesty. As an option, the domestic brothers and sisters may wear the habit of the domestic expression; however the wearing of this habit is not mandatory. This habit consists of the tunic shirt and the heart-tau cross.

39. The tunic shirt is off-white in the summer and dark brown in the winter, depending upon the decision of community leadership. The tau cross is received upon entering the novitiate as a sign of membership in the community and the heart-tau is received at profession. The domestic brothers and sisters receive the tunic shirt upon novitiate.

40. The tunic shirt is worn publicly during the meetings and ministries of the community with the support and approval of competent local church authority. The use of the tunic shirt as normal clothing by professed members is done with the approval of community leadership with special sensitivity to local church input.

**Chapter 6: Chastity (GD 85-87)**

41. The covenant of chastity for the domestic brothers and sisters is meant to increase their faithfulness and fidelity to one another as
husband and wife, or directly to our Lord if celibate or single, keeping in mind that for all of us, whether single, celibate, or married, our one true spouse is Jesus.

42. Therefore, our covenant of chastity as domestic members of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is meant to increase faithfulness and fidelity within the church.

Chapter 7: Covenant Promises

43. Postulancy: (GD 92)
The postulant is encouraged to spend a six-month to twelve-month period in close contact with other brothers and sisters, attending a national and/or regional chapter, as well as any available local cell group meeting, allowing the brother, sister, or family to slowly integrate into community life.

44. Novitiate: (GD 93-94)
The following are requisites for admission into the novitiate:

a. Right intention, freedom of choice, spiritual, intellectual, and social fitness.

b. Personal maturity.

c. Are Catholics in good standing. Our non-Catholic sisters and brothers must be able to profess either the Apostle's or Nicene Creed in both their content and their historical context.

d. Sound emotional and psychological fitness.

e. Each individual, couple, or family is to comply with the rule, Constitutions, and Directories of the community, as well as all further policies, procedures, and regulations included in the Directories of the community.
f. Each candidate must fill out all proper forms, attend a regional or national gathering, and complete normal testing and screening procedures.

45. Each person admitted to the novitiate must declare in writing that:
   a. They are entering the domestic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity of their own free will.
   b. They are ready to provide monetary support for the domestic expression of the community.

46. The declarations mentioned above are to be signed by the minister and one other witness, as well as by the candidate, and are to be kept in the archives of the community.

47. Assessment: (GD 95)
The novitiate is interrupted and must be started anew and completed if a novice does not participate as directed by the novice director.

48. The novitiate is considered null and void if the commitment for the one to two-year novitiate is made without the intention to seriously pursue the domestic expression in temporary profession.

Chapter 8: Government (GD 96-124)

49. Domestic Council of Elders
   The Domestic Council of Elders is composed of the General Minister, Vicar General Minister, First Counselor and Honorary Council Member. Members of the Domestic Council are limited to serving two consecutive elected terms for any given office. Terms of office should be staggered so that no more than one-half of said Council shall stand for election or replacement at one time.

50. The General Directives on “Conferring Offices—Particular Councils” are followed concerning establishment of General,
Regional and Local leadership with the next higher leadership body appointing or confirming elections. It is the right of the General Council of the whole community to choose that, in a chapter of elections, everyone has a direct vote instead of only delegated representatives casting ballots.

51. The Domestic General Minister reviews all applicants to the Domestic expression and approves or disapproves their entrance into the postulancy. The General Minister conducts dialogue with professed members who consider leaving the community. They have the responsibility to review quarterly reports submitted by Regional Ministers on the state of their region. The General Minister is to guide and direct Regional Ministers and Vicars when there are regional disputes or differences that cannot be settled locally or the need for a higher authority is evident. They assist in the planning and implementation of a national gathering at the Motherhouse at regular intervals (not less than every other year).

The General Minister is to finalize the approval of aspirants for the professed state of life in the Domestic expression and preside at reception of same whenever possible.

52. The Domestic Vicar General can be a representative at the General Council if needed. They assume the General Minister's role in his or her absence. The Vicar assists the General Minister when and where needed.

53. The Domestic First Counselor is a representative of the National Domestic Leadership Council. They can be representative at the General Council or Plenary Council if needed. The First Counselor assists the General Minister and Vicar where needed.

54. The Honorary Council Member is the outgoing General Minister of the domestic expression. Their responsibility is to assist the new General Minister in the transition of office and for consultation when and if needed.
55. **Regional Level**  
The Regional Council consists of the Regional Minister, Vicar and Formation Assistants.

56. The Regional Minister has the responsibility to formulate and guide regional Domestic Postulants, Novices and Temporary Professed to guide in the on-going formation of all members. They approve or disapprove of aspirants to the novitiate or professed state in their region with and in accord with the Domestic General Minister. The Regional Minister receives novices at Regional or Mini-regional gatherings. They assist in the implementation of programs and studies. The Regional Minister promotes, establishes and plans the annual Regional gathering at various regional sites. These plans are to be approved by the General Council. The Regional Minister promotes, establishes and plans mini-gatherings at various times and places. They promote, establish and maintain a Regional library. The Regional Minister submits a quarterly general report on the state of the Region and the members to the Domestic General Minister. They assist in the promotion and establishment of local BSCD Cell Groups in the Region. The frequency of the meetings is to be approved by the Regional Minister. These cell groups are to meet once a week or bi-monthly, preferably, or once a month under extraordinary circumstances. The Regional Minister shares the responsibility with the Vicar to select and appoint Regional Formation Assistants.

57. The Vicar has an ongoing responsibility to assist and consult with the Regional Minister, to insure real experience of the life of the region. They assume the Regional Minister's role in his or her absence. (The Vicar is to assist the Regional Minister in guiding and forming the Formation Assistants.)

58. Formation Assistants are to assist Regional postulants, novices, and temporary professed members assigned to them by Regional Minister and/or Vicar, in their assigned formation studies, Rule,
Constitutions, and reading list. They are to submit at least a quarterly report on each person in their care with their recommendations. Due to the Catholic base of the community and the teaching role of formaters, Formation Assistants are chosen from the Catholic membership who have the proper gifting to fulfill their role.

59. **Local Level**
The cell group is directed by a Local Council of Elders, permanent professed if possible, who fulfill the positions of Minister, Vicar Minister, and Secretary/treasurer. A local Minister may be appointed by the Regional Minister to lead without a Council of Elders in the formation stages of the cell group, or under extraordinary circumstances.

60. A permanently professed member who for serious personal reasons needs to withdraw from active participation in the community for a specific time period may request to be placed on inactive status. In their absence, they shall maintain their membership but be released from voting, leadership rights, and general responsibilities. The duration of the inactive status is at the discretion of the Domestic General Minister.
Chapter 1: Basic Vision

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity is a covenant community called as a spiritual family into deep love relationships with and in Jesus Christ. Jesus is our primary example. The Scripture is our primary rule. Our primary law is love.

The primary charism of this community is love. The greatest source of love is God, who is selfless love and self-sufficient transcendence with the life of the Trinity itself. The whole created universe is a free expression of God's love. The greatest expression of God's love for creation is the redemptive self-sacrifice of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Thus, the Trinity and the cross of Christ remain our divine models for the working of love in the Christian community that sojourns on the face of this earth.

In order for this divine love to avoid being only misdirected human emotion, it must be guided by divine truth. Consequently, it involves an understanding of the mind as well as the emotions of the heart.

This love relationship of heart and mind will be formed and fostered through a life of prayer and study. From this life of charity, centered on love relationship with Jesus, the brothers and sisters will work to share the simplicity of Jesus' love with others through an apostolic service. Through a well-balanced life of prayer, study, and apostolic service, we
hope to make the simple love mystery of Christ's dying and rising more visible in today's world.

Covenants
This lifestyle of charity will be lived out by the profession of covenant promises. These covenants are to God and to the community. These covenant promises will be professed according to various states of life and for various lengths of time by all who come to share this life of charity in imitation of Christ. The primary covenant promises of charity are as follows:

a. Poverty: To live a life of apostolic poverty so others might know the wealth of the King of kings.

b. Chastity: To live a life of chastity so others might be wed to the Divine Lover.

c. Obedience: To live a life as bondervants to the King in obedience so others might know the freedom of co-heirs to his kingdom and the divine authority of Him who first humanly obeyed.

In addition to these three primary covenants, we may also profess the following covenants:

a. Substantial Silence: To live a life with an attitude of humble silence so that others might hear the living word of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

b. Substantial Solitude: To live a life of substantial solitude so others might come to know the presence of the constant companion.

c. Prayer: To live a life of contemplative prayer so others might experience the divine action of Jesus' love in their life.

d. Penance: To live a life of daily self-denial and conversion so others might turn daily to the comfort of the Spirit of Christ in their life.
Integration
Integration is a key expression of our primary charism of love. Integration comes from the personal encounter with Jesus on the cross. On the cross Jesus reconciles the height of heaven and the depths of the earth, the far left and the far right on the earth, through his outstretched arms of love. This means that the things which contradict one another in the world may now come to complement one another in Christ. This brings much integrated diversity as long as all is centered squarely on the cross of Jesus, where God's love for all was manifested perfectly.

Integration also comes from a realization of the healthy interdependence of all the members of the Church, all peoples of the world, and all creatures of creation. This attitude causes us to become truly catholic or universal and full, as we seek to know all God's gifts coming to us through creation, the human race, and the Church, and to find our healthy place with each. Because of this, the scope of the community is international and universal.

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity integrate various aspects of Christian tradition into a manifest, living whole in order to more effectively share the holistic beauty of this balanced tradition with others. As such, our community integrates all religions from a uniquely Christian base, all Christian faiths from a uniquely Catholic base, and all religious and monastic traditions from a uniquely Franciscan base. Thus, we are wholly ecumenical and integrated from an intentionally Franciscan, Catholic base.

We also integrate seeming contradictions into complements on other levels. We intentionally integrate charismatic and contemplative spirituality. We integrate our call to solitude with our call to community. We also integrate our primary call to contemplative community with our call to overflow into apostolic action through individual and community ministry to service.

Within the structure of the community itself, we also integrate our specific and unique call to live in the single, celibate, or married states into a
balanced and living whole. Thus, there are proper integrations between male and female, single, celibate, and married members in our community. Likewise, we integrate the clerical and lay, the monastic and secular states in our community. As such, we build on the monastic tradition which sees the community itself as a quasi-church, and we look prophetically toward the future as a microcosm and possible prototype of the Church.

