

RULE
and
CONSTITUTIONS
FRANCISCAN
THIRD ORDER

Authorized translation

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*NIHIL OBSTAT quominus Constitutiones Tertii Ordinis Saecularis
Sancti Francisci Assisiensis in linguam anglicam conversae, juxta
exemplar a Patribus Censoribus emendatum, typis mandentur.*

Romae, die 23 Aprilis 1959

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The LORD

bless you and keep you

May he
show his
face to you
and have
Mercy ++

May he
turn his
countenance
to you and give
you Peace

The LORD
bless you ++

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| THE RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER SECULAR | 9 |
| DECREE OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF RELIGIOUS | 13 |
| INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD ORDER CONSTITUTIONS | 17 |
| CHAPTER ONE: ESSENTIAL STRUCTURE OF THE THIRD ORDER | 19 |
| Section I — Nature and purpose of the Third Order | 19 |
| Section II — Enrollment in the Third Order | 21 |
| Section III — Novitiate | 22 |
| Section IV — Profession | 25 |
| Section V — Unaffiliated or isolated tertiaries | 27 |
| CHAPTER TWO: WAY OF LIFE | 30 |
| Section I — Christian perfection, according to the Franciscan spirit | 30 |
| Section II — The Divine Office and other exercises of religion | 34 |
| Section III — Family and social life | 39 |
| Section IV — Works of the apostolate | 41 |
| Section V — Sick and deceased members | 43 |
| CHAPTER THREE: GOVERNMENT OF THE THIRD ORDER | 45 |
| Section I — Government in general | 45 |
| Section II — External government | 47 |
| Section III — Internal government | 54 |
| A. — The fraternity council | 55 |
| B. — Various offices in the fraternity | 59 |
| Section IV — Corrections and penalties | 62 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES | 65 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: THE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONS | 69 |
| CONSTITUTION OF THE FEDERATED PROVINCES OF NORTH AMERICA | 71 |
| ALLOCUTION OF POPE PIUS XII, July 1, 1956 | 79 |
| INDULGENCED BLESSING INDULT | 87 |
| ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS | 89 |
| INDEX | 99 |

RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER SECULAR OF ST. FRANCIS

CHAPTER I

Reception, Novitiate, and Profession

1. Only those may be received as members who have completed their fourteenth year, and are of good character, peace-loving, and above all of tried fidelity in the practice of the Catholic Faith and in loyalty to the Roman Church and the apostolic see.

2. Married women may not be received without the husband's knowledge and consent, unless their confessor judges otherwise.

3. The members shall wear the small scapular and the cord as prescribed; if they do not, they deprive themselves of the rights and privileges of the order.

4. All who enter the order must pass the first year in probation; then they shall duly make their profession upon the rule of the order, pledging themselves to observe the Commandments of God and of the Church, and to render satisfaction if they have failed against their profession.

CHAPTER II

Rule of Life

1. In all things let the members of the Third Order avoid extremes of cost and style, observing the golden mean suited to each one's station in life.

2. Let them with the utmost caution keep away from dances and shows which savor of license, as well as from all forms of dissipation.

3. Let them be temperate in eating and drinking, and devoutly say grace before and after meals.

4. They shall fast on the vigil of the Immaculate Conception and on that of St. Francis; they are to be highly commended who, according to the original rule of the tertiaries, also either fast on Fridays or abstain from fleshmeat on Wednesdays.

5. They shall approach the sacraments of penance and of the Holy Eucharist every month.

6. Tertiaries among the clergy, since they recite the divine office daily, shall be under no further obligation in this regard. Lay members who recite neither the canonical hours, nor the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, shall say daily twelve Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glories, unless they are prevented by ill health.

7. Let those who are entitled to make a last will and testament, do so in good time.

8. In their daily life let them strive to lead others by good example and to promote practices of piety and good works. Let them not allow books or publications which are a menace to virtue, to be brought into their homes, or to be read by those under their care.

9. Let them earnestly maintain the spirit of charity among themselves and towards others. Let them strive to heal discord wherever they can.

10. Let them never take an oath except when necessary. Let them never use indecent language or vulgar jokes. Let them examine their conscience every night whether they have offended in this regard; if they have, let them repent and correct the fault.

11. Let those who can do so, attend Mass every day. Let them attend the monthly meetings called by the minister prefect.

12. Let them contribute according to their means to a common fund, from which the poorer members may be aided, especially in time of sickness, or provision may be made for the dignity of divine worship.

13. Let the officers either personally visit a sick member, or send some one to perform the services of charity. In case of serious illness let them remind and urge the sick person to arrange in time the affairs of his soul.

14. At the funeral of a deceased member the resident and visiting tertiaries shall assemble and say in common five decades of the rosary for the soul of the departed. Moreover, let the priests at the holy Sacrifice and the lay members, if possible, having received Holy Communion, pray with fervent charity for the eternal rest of the deceased.

CHAPTER III

Offices, Visitation, and the Rule Itself

1. The offices shall be conferred at a meeting of the members. The term of these offices shall be three years. Let no one without good reason refuse an office tendered him, and let no one discharge his office negligently.

2. The visitor, who is charged with the supervision of the order, shall diligently investigate whether the rule is properly observed. Therefore, it shall be his duty to visit the fraternities every year, or oftener if need be, and hold a meeting, to which all the officers and members shall be summoned. Should the visitor recall a member to his duty by admonition or command, or impose a salutary penance, let such member meekly accept the correction and not refuse to perform the penance.

3. The visitors are to be chosen from the First Franciscan Order or from the Third Order Regular, and shall be appointed by the provincial or local superiors when requested. Laymen cannot hold the office of visitor.

4. Disobedient and harmful members shall be admonished of their duty a second and a third time; if they do not submit, let them be dismissed from the order.

5. Those who offend against any provision of this rule, do not incur the guilt of sin unless in so doing they also transgress the Commandments of God or of the Church.

6. Should a just and serious cause prevent a member from observing any provision of the rule, such person may be dispensed therefrom, or the regulation may be prudently commuted. For this purpose the ordinary superiors of the First Order and Third Order Regular, as also the aforesaid visitors, shall have full power.

* * *

Note: The above translation of the rule was approved by the Very Reverend Provincial Ministers of all the English-Speaking provinces of the Franciscan Order in the United States during the Second National Convention of the Third Order of St. Francis, held October 3-6, 1926, in New York City.

DECREE OF APPROVAL

SACRED CONGREGATION
OF RELIGIOUS

Prot. N. 02116/57

Since the time that Pope Honorius III, as we are told, approved the rule by word of mouth, there has never been wanting to the Third Order Secular of Saint Francis in the course of the centuries the solid support, the apostolic blessing, and the paternal interest of the Roman pontiffs. Of these, some, like Pope Nicholas IV and Pope Leo XIII, adapted the rule itself to the changing conditions of life; others, like Blessed Pope Innocent XI, recently raised to the honors of the altar, solicitously composed or sanctioned new statutes; finally, many others expressed their confidence in and their devotion to the Third Order, especially Saint Pope Pius X who affirmed that he was certain of the wholehearted support of the tertiaries for the restoration of all things in Christ: then, Pope Benedict XV and Pope Pius XI who testified that the Third Order was well adapted to this modern age: and Pope Pius XII, gloriously reigning, who extols the Third Order as "a chosen company in the peace-loving army of laypeople which, as never before, has drawn up its forces for the defense of the Kingdom of Christ and its spread throughout the world." (Address to Tertiaries, 1 July 1956, *Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1956, p. 577).

Since the time that Pope Leo XIII adapted the rule to the conditions of modern life, it has become evident that new

constitutions are needed as well, so that the tertiaries may understand more clearly the profound principles of Franciscan teaching which are contained in the rule, though the text is brief, and may put them into practice in their lives; so that they may devote themselves more intensely to their own sanctification by means of such definite rules of life; and so that they may also direct the activity they are engaged in with greater effect and method towards the good of the Church and of civil society.

For these reasons, the ministers general of the four Franciscan Families set up a commission six years ago, to put together, after an examination of the enactments of past ages, all the rules, both old and new, judged valid for the internal and external life of the Third Order, and those more in keeping with the decrees enacted by the Church in this age and with the modern apostolate of the order.

When the task of the commission was successfully completed, the constitutions were first examined by the ministers general, and then presented for approval to this Sacred Congregation charged with the Affairs of Religious. The Sacred Congregation submitted the constitutions to a searching examination and study by a special commission of consultors. This commission made some emendations and additions so that the Third Order might "satisfy the thirst for heroism of those who have to remain in the world but do not wish to be of the world" (Pope Pius XII: *Address to Tertiaries*, l. c. p. 575). These constitutions, then, the Latin original of which is kept in its Archives, this Sacred Congregation sanctioned and confirmed as it sanctions and confirms them by the tenor of this present decree.

With regard to indulgences and spiritual favors, their insertion in the constitutions implies nothing other than what their documents warrant.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, on the twenty-fifth day of the month of

August, in the year 1957, the feast of Saint Louis the King,
illustrious Patron of the Franciscan Third Order.

Seal

VALERIO Card. VALERI
Prefect

Fr. ARCADIO LARRAONA
Secr.

CONSTITUTIONS OF THE THIRD ORDER SECULAR OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

INTRODUCTION

"Dearly beloved brothers and eternally blessed children, hear me, hear the voice of your Father. We have promised great things, greater things have been promised to us. Let us keep the former, and long for the latter. Pleasure is brief, punishment eternal. Suffering is slight, glory infinite. Many are called, few chosen. To all an award will be made" (*The words of our holy Father Francis*)¹.

