



***Brothers and Sisters of Charity
at Little Portion Hermitage***

**Formation Studies
Domestic Expression**

Postulancy: 6 months to 1 year

“If You Make a Beginning . . . Begin Perfectly!” St. Bernard

Contents

Postulancy: Month One—The Rule, Principles, and Vision	3
Readings.....	3
Reflection.....	3
For Discussion:	3
This Month.....	4
Postulancy: Month Two—Integration and Communal Life.....	5
Readings—Integration	5
Readings—Communal Life Part II	5
Reflection—Integration	5
Reflection—Communal Life.....	5
For Discussion:	6
This Month.....	6
Postulancy: Month Three—Poverty	7
Readings.....	7
Reflection.....	7
For Discussion.....	7
This Month.....	8
Postulancy: Month Four—Chastity.....	9
Readings.....	9
Reflection.....	9
For Discussion.....	9
This Month.....	9
Postulancy: Month Five—Obedience.....	10
Readings.....	10
Reflection.....	10
For Discussion.....	10
This Month.....	11
Postulancy: Month Six—Entrance in the Community	12
Readings.....	12
Reflection.....	12
For Discussion:	12
This Month.....	13
Postulancy Requirements.....	14
An Examen For Postulants.....	14



***Brothers and Sisters of Charity
at Little Portion Hermitage***

Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month One

The Rule, Principles, and Vision

Readings

Scripture Rule: “I *The Rule*”; “II *The Call*”

Constitution: Chapter 1: *Basic Principles and Vision*

Way of Life: Chapter 1: *Basic Vision*, paragraphs: 1–4

Reflection

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.”

The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the basic rule of the brothers and sisters. It is good to reflect on the cross often. Sometimes we can meditate on the cross with Jesus present on it as He endures the trials of His passion. We can be in awe that the Son of God would endure such suffering for us individually and for us as a spiritual family. We can be in awe of the great love that the suffering and death of Jesus demonstrates for us.

Caritas is the Latin root of the word charity. Charity is the demonstration of love. We are called to be Brothers and Sisters of Charity, to be brothers and sisters who demonstrate love for one another and love for the world around us. In this demonstration of love we may find ourselves enduring our own trials and, in an allegorical or symbolic way, our own death to self. But we should not be worried. We know that the cross of Jesus led to his resurrection and the making new of the entire world. We can be made new with Him and begin life again. This should make us very glad.

John Peter Puleo, Domestic General Minister

For Discussion:

1. The brothers and sisters are called as a spiritual family into deep love relationship with and in Jesus Christ.
 - What are the hallmarks of a family?
 - Are there ways that you can tell that a group of people is a family?
 - How might a spiritual family be similar to this?
 - How might it be different?
2. We are called to have a deep love relationship with and in Jesus Christ.
 - What does this mean to you personally?
 - What might it mean to have a love relationship “in” Jesus Christ?

*The Rule of the brothers and sisters is the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. **The Rule, 1***



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Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month One

The Rule, Principles, and Vision

3. The primary charism of the community is love.
 - How have you seen this love manifested in this community?
 - What is it that helps keep the love of Christ and the love for brothers and sisters in community from becoming misguided or directed merely by emotion?
 - Is there a difference in the love that you sense in Christian community as compared to that you find in the world?
4. Jesus is our primary example: scripture is our primary rule: our primary law is love.
 - What examples of Jesus have you most tried to model in your life?
 - What specific scripture passage or passages have served as a rule or guide for you in your life thus far?
 - How have these contributed to your calling to the Brothers and Sisters of Charity?
5. Read, The Rule, once again.
 - What does it mean to you that the cross is the rule?
 - What does it mean to you to be made anew?

This Month

This month find times to meditate before the cross of Jesus! Meditate on the great sign of love that the cross represents. Meditate on the resurrection of Jesus and the newness of life that became abundant in this new life. Begin to see the trials that you encounter as a sharing of this cross and an opportunity to join Jesus in dying to self in order to bring new life to the world.



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Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month Two

Integration and Communal Life

Readings—Integration

Constitution: Chapter I: *Basic Principles and Vision*, paragraphs: 4-6

Way of Life: Chapter 1: *Basic Vision, Integration*

Readings—Communal Life Part II

Scripture Rule: “V *Communal Life*”

Constitution: Chapter 2: *Communal Life*

General Directory: Chapter 2: *Community Life*

Domestic Directory: Chapter 2: *Community Life*

Way of Life: Chapter II: *Community Life*

Reflection—Integration

Constitution: “Integration is the primary expression of our charism of love. 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. We integrate charismatic and contemplative spirituality.”