Because of this, we draw inspiration from the entire monastic tradition in our integration. Knowing that the word monk means 'alone' we follow the hermetical example of the desert fathers of Egypt, especially St. Antony of the Desert. Knowing that we do this as brothers and sisters in community, we also draw inspiration from the cenobitic tradition established by St. Pachomius. We emulate the moderation and stability of St. Benedict's rule, as well as the emphasis on brotherly love in the common life found in the rule of St. Augustine. As a semi or socio-eremitical based community, we also draw inspiration from the original Carmelite Rule and the Constitutions of the many semi-eremiitical reforms of the eleventh century, especially the Camaldolese of St. Romuald, with whom the Franciscans share so much history. The integrated double monasteries of the Celtic monks also inspires our integrations between single, celibate, and married members, living together in appropriate expressions in our monastic village.

We also recognize and emulate the hermits, pilgrims, and itinerate preachers of the Penitential Movement, since it was from this movement that the whole Franciscan family was born, giving birth not only to the mendicant friars of the First Order and the contemplative sisters of the Second Order, but also to the rich and diverse congregations of brothers and sisters of the Third Order Regular and Secular of St. Francis, or the Brothers and Sisters of Penance.

Because of our Franciscan base, we observe the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ after the example of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. We first seek to understand and live the beautiful tradition of contemplation of heart that is traceable back to the holy lady, St. Clare. We then seek
to understand and live the simple and wise friar, St. Anthony. We seek to understand and live the freedom of our royal Lady Poverty that is traceable in heart and mind back to our free little brother and holy father, St. Francis. The rules and writings of Francis and Clare serve as important sources of inspiration for our lives as Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

We also recognize and are inspired by the various non-Catholic movements which so strongly emphasize intense alternative approaches to family oriented Christian community, such as the Mennonites of Menno Simons, the Amish of Jacob Amman, or the Quakers of George Fox.

Also, the ashrams, or communities of the non-Christian religions of the East have much to teach us regarding lifestyle. Of course, we do this from our Catholic, Christian, Franciscan base, retaining orthodox doctrine, integrity of sacraments, and obedience to the authorities over us, both as individuals and as a community.

Finally, at the root and center of all that we are on earth, we seek the divine love of Jesus Christ, our Lover and our Lord, who leads us to the Father under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the gospels, which serve as our primary rule of life.

In all of this, we integrate the various traditions of the past in the present as we build toward the future. We are the living stones and the spiritual temple of God, built on the foundations of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone. All of the monastic, religious, and Franciscan traditions of Christianity have been built stone upon stone, course upon course, through almost 2,000 years of Christian history. We must build squarely upon the sound traditions of the past if we are to build straight into the future. However, to simply imitate the past is to go down, rather than go up, in this building process. We must build our stones squarely on all the traditions or stones of the past, but we must build upward into new space if we are to go higher. This involves an element of risk. We build upon the past, but we are called to manifest something new. We are rooted in the past, but our flower must be fresh and new if it is to bring new and fresh beauty into this world.
Therefore, although we are Franciscan in our base, the Lord has given us a prophetic word to “die to Franciscanism”. Jesus is our primary example and the Scripture is our primary rule. In this we are less Francis and more Jesus. Likewise, we are perhaps more like Francis and less like Franciscanism. As Francis was called to live the gospel in his time, so have we been birthed as a fresh add new expression of gospel living for our time.

As such, Franciscanism is our mother, but we are called to be a child that is unique and new. As the Old Testament was to the New Testament Church, so is Franciscanism to the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. We love our heritage as a child loves its mother. Likewise, we may quote an appeal to the mother in order to legitimize the child. However, we are not exactly like our mother. We are a child that is unique and new. We must be birthed mature, and stand as our own person.

We are not a synthesized community, we are an integrated community. Integration is like two or three cords being woven together to form a rope. In the weaving process the distinct character of each cord is retained, but they work together to form something bigger and stronger. Synthesis is the total disintegration of the uniqueness of each individual part to form something brand new. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are integrated, meaning that we take various unique aspects of Christian, Catholic, and monastic Franciscan life and interweave them to form something new, but something that is built very surely and very perceivably on the apostolic and religious traditions of our Christian past.

This integration must be more than just good ideas and concepts. It must be a living, spiritual reality. Just as St. Paul says the body of Christ has many members, yet it is one body; so, too, do we take many different members of our Christian heritage and integrate them into a living body that continues to grow through space and time in Christ.

Regathering
As a Catholic and Christian ecumenical community, we intentionally see the dispersion and regathering of the Jews of the Old Testament as a
possible symbol and pattern of our ecumenical mission. As the Jewish people were given a divinely ordained leadership of priests, a lifestyle based on the law, and a worship centered on temple sacrifice, so has the new Israel been given an ordained leadership of apostles and their successors, a lifestyle based on the law of love, and a worship centered on liturgy and sacrament. As the Jewish people were dispersed by God for the sins of the leaders and the people, so has the New Testament Church been dispersed for the sins of both the shepherds and the flock. As God continued to shepherd his people in dispersion by raising up a new Rabbinical leadership and a word oriented worship in the synagogue system, so has God continued to shepherd the people of the New Testament dispersion through various ecclesial communities of the Reformation. Likewise, as God regathered the dispersed Jews of the synagogue and integrated them with the original leadership and worship of the temple, so must we regather the legitimate leadership and worship gifts of the Reformation and integrate them with the original apostolic leadership and Eucharistic worship of the Catholic Christian expression. We integrate while retaining the legitimate integrity of both.

**Apostolic and Prophetic**
The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are called to be a microcosm of the Church. As the Church itself is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone, so is the Christian community called by God to be both apostolic and prophetic. The apostolic dimension is lived out by our humble submission to and union with the pope and the bishops as successors to St. Peter and the apostles. The prophetic dimension is lived out in love by the simple integrated witness of our community and its various structures, spiritualities, and ministries. Since the community itself is a microcosm of the Church, the apostolic is also embodied in these prophetic structures, spiritualities, and ministries. In this unique integration of the apostolic and prophetic charisms, the community itself becomes a possible prototype of the Church of the future.
As the Church is both an apostolic and prophetic witness of Christ to the modern world, so does our Christian community as a microcosm of the Church, bear an apostolic and prophetic mission to the world. Not only do we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ as a leaven in the dough of the modern world, we also provide a spiritual and temporal alternative to even the basic concepts and structures of modern, secular society. We present an alternative dough to better bring the Bread of Life to a hungry world. We form an alternative society within the society of the religious and secular world.

Chapter 2: Communal Life

Spiritual Family
As the name Brothers and Sisters of Charity implies, we are a spiritual family bound in the life of Jesus Christ. As Jesus is our brother, so we are brothers and sisters in Him. As love is the fulfillment of the entire law and prophets, the greatest law of our community is love, and the greatest prophetic message is charity.

As a true spiritual family in Christ, the community is incarnationally guided by the leadership of a spiritual father and mother who act as spiritual parents. As Christians both the father and mother stand as Christ to each other and to the whole community. In this relationship a true and loving attitude of family is retained between the sons and daughters and the parents. The parents normally seek the appropriate input of the whole family before exercising the proper role of decision-making in leadership that affects the whole family. In turn, the family is called to support the parents as the ones upon whom the greater burden is laid through familial dialogue and loving obedience. In this family relationship is found the balance of mutual support which is love.

This attitude of family relationship reaches out to all branches of the Franciscan family tree from whom we have been birthed and nourished as a new fruit of the Spirit of God. This attitude permeates outward to all religious and monastic communities of the Church, the entire Church, and to all of creation, both human and non-human, animate and
inanimate. Knowing that the Church is Christ's body, all human beings are created in the image of God and all creation bears the distinct traces of the Creator. Consequently, a holistic attitude of love, peace, and justice, permeates our whole environment and ecology as a community and as individuals.

Since Jesus and His disciples are our primary example of love, and the Scriptures are our primary rule for this family life, we are always to be united with the Church Jesus founded, through which God gave us the Scriptures. The Franciscan tradition, moreover, binds us to special reverence for the pope and complete obedience to him. We esteem him as the successor to St. Peter and the Vicar of Christ among the bishops, who shepherd the flock of the Church on earth. According to all monastic traditions, let us show respect for each individual bishop as a successor to the apostles. As it was the desire and example of St. Francis, let us give due respect to all priests, deacons, and religious. As an ecumenical community let us, likewise, show proper respect for all the leadership of the various ecclesial communities which call upon the name of Jesus as Lord. Let us show respect to all the people of God as members of Christ's body, all people on earth as created in God's image, and all creation as bearing the traces of God.

All are united in Christ who created all and offers redemption and reconciliation to all from the cross and his empty tomb, through the ministry of the Church. These attitudes and actions of family and unity with all transforms our whole life in the power of the Spirit, whose temple we are. They turn the water of mundane, daily, human living on the face of this earth into the wine of the kingdom of heaven in a true Christian community through the miracle of faith in Christ.

Love

In keeping with the name, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, the most important charism of our family is love. Jesus teaches us that love of God and the neighbor is the fulfillment of the whole law and all the prophets. The Apostle Paul tells us that it is the greatest charismatic gift and is first on his list of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, love is the
greatest charism and our most important law in the community. When you cannot find a law or a leader to guide you in what to do, follow the advice of St. Augustine who said, “Love God and do what you will”, and ask the question, “What would Jesus do?”

Love is most fully manifested in the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. But love is not the annihilation of self. It is the sacrifice of self. You cannot sacrifice what you do not first possess. Therefore, a true love of self must precede self-sacrifice. As Jesus teaches, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

True love of self is based on the love of God who created us in his own image. That image has been obscured by sin, but the image remains and is restored once we are cleansed from sin in Christ. We must hate sin if we love God, but hatred of self does injustice to the image of God, and injustice to the image of God is a sin against God himself. If we love God, we must love ourselves. If we love ourselves, we will appreciate ourselves and develop a positive self-image.

Yet, true self-sacrifice brings an even greater self-fulfillment. As Jesus says, “He who loses himself for my sake and the sake of the gospel, will come to find it.” Therefore, a true self-sacrifice brings both true self-fulfillment and the paradox of the cross, which is the ultimate fulfillment of self through selfless love.