"The Third Order was, as it were, the culmination of the outstanding and immortal services which Francis rendered Christianity . . . ; and nothing illustrates better the extent and the intensity of his burning zeal to promote far and wide the glory of Jesus Christ. For, having given anxious thought to the evils which beset the Church in his day, with unbelievable tenacity Francis set about restoring all things in accordance with the Christian standard; he founded two religious families, one for men, the other for women, who would follow the humble way of the cross by taking solemn vows. But he was not able to receive into the cloister all who everywhere desired to come and follow his way of life. So, he determined to give those living in the midst of the world's turmoil a means of acquiring Christian perfection. He founded an order — in the true sense of the word — of tertiaries: an order not

¹*Words of St. Francis*, compiled and edited by James Meyer O.F.M. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1952).

indeed bound, as were the previous two, by religious vows, yet characterized by the same simplicity of life and spirit of penance. Thus, what no founder of a religious order had ever thought of doing — making the religious life available to everyone — he was the first to conceive and, under God, to realize with complete success” (Pope Benedict XV, *Sacra Propediem*, 6 Jan. 1921, *Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1921, p. 34).

CHAPTER ONE

ESSENTIAL STRUCTURE OF THE THIRD ORDER

SECTION I

Nature and purpose of the Third Order

Article 1.

The Third Order Secular of Saint Francis is an association of the faithful who strive to achieve Christian perfection in the world, under the direction of the Franciscan Order and according to its spirit, but in a manner suited to life in the world. This they do according to the Rule drawn up for them by the Seraphic Father Francis, as approved and interpreted by the Apostolic See (cf. can. 702, §1).

Article 2.

The life of the Franciscan tertiaries is this: to observe the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ while living in the world, and this in such a way as to be an example for others; to seek out the glory of God by sanctifying themselves and their neighbors, to which they are bound by virtue of the profession they made before the Church; to live faithfully in the spirit of penance, by observing the rule with care in their individual and social life.

Article 3.

This life can be perfectly lived only in the union of the Mystical Body of Christ, in which the tertiaries are intimately united by their profession. Hence, joined together by gospel charity, they should zealously foster a family spirit both in their own fraternity and in the whole order, and thus prove themselves a true community.

Article 4.

It is the duty of the Third Order, as a leaven of the gospel perfection put into the world, to give stability and strength to Christian life within the Church, and to maintain and spread Christ's kingdom by setting before others a pattern of genuine holiness.

Article 5.

Therefore the tertiaries, instructed and trained for the gospel life, which is truly apostolic, should imitate in their own daily lives their Seraphic Father, who did not think himself a friend of Christ if he did not devote himself to the souls redeemed by Him.

Article 6.

The Third Order, because it aims at perfection and is imbued with the apostolic spirit, can meet the demands of all the different circumstances of life in the world.

Consequently, besides the normal divisions of the fraternity, other special groups may be formed within it, provided that the character of a family, proper to the order, is always kept.

Article 7.

As the supreme pontiffs have attested, it is very beneficial for the clergy also to be enrolled in the Third Order. Hence superiors and all the other friars should spare no effort towards this end. Furthermore, where this can be done, the commissaries should establish fraternities for the clergy, especially in diocesan seminaries.

Article 8.

Since in the Third Order there are always members who have consecrated themselves to God either by private vows or by promises, these may be gathered into groups of their own, subject to particular norms, in order that they may progress more surely in virtue and grow in numbers, and act more efficaciously as a gospel leaven in the life of the fraternity.

Article 9.

Since the Third Order was instituted for the sanctification of the married state as well — for the first tertiaries were a married couple — it would be an excellent work to form and foster groups for married and engaged couples where such members are sufficiently numerous.

Article 10.

Since, after the example of Christ and of his saints, it is of great assistance to one's own sanctification and to that of one's neighbor, to accept sufferings willingly from the hand of God and to bear them in union with the agonizing pains of the Lord, the commissaries should see to it that the sick tertiaries are associated in groups, where this can be conveniently done. By means of regular letters and visits they should encourage the sick to offer up the pains and difficulties of life for the good of the Church and of the order, to bear their sufferings with the patience portrayed in the gospel, and thus to win for themselves treasures of grace and merit.

SECTION II

Enrollment in the Third Order

Article 11.

Since the continual growth of the Third Order should be in holiness rather than in numbers, careful inquiry shall be made whether candidates are fit for entry into the Order, according to the conditions laid down in the rule and these constitutions.

Those are fit for membership, who, called by divine grace, desire to dedicate themselves to God in a special way in the world; that is, wish to be pleasing to God and to be of service to the Church and to human society according to the spirit of Saint Francis.

Article 12.

Lay candidates shall be tested as postulants for at least three months before they are admitted to the novitiate. Secular clergy, however, and those who come from other Franciscan associations, or who for other reasons are considered sufficiently instructed, as also those who are being received as isolated members, may be admitted to the novitiate immediately.

Postulants shall be briefly instructed in Christian doctrine, in the life of our holy Father Francis, and in the Third Order. Thus prepared, they shall go forward to receive the habit.

SECTION III

Novitiate

Article 13.

According to the Rule, those are invalidly admitted to the novitiate who have not yet completed their fourteenth year; for candidates should be old enough to make a sufficiently serious and prudent judgment on the form of spiritual life that they are about to choose.

According to common law, the following also are invalidly admitted:

1) those bound by the ties of religious profession (can. 704, §1);

2) those enrolled in another Third Order, if they have not obtained an indult to belong to both (can. 705);

3) non-Catholics, and those enrolled in forbidden societies, or those who have notoriously incurred a censure, and, in general, public sinners (can. 693, §1).

Article 14.

The following are, moreover, illicitly admitted: married women without the husband's knowledge or contrary to his will, unless their spiritual director or the director of the

fraternity judges otherwise; those who through their own fault are burdened with debts which they cannot pay; those who are not of a kindly and peaceful disposition, but are prone to bickering, gossip, detraction, and calumny, or to unusual forms of devotion.

Article 15.

Those who have been found suitable shall be admitted to the novitiate of the fraternity by the director on the advice of the council.

Article 16.

Postulants are received into the novitiate by means of the clothing in the habit, which consists in receiving a blessed scapular and cord, according to the form prescribed by the Ceremonial of the order.

Moreover, if novices are to be admitted into a fraternity, it is required for validity that their names be recorded in the register of the fraternity (can. 694, §2), without prejudice to the regulation of article 34 concerning isolated tertiaries.

For this ceremony it is praiseworthy to use a habit or scapular shaped like a garment.

Article 17.

In their daily lives the tertiaries shall wear the small scapular under their outer clothing in any becoming manner; and also the cord which is the badge of the Franciscan life and an excellent reminder of penance and perseverance.

For a reasonable cause, however, they may lay aside the cord and scapular for a short time.

But in individual cases and for a just cause, the director may dispense from wearing them; or he may allow to be used in their stead a metal medal bearing the image of our Lord Jesus Christ or of the Blessed Virgin Mary or of our holy Father Francis.

In the case of individual fraternities the major superiors of the Franciscan Order have the same faculty, provided

that the reasons, submitted in writing by the director and council of the fraternity, are really sufficient.

It is a praiseworthy tradition of the order to wear the habit or large scapular during sacred functions.

Article 18.

At the time of clothing each tertiary shall be given a certificate of membership with the appropriate information, signed by the one who officiated at the ceremony.

Article 19.

The novitiate shall last one complete year, as prescribed in the rule.

Article 20.

The purpose of the novitiate is so to prepare the novices that they may afterwards dedicate themselves to God by profession, with a full realization of their obligations. They shall, therefore, be thoroughly formed by means of a solid grounding, both theoretical and practical, in the Christian and Franciscan life.

Should any novice be unable to attend the regular instructions, the director together with the minister prefect must provide for him in some other way, unless it is clear for other reasons that he is sufficiently advanced in Franciscan doctrine.

Article 21.

The novices shall be carefully instructed in the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the life and spirit of our holy Father Francis, in the nature, purpose, and history of the Third Order, and in the regulations of the holy rule and of these constitutions.

They shall learn thoroughly the means by which they can live in the midst of the world in the spirit of Christian penance, fulfill their duties in the various circumstances of life, and perform works of religion, of charity, and of the apostolate.

Article 22.

Novices enjoy all the privileges and spiritual favors both of the Third Order in general and of the fraternity in which they are enrolled.

In danger of death a novice may be admitted to profession and, thus professed, he enjoys the same privileges as the other professed members; if however he recovers his health, the profession ceases to have any force, and must be made when the period of probation is completed.

Article 23.

Towards the end of the novitiate the director, if he thinks fit, shall test the knowledge and intentions of the novices, and seek the advice of the council as to whether they are worthy of being admitted to profession.

If a novice through his own negligence has not attended the majority of the instructions, or if it remains doubtful that he is worthy and suitable, the novitiate shall be prolonged, but not beyond six months.

If, however, when the year of novitiate is completed, a novice through his own negligence fails to make profession within two years, the novitiate must be repeated if he wishes to be admitted to the order.

Where isolated tertiaries are concerned, articles 33 and 34 shall be observed.

SECTION IV

Profession

Article 24.

Profession in the Third Order is a solemn religious act whereby one of the faithful, moved by divine grace, dedicates himself to God, promising to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world, by living according to the commandments of God and the rule of our holy Father Francis; and promising to atone for transgressions committed

against the rule or these constitutions, should the visitator or the superior so wish.

Profession is, therefore, a special renewal of the baptismal promises and a self-consecration, whereby one of the faithful living in the world promises to use particular means for leading a life in full accord with the gospel. In this way he unites himself by a closer bond to our Lord Jesus Christ and becomes a member of the great Franciscan family.

Because of this, tertiaries should hold their holy profession in high esteem throughout their lives.

Article 25.

For profession to be valid it is required that those who are about to make it:

- 1) be fifteen years old;
- 2) have duly completed the novitiate, in accordance with these constitutions;

- 3) do so freely and expressly in the presence of the lawful Superior or another who has the proper faculties.

Profession shall be made according to the form prescribed by the Ceremonial and shall be noted in the register of the fraternity, without prejudice to article 34 concerning isolated tertiaries.