Way of Life: “We integrate our call to solitude with our call to community. We integrate our call to contemplative community with our call to overflow into apostolic action. We integrate single, celibate, and married states into a balanced whole.”

Reflection—Communal Life

Scripture Rule: “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 as the Lord as forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love which binds the rest together and makes them perfect.”

As Brothers and Sisters of Charity we try to bring the unity of Jesus Christ to and with all. We join together to support one another on our spiritual journey. As domestics we give proper priority to God, family, community, and then to the greater church, with the cell group being the most basic unit of community beyond the family.

Debbie Ballard, BSCD SW Vicar Regional Minister



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Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month Two

Integration and Communal Life

For Discussion:

1. Integration must be more than good ideas and concepts.
 - How might you make some of them living, spiritual realities?
 - How are you already living them?
2. Of all the integrations detailed which one or ones do you find the most challenging?
 - How so?
3. Reread the Readings above for Integration and Communal Life.
 - What word(s) or phrase(s) stand(s) out to you?
 - What feelings or thoughts do they invoke?
 - Share these in your cell group or with your Formation Assistant.
4. Are there any ideas in the readings on integration or communal life that cause you concern?
 - If so, discuss them in community with either your cell group or your Formation Assistant. They may represent opportunities for spiritual growth.
5. Spend some time reflecting on the priorities in your life.
God/family/Church/ community/parish/work/play
 - How do things fit?
 - Is there any area that seems to be out of place or, perhaps, overemphasized? Any area underemphasized?
 - Where does your involvement with the Brothers and Sisters of Charity fit right now?
 - Discuss.

This Month

This month attend a cell group meeting either in person or on Skype. Find out when the next regional gathering is for your region and make plans to attend. Make plans to visit Little Portion, either in conjunction with a retreat at the retreat center, to volunteer, or to attend the General Gathering in October. Ask your Formation Assistant if there are other members you could talk to about how they live out the way of life.

If not already open to both charismatic and contemplative prayer, ask your Cell Group Leader or Formation Assistant to lead you in a time of prayer where you can experience and participate in either or both.



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Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month Three

Poverty

Readings

Scripture Rule: “IX Poverty”; “XVI Food”; “XVII Clothing”; “XVIII Shelter”

Constitution: Chapter 7: *Poverty*

Way of Life: Chapter VI: *Poverty*

Reflection

Jesus said “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.” It might be doubtful indeed which poor he, as Truth, was speaking about when saying, “Blessed are the poor,” if he had added nothing about the kind of “poor” to be understood. It might seem that this neediness alone, which many suffer in heavy and hard necessity, were enough to deserve the kingdom of heaven. But when he said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” he showed that the kingdom is to be given to those whom humility of soul commends rather than lack of means... Nevertheless, even in many of the wealthy is found this spirit that uses its abundance not for the swelling of pride, but for works of kindness. This same spirit names as its greatest riches what it spends on relieving the misery of another’s suffering. To every race and partaker of mankind it is given to be a partaker of this virtue, for people can be equal in purpose and unequal in property. It does not matter how much they are different in earthly possessions when people are known to be equal in spiritual goods. That poverty is blessed that is not obsessed by the love of temporal things, not longs to be enriched in the resources of the world, but strives to grow rich in heavenly goods. (*St. Leo the Great, excerpts from Sermon 95*)

Annamarie Zullo, Vicar Minister North East Region

For Discussion

1. The clear distinction between wants and needs is a vital initial step in the process of embracing gospel poverty.
 - Does your relationship with Jesus help you make these distinctions? How?
 - Do you see “gospel poverty” as having the potential to produce both temporal and spiritual fruit? How?
2. Reread the 3 Scriptural models of poverty in our Way of Life. The Brothers and Sisters are called into a life of gospel simplicity and poverty of spirit so that others may experience the wealth of Christ’s love.
 - What witness does a life of gospel poverty gives to the world?
 - How does gospel poverty serve as a “ministry of presence?”
 - Have you been influenced by another’s example of gospel simplicity?
 - How?