This true self-awareness in the mystery of Christ does not make us egotistical or proud. It makes us humble. This humility is absolutely necessary in community. This humility must be based on the truth ... the truth of our own self existence in light of the truth of God, all humankind which bears the image of God, the Church which as the temple of the Holy Spirit is the Body of Christ, and all creation which bears God's traces. It is truth that we are dependent on God, and interdependent with the Church, the human race, and all the created world for our very self existence. This truth of our own existence fosters both humility and a sense of positive self-worth.
The humility of love cannot foster either independence or codependency in community. Independence denies our dependence on God, our interdependency with the Church, the human race, and the created world. It is ultimately egotistical and proud. Codependency seeks a false dependency on God and people as a reaction to a lack of a true appreciation of self or positive self-image. Ultimately, it causes unrealistic expectations in our love relationship with God and with people, and leads to disappointment, despair, and even hate. Attitudes of independence and codependency work in opposition to the true charism of love, which fosters attitudes of humility based on the truth. Since an attitude of true humility is necessary in community, a mature attitude of self-love and self-worth in the Lord which breeds a positive self image is needed by all.

If we are truly humble, we will also be more silent so as to better listen both to God and to people. This is based on a realization of our interdependence with others and our dependence on God, which causes us to truly listen to others and to God in order to be self fulfilled. It is also based on a love which causes us to sacrifice that self through silence so that the words of others might be truly heard.

If we really listen in silence to others and to God, then we will discover the gift of obedience. This involves simply and maturely cooperating with the reality of our dependence on God and our interdependency with people, especially those in the offices of authority established by God within both the Church and the world. This is true especially in the Church and the communities of the Church who guide us in the name of God for our own self-fulfillment in Christ. It is also based on the self-sacrifice of love, which willingly conforms the self to the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Chapter 3: Prayer

The most important task of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is to prayerfully worship God. Prayer is the strength of our individual and community existence. It is through prayer that we find the heart of our
love relationship with Jesus, working in individual lives that communities prosper in the peace and unity of God as a whole.

It is in the solitude of prayer that we find our true companion and thus learn to be better companions for one another in community. It is in the inner silence of prayer that we hear the living word of God and thus learn to speak words that flow from the love of God to one another. Let it never be forgotten that the primary purpose of this community is to live a life of contemplation and prayer.

Our approach to prayer embodies an integration of many spiritual traditions. We draw much inspiration from the solitary and semi eremitical approach of the hermits like St. Antony of the Desert in both our private and our communal prayer. The solemnity of the common liturgies of Benedictine and all coenobitic monasteries inspires us to appreciate the importance of the work of God in the Liturgy of the Hours. The charismatic, creative, and spontaneous use of color, sacramental sign and symbol, and of all creation, through an appreciation of Christ's incarnation as found in Franciscan prayer, says much to the balance between charismatic and liturgical, reverence and joy, form and freedom, in worship. Likewise, does Francis inspire us to reverence the traditional use of sacraments and devotional aids? We also love and appreciate the beautiful hymns of the Protestant Reformation, and their emphasis on the word of God in Scripture in both private and communal prayer. The charismatic experience of Catholics and Protestants alike in our own time draws much from the ancient monastic and Franciscan mystics, as well as the more recent Pentecostal Movement of the earlier twentieth century in America. Lastly, we cannot help but recognize some similarity between the Hesychast tradition of Russian Christianity and the experience of the mystics of the far East.

Creation

Inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, we seek not so much to pray, but for our life to become a prayer. In this holistic attitude, we are helped greatly by all of creation which bears the traces of God. We are helped by encountering all peoples for they bear the image of God. We are helped by
the Church for it is the very Body of Christ. With these helps from God, our whole life becomes a prayer and all of creation becomes a sort of church to be revered.

Penance
As penitents, or people of conversion, we can only turn to creation as a ladder leading to God, if we first turn to God expecting him to draw us up by grace to himself through all creation. We recognize that the world bears God's traces, and all people bear God's image, but that image has been obscured by sin and has corrupted the whole world. As penitents, we always seek to be open to the charismatic fire of the Holy Spirit of God, which burns up all that is not of God and inflames our hearts with divine love. This fire must be stirred up actively through charismatic praise and thanksgiving, as well as through Christian meditation, as we choose to conform our thinking in our lives to Christ. Everything in our life must be consumed in the fire of God's love. Hot embers will then burn steadily and effortlessly as we enter into passive, contemplative peace.

To help us in this conversion we also use both the sacrament of penance, and individual and corporate confession within the community. This is done to foster forgiveness, not guilt, so is responded to freely, not under communal constraint.

Sacraments
We recognize that the grace of God is offered to us as a gift through the ministry of the Church in the sacraments. They both symbolize our existent faith and cause that faith to grow stronger. This gift must be actively received by faith if we are to experience the full and conscious benefit of these mysteries. However, even with weak faith, God can work through these channels to cause our faith to grow stronger.

We also recognize that the grace of God is not exclusively limited to the channel of the sacraments of the Church. Normally, the sacraments are the instrument God uses to administer a particular grace. But God, being God, is free to use whatever channel in the created world he so wishes.
to give his gifts of grace. Likewise, he may touch a person directly, without any incarnational channel whatsoever. Even in these cases, the further reception of the appropriate sacrament is advisable, since a true sacrament of the Church not only affects, but symbolizes grace. The sacrament can only confirm and strengthen, and therefore perfect grace.

Divine Office
Inspired by the ancient monastic tradition, our community prays the Liturgy of the Hours daily. The Liturgy of the Hours is the common prayer of the community, for it unites us with the official common prayer of the whole Church. Ordinarily, it is prayed in common wherever the brothers and sisters live together, or wherever they come together.

The common celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours is not attached to a specific place, but to the community itself. We see the world as our cloister, the body as our cell, and our soul as the hermit within. Still a church or oratory is ordinarily to be preferred, both because it is a holy place and because in it the witness of prayer is better given the people of God.

Eucharist and Communion
Since the community is a microcosm of the Body of Christ, we gather as frequently as possible to receive the Body of Christ sacramentally in communion. When possible, this is done within a Eucharistic Liturgy. On Sundays and Holydays, Eucharist is celebrated at the community or attended by the community in the local parish.

As a symbol of the painful disunity of doctrinal mind and structures of body that still exist between Catholic and non-Catholic expressions of the Christian faith, and in obedience to the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, we do not practice inter-communion during our Eucharistic liturgies or Communion services. We take the pain of these celebrations as a symbol of the pain still existent among various professing Christians because of the disunity of their particular ecclesial communities with one another. In this symbolic sense, we take this pain as a microcosm of the pain of the whole professing Body of Christ and as a
positive force which impels us to work even more strenuously for the cause of the restoration of the full unity in the professing Body of Christ.

Charismatic
The Holy Spirit is given to us in various ways through word and sacrament, especially Baptism and Confirmation. Yet, we recognize that we must actually respond to this gift if we are to enjoy the full working of the Spirit in our lives. In the common prayer hours we are open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. We do not stifle the use of new music for worship, nor the gift of spontaneous singing in the Spirit by individuals or groups. We try to be open to the various gifts of the Spirit within the context of the liturgy. We also take time to personally share various needs before or during the intercessions, so the community can better pray with understanding from the heart. The community must be open to the moving of the Holy Spirit if our common prayer is to be meaningful as a communication between a living God and human beings.

Upon communal discernment the formal liturgical office may be discontinued in favor of total spontaneous common prayer and for various periods of time. However, at least one formal office is prayed daily, even during this time. In this freedom to move in the Holy Spirit, let reason and reverence be safeguarded through the grace of discernment on the part of both community and leadership.

In addition to the more overtly Catholic charismatic celebrations of liturgy and sacrament, we also engage in the more spontaneous and less structured charismatic service, centered more exclusively on the word and the spontaneous working of the Holy Spirit. In this we try to embody many of the good expressions of worship which come to us from the Reformation. It is our hope that we do this in a way that is mutually balanced and respectful while retaining the doctrinal and sacramental integrity of both Catholic and non-Catholic expressions and maintaining a truly Catholic base.


**Devotion**

In our devotions we give special attention to those which cause us to meditate on the life and passion of Christ. We also give special place to those honoring Mary and her role in the Church, for it was through her faith response to God that the Word was made flesh, and it is she who as the bride of God is consequently the most perfect model of the Church as the bride of Christ. We give a special place to the Scriptures, for they are the written version of the living Word and are the earliest written account of apostolic tradition through whom the whole world first heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Likewise, we love and adore the Holy Eucharist for it is the continued sacramental incarnation of the Body of Christ, who is the living Word. Furthermore, we honor the saints who have been transformed by that sacrament and word, and who are in constant communion with us through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

Notwithstanding the need for the discipline of faith in any form of prayer, if at any time these devotions become an occasion for legalism or undue spiritual dryness, the use of charismatic and spontaneous prayer can be, at least temporarily, substituted. All devotions are subject to the guidance of the Church, sound theological insights, and the “canon” or “yardstick” of Scripture.

**Contemplation**

After we have stirred up our hearts and minds through both private and communal means for charismatic praise and directed meditation, we allow ourselves to pass over into pure and passive contemplation. Here we learn to simply ‘be’ with Jesus, without the intrusion of either ideas or emotion.

Ministers make provision for the brothers and sisters to be prepared for this contemplation in both theory and practice. The writings of the mystics of the Church, especially those of Franciscan and monastic tradition, as well as both private and communal times of retreat in solitude and silence, are provided for.
In all contemplation, members must ‘test the spirits’ by all available means given to us by the Church.

Conclusion
In all our private and communal prayer we remember that personal love relationship with Jesus is the sole purpose of any particular prayer form. Any form of prayer, be it private devotions, public liturgies, charismatic phenomenon, or contemplation itself, can become a false idol which often must be torn down in order for true spirituality to be authentically built up by Christ.

All particular forms, techniques, or methods are simply tools for prayer. They can never replace the pure experience of prayer itself, which is union with Christ. They are gifts from God, but they are not God. We must always be careful not to create false gods by worshipping the gifts, but must go through the legitimate gifts to true worship of the divine Giver. Thus, will all of our private and communal prayer bring us into intimate union with God.

Chapter 4: Study and Formation
The Scriptures encourage us to “study to show yourself approved”, and to “meditate on the law of the Lord day and night”. The studies of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity are aimed at forming a personal love relationship with and in Jesus Christ.

It is through study and meditation that Jesus tells us many objective truths about his being and his kingdom. Study is, therefore, and important nourishment for our prayer, and prayer, in turn, leads us to Jesus, who is himself the Bread of Life who nourishes the whole world.