Article 26.

In order to make their profession with greater fruit and fervor, the novices shall prepare themselves well for it, if possible by first making a retreat.

Article 27.

The rite of profession, as laid down in the Ceremonial, shall be carried out with great solemnity. It shall take place in conjunction with the Sacrifice of the Mass, where this can be conveniently done.

This ceremony shall not be held too often, so that it may not be cheapened through frequent use; but, rather, that those making the profession and all who are present may draw from the ceremony an increase of holiness.

The vernacular may be used both in the rite of profession and of clothing.

Article 28.

At the time of profession the certificate of membership, spoken of in article 18, shall be completed with the appropriate information.

Article 29.

In the Gospel our Lord gives this admonition: "No one who looks behind him, when he has once put his hand to the plough, is fitted for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Therefore, the tertiary brothers and sisters — as persons who have embraced a constant way of life in the world — shall strive to strengthen themselves more and more in their holy resolution. Hence, they are urged to make a frequent renewal of their profession with devotion, at least privately; but to make it publicly on the anniversary of the profession of our holy Father Francis (April 16), and at the time of retreat.

SECTION V

Unaffiliated or isolated tertiaries

Article 30.

An unaffiliated or isolated tertiary is one who, for just and reasonable causes, cannot be enrolled in any fraternity, or one who was admitted invalidly to some fraternity because of omission of registration — provided that he was received by a priest who had the faculty of receiving even isolated tertiaries.

Article 31.

All superiors may receive isolated tertiaries without seeking the consent of the local ordinary (can. 703, §2); others may do so, however, only if they have obtained the proper faculty from the competent superior.

This faculty can be granted for prudent reasons to priests who do not belong to the Franciscan Order, always without prejudice to the regulation of article 34.

Article 32.

Isolated tertiaries must carry out the year of novitiate as laid down in these constitutions. Moreover, special care is needed in their case, lest they go on to profession without sufficient preparation, or later lose the Franciscan spirit little by little. Indeed, since they do not have the benefit of the very frequent instructions that are given in the fraternities for the spiritual formation of tertiaries, they should be given a full training, in whatever manner this can best be done.

Article 33.

When the novitiate year has been duly completed, the superior, if he thinks fit, shall test their knowledge and intentions, either personally or through another priest; and if they are found worthy, they shall be admitted to profession.

Article 34.

Although it is not required for validity that the names of isolated tertiaries be entered in the register of the order, it is none the less very useful, so that clear proof may be had of the clothing and of the profession ceremonies (cf. can. 694, §2). Therefore, in such cases, the priest who carries out the clothing or receives the profession shall inform the proper provincial commissary as soon as possible, mentioning the surname, the Christian name, and the residence of the member, as well as the day, the month, and the year of the clothing or of the profession. The commissary will write this information into a register specially kept for this purpose.

Article 35.

Every isolated tertiary is strongly advised to maintain contact, if possible, with the provincial commissary or with the one who received him into the order; to subscribe to some Franciscan magazine; to attend the more solemn functions with the nearest fraternity, whenever an opportunity occurs;

to present himself for visitation there at least every three years; and occasionally to inform the provincial commissary about his Franciscan and apostolic way of life.

Article 36.

The provincial commissary shall send a circular letter to the isolated tertiaries at least twice a year, and shall get them to meet sometimes for a day of reunion.

Article 37.

Isolated members enjoy the rights and privileges which tertiaries have as individuals, but not those they have as members of fraternities.

Article 38.

If an isolated tertiary wishes to be admitted to some fraternity, it suffices that he be accepted by that fraternity and entered in its register.

CHAPTER TWO

WAY OF LIFE

"Oh how happy and blessed are they who love the Lord, and who do as the Lord himself says in the Gospel: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul and thy neighbor as thyself* (Mt. 22, 37-39). Let us therefore love God and adore him with a pure heart and a pure mind . . . And let us praise him and pray to him day and night . . . Let us, moreover, produce the good fruits of penance (Lk. 3, 8). And let us love our neighbors as ourselves" (Our holy Father Francis, *First Letter to all Christians*).

SECTION I

Christian perfection, according to the Franciscan spirit

Article 39.

Although the Third Order is not a body of persons who are already perfect, it is principally a school of integral Christian perfection, imbued with the genuine Franciscan spirit. For, it was instituted for this purpose: to satisfy fully the sincere desires of those who had to remain in the world but who did not wish to be of the world. Therefore, the Third Order wishes to have as members those who burn with the desire of striving for perfection in their own station in life (Pope Pius XII, *Address to Tertiaries*, 1 July 1956, *Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1956, p. 573-577).

Article 40.

Tertiaries shall meditate on and put into practice before all else that well-known twofold commandment of Christ: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul and thy whole mind. This is the greatest of the commandments, and the first. And the second, its like, is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Matthew, 22: 37-39).

Article 41.

Since Christ is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6), tertiaries should have the deep conviction that, by reason of their baptism and holy profession, they must become like Christ crucified, and must follow his gospel as their rule of life. For, the observance of the gospel in a perfect way is the reason for the rule of our holy Father Francis. Thus, the members, "although they pass their lives in the midst of the world, should be imbued with the mind and spirit of Christ" (Pope Pius XII, *Address to Tertiaries*, 20 September 1945).

Article 42.

Charity unites not only God with men but also men with one another, as is shown in the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ: "I pray . . . that they may all be one; that they too may be one in us, as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee" (John, 17: 20-21). Tertiaries, therefore, shall regard all others as children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ our Lord. They shall treat each one with the greatest kindness and courtesy, that is both sincere and heartfelt, praising virtues and mercifully concealing faults — in keeping with the exhortation of the Apostle: "Bear the burden of one another's failings; then you will be fulfilling the law of Christ" (*Galatians*, 6:2).

Article 43.

That they may more easily practice love of God and charity towards their neighbor, members shall follow the

example of Christ who said of himself: "The Son of Man did not come to have service done him; he came to serve others, and to give his life as a ransom for the lives of many" (Matthew, 20:28). Further, with the Seraphic Francis as their model, they shall, instead of living merely for themselves, make every effort to be of service to others, and to spread Christ's kingdom by word and work. They shall strive to settle disagreements and discord wherever they may come upon these, and make the greatest endeavor to restore and promote the spirit of charity and peace.

Article 44.

Led by the spirit of submission, and with hearts full of joyous gratitude, tertiaries shall regard as outstanding gifts of God the benefits of the Creation, of the Incarnation, and of the Redemption. But they shall use the goods of this world in the fear of the Lord, and put themselves under the yoke of service and of loyalty to God by controlling the gratification of corrupt nature, the gratification of the eye, and the empty pomp of living (cf. 1 John 2:16). They shall always bear in mind that, through baptism and holy profession, they have died with Christ, and must lead a new kind of life, living for God in Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. *Romans*, 6:3 - 11).

Article 45.

They shall love and venerate the Holy Roman Church with utmost devotedness, because to it alone Christ entrusted the treasures of truth and holiness. So, with a promptness of will, the submission of sons, and a sincere loyalty, they shall pay homage to the supreme pontiff, Christ's vicar on earth, to their bishops, regular superiors, parish priests, and all other shepherds of souls. They shall love, honor, and revere the priests of the Church, who, as our Seraphic Father says, consecrate and administer to others the most holy Body and Blood of Christ.

Article 46.

Imbued with the spirit of poverty, the members, while they may prudently provide for their present and future

needs, shall still take care to disengage their hearts from the things of this world. They shall bear in mind that they will be children of their Seraphic Patriarch only in so far as they foster this spirit of mortification.

Article 47.

Accordingly, let them beware of committing any sin in acquiring and enjoying temporal goods. Rather, let them share these things with their neighbors, bearing in mind that all temporal things — private property itself included — have been given to them by God not only for their own advantage but also that they may be administered well for the good of society.

Moreover, let them, in good time, will their property, with due regard for justice and charity.

Article 48.

Since daily work is an excellent and continual practice of penance and the companion of Christian joy, tertiaries shall prove themselves untiring, faithful, and diligent at work, doing everything for God's honor and glory. Thus they will earn for themselves the necessities of life, avoid idleness, develop and perfect their natural skills in an excellent way, and be able to perform great works of charity.

Article 49.

Tertiaries shall avoid all vanity in their appearance and clothes, and adhere to the standard of simplicity, moderation, and propriety that befits each one. With regard to food and drink, they shall observe the frugality enjoined by the rule and also the fasts imposed by the Church and the rule.

Article 50.

They shall steadfastly avoid dances, theatrical performances, films and television shows that tend to be offensive to good morals, and also all forms of dissipation. Concerning dances in general, tertiaries shall observe exactly the regulations laid down by the Church in their various localities, so that they may never be the cause of scandal. To put the

spirit of penance into practice better and to foster recollection, it is to be recommended that they abstain altogether from dances and worldly shows.

Article 51.

As lovers of the eminent virtue of chastity, members shall regard their own bodies and those of others as holy, and observe the Christian precepts on this matter in keeping with each one's state of life.

The unmarried shall hold the state of continence or virginity in high esteem and keep it unsullied; those who are engaged shall chastely prepare themselves for entrance into holy matrimony; and married tertiaries shall draw from the sacrament they have received the graces necessary to raise and train their children well and to watch over their married life faithfully, holily and chastely.

Article 52.

Those tertiaries are worthy of very great praise who, experienced in the ways of the Lord, and on the advice of their spiritual director, take one or other private vow.

Article 53.

In order to recognize one another more easily and to be more effectively drawn together in the bonds of fraternal charity, tertiaries shall wear an external Franciscan emblem, where this can be prudently done. Further, it is urged that one and the same emblem be worn throughout the world. Likewise, tertiaries shall salute one another with the Franciscan greeting *Pax et Bonum*, or in any other religious manner according to local usage.