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Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month Three

Poverty

3. Love is selfless and selflessness brings sacrifice.
 - In what ways do you see sacrifice cultivating a spirit of poverty in yourself?
 - When has sacrificing for others been easy for you?
 - When has it been difficult?
4. As Christians, how do we reconcile the pure selflessness of Christ's example with our own tendency toward materialism and temporal security?
 - How does developing an awareness of the poverty that exists in the world help us to cultivate a love for the poor that leads to action?
 - How might it help us to see Christ in places where we might not want to look for Him?
5. The idea of gospel poverty can be a challenge, even for those who have spent years embracing this way of life.
 - How do you see yourself beginning this process?
 - Does the example of others help or hinder you?
 - Do you see this as a competitive challenge... With others?
 - Within yourself?
6. Finally, what is your personal definition of Gospel poverty? What does it mean to you? What might be your motive or reasoning for seeking a greater degree of Gospel poverty in your life?

This Month

Take an honest inventory of your wants and needs. Examine not only food, clothing shelter, but also time, talent and treasure. Ask Jesus to begin to show you what He wants to be your authentic living out of gospel poverty and simplicity. Give yourself permission to explore what God is asking of you.



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Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month Four

Chastity

Readings

Scripture Rule: “X Chastity”

Constitution: Chapter 8: *Chastity*

General Directory: Chapter 7: *Chastity*

Domestic Directory: Chapter 7: *Chastity*

Way of Life: Chapter VII: *Chastity*

Reflection

The word “chastity” stems from the Latin adjective *castus* meaning “pure”.

When we enter community we make a covenant promise of chastity “so that others might be wed to the Divine Lover”. For singles, this promise of chastity is designed to increase faithfulness directly to our Lord, and for those who are married, to each other.

But chastity reaches further than this! Our God is a jealous God. He wants all of us. We are to look at our use of books, television, internet and movies. How do these stack up with a life of purity? Is there anywhere we go or anything we do where Jesus himself would not be welcome and pleased to join us?

Debbie Ballard, BSCD SW Vicar Regional Minister

For Discussion

1. Do the books, movies, television shows, and internet sites we chose lead us closer to Christ? Even if “good,” might there ever be a time when they could be a distraction?
2. For singles, how might our promise of chastity increase faithfulness to our Lord?
3. For married folks, how might our promise of chastity increase faithfulness to each other as a witness of His faithfulness to us?
What does it mean for a married couple to live a life of chastity?
4. How might your promise of chastity allow others to wed the Divine lover? How might your example of faithfulness influence others to be more deeply drawn to the love of Christ?

This Month

This month take inventory of chastity in your life. Spend some quiet time listening for where the Lord may be asking you to live a more chaste life. “Do whatever He tells you to do” and give Him thanks and praise for those areas of your life where you are living chastely.



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Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month Five

Obedience

Readings

Scripture Rule: “XI *Obedience*”

Constitution: Chapter 9: *Obedience*

Way of Life: Chapter VIII: *Obedience*

Reflection

Of all the spiritual disciplines none has been more misunderstood than that of obedience and submission. “These disciplines are for the purpose of realizing a greater good. In and of themselves they are of no value whatever. Obedience has value only as a means of setting us before God so that He can give us the liberation we seek. The liberation is the end; the disciplines are merely the means. They are not the answer, they only lead us to the Answer...Let us forever center on Christ and view the spiritual disciplines as a way of drawing closer to His heart.” (*RJ Foster, Celebration of Discipline*)

Every discipline has its corresponding freedom. Obedience allows us the freedom from self-preoccupation so that we can open our hearts to the needs of others. The root of obedience is *obed* and literally means “to listen with the heart.” Through obedience, we are free to value other people above ourselves. Jesus stressed that the real issue was the inner spirit of consideration and respect for one another. As Christians, we are obedient because Jesus was obedient. Obedience is a spiritual discipline that becomes both a responsibility and an expectation for all Christians. Jesus, the obedient Lamb of God says, “I have given you an example that you should also do as I have done for you.” (*John 13:15*)

Annmarie Zullo, Vicar Minister NE Region

For Discussion

1. As members of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity we are called to act out the life of obedience with the members of our nuclear family, the members of our BSC spiritual family, and those we encounter in the world each day.

The primary deed of obedience is a commitment to listen to others and to act on what we have heard.