Study in Jesus is like the stage of dialogue between two lovers who desire to grow very close. Getting to know one another through words is a needed and natural stage before one can enter into a stage of unspoken communication that is based on knowledge, love, and trust. Upon knowing the objective truths of Jesus, it is easier to enter into a mature and trusting love relationship with him that is more subjective and un-
spoken in nature. The unspoken stage of communication with Jesus can only be reached after having first entered into the spoken stage of dialogue. Therefore, the contemplative seeks to know the truth that sets him free in a world of knowledge, love, and trust. The ever-growing contemplative will find a place for study if his prayer is to be guided in a way that is true and sure.

Because the Brothers and Sisters are concerned primarily with relationship with Jesus, their studies include a balanced understanding of Scripture and prayer through which we know the mind and heart of Christ. Because both Scripture and prayer come to us through the Church, a basic understanding of the Church is helpful. Because we are concerned not only with relationships with Jesus, but human relationships in Jesus, this study of the Church, appropriately, includes an emphasis on monastic and Franciscan approaches to community life. Since we are aiming primarily at contemplative union of heart with Jesus in all of our relationships and all of our studies, a study of contemplative and charismatic prayer traditions of the Church are helpful. As the story and message of Jesus has come to us through the Church, all study is undertaken in the guiding light of God's truth in Christ as revealed through the Holy Spirit in the Church.

As a gospel community raised up by the Spirit in the Church through the ministry of the founder, we study the writings and oral teachings of the founder.

In our approach to study we draw inspiration from the Biblically oriented Church fathers, such as St. Augustine or St. John Chrysostom; the monastic tradition of Lectio Divina of St. Benedict or St. Bernard; the mystical yet practical Franciscan tradition of St. Anthony or St. Bonaventure; and the Celtic tradition from the monastic villages and leading centers of those such as St. Columba, St. Finian, or St. Hilda of the famous double monastery at Whitby. Of course, the Dominican school of St. Dominic, St. Thomas Aquinas, or St. Catherine of Sienna is important, as well as the contemplative approach toward learning as embodied in the Carmelite reformers St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. From a
Catholic base we also draw inspiration from the emphasis on the Scriptures as found in Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther or John Calvin. Of course, through it all the simple emphasis on the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in St. Francis of Assisi keeps study from becoming a dangerous road toward religious pride.

The study of the contemplative is only undertaken to further relationship with Jesus Christ and with brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and the whole world created by Jesus Christ. Study for the sake of study leads to both vanity and pride, both of which are harmful to the prayer life of the Christ-centered contemplative.

The place of study will help those involved in apostolic ministry, whether in the capacity of inner-community or outside apostolic work. The truths of our ministerial function must be studied and learned if we are to perform them with a mature freedom that breeds and attitude of peaceful prayer.

Even as Jesus formed his apostles and disciples, so are we to be formed by him. in this way of life. This is done by the power of the Holy Spirit under the guidance of the Scriptures and the teaching authority of the Church. It is also accomplished under the leadership of the spiritual father and mother of the community, which is raised up by the spirit, inspired by the Scriptures, and established as a spiritual family within the Church. As such, the community is responsible for the formation of its members regarding things pertinent to community life.

Because the whole human race bears the image of God and all of creation bears God's traces, the wise Brother or Sister of Charity will also spend some time in secular study. This is done to better familiarize oneself with the world in which we live. We are to be in the world, but not of the world. We are to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to all of the world. In order to better this, we must know at least something about the world.

The wise brother or sister spends a little time each day in both religious and secular study. Most of the study is done in private. The daily reading of Scripture from the common prayer hours and Mass provide much of
the needed input for good meditation, but private Scripture study and other sacred reading keep the common readings from becoming burdensome.

The community meets regularly for spiritual studies. These primarily concern living the simple gospel life in community according to the vision and ideals of the founder as spiritual father. It is through these group studies that we can help aid the community in a common growth that breeds unity and fellowship, rather than a purely individualistic growth that can breed factions and divisions.

Chapter 5: Apostolic Service

After drinking in the water from the wellspring springing up into eternal life through a life in community in prayer and study, brothers and sisters fill their canteens of apostolic service and take living water to those dying of thirst in the desert. After giving the thirsty water to drink from our canteens of apostolic service, we carefully lead those stranded in the desert back to the well of eternal life, which is a mature and personal love relationship of heart and mind with Jesus our Lord. Brothers and sisters must be careful to always return to the oasis of prayer and study before our canteens of apostolic service run dry. If this should happen, both the rescuer and the rescued would end up stranded in the desert without enough water to return to the oasis. The healthy life of apostolic service flows naturally from the life centered on study and prayer. Our ministry flows from our being; our being is not centered on our ministry. Thus, will both our contemplation and active life be free to soar to the heights of the life of the heavenly kingdom, even while here on earth.

Ministry of Presence

The most basic apostolate of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is to simply live the gospel with a humble and joyful heart. In this sense our apostolate includes both our simple presence among the people and our proclamation of the gospel to the people through work and word. This is the ministry of presence.
Itinerancy
The brothers' and sisters' main ministry is to go forth in apostolic itinerancy from place to place after the pattern of Matthew 10 and 19. As little ones, we go forth not as the rich and powerful of the world, but as the poorest of the poor. The bigness of professional training is not absolutely necessary to minister God's simple love. All that is needed is a caring heart. Thus, the ministry of presence is the most important ministry of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. To simply greet people on the streets with a cheerful greeting of Christ's peace is ministry enough. To go to the homes of the shut-ins, the lonely, and the unchurched, simply to say we care is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ profoundly.

Let this ministry go forth in total availability. Let us serve in whatever capacity is needed; visit homes and gather the needs of the people in prayer within the churches, sing, teach, or do manual labor. If we can serve we will; if we are welcome we will stay; if we are not welcome we will simply move on to another church or town.

We venture forth in apostolic poverty, taking nothing for our journey. We are not necessarily dependent on automobiles or special equipment to minister. If we absolutely need more than we can carry on our backs, then we need too much. However, we freely use whatever is made available to us in a local town or church. We go forth without money, asking none for ourselves. In exchange for our labor we ask only a little food to eat and a place to sleep. Nothing more is needed. We may, however, beg money and goods for the poor, giving special priority to the local area in which we minister.

Those who go forth in this gospel life normally seek to go two-by-two in strict imitation of the gospel. However, larger itinerate groups may travel together, especially during a time of formation. This is done under the inspiration of the gospel, which portrays Jesus in the company of the holy apostles and the holy women who assisted them out of their means,
Stabilized Ministry
There are also more stabilized ministries which need some planning and organization at both the community and in places to which we go. Due to the need for money to maintain these ministries, they are patterned on the common life of Acts 2 and 4.

Notwithstanding our call to itinerate poverty, we also recognize the need for stability within today’s overly transient world. Consequently, we seek to be a witness of the stability Jesus brings to our life as a family of God. This manifests itself through keeping the commitments included in our covenants, our Scripture Rule, and these Constitutions, as a universal community as we travel about the world. It also manifests itself in the family-like ties evident in the local community. Solid family commitments and availability should be evidenced in our relationships with the brothers and sisters of each local community and the laity of each local area.

The apostolic service of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity varies according to both the natural and supernatural gifts of individuals as discerned by the community. All formal ministries of the community are discerned by the leadership of the community. In this discernment, community leadership listens carefully to the voice of the individual and the observation of the whole community. Ideally, the exercise of apostolic service causes both the individual and the community to prosper in Christ. Of course, the brothers and sisters who are entrusted with the ministry or work of the community apostolate are to remain faithful to the life of the community and obedient to the members.

In all apostolates, even those of personal inspiration, the brothers and sisters are obedient to proper Church authority. We recognize the bishop of Rome as the successor to St. Peter and the Vicar of Christ. We recognize the entire College of Bishops and each individual bishop as successors to the apostles; Likewise, we recognize all priests and deacons as those to whom ministerial faculties have been granted by the bishops. Furthermore, when ministering in a non-Catholic church or parish, we respect and recognize the legitimate and appropriate authority in the person or persons of each ecclesial community’s respective leadership.
Period of Ministry
The community seeks a peaceful balance between prayer and activity. Yet, the primacy of prayer is always recognized and protected. A rhythm of the Spirit leads us from prayer into action, and from action back into prayer. This rhythm exists on both communal and individual levels, according to particular statutes of the particular expressions of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

Chapter 6: Poverty
The gospel calls all Christians to a life of simplicity and poverty of spirit as a love response both to God and to people. This means moderately using the things of this world as pilgrims and strangers without losing full sight of the inheritance of our heavenly homeland. Following the primary example of Jesus, this includes denying ourselves both the things we need and the things we don't need, so that others might have the things they need. We are called to live simply, so that others might simply live. We distinguish between our wants and our needs, for indulging our wants can kill the needy. We are called to simply love the lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Gospel poverty is essentially a love response to God and to people. The beauty of gospel poverty is found in love. Poverty without love is an ugly curse that brings pain and death to the very people created in the image of our life-giving God. On the other hand, love without the sacrifice of poverty is as empty as a lifeless shell. Love is selfless. Selflessness brings sacrifice of self for the sake of others. This sacrifice manifests itself in various expressions of gospel poverty. Gospel poverty cannot be a willing self-sacrifice without love, and love cannot be Christian without the self-sacrifice of poverty. When we become poor in spirit, we come to know the wealth of God's love; and if we know the wealth of God's love, we gladly become poor for the sake of others.

Gospel poverty is also an ascetical discipline which protects our life in God. We must love our neighbor, but we must love our neighbor as our-
selves. Therefore, some protection of self in Christ is necessary before we can truly sacrifice self in the love of God for the sake of others. Therefore, Gospel poverty becomes an ascetical discipline which protects and nourishes our spiritual wealth in Christ.

According to the mind of St. Francis, the logic of gospel poverty goes like this: The more you have the more you must defend, the more you have the more you have to pay for, therefore, the more you have to ask for; therefore, the less you are able to give the gospel as a free gift to others. According to the mind of St. Paul: The less we are responsible for materially, the more we are able to give the gospel away to others without encumbrance.

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity work to be as free as possible from the cares of the world, so that our hearts may be fixed only on heaven. We engage in a life of heavenly prayer, study, and work, free from the cares of this world, which so quickly kills and blinds the spiritual life of freedom. We are bound to as little as possible, so that we may be free to give as much as possible to anyone who asks when the love of Jesus inspires. We are poor, so that others might be wealthy in the Lord. Motivated by love of God and love of neighbor, we gladly embrace the lowliness of poverty so all might know the exalted glory of true wealth in Jesus.