SECTION II

The Divine Office and other exercises of religion

Article 54.

The tertiaries, going through the world, shall, with joy and thanksgiving, contemplate God in all creation. Al-

ways and everywhere they shall proclaim his glory, acting as heralds of the Great King after the example of their Seraphic Father.

In a more excellent way still, they shall glorify God in union with Christ and his Church by active participation in sacred functions.

Article 55.

With all due care they shall keep holy the Sundays and the feastdays of obligation. They shall be painstaking in their attendance at the functions recommended in the rule and in these constitutions, and at other sacred functions, especially those carried out in their parochial and Franciscan churches.

Article 56.

The union with Christ which is begun in the faithful by baptism is renewed and strengthened through participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Consequently, tertiaries shall be on fire with love for the most sublime Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in obedience to the words of their Seraphic Father: "Brothers, kissing your feet, and with all the charity of which I am capable, I beg you all to show every reverence and honor possible to the most holy Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all things in heaven and on earth are set at peace and are reconciled (cf. *Collossians*, 1:20) to Almighty God" (*Letter to the General Chapter*).

Article 57.

If it is possible for them, tertiaries shall strive to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass daily, and to go frequently to Holy Communion with devotion. Those unable to do so shall take care to make a spiritual communion. Thus, united with the Eucharistic Christ, either sacramentally or in spirit, they shall start their daily work with confidence.

Article 58.

They shall show deep reverence for God's churches, whether these are large and richly furnished, or small and poor; and they shall make visits to them readily, whenever an opportunity occurs. There they shall adore Christ with the words of their Seraphic Father: "We adore you, most holy Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all your churches throughout the world; and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world." Thus, through participation in the Eucharist, they shall realize and profess their membership of the Mystical Body of Christ, of whose unity this most sublime Sacrament is the symbol, the sustaining power, and the perfection.

Article 59.

They shall fulfil their obligation of reciting the office faithfully, attentively, and devoutly — saying daily any one of the following: the canonical hours; the short office granted by the Church in various forms for lay brothers and sisters; the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, and *Glory be to the Father*, recited twelve times.

If it is convenient, they shall recite these prayers at different times of the day after the manner of the canonical hours. It is commendable to recite them in common and in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

With the exception of the canonical hours, these prayers may be recited in the vernacular.

Article 60.

In accordance with article 167 priest-tertiaries may use the Roman-Seraphic Missal and Breviary. Likewise, they are recommended to recite daily, on completing the divine office, some antiphon or responsory and a prayer in honor of our holy Father Francis.

Article 61.

In accordance with the rule, tertiaryes shall receive the sacrament of penance every month or even oftener; and,

when possible, they shall have a competent spiritual director.

They shall, moreover, examine their consciences daily, and correct the sins they have committed by truly repenting of them.

Article 62.

Daily, if possible, but especially on Sundays and holy-days, tertiaries shall devote some time to mental prayer or spiritual reading. They shall make frequent use of the Sacred Scriptures, particularly of the holy Gospel, and also of the life of our holy Father Francis and of the other saints of the Seraphic Order.

Likewise, by means of the pious exercise of the Way of the Cross, they shall reflect, especially during Lent and on Fridays, on the last sufferings of Christ.

Article 63.

Tertiaries, even those who belong to other pious associations, shall do their utmost to attend the monthly meetings enjoined by the rule.

In the morning, where possible, Mass shall be celebrated, with a sermon and general Communion of the members. In the afternoon, or evening, the meeting shall be held in this way: after the recitation of the opening prayers as laid down by the Ceremonial, the director shall preach on some point of Franciscan spirituality, adapting his discourse to the congregation; he shall then make the announcements about past and future activities; lastly, after the recitation of the final prayers, he shall bring the meeting to a close with Benediction of the most Blessed Sacrament, if possible.

At some suitable time before the end of the meeting, the alms offered by the members, for distribution among the poor and for other pious uses, shall be collected.

Article 64.

In the absence of the director or another priest, the monthly meeting shall be conducted as follows: the minister prefect or his substitute shall recite with the members the

ritual prayers and any others suited to the time and place; he shall then read a part of the rule or of these constitutions or of the life of our Seraphic Father or of some other Franciscan saint; he shall make whatever announcements are necessary, indicate the date and time of the next meeting, collect the alms, and recite the final prayers.

Article 65.

A most effective means of renewing one's zeal for perfection is the monthly recollection day. Tertiaries shall do their utmost to make one either with the fraternity or privately.

Article 66.

It is strongly recommended that in every fraternity an *open* retreat of a Franciscan nature be held annually. But each member shall take care to make a *closed* retreat at least every three years.

Article 67.

Those who organize congresses of more than usual importance shall not fail to send expressions of their devoted homage to the Roman pontiff and to the ministers general of the order (Saint Pius X, *Tertium Franciscanum Ordinem*, 8 September 1912, *Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1912, p. 585 f.).

Article 68.

Every year in the month of January or of June, each fraternity shall publicly make or renew its solemn consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and in the month of May or December, its consecration to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, using the approved prayers.

Article 69.

Tertiaries shall love the most Blessed Virgin Mother of Jesus with a tender and filial affection, and honor her as Queen and Patron of the order with special devotion and reverence.

Article 70.

Similarly, they shall venerate with particular devotion and imitate Saint Joseph, the Spouse of the Blessed Virgin, also our holy Father Francis, holy Mother Clare, and the patrons of the Third Order, namely, Saint Louis the King and Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. They shall celebrate their feasts with solemn ceremonies.

SECTION III

Family and social life

Article 71.

The Franciscan spirit is particularly suited to the good ordering and safeguarding of family and social life. Tertiaries, in the first place, shall promote with loving care the Christian family; for upon it, in great measure, depends the welfare of the Church and of human society.

So, in imitation of the Holy Family of Nazareth, they shall strive to uphold the particular aim and the sanctity of marriage and of the Christian family, to practice the home virtues, to accept out of love for God the burden even of a large family, and to excel all others in uprightness of life and in the spirit of sacrifice.

Article 72.

They shall take the greatest care to make life within the family pleasant and happy, even when means are limited. The furnishings of the house shall mirror the Franciscan spirit as far as possible. The crucifix, so dear to our holy Father Francis, shall occupy the principal place in the living rooms and bedrooms.

Home life shall be sanctified each day by morning and evening prayers, and by grace before and after meals. The following practices are strongly recommended: the reading of the New Testament or of the life of some saint; the recitation of the rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary or of the

Franciscan Crown; and the consecration of the family to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, annually renewed.

Article 73.

In accordance with the rule, they shall not permit in their homes books, newspapers, images or pictures, radio or television programs, from which harm to virtue may be feared; and they shall also prudently restrain those subject to them from using such things. Rather, they shall foster by all means in their power everything that makes family life holy and happy.

Article 74.

(Tertiaries shall carefully observe and uphold the virtue of justice, both commutative and distributive, both legal and social, prudently tempering it with charity.) With great sincerity they shall show themselves to be true Christians and Franciscans by paying their debts, by giving and taking a just price for goods on sale and for work done, by cultivating a spirit of thrift, by promoting peace among members of the different social classes, by bettering the conditions of the poorer class, by giving particular support and encouragement to the middle class, and by honoring agricultural and manual work as well.

Article 75.

Consequently, tertiaries shall be thoroughly familiar with the encyclical letters *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno* and with the other papal documents dealing with social and political matters; and they shall make every effort to put into practice in their own lives the principles found therein.

Yet fraternities of the Third Order as such shall abstain from engaging in civil or purely economic and political affairs. In carrying out social action they shall observe to the letter the instructions and regulations of the Holy See and of the local ordinaries (Pope Saint Pius X, *Tertium Franciscalum Ordinem*, 8 September 1912, *Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1912, p. 585).

Article 76.

(Nevertheless, it is clearly the mind of the Church that tertiaries as individuals shall, in virtue of their own spiritual formation, by their example and activity, strive to better the social and political world in which they live. For, the Third Order is well fitted to the task of adjusting the relations between rich and poor,) "since it bases itself on this firm conviction, that poverty is not without a dignity of its own: that, while the rich man is bound to be compassionate and generous, the poor man should be content with his lot and with the fruits of his labor: and that, since neither was born to live for such passing things, the one by patience, the other by liberality must make his way to Heaven" (Pope Leo XIII, *Auspicato*, 17 September 1882).

SECTION IV

Works of the apostolate

Article 77.

The Third Order is a chosen company in the peace-loving army of laypeople, drawn up in constant readiness for the defense of the kingdom of Christ and its spread throughout the world. Hence, following in the footsteps of their Seraphic Father, tertiaries shall, more than others, defend and support the Church, and give it new life (Pope Pius XII, *Address to Tertiaries*, 1 July 1956, *Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1956, p. 577).

Article 78.

Tertiaries, as heralds of the Great King, shall therefore spend themselves for the salvation of their neighbor in works of charity and of the apostolate. They shall work energetically in promoting the Catholic Faith, and in defending the Church and the Roman pontiff.

They shall devote themselves principally to the works and duties that are especially proper to the Franciscan Order,

as for instance, the missions, the promoting of religious vocations, etc., or to the projects passed over by others.

Article 79.

All, superiors as well as subjects, shall make a point of settling differences with great zeal and equal prudence, thus modeling themselves on their Seraphic Father, who always proclaimed the message of peace with great fervor to those he met on his travels and to those who came to visit him.

They shall give the closest attention to upholding fraternal harmony and charity between the members of each Franciscan Family.

As far as possible, they shall work together in planning and carrying out public celebrations, such as pilgrimages, congresses, the more important festivities, and works of piety and of the apostolate.

Article 80.

In order to ensure that they do not develop into associations of a purely devotional character, the fraternities of the Third Order are encouraged to promote individually, as far as circumstances permit, a particular work of the apostolate. This should be done by the individual provinces also.

Article 81.