- How do you see this happening in your nuclear family or those to whom you are closest?
 - How do you see this happening with your brothers and sisters in Christ?
 - In the workplace? Give examples.
2. Jesus’ teaching on obedience challenges the notion of the self as being the most important and ruler of all.
 - How do you understand the teaching of Jesus that freedom is discovered in obedience and in becoming the servant of all?



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Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month Five

Obedience

- What experiences have you had that helped you see this reality?
3. The foremost symbol of this radical obedience is the cross. “He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” (*Phil. 2:8*)
- How is this type of dying to self an expression of our love for those closest to us, our brothers and sisters in community, the Church, and the whole world?
 - How do we find a new freedom and new life in our death to self-will?
4. St. Paul urged “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities”. (*Rm. 13:1*. The Church teaches us to be obedient to all authority unless it conflicts in matters of faith and morals. “As Jesus and the apostles had to speak the truth, even when it conflicted with those in authority, so also must we.”
- Has there been a time in your life when you have had to stand up for the truth even though that truth seemed to question authority?
 - What were the consequences?
 - Would you do it again?
5. What are the obediences that you adhere to daily?
- Does the idea of “conforming yourself to the example of Christ in matters of obedience” in daily life help make obedience meaningful to you?
 - Discuss instances when this concept may or may not have helped you and why so.

This Month

This month, take time to inventory those areas where obedience has been a struggle for you. Contrast with areas when it is not a problem. Ask Jesus to show you what makes the difference and to help you with any attitude changes that He may be nudging you to make. Pray!



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Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month Six

Entrance into the Community

Readings

Scripture Rule: “XIV *Candidates*”; “XV *Commitment*”

Constitution: Chapter 10: *Entrance into the Community*

General Directory: Chapter 9: *Covenant Promises*

Domestic Directory: Chapter 9: *Covenant Promises*

Way of Life: Chapter 9: *Covenant Promises*, paragraphs: 1–6

Reflection

XV Commitment

2 Cor.5:17

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away. Now, all is new!”

“O Lord my God, even though I have done nothing good in Thy sight, yet grant me by Thy grace, to make a good beginning. O Lord, sprinkle into my heart the dew of Thy grace.”

(Evening Prayer of St. John Chrysotom)

Jesus died for all and was raised from the dead for us so that we could partake in His death and be born again in Him. This basic tenet of faith was affirmed for each of us personally at the time of our baptism. At that moment, we entered the tomb with Christ and through water and the Spirit rose again to live a new life in Him. The old passed away and all was made new. We became a new creation. We have been called to live in this new creation as a new creation each day.

To embark on the journey to becoming a new member or novice, in the community of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is a reminder and a renewal of this call to be made anew in Christ. We must die to the things of this world and unite ourselves to the humble, obedient death of Jesus, allowing ourselves to be reconciled, so that we can then open our eyes to a new life and a new beginning. Entered into properly, the novitiate can be a time of wide open eyes, heart, soul, and spirit, everything made new, everything seen through the eyes, heart, soul, and spirit of a child. Along with your Formation Assistant, Cell group leader, and Regional Minister I invite you, at this time, to make your discernment to our community and if called, to make your new beginning a good beginning!

John Peter Puleo, Domestic General Minister

For Discussion:

1. "When an individual hears God's Spirit calling..." *Const. 10:51*
 - In what ways do you hear God's Spirit calling you to this community?
 - What are the signs in your life of this calling?
 - What attracts you to this community?

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Formation Studies Domestic Expression

Postulancy: Month Six

Entrance into the Community

- Is it the lifestyle, the companionship, the example of brothers and sisters, the teachings, the worship?
 - Why this community?
2. Is your calling particular to the Domestic expression?
- Do you have stirrings within you of a monastic call or, if single, a call to celibate life?
3. You are about to embark on a new journey or path of life. (Thinking about this, there are two sides.) On the one hand there are thoughts of excitement, assuredness, and peace relative to your becoming a new member of this community. On the other hand, you may have some thoughts of uncertainty, anxiety, or even fear.
- Discuss your thoughts both pro and con relative to your discernment.
4. The statement of commitment for a novice reads, “... of my own free will promise to live in obedience to God, the Scripture Rule, Constitution and community leadership ...”.
- Is this decision to become a novice in the community fully of your own free will?
 - Discuss your understanding of obedience relative to becoming a new member of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity?
5. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away. Now, all is new!”
(2 Cor. 5:17)
- What things or habits in your life may have to “pass away” in order for you to be created anew?
 - What new things might you do intentionally to replace these?
 - What might God do?