The ascetical discipline of gospel poverty is like the pruning of the wild growth from a fruit tree. Initially, it seems to cut the tree back to almost nothing, but in the long run it causes the tree to actually become more fruitful. Likewise, with the gospel poverty. Initially, it seems to deprive a person or a community from any earthly pleasure, but in the long run it causes even our earthly life to be more fruitful.

Ultimately, gospel poverty is a naked embrace of the paradox of the cross of Jesus Christ. Gospel poverty must be a love response to God and to people, and the highest expression of God's love is in the self-emptying of God in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and his death on the cross for the sake of the salvation of the world. Therefore, the logic
of poverty is found in love, and the highest expression of love is found in
the cross. Therefore, gospel poverty makes ultimate sense only in the
light of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*The Three Scriptural Models*
There are three Scriptural models of poverty found in the New Testa-
ment. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity embody these three New
Testament models according to the various states of life and particular
expressions of community found within our overall family.

The first Scriptural model is found in Matthew 10 and 19, which de-
scribes the itinerate life of Jesus and the apostles. The Brothers and
Sisters of Charity live out this Scriptural model in a very literal way when
we embark on our itinerate ministry. According to this model, neither
individuals or the apostolic and itinerate community as a body possess
anything whatsoever. We carry only the bare essentials of life on our
backs, heading out on foot from place-to-place, not knowing where we
will rest our heads, what we will eat, or where we will minister from
day-to-day. This life is a prophetic witness of joyfully embracing the most
radical poverty by an act of our own free will, so as to visibly and obvi-
ously depend solely on the providence of God and the charity of all hu-
mankind, especially the charity and hospitality of our brothers and sisters
in Christ.

The second model is found in Acts 2 and 4, describing the common life
of the first Christian Church in Jerusalem. The Brothers and Sisters of
Charity embody this New Testament expression of gospel poverty within
the life of the celibate brotherhood and the celibate sisterhood. In this life
the individual brothers and sisters renounce all claim to personal pos-
sessions, but the respective expressions of community may own prop-
erty and have possessions in common. However, even in this common
ownership we remember that our covenant of poverty binds the whole
community into solidarity with the world's poor and a lifestyle that is both
interiorly and exteriorly simple. For the individual of the community, this
life of strict renunciation of individual ownership and strict common own-
ership is entered into gradually, according to the stages of commitment
from temporary covenant to permanent covenant. This is done according to the particular statutes of the celibate brotherhood and celibate sisterhood respectively.

The third Scriptural model for poverty is found in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 8, where Paul describes the more domestic approach to Christian living. Here, Paul encourages that the relief of the poor ought not to impoverish the rich, but there should be a certain equality between the rich and the poor, even while retaining private ownership and wealth. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity embody this Scriptural model within both the single and the married expressions of community. In this expression, the individuals and families may retain private property, but they are called to share that property with their brothers and sisters in Christ, according to the particular statutes of their particular expression of community. In this they manifest the Church’s teaching on the balance between the right to private property and the social and communitarian nature of all property and possessions, as well as the whole created world itself.

With these three Scriptural approaches to poverty, the first is like prophetic lightening which lights up the whole sky with a flash for a brief moment, yet has the power to light up entire cities for a long time. It provides an inspiration by a few for the sake of the many, yet this model itself is not intended to be the lived alternative for all. The second approach is less idealistic and is more approachable as a lifestyle for the majority of those who are called to the celibate state of life. It is like a power station for a whole city; much too powerful for the average household, yet still a source of power for every domestic household. While this is more approachable to the majority of those who are called to celibacy, it still remains prophetic to the world in general, since only a minority of the followers of Christ are called to do so in celibacy. The third Scriptural way is more practical, for it is the livable ideal for the many, both single and married, who follow the way of Christ. It is like an electric light bulb which gets its power both from the power station and its original inspiration from the flash of lightening. However, this way is also prophetic, relative to the witness of the whole world, since such poverty of spirit
and gospel simplicity are certainly the narrow way, when compared to the materialism and consumerism so evident and rampant in our world today.

**Particulars**

St. Paul says to Timothy, “If we have food and clothing, we have all we need” (I Tim. 6:8). And Sirach says, “Life’s prime needs are water, bread, and clothing, a house too for decent privacy” (Sir. 29:21). Based upon these two Scriptures, we see the basic needs of our life in poverty as food, clothing, and shelter. In turn, each of these three areas is affected by our approach to gospel poverty and simplicity.

In all of our external manifestations of poverty, we are conscious of the domestic and foreign poor, and seek solidarity with them through appropriate lifestyle changes and sacrifices. We do this in a way that neither denies the goodness of the created world or genuine human advancement in science, technology, or the arts. Nor are we afraid to enjoy the genuine blessings from God. But in our joy in blessing we must always be seasoned with a little sorrow for this pain of the poor, and always ready to share our joy with them. Real lifestyle changes and sacrifice must be the result. We do this according to the particular statutes of the particular expressions of the community.

**Food**

In keeping with the admonition of the gospels, we discipline our eating habits so that we might have more of our will to give to Jesus and more food to give to the hungry. We discipline our bodies daily so as not to be mastered by the desires of the flesh. Yet, we take care of the body God has given us, for it is now the temple of the Holy Spirit. Nor should we ourselves be impoverished by constant fasting.

As the Wisdom literature of Scripture explains: Simplicity in food and drink brings health to mind and body, as well as table etiquette which manifests courtesy and care for others. However, scrupulosity regarding food and drink brings legalism, which brings worry, which brings sick-
ness, which brings death. True gospel simplicity in food and drink brings a freedom and a joy that was manifested in Jesus and the first apostles.

In order that poverty and moderation be clearly evidenced at our meals, an excess of food is avoided and only that kind which is in harmony with our state of life and the particular statutes of our particular expression of community is served. Remembering that love is our greatest law, we take care to provide the real necessities of the brothers and the sisters and the special needs of the sick.

For those who suffer from addiction and compulsions in food, drink, and other areas, we lovingly and forgivably encourage participation in both religious and proper secular programs which might be helpful. Prayer and purity of heart, mind, and body is the primary tool we use to calm our nerves to bring us joy from the giver of peace and joy.

**Fasting**

Jesus speaks of a healthy asceticism regarding food and drink, especially in the form of fasting, but this is not to be done in gloomy legalism or scrupulous religiosity. We are to fast with a whole new spirit, a spirit of joy, a spirit of freedom. Yet, in this fast, we are like Christ before us, to be tested by God and tempted by the devil to prepare us for our ministry and our life of poverty. In this fast, we go with Jesus into the desert to prepare us for our itinerate ministry among the poorest of the poor, who many times only have bread and water for their daily fare. If we cannot hold up under a fast undertaken willingly and in controlled conditions, how can we expect to do so when such poverty and fasting come to us in time of trial and against our will?

Specifically, we encourage the Brothers and Sisters of Charity to fast according to the norms and liturgical laws of the Church. Furthermore, we encourage all who are able to fast on bread and water on Wednesdays and Fridays in accordance with current, popular Marian devotions.

In a spirit of environmental and ecological sensitivity, we also do our best to produce and serve only good, healthy food at our table. We recognize that many of the agricultural techniques of modern society actual-
ly bring disease and death into the world, even though they seem to bring us fast and abundant quantities of food.

However, in keeping with the demands of gospel poverty, we do not become fanatical or overly concerned about food and drink. We do not spend undue extra money on health foods that the truly poor cannot afford. Whenever possible, we acquire our food from simple gardens, maintained by our own hands, or from low-priced markets that are easily accessible. Also, according to particular statutes, we are not ashamed to go to the table of the Lord and beg food from institutions or restaurants in our area.

When sitting at the table of a hospitable host, we eat whatever is set before us in thanksgiving and prayer. Neither are we critical of others' habits concerning food, drink, or smoking. As Little Brothers and Sisters, we are called to teach others not so much by our words, but more by our example of simplicity, lowliness, and child-like innocence.

**Clothing**
The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are called to dress themselves simply and humbly as a sign and symbol of gospel poverty in the midst of a materialistic world. We do this in response to Jesus' own teaching on simplicity of clothing. We also do this in response to the crass materialism and consumerism of our modern world, in which fashion fads are propagated year in and year out at the expense of both the economy of the poor and the morality of the whole human race. Therefore, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity are to exercise gospel simplicity in their use of secular and religious clothing.

In response to the penitential tradition of the Church, which itself goes back to the example of the two witnesses of Revelation 11 and the example of St. John the Baptist himself, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity may garb themselves in the prophet's dress of extreme poverty and/or 'sackcloth'. Likewise, from the entire semi-eremitical, monastic, and Franciscan traditions, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity may clothe themselves in various expressions of religious and monastic dress. This
is done according to the particular statutes of the particular expressions of our community.

In this, we must be daily cautioned and constantly aware of Jesus' teaching against the religious pride of the scribes and Pharisees who liked to parade around in their long robes so the others could see and praise them for their so-called spirituality.

The uniform, or habit, of the whole monastic tradition can be a positive, silent witness of humility, or it can be a very dangerous occasion for pride. We must remember the saying of the Eastern monastics, that the habit makes the monk; but according to the mind of the developed monasticism of the West, the monk is not made by the habit. Somewhere between these two sayings, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity find the truth.

All clothing of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is deep within the true manifestation of a life of gospel poverty, humility, and love. The clothing we wear is simple, inexpensive, plain, and modest, so as not to give way to the temptation of vanity or religious pride.

Shelter

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity also manifest a radical gospel simplicity in the area of shelter. The very homes and buildings in which we live manifest a gospel alternative of good news in the face of the system and pattern of our modern world, which has so imbalanced not only human society, but the ecology and environment of the whole created world as well. As an alternative to the quick wealth mentality and the consumeristic materialism of the phenomenon of modern suburban life—the Brothers and Sisters of Charity willingly adapt a gospel simplicity in their homes and buildings wherever they may be, be it in the inner city, in the suburbs, or in the rural areas. In this we are a leaven in the midst of the dough of the secular world, so that the light of God might shine in the darkness and keep the dough of the secular world from falling flat. In this we treat the symptoms of the disease of the pain and poverty of this
world temporarily, so that we may eventually get to both the spiritual and temporal root causes.

In an attempt to treat this root cause of sociological imbalance within modern society, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity also set up alternative expressions of intentional Christian community in rural settings. Only in a rural setting and with the help of many brothers and sisters in Christ can a completely alternative approach to society be, at least substantially, pioneered and brought forth. This alternative approach to Christian society has vast ramifications on the specific expression of gospel simplicity regarding the very building and homes in which we live.