In keeping with the mind of the supreme pontiffs, the directors and the members of the Seraphic Order shall readily support and carry out, in full cooperation with the ecclesiastical superiors, the projects proposed by them in their respective nations, regions, dioceses, or parishes, and in particular the work of *Catholic Action*.

They shall always maintain peaceful and harmonious relations with other pious associations, especially parochial.

Article 82.

In gratitude to God and to the Church for their Franciscan vocation, members shall do their utmost to advance the interests of the order. One or more shall be appointed in each fraternity whose duty it will be to promote and spread it with

prudent zeal, especially among men and young people.

Furthermore, let commissaries and directors see to it that boys and girls, even from their earliest years, are enrolled in ever-increasing numbers in some Franciscan association adapted to their needs, which will be a nursery for aspirants to the order.

Article 83.

It is strongly recommended that books and periodicals dealing with the life and spirit of the Third Order be published and widely propagated among the members. If conditions are favorable, the four Regular Families shall undertake this in common, according to regulations approved by the superiors.

The members, for their part, shall not only buy and read Franciscan literature themselves, but shall also be zealous in spreading it as much as possible among those outside the order. In this way they will nourish continually the Franciscan spirit in their own hearts, make the Third Order known to others, and exercise the praiseworthy apostolate of good literature.

Article 84.

For the rest, all shall bear in mind the very solemn appeal made by the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, in an address to the tertiaries: "To work, you too, beloved children! Jesus himself asks this of you through me, his Vicar. Press forward, all! Bring aid to a world in jeopardy! Uphold the Church!" (Pope Pius XII, *Address to Tertiaries*, 1 July 1956, *Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1956, p. 577).

SECTION V

Sick and deceased members

Article 85.

Tertiaries who are sick, disabled, old, or afflicted with any infirmity, shall bear their trials patiently, nay more, with

Franciscan joy, as companions of the suffering Christ. In union with the whole Mystical Body of Christ they shall offer the hardships of their lives to the heavenly Father in expiation of their own sins and the sins of the world. They shall give thanks to God for all the blessings he has bestowed on them.

Article 86.

After the splendid example of their Seraphic Father, and in accordance with the rule, the members shall show deep sympathy towards the sick and infirm, and great concern for their needs. Where possible, persons qualified in the care of the sick shall be appointed infirmarians in the fraternities, in conformity with article 145.

Moreover, in the spirit of fraternal charity, all the tertiaries, but especially the minister prefect and councilors, shall visit and encourage the sick; and if these are poor, provide for their needs in so far as their means allow.

Article 87.

As the rule directs, they shall also advise and gently urge those who are dangerously ill to receive the last sacraments in good time.

The tertiaries shall perform this salutary service for the rest of the faithful as well.

Article 88.

The regulations which the rule lays down concerning the obsequies of the members and concerning the prayers to be said for their eternal happiness shall be observed carefully, as determined by local customs. In addition to the usual prayers enjoined for deceased tertiaries, each fraternity shall have the sacrifice of the Mass applied in the month of November for its deceased members.

Article 89.

It is highly commendable for tertiaries to direct that they be buried in the full habit of the order.

CHAPTER THREE

GOVERNMENT OF THE THIRD ORDER

"The Seraphic Father Francis wished his ministers to be courteous to their subjects, kindly and gentle He wished them to be reasonable in their commands, forgiving in the face of offenses, more ready to bear than to return injuries, to be enemies of sin but physicians of sinners. Finally, he wished them to be such that their lives would be a mirror of disciplined living. On the other hand, he wished them to be treated with all honor and to be loved, seeing that they had to bear the burden of cares and labors (cf. Matthew, 20:12). He used to say that those who guided the souls entrusted to them after this pattern and according to these principles were deserving of the greatest rewards in God's sight" (Thomas of Celano, *Vita secunda*, pars 2, cap. 140, n. 187).

SECTION I

Government in general

Article 90.

The Franciscan Third Order, whose nature is already defined in article 1, is the community of all members and fraternities, entrusted by the Church to the care of the four Regular Franciscan Families for the attaining of its end and the maintaining and fostering of the true Franciscan spirit.

Article 91.

The order is divided by common law (can. 702, §2) into fraternities (Latin: *sodalities*). But by its own particular

law it is divided into regions, provinces, nations and obediences: divisions, that is, which are governed by the respective Franciscan Family.

Article 92.

A fraternity is a moral person whose duty it is to care for all its members, and to foster spiritual union with the other parts of the Third Order, with the Regular Franciscan Families, and most of all with the Church.

Article 93.

The following are the necessary requirements for establishing a fraternity as an organic body:

- 1) at least three professed members (can. 100, §2);
- 2) the consent of the local ordinary, given in writing (can. 686);
- 3) the document of establishment signed by the competent superior of the Family on which the fraternity depends (can. 687; cf. can. 100, §1);
- 4) a register for the names of the tertiaries (cf. can. 694, §2);
- 5) a church, oratory, or an altar, where the fraternity carries out its religious functions;
- 6) the appointment of the director and of the minister prefect together with the council, as enjoined by common law and by these constitutions (cf. articles 111, 112, 122).

Notice of all establishments of fraternities and of the appointment of directors must be sent to the provincial or the regional commissary.

Article 94.

The government of the Third Order is of a double kind, in conformity with its particular nature: *external*, which is exercised by the Church and by the four Regular Franciscan Families; and *internal*, which common law leaves in the hands of the tertiaries themselves.

SECTION II

External government

Article 95.

The Roman pontiff, who is the teacher and ruler of all the faithful and of all associations in the Church, is in a special way — according to the mind of our holy Father Francis — the supreme director of the Third Order and of the entire Franciscan Family. Therefore, all tertiaries shall show the greatest reverence and submission to him, the Vicar of Christ on earth, and give him absolute obedience.

Article 96.

The local ordinary, to whom all tertiaries owe obedience and reverence, has, according to the sacred canons, the right:

- 1) to grant permission for the establishment of an organic fraternity in his diocese (can. 68, §3; 703, §2);
- 2) to make a visitation of the churches or oratories or of the altars that are the property of the Third Order;
- 3) to examine the books of administration, and to ask for an account of the temporal goods and Mass obligations of the fraternity itself (can. 691, §1);
- 4) to grant permission to wear the habit during public sacred functions (can. 703, §3);
- 5) to dismiss tertiaries (can. 696, §3), and for a grave cause to suppress fraternities (can. 699, §1).

Article 97.

According to the constitutions of the Roman pontiffs, the Third Order, in what concerns spiritual direction and internal discipline, is subject to the superiors of the three Families of the First Order and of the Third Order Regular.

Article 98.

In these present constitutions the superiors of the Third Order are:

- 1) the superior general, throughout the world;

2) the provincial superior, within the limits of his province;

3) the local superior, in his own district.

The following, however, are habitual delegates: the general, national, provincial, and regional commissaries. Only in the act of visitation or in meetings of the tertiaries do these take precedence over the local superior.

Article 99.

The above-mentioned superiors, each within the limits of his jurisdiction and with the previous consent of the local ordinary, may, either personally or through their delegates, establish fraternities, even outside the churches of the order; and they may direct them either personally or through directors appointed in accordance with articles 111 and 112.

Secular priests, however, or those of another religious institute may not be appointed directors unless the local ordinary or the respective competent superior is consulted.

Article 100.

These same superiors may delegate their powers either wholly or in part. Yet they shall not delegate them to secular priests or to priests of another religious institute, if in the locality where they reside habitually there already exists a fraternity of the Third Order or if another priest has already been given the same faculties.

The priest delegated to establish a fraternity shall observe accurately the regulations of article 93.

Article 101.

The faculty of establishing and of directing a fraternity, granted by one Franciscan Family, is not valid for establishing or directing a fraternity dependent on another Family.

Article 102.

A fraternity established by any bishop or priest in virtue of a delegation is subject to the Franciscan Family from which the bishop or priest received the delegation. Conse-

quently, the one who establishes a fraternity must, in accordance with article 93, inform the respective commissary of the establishment made.

Article 103.

A fraternity established by one Franciscan Family may not, without having first consulted the superiors of that Family, or against their will, go over to another Family. This regulation holds good even if the director of the fraternity has been taken from another Family (S. C. Rel., 6 December 1911 ad I).

Article 104.

However, if individual tertiaries for any reasonable cause wish to go over to another fraternity, even one of a different obedience, it suffices that they be accepted by that fraternity and that they inform the director of the former fraternity (S. C. Rel., 4 March 1903).

Article 105.

The superiors of the four Franciscan Families govern the Third Order normally through the general, national, provincial, and regional commissaries, and through the local directors.

Article 106.

In order that the faithful may share more fully in the abundant fruits of the Franciscan way of life, and that the Third Order may live up to the expectations of holy Mother Church more perfectly, the superiors, the commissaries, and the directors shall take the greatest pains in spreading it widely throughout their territories.

Moreover, all the religious of each Franciscan Family, but especially the preachers of the divine word, shall hold it in high esteem and foster it among those of the faithful who aspire to a deeper Christian life.

Article 107.

The general commissary of the Third Order is appointed by the minister general on the advice of his definitory, and

exercises his office by virtue of delegated power subject to the minister general himself. His duties are chiefly these:

1) to direct national and provincial commissaries in matters regarding the spiritual life and apostolic activity of the Third Order; and to call them together for consultation with the consent of the minister general;

2) to make known the news and ventures of one nation or province to the others;

3) to undertake or to encourage enterprises of greater importance pertaining to the Third Order; and to foster unity of action with the other Franciscan obediences, other Third Orders, and all other pious associations and works;

4) to make an annual report to his general definitory on the state of the Third Order in the provinces and nations.

Article 108.

The national commissary — where one is necessary — is appointed by the minister general on the advice of his definitory and after consultation with the general commissary and the ministers provincial of the nation in question. The scope of his office, however, is determined by special regulations, which may be laid down by the ministers provincial of the particular nation, with the approval of the minister general.