This Month

This month arrange for a day of recollection or retreat for yourself. This can be done at a retreat center, your local church, or even in your home. Set the day aside as a special time and let your family and friends know that you are committed for that day.

Enter the day as you would a silent retreat. Your primary focus for the day should be to hear what God is saying to you and to listen. Pray. Participate in Liturgies. Spend some time in adoration. Take a walk. Journal. Even do some work that is physical but not too mentally distracting. Be listening.

Use the Scripture Rule as a tool for reflection. Recite a prayer for guidance during the day like, “O Lord my God, even though I have done nothing good in Thy sight, yet grant me by Thy grace, to make a good beginning. O Lord, sprinkle into my heart the dew of Thy grace.” You might also decide to pray and respond to the “Examen for Postulants” on that day.

Share the insights gained on that day with your cell group or Formation Assistant the next time you are together.



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Formation Process and Guidelines Domestic Expression

Postulancy: 6 months to 1 year

“If You Make a Beginning . . . Begin Perfectly!” St. Bernard

Postulancy Requirements

- Continue your reading and study, of “The Brothers and Sisters of Charity Scripture Rule” and “The Way of Life (*A Non-Canonical Guideline and Spirituality*)”. Discuss in a cell group setting or with your Formation Assistant. You may find keeping a journal of your studies helpful.
- Obtain a BSC Rule, Constitution, and Directory.
- Complete the **six month postulancy program** as presented in your binder with a Formation Assistant or within a cell group.
- Read the book “**The World is My Cloister**” by our founder, John Michael Talbot.
- Begin to familiarize yourself with the **Liturgy of the Hours**.
A suggested study guide:
General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours/abridged
And also *General Principles*
These are found in the single volume book, *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing.
- During this period, **attendance at Cell Group meetings** and the General or Regional Gatherings, is strongly encouraged. It is only in gathering with the brothers and sisters that the true bond of community can be obtained.
- A **day of recollection** before entering the Novitiate. (A Guideline for making the day of recollection will appear in month six of the postulancy program.)
- An **Examen with a Written Response** at the end of the Postulancy.

As you continue in the formation program, it should be noted that a visit to the Motherhouse in Arkansas is required before Temporary Profession

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An Examen For Postulants

In considering your call to the Brothers and Sisters of Charity Domestic expression, please reflect on the following questions pertaining to your growth during the Postulancy.

- What specific things about this way of life do you discern as your calling?
- What exactly is it that makes you feel this is where God wants you to be?
- How would being a member of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity draw you closer to Jesus?
- Since entering the Postulancy:
 - a. How has it affected your life or changed the way you live?
 - b. Has your daily life changed since entering the Postulancy? • If yes, How?
- Do you perceive spiritual growth? • Are you working on more faithful and disciplined prayer? • Study? • Spiritual reading? • Solitude? • Simplification of lifestyle?
- Are you growing in your understanding of how to live the evangelic counsels, evangelical poverty, consecrated chastity and religious obedience, according to your state in life?
- Does your formation thus far encompass all parts of your life? • Are you becoming increasingly familiar with the community? • With its history? • With the teachings of the Founder? • With the Rule, Constitution and Directories?
- Do you go out of your way to attend gatherings and cell groups? • Or would you rather not invest the effort, time and expense required?
- Are you willing to be inconvenienced for the sake of your postulancy?
- Have you remained faithful to your financial commitment to the community?
- Has the postulancy strengthened your family life? • Does your family support your commitment? • Is there ongoing tension in your family as a result of your postulancy in the community?
- Are there other associations or communities to which you belong where a conflict of interest with the Brothers and Sisters of Charity may exist?
- Do you prioritize your time such that your formation studies and the community related activities take precedence over things beyond the nuclear family? • Do you find yourself placing BSCD formation and commitment to the community at the end of a long list of other commitments? • Are your other commitments compatible and complimentary to your postulancy in the community, or do they conflict in vision, time or energy expended?
- **Have you completed all the requirements of the Postulancy as listed in the Formation Guidelines?**