In this alternative setting, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity use forms of shelter that are both economically and energy efficient. We are encouraged to investigate such things as earth sheltering, or styles of construction that are less appearance conscious and more practical. Likewise, whenever possible, we seek a true solidarity with the poor of the third world. However, in this we should not become so scrupulous about utilitarianism that legitimate beauty and esthetics are completely overlooked.

We also investigate alternative forms of energy production, proper to our culture and time. For us this primarily includes solar units, wind generators, hydro-electric units, and gas production from a more environmentally sensitive waste disposal and sanitary system. Others might become possible with new knowledge and technology.

The poverty, sacrifice, and simplicity of such a life is almost self-imposed. If you build your own home, you appreciate even the most simple aspects of it more greatly. If you produce your own energy, you will use that energy more simply. Likewise, if you produce your own food, you will consume it more sparingly and enjoy it more thoroughly. It is this alternative, rural approach to intentional Christian community which requires the most simplicity in food, clothing and shelter, and which manifests the most complete alternative to the sociological imbalances and abuses of modern society.
Chapter 7: Chastity

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are called to espouse Christ Jesus as the bridegroom of their souls in a personal love relationship that is chaste. If this personal love relationship with Jesus is one of chastity, then there will be no question whatsoever as to who is the father of our spiritual children.

The chastity of our personal love relationship with Christ is incarnationally manifested through our human relationships according to our various states of life. For the celibate, the vow of chastity calls us to give up our right to marry and parent children in order to more fully espouse Christ alone. In this covenant of chastity, we imitate the literal way of Jesus who was himself without earthly wife or children. In this covenant of chastity, we free ourselves of all earthly domestic responsibility so as to more single-heartedly espouse both the Church and the community as the bride of Christ with Christ. In this covenant of chastity, we become a symbolic reminder of heaven where none will be given in marriage to another, but where all will be united as the one bride of Christ.

For the married brother or sister, the covenant of chastity calls us to enter more fully into the sacrament of matrimony, which in a most perfect way manifests incarnationally the mystery of the love union between the Church who is the bride of Christ and the groom who is Christ Jesus himself. This covenant of chastity helps the married Brothers and Sisters of Charity to manifest the contrast between monogamous Christian marriage and the marriages of the modern secular world in which one quite easily goes from spouse to spouse through divorce. Furthermore, this covenant of chastity helps to strengthen the Brothers and Sisters of Charity who have entered into Christian marriage to be more faithful parents to the children who are born of this love union. These children themselves become sacramental reminders of the spiritual children who are born into the Church through the love union between Christ as the groom and the Church who is his bride.
While on earth the covenant of chastity is sacrificial, just as was the very life of Jesus. It is not always easy to remain celibate, nor is it easy to remain married to one spouse, especially when the world constantly bombards us through media and peer pressure to a life of promiscuity. Chastity is not always easy, though its rewards are great.

We do well to remember that chastity is best kept pure where a love relationship with Christ is left free to grow in the Spirit, and relationships of deep love and friendship are encouraged and nurtured between brothers and sisters in Christ. But in this let us be aware of the due discretion and disciplines made available through the moral teaching of the Church and the ancient and trustworthy traditions of both religious and intentional community life.

Since chastity is a pure expression of love itself, it is good to remember that love itself is not an emotion, but is an act of the will. Love is a decision that includes the emotions, but is not guided by them. The emotions are guided by the will and the decision to love. Love is a commitment; therefore, chastity in an expression of love requires commitment and a decision to persevere. If that commitment is based solely on emotions, then it will fail. However, if that commitment to chastity does not include the emotions, it will become dry, weary, and unbearable. So, let the healthy love oriented chastity find the balance between the human will and the human emotions, which is truly a God-given gift.

**Chapter 8: Obedience**

The covenant of obedience calls us into a love union with Jesus, who obeyed both God the Father and the religious authorities of his day even to the point of death. In our covenant of obedience we, too, are called to obey God, the Church, and the ministers and leadership of the community. We also do well to obey the civil authorities whenever their law does not conflict with the law of God and the Church, for Christ Jesus himself, as well as the apostles, Peter and Paul, submitted themselves even to the unjust punishment inflicted on them by the civil authority of their day. In this obedience we give up our own will for the sake of the
community, the Church, and the whole world, and come to find a new freedom and a life in their death to self will.

This does not, however, mean that we are not to respectfully make our needs and opinions known to the ministers of the community, the Church, and the world. As Jesus and the apostles spoke the truth, even when it conflicted with those in authority, so also must we. But as Jesus finally submitted to their authority, even to the point of death, so also must we; believing that in this death to self we share in the self-sacrifice of Christ, which brings new life and salvation to the whole world. Dialogue and love must, therefore, be encouraged if this obedience is to be a full expression of Jesus' love at work both within the individual members of the community and their ministers.

Ministers strive to create relationships and atmospheres where open dialogue is fostered. In this, however, all, both minister and member must conform to the Apostle Paul, who encouraged us to always give our reply in a humble respect.

Obedience is a direct outgrowth of humility, and humility is a direct outgrowth of a realization of the truth of the interdependence of all of the created world and a love which comes from God. All of the particular bodies of the created universe, animate and inanimate, human and non-human, are interdependent upon one another in the same way. This interdependency is not a choice; it is a simple fact of existence. It is a truth. Therefore, we are submitted to the various forces of nature. Likewise, we are subject to various human institutions, especially civil government. In particular, we are interdependent with the various members of the Church which bears the Spirit of God and is therefore the Body of Christ. This is true, especially, of particular communities in the Church, which have been given a special charism. by that same Spirit of God. God's image, the Church herself bears the Holy Spirit and is therefore the Body of Christ, and particular communities of the Church have been given a specific charism by the Spirit of Christ, proper obedience to these various realities facilitates at least in some way, obedience to God himself.
Therefore, our covenant of obedience is based both on the fact of the interdependence of the created world, humankind, the Church of Christ, and this community in the Body of Christ, and also upon our love for God and people, which impels us to be conformed perfectly to the example of Christ Jesus himself.

In our relationships of obedience we recognize a hierarchy of priorities between the various social bodies of community that exist within the Christian faith. Our first priority is God. Next is the Church Catholic, which includes every aspect of our life. After God and with the Church universal, comes the nuclear family, which is the most primary expression of community in a person's life. Next comes the support group, which in this case is the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, followed by any other para-church organizations. After that comes the local parish in which the individuals and community actively participate and support. Lastly, comes the whole world with whom the whole Church, including our community, shares the good news of Jesus Christ through work and word.

For the celibate brotherhood and the celibate sisterhood, the covenant of obedience requires a more intense relationship and application between the minister and the member of the community. For the celibate the community becomes the primary family on earth. A more complete knowledge of a person's life and a more intense input into a person's life in both spiritual and temporal direction as these relate to the overall life of the community is necessary. Therefore, the covenant of obedience with the celibate brotherhood and the celibate sisterhood is by its nature more specific and intense.

Since the primary expression of family for both the singles and the married members is their own more particular nuclear family, their relationship with the community is secondary; therefore, knowledge of and input into a person's personal life need not be as intense. Consequently, the covenant of obedience with both the single and the married member of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is less specific and intense.
Furthermore, there is a difference in both the specific application and the intensity of the covenant of obedience between those who live in intentional monastic community and those who live in their own homes. Due to the nature of intentional, monastic, Christian community, for the single, celibate, or married states, there is a more specific and closer interdependence between the members of the community and the community itself. Consequently, the covenant of obedience has more specific and intense application for the intentional monastic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

Those who live in their own homes as Little Brothers and Sisters of Charity have a less frequent, specific, or intense interdependence with the other members of the community, the leadership of the community, or the community as a whole. Consequently, their covenant of obedience is by its nature less intense than the covenant lived out by those who live in the intentional monastic expression of our Christian community.

The specific applications of our covenant of obedience as Brothers and Sisters of Charity are outlined according to the particular statutes of the particular expression of community to which we belong.

**Chapter 9: Covenant Promises**

God is a God of covenant. He covenanted with humankind in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:16). He covenanted with Adam after the fall (Gen. 3:15), and with Noah after the flood (Gen. 9:16). He covenanted with Abraham to multiply his offspring like the stars of heaven, even though Sarah, his wife, was sterile (Gen. 12:2). He made a covenant with Moses and gave the chosen people the law (Ex. 19:5). He made an everlasting covenant with his servant, David (2Sam. 7:16). He fulfilled that covenant with David perfectly in the person of Jesus and through the establishment of the new covenant (Lk. 1:32 and Heb. 8:8), which is, itself a covenant of love.

As a covenant community, we are something old yet something new in the plan of God. As the baptism of John was something new for its time,
While building on the old, so are the covenant promises of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity something new for our time that build upon our Christian and Judaic commitments and communities of times past.

Like the earliest monastic traditions, we are a lay community that professes an informal commitment to live life in community which is not necessarily defined clearly by the Church. Yet this commitment is not opposed to the Church. We are totally submissive to the teaching authority of the Church, yet we do not fit into the precise definitions of current canon law.

Like the Penitential Movement from which much of the monastic and Franciscan family was born, we are neither exclusively monastic or secular, but something unique that includes both in our single, celibate, and married expressions. As such, we are neither an association of the faithful nor an institute of the consecrated life exclusively; yet we include aspects of both in our intentional monastic Christian community and our domestic expression constituting something unique and new. We are simply a covenant community.

Our covenant commitments are an outgrowth of our baptismal commitment. There is no greater general commitment than to die to self in order to rise up a new creation in Christ. This is the commitment of baptism. Our covenants only specify the nature of that dying and rising in Christ in more particular ways during a particular period in our life. Our covenants are an outgrowth of our baptism in Christ.

When individuals hear God's Spirit calling them to investigate membership in our community, they undergo a process of mutual discernment between themselves and the community to “test the spirits”. This involves a time of dialogue and gradual entrance into the full participation with a commitment of being a Brother or Sister of Charity.

This time is not intended to test the quality or the worth of a person before God, or even, necessarily, to test their overall call to community or religious life; but is meant only to discern their specific call to be a Brother or Sister of Charity. During this time it is the role of the community to
help discern the authentic call of God on a person's life and help them respond in being all the good that God wants them to be. Sometimes this leads them into our community; sometimes it leads them elsewhere. Either way is fine as long as it is God's will.