Article 109.

The provincial commissary is appointed by the minister provincial on the advice of his definitory; and he exercises his office by virtue of delegated power subject to the minister provincial. His duties are these:

1) to help the regional commissaries and the local directors in their work.

2) to provide the directors and officers of fraternities with the means necessary for their spiritual growth and technical formation.

3) to make a visitation of all the fraternities in accordance with these constitutions either personally or through a delegate (articles 116 - 119);

4) to have a constant concern for the isolated tertiaries (article 34 — 36) and for the groups of sick tertiaries (article 10);

5) to convoke and preside at conventions, either general or particular, within the boundaries of his province;

6) to promote and direct pilgrimages and the more important apostolic and charitable projects which are common to the whole province or to several regions;

7) to foster unity of action with other Franciscan obediences, other Third Orders, and all other pious associations and works;

8) to send an annual report on the Third Order to the minister provincial, to the general commissary, and also to the national commissary, if there is one.

Article 110.

The regional commissary is appointed by the minister provincial after consultation with the provincial commissary. He directs his region in accordance with the regulations laid down by his superiors.

Article 111.

The local director or moderator, appointed in accordance with the regulations peculiar to each Franciscan Family, must be a man of experience, zeal, holiness, prudence, and pastoral devotedness. In the spirit of our holy Father Francis, all the members shall show him obedience and reverence.

Article 112.

Without prejudice to the regulation of article 99, the particular statutes of each Franciscan Family may determine in greater detail the appointment of directors for fraternities established outside of Franciscan churches.

Article 113.

The director's duties are chiefly these:

1) to admit postulants to the habit and novices to profession, on the advice of his council;

2) to receive the above-mentioned both to the habit

and profession, in accordance with the Ceremonial;

3) to preside at the monthly meetings of the fraternity and at the sessions of the council;

4) to see to it that the councilors and the officers fulfill their duties diligently;

5) to impart the papal blessing and the indulgenced blessing on the appointed days;

6) to dispense individual members, for a just cause, from any precept of the rule or of these constitutions;

7) to examine the registers of the fraternity and the books concerned with administration, to see also that obligations are fulfilled – without, however, involving himself in financial matters except to the extent enjoined by articles 131 and 144;

8) to preside at the election of the council if this takes place outside the time of visitation (cf. article 117, §8).

Article 114.

The director is more the father than the judge of his fraternity. Consequently, he must concern himself with fostering in a practical way the spiritual life and progress of the individual members and of the whole fraternity. He must be continually conscious that the wellbeing of the fraternity depends principally on him, that he will have to give to God an account of the office entrusted to his care.

Article 115.

Besides the regular superiors, the following are visitors *ex officio*: the general commissary in the whole order, the national commissary in his nation, the provincial commissary in his province, the regional commissary in his region.

However, neither the general nor the national commissary shall make a visitation in any province without first notifying its minister provincial.

Article 116.

The visitation of each fraternity shall be made, if possible, yearly – as the rule prescribes – or at least every three

years. Since experience teaches that the life of the Third Order and its spiritual productiveness depend very much on the careful making of the visitation, superiors shall ensure that the visitation is made regularly, either by themselves or by their commissaries. Nor shall it be carried out hastily or superficially; but, rather, with great care and earnestness, and in keeping with the regulations of the Ceremonial of the order.

Article 117.

The visitor is designated according to the particular statutes of each Family. During the visitation it is his right and duty:

1) to summon the council and fraternity, and even individual tertiaries if this seems advisable, in order to discuss the affairs of the Third Order;

2) to inquire if the rule and constitutions are being observed; if the fraternity is engaged in works of the apostolate and of charity; if zeal for gospel perfection, if peace and harmony, are flourishing;

3) to examine the books and registers both of the fraternity and of the council;

4) to dispense from or commute regulations of the rule and of these constitutions, for a just cause;

5) to correct and admonish members and officers who are delinquent or negligent, if such a need arises, and to expel incorrigible members in accordance with articles 147 - 154;

6) to impose on all tertiaries, in virtue of what they have promised at profession, salutary penances for transgressions.

7) to impart the indulgenced blessing or the papal blessing;

8) to preside at the election of the council in the triennial visitation, unless for a just cause the election takes place at another time.

Article 118.

In places where their own religious are not available, the competent superiors may designate for the office of visita-

tor secular or religious priests, but never laymen.

Article 119.

If it seems necessary or advisable, the visitator shall pay a visit to the parish priest and to the local ordinary, and learn their views on the fraternity and on the tertiaries.

SECTION III

Internal government

Article 120.

The internal government of a fraternity, as a moral person within the Third Order, belongs to the council of the fraternity. This council consists of the minister prefect and councilors, and constitutes also the advisory board of the director.

There shall be at least four councilors, so that the necessary offices may be filled (cf. article 136); however, more can be elected in proportion to the number of the tertiaries.

Article 121.

Regional, provincial, national, and general councils may be set up, after the manner of the fraternity council, in accordance with the particular statutes of each Family. These councils shall consist of the respective commissary and a number of tertiaries designated according to the above-mentioned statutes.

Furthermore, where the different obediences are working side by side, similar joint councils may be established where this seems advisable. These councils shall consist of the respective commissaries of the four Franciscan Families and at least one tertiary of each obedience. One of these tertiaries shall be elected minister prefect each year; and it shall be his duty, either personally or through a delegate, to represent the whole Third Order within his territory, that is, the provincial minister prefect within his province, the national minister prefect within his country, and the general minister prefect throughout the world.

A. The fraternity council

Article 122.

At the establishment of a new fraternity, according to the Ceremonial of the order, the council is appointed by the one who establishes the fraternity, after consultation with the director already appointed. In other cases the council shall be elected at a general meeting by the professed tertiaries, who have not been deprived of the right to vote.

Article 123.

Only the professed members of the fraternity in question have the right of active and passive voice. Anyone who, despite three warnings, has failed to participate in fraternity life stands deprived, by that very fact, of active and passive voice; likewise anyone suspended according to article 148, and those who have been deprived thereof for some other reason.

Article 124.

At least one month before the day appointed, the chairman of the election must summon the members of the electoral chapter, either by letter or in some other way. The elections must be carried out according to common law (cf. can. 697, §2), the present constitutions, and legitimate customs.

Article 125.

In order to facilitate the elections, the following procedure is recommended:

1) On printed ballots, to be distributed to the electors at a suitable time, the chairman shall propose three candidates for the office of minister prefect, and candidates for the office of councilor in proportion to the number necessary or suitable in each fraternity. The names of the candidates submitted for the office of minister prefect shall also be listed among those last.

After each name a space shall be left where the electors may write in other names of their own choice.

The elections may be completed in one balloting for all the members of the council, or there may be separate ballotings for the minister prefect and for the councilors.

2) Two tellers shall be appointed by the chairman and shall be warned of the obligation of observing secrecy. When the ballots have been distributed and the individual electors have selected their candidates, the tellers shall remove the ballots from the box into which they have been dropped. Then, together with the chairman, they shall verify and count them, and determine the number of valid votes cast for each candidate.

When the votes have been determined, the chairman shall announce publicly how many votes each one has received. Whoever receives a relative majority of the valid votes shall be deemed elected. However, if several candidates have received an equal number of votes, he who is senior by profession shall be deemed elected; and if they were professed at the same time, he who is the senior by age.

If anyone votes for himself, and the fact is proved, he shall not be deemed elected, and shall be without active and passive voice for this one occasion.

Article 126.

Every election must be confirmed by the chairman of the chapter.

Article 127.

At the end of three years the same minister prefect may be re-elected. For a third successive term of three years he requires the confirmation of the provincial commissary; for the fourth and further terms of office, that of the minister provincial.

Councilors may be re-elected for several three-year terms in succession; nevertheless, it is advisable to replace at least one third of the council with new councilors after six years.

Article 128.

If the minister prefect should happen to die during his term of office, the vice-minister prefect shall succeed him until the end of the three-year term, in accordance with the regulation in article 141; and as soon as possible a new vice-minister prefect shall be elected by the council.

Likewise, a new election shall be held by the council whenever any councilor, no matter what the cause, cannot fulfill the duties of his office during the three-year term.

Article 129.

Those to be chosen as councilors shall be of serious mind, prudent, active, zealous for the glory of God and of the order, and, in particular, shall stand high in the estimation of all.

Article 130.

At least once a month, in accordance with the regulation of the Ceremonial, the council shall hold a session, presided over by the director or, in his absence, by the minister prefect or the vice-minister prefect or the councilor who is senior by reason of profession.

All the councilors who have not a legitimate reason for being absent are bound to attend; and a session may not be held unless the majority of the council, not counting the director, is present.

Article 131.

Every councilor enjoys consultative or deliberative voice, as required, and the vote of the majority is decisive. But if a tie occurs in the voting, the person who presides has a casting-vote. If he does not wish to use his casting-vote, the matter can be submitted to the judgment of the provincial commissary, without prejudice to the right of a further recourse to the minister provincial.

If the director was not present at the session of the council, its decisions require his approval. Elections, however, may not be held in the absence of the director or of the visitor.

Article 132.

Secrecy must be observed by all the councilors concerning every matter discussed at the sessions, in order that misunderstandings may not arise, and that the freedom of the councilors to state their opinion may not be hampered.

Article 133.

It is the duty of the council:

1) to promote the gospel perfection of the members, and to put forward every means suitable for achieving this end;

2) to strengthen the bonds of fraternal love among the members and among the fraternities, and to carry on works of charity and of the apostolate, so that all the tertiaries may show themselves, both in the Church and in civil society, to be true heralds of the charity of our Lord Jesus Christ and of our holy Father Francis;

3) to admit, after discussion, postulants to the habit and novices to profession, in accordance with article 113, §1, and without prejudice to the regulations of articles 13, 14, and 23;

4) to carry out the wishes of the superiors;

5) to administer the goods of the fraternity and to distribute the alms;

6) to admit into the fraternity isolated tertiaries or those coming from another fraternity;

7) to propose to the director the dismissal of those who remain incorrigible despite three admonitions, and also of delinquent members;

8) to confer offices on the councilors or on other tertiaries, in accordance with articles 137 and 138;

9) to examine and approve the books of the fraternity;

10) to see to it that the officers fulfil their duties well;

11) to prepare the annual report for submission to the superiors.

Article 134.

Questions of greater importance ordinarily shall not be disposed of at a single session, and they shall always be decided by secret vote.

Article 135.

Where the number of members makes it advisable, two fraternities or two sections may be formed, one for the men, and one for the women. In these cases two councils shall be set up as well. However, in matters of common interest, and more especially in the interest of fostering the family spirit, both fraternities or sections, or both councils, shall meet together.

B. Various offices in the fraternity

Article 136.

As provided for in the rule, there are various offices within a fraternity.

The principal officers, that every fraternity must necessarily have, are: the minister prefect, the vice-minister prefect, the master of novices and of postulants, the secretary, and the treasurer. In addition, as necessity or usefulness requires, other officers may be appointed, for example, infirmarians, librarian, etc.

Again, where this is thought opportune, delegates for the groups and for the various works described in articles 6 – 10 shall be appointed.

Article 137.

With the exception of the minister prefect, already chosen in the Chapter itself, all the other officers shall be appointed by the council at its first meeting after the election – the one who presides proposing the names.

Article 138.

The principal offices may be conferred only on councilors; but the rest, on other tertiaries as well. Should any of

the officers be unable to fulfil the duties of office during his term, no matter what the cause, the appointment of a successor for the remainder of the three-year term pertains to the council.

Article 139.

The officers shall bear in mind that the offices entrusted to them are positions of hard work rather than of honor.

Article 140.

The minister prefect is the first officer of the fraternity. As his very name implies (Latin: *Minister*), he ought to be the servant of all the members. It is his duty:

1) to convoke and direct, together with the director, the sessions of the council and the meetings of the fraternity;

2) to represent the fraternity in external matters;

3) to watch over and promote, together with the director, the spiritual life and the conduct of the tertiaries, especially of the officers;

4) to make a yearly report to the fraternity, either personally or through other officers, on the internal and external life of the fraternity: that is, on its moral and economic state, and on its apostolic activities and charitable works;

5) to see to it that the poor members are assisted, that the sick are visited, and that those in danger of death are gently encouraged to receive the sacraments in good time; that the tertiaries are informed of the death of any member, and that the prescribed prayers are said for them;

6) to apply at the proper time, together with the director, for the visitation of the provincial or the regional commissary.

Article 141.

The vice-minister prefect takes the place of the minister prefect in case of illness or of some other impediment; and, in case of death, succeeds him for the remainder of the three-year term. The vice-minister prefect shall attend all sessions of the council and assist the minister prefect.

Should the vice-minister prefect be unable to fulfil the duties of his office, no matter what the cause, another shall be elected in accordance with article 138.

Article 142.

The secretary has the duty of keeping the records of the fraternity and of taking charge of the files. He shall enter in a special register the surname, Christian name, and residence of the members; likewise the day, the month, and the year of their clothing, profession, death, or departure from the fraternity.

In addition, he shall keep accurate minutes of the council sessions, of the chapter, and of the elections; he shall keep a chronicle; he shall see to it that the more noteworthy events are published in the newspapers and, more especially, are sent to the provincial commissary, whose duty it is to forward such news to the general commissary.

He shall take good care of the minutes and relevant documents, arranging them methodically in files. Likewise, he shall promptly inform members of the orders and instructions of the director or of the minister prefect.

Article 143.

The master of novices and of postulants shall train his charges in accordance with articles 20 and 21, and give them the lead by his own good example and observance of the rule. At least once a month he shall summon those entrusted to his care to receive instruction under the guidance of the director.

The office of master is of very great importance, since the development of a fraternity depends on the spiritual progress of the novices, just as its decline follows from their spiritual sluggishness.

Together with the director, the master shall test the knowledge and intentions of the novices before profession, in accordance with article 23.

Should any of the novices or postulants fall ill, the master shall inform the minister prefect and the infirmarian without delay.

Article 144.

The treasurer shall keep carefully the offerings made to the fraternity, and shall note in a special ledger the day, the month, and the year when they were given to him, and also the name of the person who gave or collected them.

With the consent of the council he shall distribute alms to members and others in need, and carefully provide the things necessary for the fraternity or for the dignity of divine worship, noting, as above, the respective expenses in the ledger.

He shall make a report of his financial administration three times a year to the council, and once a year to the fraternity as a whole, following an examination of the ledgers and of the cash-box by at least two controllers appointed by the council.

Article 145.

One infirmarian or more shall be appointed, as necessity or usefulness demands. To each one a section of the city or town shall be assigned, where they shall exercise the office of charity towards the sick members.

If there are several infirmarians, one shall be appointed head-infirmarian, and shall have charge of all the sick tertiaries. He, too, shall see to it that the other infirmarians fulfil their office competently.

Article 146.

With regard to the delegates for the groups and for the various works mentioned in articles 6 - 10, the particular statutes drawn up both for individual nations and for the different groups, and approved by the superiors, shall be consulted.

SECTION IV

Corrections and penalties

Article 147.

The visitators, the directors and the ministers prefect shall strive to lead the erring members to a better way of life.

But, bearing in mind the words and example of our holy Father Francis, they shall always act with charity and with prudence, and never use harsh words or be too strict.

Article 148.

On the first and second occasion the director shall warn the erring members in a fatherly way; the third time, on the advice of the council, he shall suspend them temporarily from the fraternity meetings. However, if after the third warning they do not amend, they shall be dismissed from the fraternity with the consent of the council.

The names of tertiaries who have been dismissed shall be forwarded to the provincial or regional commissary.

Article 149.

Nevertheless, should scandal arise in a fraternity because of the grave transgression of some member, and should there be danger in delay, the director may dismiss the delinquent immediately; but he shall inform the provincial commissary as soon as possible.

Article 150.

Dismissal from the Third Order itself pertains to the provincial and the general commissaries.

Article 151.

The imposition of suspension and of dismissal must always be communicated in writing, and must be noted in the register of the fraternity and in the minutes of the council.

If those who have been dismissed ask to be enrolled again in the Third Order, they may be admitted only by the provincial or the general commissary, and that after a long period of time, provided no scandal is caused and the novitiate is repeated.

Article 152.

Anyone who has apostatized from the Catholic Faith, or who has joined a society condemned by the Holy See, or who has notoriously incurred a censure, or who is living as a

public sinner, shall be dismissed from the order after the necessary warning (can. 696, §2; cf. can. 93, §1).

Anyone, however, who has notoriously violated social justice, especially towards servants or employees, ought to be reported to the provincial commissary for judgment.

Article 153.

Tertiaries who, despite three warnings, have refused to fulfil the obligations proper to the Third Order for a period of three years shall, considering places and times, be dismissed from the order by the provincial commissary.

Article 154.

Those who have been suspended or dismissed from a fraternity enjoy only the favors and privileges to which isolated tertiaries have a right; and they remain bound by the obligations of the rule and constitutions as isolated tertiaries.

Those, however, who have been dismissed from the order are deprived of all favors and privileges, and are freed from all the regulations of the rule and constitutions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

Article 155.

When marching in procession as a group under their own cross or banner, tertiaries take precedence over all other associations, even over confraternities of the Most Blessed Sacrament, provided they are wearing the full habit or at least the Franciscan cord, or that the other associations too are marching without the habit (can. 701, §1, 2).

However, if the tertiaries are wearing only some other emblem, all other associations who are wearing a habit take precedence over them (can. 701, §3).

Article 156.

Among various fraternities of tertiaries that one takes precedence which is in peaceful quasi-possession of this right; and if this is not clear, then the one which was first established in the place where the question arises (can. 106, §5).

Disputed cases shall be resolved with justice and equity by the regular ordinaries concerned.

Article 157.

In the more urgent cases it is the local ordinary who settles all disputes about precedence between the Third Order and other ecclesiastical associations. His settlement may not be set aside pending an appeal, yet the rights of either party must not be prejudiced; that is to say, if an urgent case arises, the local ordinary can settle the matter by a decree of his own, and this must be upheld; the party, however, that considers itself wronged has the right of appealing to the

Holy See, but must obey the ordinary's decree in the meantime (can. 106, §6).

Article 158.

Everyone shall hold in high esteem the privileges, indulgences and favors that holy Mother Church has graciously lavished on the members of the Third Order.

Article 159.

In order to gain the indulgences granted to the order, tertiaries must wear the scapular and cord habitually, without prejudice to the regulation in article 17.

Article 160.

By the concession of Pope Saint Pius X, full communication of indulgences and spiritual blessings exists between the First, Second, and Third Orders of Saint Francis. "All who serve under the banner of the Seraphic Patriarch Saint Francis, no matter to which order or Family of the orders they belong, may avail themselves forever" of this mutual communication (*Sodalium e Tertio Ordine*, 5 May 1909).

Besides, since the Third Order is one, although entrusted by the Church to the care of the four Franciscan Families, all privileges and indulgences, and also indulgences and favors of every kind, which are granted to tertiaries attached to one Franciscan Family are taken as granted to the whole Third Order.

Article 161.

Members who live in places where there is no Franciscan church or oratory, and where no fraternity of the Third Order has been established, can gain all the indulgences of the order in the parish church or its dependent church (S. Congr. Rites, 31 January 1893).

Likewise, tertiaries who live in places where no fraternity of the Third Order has been established can receive the indulgenced blessing in place of the papal blessing twice a year (S. Congr. Ind., 31 May 1893).