Furthermore, once discerned that a person should pursue membership within the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, we must further discern as to which of these particular expressions of community a brother or a sister be called, i.e., single life, the celibate brotherhood, the celibate sisterhood, the married monastic, or the domestic expression of the Little Brothers and Sisters. Each particular expression of our community receives a brother or sister into that particular expression, according to their own approved particular statutes.

The minister of each particular expression of the community, or one who has been delegated by the minister, has the power to receive new members into the community. Whenever possible a consultation with the brothers and/or sisters in leadership in each particular expression is advisable, but this is not mandatory.

For the intentionally monastic expression of community, be it singles, celibates, or marrieds, a gradual series of commitments is required. A candidate must spend an appropriate amount of time in a pre-novitiate program. The duration of time can vary and is determined by the minister and the council, in light of the candidate's human and religious maturity. The pre-novitiate program is meant to provide time to judge the ability and vocation of the candidate to determine their grasp. It is also meant to ease the candidate from a lifestyle proper to the secular world, into one that is proper for a novice living in intentional monastic community. The steps of this pre-novitiate program are as follows:

a. **Candidate:** This period extends to the beginning of the postulancy and calls for some time, approximately two weeks, of living the normal schedule of our life.

b. **Postulancy:** This is a six to twelve month period to get to know the life of the community in both ideals and in practices. During
this time the candidate lives with the community, becomes acquainted with the spirit and vision of the founder, works in the community apostolate, and is given an orientation to community life, receiving spiritual guidance for growth and prayer and interior life.

c. **Novitiate:** After this period of getting acquainted, the individual will be asked to make a public covenant with the community for a novitiate period of one year. During this time the novice is seriously instructed in Catholic, Christian, and Franciscan monastic approaches to life, in the Spirit of Jesus and the life in Christian community in general. Furthermore, the novice is seriously instructed according to the vision and the ideals of the founder as contained in written materials and oral tradition.

d. **Profession:** After this one-year period of living the full life of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, the individual will be asked to covenant for a period of three years. From this time on, the covenant must be renewed every three years. For those who have lived in community for at least four and one-half years under temporary commitments, novitiate and postulancy, a lifetime covenant promise may be made, but this lifetime covenant is an option; it is not an agenda. Those who leave after the duration of any temporary commitment can do so in good standing and with the full support of the community.

For membership in the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, an individual must be able to profess the content and understand the context of both the Apostle’s and the Nicene Creeds. This is the minimal standard of orthodoxy given to us from Christian history and the witness of the earliest Church. Since we are an ecumenical, Christian community, coming from both a Catholic and a Franciscan base, these covenant promises require complete cooperation with the authority of the Catholic Church and the Franciscan family. Both the Catholic Church and the Franciscan family stand firm in their resolve to guard the religious liberty of all Christian peoples, all worshippers of God, and all good will. This especially
applies to the religious differences of those who come from the various ecclesial communities of Christendom. Thus is the community itself a symbol of the unity we can find in Christ, while still respecting the diversity of our various gifts from God.

For the sake of unity, presence by all non-Catholic community members is required at all community worship services. This includes both services of a liturgical and sacramental, as well as a charismatic nature. In obedience to the teaching of the Church, we retain sacramental integrity at these liturgical gatherings. Thus does our community also become a symbol of the disunity that still exists between the various ecclesial communities that call upon the name of Christ.

Our non-Catholic brothers and sisters agree not to publicly contend with the doctrinal teaching of the Church in order that unity of spirit, mind, and body be preserved in public worship. All of us commit to a mutual respect of one's differences, while still retaining our own point of view. Furthermore, we covenant not enter into vain argumentation over theological issues.

Chapter 10: Government (Non-Canonical)

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are a spiritual family in Christ, raised up by the Spirit in the Church, integrating the single, celibate, and married states in life, as well as those who live in intentional, monastic community with those who live the domestic life in their own homes. As such, the whole community is governed by a General Council, made up of leadership representatives of various states of life which exist under their own respective leadership and particular statutes. As one spiritual family, the whole community is parented by a Spiritual Father and Mother in the persons of the founder and the foundress, and exist under the direction of one General Council, the Scripture Rule, and the General Constitutions.
The General Council
Supreme authority in the community resides in the General Council when acting in union with the founder and the foundress, the Scripture Rule, and these General Constitutions. The General Council consists of leadership representatives from the celibate brotherhood, the celibate sisterhood, and the married monastic community, as well as the Little Brothers and Sisters who live the domestic life in their own homes. Other representatives may be added as other expressions develop.

This General Council exists under the general direction of the founder and foundress, the Scripture Rule, and these Constitutions. The founder and foundress act as Spiritual Father and Mother to the whole community, and, therefore, have a permanent place on the Council. If at any time they become unable to actively govern, their lawful successors will take their place, but, even then, the founder and foundress have a permanent place of honor on the Council with passive voice.

The General Council has the power to govern, proper to the general concerns of the community. This primarily includes the direction of the annual general conference, any general ministries or foundations, any necessary amendments to the General Constitutions, and general disciplinary action directed towards any particular leader or particular expression as a whole. Particular concerns proper to the various states of life and communities are left up to particular statutes and leadership of each respective expression. Likewise, the direct disciplinary action concerning individual members is ordinarily left to leadership of the particular expression.

The decisions of the General Council are reached by a majority vote. The method of voting will be by ballot or by toll. As Spiritual Father and Mother of the whole community, the founder and foundress have veto power over the decisions of the Council as long as they themselves agree. When they do not the founder has veto power alone as General Minister of the whole community.
All members of the community, including the founder and foundress, must take into consideration the general well-being and desires of the whole community before exercising any power in leadership. Leaders must first listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to even the smallest member of the community before they can speak with true authority. It must always be remembered that Jesus is our primary shepherd, the Holy Spirit is our General Minister, and God the Father is our primary Spiritual Father. As such, God is our primary Father and the Church is our primary Mother. Likewise, the Trinity itself is the primary model for love and unity ideally exemplified by the General Council.

*The Spiritual Father*

The founder is the Spiritual Father of the whole community, and therefore, acts as the General Minister. Since he is a true Spiritual Father of the whole spiritual family, the community, his term is for life according to the norms of these Constitutions.

The Spiritual Father as General Minister enjoys ordinary authority over each and every brother and sister, as well as over the particular expressions of the community. Normally, he exercises his authority through the leadership of each particular expression of community, but he may act alone under extraordinary circumstances. Therefore, he exercises this authority alone or with the General Council in accordance with the norms of these Constitutions.

*Decrees*

The General Minister, with the input or the consent of his council, can promulgate decrees which are obligatory for the whole community. These decrees are effective only until the general conference, but if they are confirmed by the Council at the time of that conference, they remain in force. The General Minister, with the input of the Council, can promulgate decrees for the particular expressions of the community. However, he may do this only after consulting the respective leadership of each particular expression. Such decrees may even be given permanent force until they are revoked.
**Favors and Dispensations**

Favors, dispensations or other concessions of any kind are granted in writing by the General Minister, either to individual brothers or sisters or to particular expressions of the community. These do not terminate when the one who granted them no longer has the right to do so, unless added clauses specify otherwise. Even though mention be made of the previous refusal, a favor denied by the General Minister cannot be obtained validly from the Vicar without the consent of the General Minister.

**Visitations**

The General Minister, either personally or through a delegate, makes visitations of all the particular expressions of the community on a regular and frequent basis. Ideally this is done once a year.

**Absent**

When the Spiritual Father, as General Minister, is absent or impeded, the Spiritual Mother as Vicar governs with ordinary authority. However, she must not use her authority contrary to the mind and will of the Spiritual Father. If the Spiritual Mother, as Vicar, is also absent or impeded, the next officer takes his/her place with the name and office of Pro-Vicar.

**The Spiritual Mother**

The foundress is the Spiritual Mother of the whole community, and therefore, acts as the Vicar General Minister. Since a spiritual marriage exists between the Spiritual Father and the Spiritual Mother of the community, the term of her office, likewise, is permanent, according to the norms of these Constitutions. The General Minister, with the Council, and the confirmation of the bishop, may remove the Vicar from office in the case of habitual, grave offense for the common good of the whole community or for a just cause may accept her resignation. The Vicar assists the General Minister in everything, but when the minister is present, the Vicar performs only what has been assigned to her. When the General Minister is absent or impeded, the Vicar governs the community with ordinary authority in accord with the above articles. She succeeds to the office of minister if it becomes vacant until the new General Minis-
ter arrives. When the General Minister is absent, the Vicar can do only what cannot be postponed until his return. The Vicar should make no innovations she knows to be contrary to the General Minister's wishes as founder and Spiritual Father.

**Particular Expressions**
Each particular expression of community, i.e., celibate brotherhood, celibate sisterhood, married monastic, and domestic family expressions, exist under their own respective leadership and particular statutes. These particular statutes must be approved by the founder as General Minister and the General Council whenever possible. Likewise, all particular leadership must be confirmed by the founder as General Minister of the whole community. In emergency situations the General Minister may appoint interim leaders until such time as proper vote may be taken by the particular expressions.

**Higher Authority**
The general leadership of the whole community, including the founder and the foundress, exists under higher authority. This authority includes the bishop of Rome and the bishop of the Diocese in which the motherhouse exists, concerning things Catholic; the Order of Friars Minor and the Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart concerning things Franciscan; and the Board of Directors of the Little Portion, Inc. concerning things temporal. While the general leadership of the community is more initiating by its nature, the higher authority over them is more permissive. It sets up the general and wide parameters of what is considered authentically Catholic and Franciscan, as well as lawful. It steps in only when the general leadership has gone over the line. The leadership of the community is free to direct the community wherever they discern the Spirit to be leading within these parameters.

**Recourse**
Individual members of the community may have recourse to higher authority whenever an habitual abuse of authority exists in their immediate superior. They are bound to obey leadership whenever leadership di-
rects according to the Scripture Rule, these General Constitutions, and particular statutes, and does not direct contrary to either the Church or an individual's conscience concerning faith and morality. Minor insensitivities by leadership that do not direct contrary to these things should be lovingly obeyed, but openly and honestly dialogued through between appropriate leadership and individuals. Even occasional, outright abuses of these things by leadership should be borne in love by individuals, unless they become habitual or of a moral consequence. An individual should not spurn the authority of their leader, even though they cannot obey him in these areas. Then, after much dialogue and prayer, an individual may have recourse to higher authority. If problems in leadership continue to be habitual, the members may petition higher authority so that disciplinary action by that higher authority may be taken for the good of the community.

**Appropriate Dialogue**
When a brother or sister disagrees or has difficulty with leadership, they are to use appropriate channels for dialogue. They are encouraged to speak freely, yet respectfully, to their own respective and immediate leadership, or the leader with whom they disagree. They may also speak to other community members who are directly involved as long as they speak respectfully and in confidence. Any involvement of other community members is considered insubordinate and gossip, and therefore a serious offense against leadership and their covenant of obedience.

They may also have recourse to any higher authority within or above the community in serious situations. They may consult a spiritual director, confessor, or professional counsellor with whom confidentiality is assured. Any dialogue of inner community affairs outside of these appropriate channels is considered gossip and possible slander, and is considered a morally grave offense against the community.

**Patriarchal and Matriarchal Successors**
The Spiritual Father and Mother appoint and commission successors before the termination of their active leadership. These successors may
be celibate or married, but must be able to work together without harm to either their celibate or married states. The appointment of these successors comes with sensitivity to the whole community after consultation with the General Council and must be confirmed by the bishop or other appropriate Church authorities.

In the event of the unexpected death of the founder and/or foundress as Spiritual Father or Spiritual Mother, making their own choosing of a successor impossible, the community, the remaining Spiritual Father or Spiritual Mother, and the bishop will discern God’s choice of a successor. In this, the consultative vote of both the General Council and the community will be considered, keeping in mind the special precedence of the vote of the intentional monastic expression in which the founder and foundress lived. The remaining Spiritual Father or Spiritual Mother will then exercise their authority to choose or appoint a patriarchal or matriarchal successor for their deceased spiritual spouse. This choice must then be confirmed by the bishop.

In the case of the death of the founder as Spiritual Father, the foundress as Spiritual Mother may ascend to the position of General Minister. This must be done by the vote of the monastic expression and the General Council with confirmation by the bishop, keeping in mind the will of the whole community as discerned through consultative vote when possible.

In the case of the Spiritual Mother as foundress ascending to the role of General Minister, the patriarchal succession of a new Spiritual Father need not be immediate. A natural development of the charismatic reality of the Spiritual Father may unfold as discerned by both community and leadership with proper confirmation by the bishop. In the interim period the Pro-Vicar will act as Vicar General Minister.

The General Minister may, therefore, be either male or female as Spiritual Father or Spiritual Mother as discerned either by the direct and implemented according to the norms of these Constitutions. In the case of the patriarchal and matriarchal succession affecting the office of General Minister and Vicar General respectively, only the consultative vote
of the intentional monastic community and the General Council is needed before the appointment by the remaining spiritual spouse and confirmation by the bishop. In the case where the exchange of the offices of General Minister and Vicar General Minister between the Spiritual Father and Mother is involved, the active vote of both the intentional monastic community and the General Council is needed before the bishop's confirmation.

*Conferring of Offices*

Offices and positions in the community are conferred either by election, which is duly confirmed, or by appointment. There are two methods of election in the community. These are the written and the roll call. The election takes place, ordinarily, at the general conference extraordinarily, at a meeting of the general chapter of a particular expression of the community, according to their particular statutes. The General Minister, either personally or through a delegate, presides at the election of officers. In the spirit of co-responsibility and communal service, the brothers and sisters accept election to the offices mentioned unless absolutely impossible. All professed members are eligible for the offices and positions of the community, as long as they have the requisites and qualifications established by common law and these Constitutions. Unless otherwise provided, one who has been elected by a chapter cannot exercise authority until he has been confirmed by the General Minister or his delegate, who presides at the election.

*Loss and Vacancy of Offices*

*Loss:* Offices are lost by expiration of term of office, by acceptance of an incompatible office within or without the order, by a resignation that is accepted, by removal and deprivation.

*Prolongation:* All offices and positions conferred by election or by appointment always become vacant at the time of the general conference unless other provision is expressly made. The General Minister with the input of this Council can decree the prolongation of an office or position. This is done with consideration of the vote of the general chapter of the
respective particular expression of community. An officer of a particular chapter of a particular expression of the community, after consulting with its membership, can accept the resignation of an office which has been conferred by that same chapter. Resignation of the General Minister has no effect unless it is made to and accepted by the bishop. The General Council, when acting in union with the General Minister can with confirmation by the bishop, accept the resignation of the Vicar General Minister. It may also accept the resignation of the particular leadership of a particular expression of the community outside of their particular chapter. The General Minister may accept the resignation of offices conferred by appointment.

Removal: For a grave reason and with the input of the Council, the General Minister may remove from office any particular leader of any particular expression of the community represented in the Council. When a decree of removal is issued, recourse with the effect of suspending the decree may be directed to the General Minister and the bishop, respectively. Such recourse must be made to the minister who issued the decree and this within ten available days. These ten days are to be computed from the time of communication of the decree. If this time elapses and no recourse has been initiated, the office becomes automatically vacant.

Conclusion
All leaders in the community must be both good followers and good leaders. They must be willing to listen, yet able to teach. They must be knowledgeable of Catholic Christian doctrine and Franciscan monastic spirituality from both study and experience. The ministers will be subject to the guidance of the Church, and will thus guide the brothers and sisters by both example and work.

Chapter 11: Correction and Discipline
Jesus tells us that we are to forgive a repentant brother or sister until seven times seventy. He also tells us that when there is an offense within the community, we are to go first to the brother or sister by ourselves,
then with a witness, and finally, with the leaders of the community. If after that, the brother or sister does not repent, they are to be treated like a tax collector or a publican. Likewise, Paul commands us that while we are not to judge those who live outside of the community, we have the obligation to judge those within the community both for the sake of the community at large and the soul of the individual themselves.

When there is a behavior or disciplinary problem within the community, we first are to go and speak to the brother or sister with whom we have a fault, or whom we believe has a fault with us, and talk with them privately about this matter. Next, we go with one or two witnesses, but even this is kept very private and confidential. If the individual still does not respond, then the matter should be brought to community leadership.

The ministers show fatherly and motherly compassion to brothers and sisters who sin, or who are in danger of sinning, in order to give them appropriate and effective help in the Lord Jesus. Ministers do not impose formal penalties unless this is absolutely necessary. Likewise, they are prudent and charitable in imposing corrective punishment when needed.

Communal correction is only undertaken for the genuine spiritual welfare of both the individual and the community. Great care is taken to protect the basic human rights of the individuals in question, while also preserving the discipline and welfare of the community. If the good of individuals or of the community forces a minister to admonish, correct, or punish, he is to offer this service kindly and lovingly in accordance with the norms of the Scripture Rule, these Constitutions, and particular statutes.

When public or private sin is present in the community, the minister may exhort those in sin to go to their brothers and/or sisters, and also may encourage them to go to a priest in confession and penance in order to be absolved of their sin by the Church who holds the keys of the kingdom.

He may also exhort non-Catholic members to private and public confessions before the offended parties, in order that the individuals and the assembly of the community recognize God's forgiveness of their sin. In
this way they may put it behind them and out of their minds once and for all.

All ministers should remember the words of St. Francis who said, “All the friars, both the ministers who are servants and their subjects, should avoid being upset or angry when anyone falls into sin or gives bad example; for the devil would be only too glad to ensnare many others through one man's sin. Rather, let them give the sinner spiritual aid, as best they can.” Nor, “should they embarrass him or speak about his fault. They should have the greatest sympathy for him and keep their brother's fall a secret.” It is not the healthy who have need of a physician, but they who are sick.

The ministers who are constrained to impose punishments do well to have before their eyes what St. Francis wrote to a certain minister, “I should like to prove that you love God and me, his servant and yours, in the following way. There should be no friar in the whole world who has fallen into sin, no matter how deeply he has fallen, who will ever fail to find your forgiveness for the asking, if he will only look into your eyes. And should he appear before you again a thousand times, you should love him more than you love me so that you may draw him to God; you should always have pity on such friars.”

Dismissal
For the dismissal of professed brothers and sisters from the community, grave reasons are required. These grave reasons include willing and habitual disobedience concerning the teachings of the Church concerning faith and morality and/or habitual unwillingness to live according to the vision and ideals of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity as put forward by the founder and foundress in the Scripture Rule, these Constitutions, and the particular statutes of the expression of the community in which they made their covenant. The dismissal of individuals from the particular expressions of community must be in accord with the particular statutes of the particular expression of the community. Generally speaking, the leadership of the particular expression of community is competent to issue a decree of dismissal. However, this must be either
confined or vetoed by the General Minister, who is the Spiritual Father of the whole community.

All of the ministers should care for the spiritual, moral, and social welfare of those who leave or are dismissed from the community. They assist them, remembering their needs as well as the demands of equity and considering the time the individual spent in community life and the benefits received from the community.

Chapter 12: Our Own Laws As Community

The General Council, in union with the Spiritual Father and Mother as General and Vicar Minister and with the confirmation of the local bishop, are competent to establish constitutions as well as to repeal constitutions. Even the General Council and the successors to the founding Spiritual Father and Mother may not change anything essential to the founding charism of the community contained in these Constitutions. Interpretation of laws established by the General Council falls within the competence of the General Council. Outside the General Council interpreting is entrusted to the particular leaders of the particular expressions of our community with consultation with and confirmation from the General Minister. An interpretation made outside of the General Council, unless it is approved by General Council.

It is the role of the Constitution to offer norms necessary for good order in the lifestyle of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity wherever they may be.

It is the role of the particular leadership of the particular expressions of our community to establish particular statutes in light of personal and local needs or circumstances. These may never be contrary to the norms of the General Constitution, and must be approved by the General Minister, who is the founder and Spiritual Father of the whole community.
For a just reason, the minister can dispense from laws of discipline enacted by the community, even in habitual and particular cases, but not those laws expressly excluded:

a. The General Minister with respect to individuals and the whole community.

b. The particular minister for his own particular expression of community wherever they may live.

However, a habitual dispensation in favor of the brothers and sisters of an entire particular expression of community is reserved to the General Minister.

No minister of the community has the power to dispense from what touches the very substance of our community life, nor unless expressly stated otherwise, from the laws of these Constitutions, namely, those pertaining to structures or government, even enacted by the Council.

The laws contained in these General Constitutions do indeed bind in conscience since faithfulness to the gospel can scarcely be attained in a way proper to this community without faithful observance of these laws. All brothers and sisters should strive to keep them with the greatest care.
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