Article 162.

Tertiaries who live in seminaries, colleges, hospitals, hospices, etc., and who cannot easily visit a parochial or a Franciscan church, can gain the indulgences of the order in the oratory of the house, even when this is semi-public only (S. Congr. Ind., 18 July 1902; 22 March 1905; 8 August 1906).

Article 163.

Members who are ill or convalescing and who cannot easily leave the house, can gain all the indulgences attached to Franciscan churches or to the Third Order by reciting the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary* five times and adding at least one *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, and *Glory be to the Father* for the supreme pontiff's intention (Brief of Pope Leo XIII, 7 September 1901).

Such tertiaries, too, can receive the indulgenced blessing and can also gain every plenary indulgence granted for stated days, on any day within the octave of the feast to which the blessing or plenary indulgence is attached, provided they fulfil all the other conditions (S. Congr. Ind., 13 August 1901).

Article 164.

Directors of the Third Order who cannot join it because they have taken vows in some religious institute or are members of another Third Order, can, during their term of office, share in all the indulgences and other favors enjoyed by the fraternity which they direct (S. Paen., 13 December, 1928).

Article 165.

The priest who imparts the indulgenced blessing receives it himself also (S. Congr. Ind., 1 February 1905).

Religious who are present in a church or oratory where the blessing is being given to lay tertiaries under the formula *Intret oratio*, can receive it, if on that day they are unable to do so under the formula *Ne reminiscaris*, and *vice versa* (S. Congr. Rites, 7 June 1919).

The Mass applied for the soul of each member of the Third order, either at the monthly meeting after his death or at a meeting specially called for this purpose, may be said as a Requiem Mass, even if a feast of double rite occurs, provided that the other liturgical rules are observed (S. Cong. Rites, 21 November, 1938).

Moreover, all Masses celebrated for the repose of the souls of deceased tertiaries are privileged.

Article 167.

Priest-tertiaries who are not bound to choral Office enjoy the privilege of using the breviary of the Franciscan Family to which they are attached (S. Congr. Rites, 2 May 1880; 15 April 1904).

When they celebrate Mass in a private oratory they may use the Missal also of that Franciscan Family (S. Congr. Rites, 15 April 1904). They are always allowed to add the name of our holy Father Francis in the *Confiteor*.

If they use the Seraphic calendar in reciting the breviary they may say the votive Mass of the Immaculate Conception on Saturdays, provided they celebrate Mass in a private oratory and observe the liturgical rules (S. Congr. Rites, 9 December 1903; 22 March 1905).

Priest-tertiaries who use the Roman Missal and breviary may follow the Roman-Seraphic Missal and Breviary on the principal Franciscan feastdays.

Article 168.

Priest-tertiaries enjoy the indult of a privileged altar three times a week, unless they have a similar indult from another source (Pope Leo XIII, *Misericors Dei Filius* — an indult not revoked by the Decree of the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary, 20 March 1933).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONS

Article 169.

These constitutions, drawn up for the integral observance of profession and of the rule, do not bind under sin, unless they are otherwise of obligation from the divine, the natural, or the ecclesiastical law.

Article 170.

Should any doubts arise about the meaning or about the obligations of these constitutions, the matter must be referred to the ministers general or to their delegates, who are the persons empowered to give a practical interpretation.

Article 171.

In order to remove all doubts and difficulties, and in order that the Third Order may be better adapted to modern times, all previous regulations which are at variance with the present ones are abrogated by these constitutions.

Article 172.

However, as necessity or usefulness may require in view of particular conditions of place and time, the competent superiors may draw up special statutes, provided these are not contrary to the present constitutions. These statutes, as well as all particular regulations yet to be drawn up, as mentioned, throughout these constitutions, require the approval of the competent minister general.

Moreover, it is strongly recommended that all statutes of this kind be drawn up by the common consent of the four

Franciscan Families, in order to provide better for the unity and harmony of the whole order.

Article 173.

All visitators, directors, ministers prefect, officers, and members shall bear in mind that the progress of the Third Order and the gospel perfection of its members depend principally on the faithful observance of these constitutions.

* * * * *

“And whoever shall observe these things, may he be filled in Heaven with the blessing of the Most High Heavenly Father and may he be filled on earth with the blessing of his beloved Son together with the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, and all the powers of Heaven and all the saints. And I, Brother Francis, your little one and servant, in so far as I can, guarantee to you within and without this most holy blessing. Amen”
(The Testament of our holy Father Francis)

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End of the text of the Constitutions

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Constitutions of Federated Provinces

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ADDRESS OF POPE PIUS XII

July 1, 1956

TO THE TERTIARIES OF ITALY

THE FRANCISCAN VISION OF LIFE

RICH HERITAGE

In bidding you affectionate welcome, beloved children — directors, friars, brothers and sisters of the Third Order in Italy — We wish above all to express our joy at the happy revival of your individual and collective activity as well as at the spirit of concord that reigns among you. Reading your history, one is astounded by the number and variety of the blossoms of holiness, of the fruits of apostolic work, that have budded and matured on the three branches of the thriving and vigorous tree of the Franciscan Order. From the time of Blessed Luchesio right down to the countless numbers of lay people in every walk of life, to the priests, to the bishops, to the popes — a veritable multitude of souls has attributed to the Third Order a great part of that spirit which spurred them on to walk in the way of perfection. And no less wonderful is the story of the work done by them towards the religious, moral, social and political reorganization of society.

ALWAYS READY TO COOPERATE

After its providential founding, the Third Order, pervaded through and through by the spirit and the teaching of its Seraphic Founder, became immediately the surety of holiness for very many hearts. There were, it is true, during the course of the long years, periods of crisis and of less fervor; despite

that, however, the activity of the Order was always noteworthy and efficacious. In times of strife and feud the tertiaries became the promoters of concord and peace; with a prudent fearlessness they worked against the abuses of the feudal lords for the betterment and the defense of the humbler classes; in order to reduce, and, in so far as possible, destroy the effects of heresies and schisms, they practiced and preached absolute fidelity to the Church and to its visible Head; to stem the spreading tide of injustice, oppression, and plunder they gave an example of detachment from riches, vanities and honors.

It may well be said that whenever the Church called her children together for any work of profound internal renewal, she found the tertiaries ready to cooperate in ensuring the success of the common effort. For that reason you have had the support and the blessing of the Roman pontiffs: from Honorius III, who tradition has it, gave verbal approval to the rule of your order, down to Gregory IX, the great friend of your holy Patriarch; to Leo XIII, who by the Apostolic Constitution *Misericors Dei Filius* of May 30, 1883, reformed your rule, taking care, however, that the intimate nature of the order was in no way modified; to St. Pius X who proclaimed himself confident of the efficacious contribution of the tertiaries towards the restoring of all things in Christ (Apostolic Letter, May 5, 1909); to Benedict XV and Pius XI who reaffirmed the perennial modernity of the Third Order. On various occasions we also have willingly praised your spirit and encouraged your work; and today we are glad to meet you once again and to offer you anew Our congratulations, Our good wishes and Our paternal exhortation. And we, like you, ask of the Lord that the splendor of your many glories may never be in any way obscured, that the confidence which the Church places in you may never become vain. For you, of course, as for other institutes, the recent war may have caused at first a period of organic standstill and perhaps of spiritual coolness; but now, as witness this magnificent con-

gress of yours, you have recovered your primitive fervor, to make of the Third Order a school of christian perfection, of the genuine Franciscan spirit, and of fearless and prompt action for the building up of the Body of Christ.

TO SATISFY THE THIRST FOR HEROISM . . .

1. You must be, above all, a school of integral christian perfection.

The Third Order was born in the mind of your Seraphic Father the day that a group of souls, moved and urged on by his words, asked him to be allowed to accompany him on the path he was traveling, following in the footsteps of Christ, in Whose name he was constantly repeating the words "Be ye perfect" (Mt. 5, 48). But since it was not possible for everyone to follow the Gospel counsels, Francis remembered that all, as long as they wished it, could tend to the perfection of their own state of life and reach it without embracing the state of perfection. By denying themselves, all could be docile instruments in the hands of Christ: prompt to answer his every desire, his every suggestion. And that complete and continual clinging to the will of God, that affectionate yet strong dedication to him and to his wishes, that fulness and perfection of life in the light of the gospel, can belong to all christians, and in fact, has been the treasure of so many in every age.

The Third Order of St. Francis was born to satisfy this thirst for heroism among those who, though having to remain in the world, did not wish to be of the world. The Third Order, then, seeks souls who long for perfection in their own state.

You are an order: a lay order, but truly an order, "an order in the true sense of the word," as our Predecessor Benedict XV of holy memory called it (Encycl. Letter *Sacra Prope-diem*, Jan 6, 1921). You will not be — this should be obvious — an assembly of the perfect; but you must be a school of christian perfection. Without that resolute resolve it is im-

possible to be a suitable member of so chosen and so glorious an army.

NO SHALLOW SPIRITUALITY

2. You must be a school of the true Franciscan spirit.

While no one harbors any doubts about the importance of the Franciscan Third Order in the modern world, still worthy of note are the anxieties which the most zealous Franciscans feel about the effective vitality of the Third Order both in Italy and in other countries: there are some who fear that the Third Order today does not give the hosts of saints and apostles that once it provided for the complete service of the Church.

The reasons for such a phenomenon may perhaps be sought — among other things — in a lesser efficacy of the Franciscan spirit in not a few tertiaries, and at times in some directors. That is to say, some complain that matters frequently remain too much in the field of theory, when in fact, it is not sufficient to know the life of the holy Patriarch and to tell it to others, in order to be sure of forming oneself, and especially others, according to the Franciscan outlook and method. If this complaint were true, it would be necessary to find a prompt remedy for it. Remember that your Third Order cannot blossom and give fruit, as it did in the eras of its glory, if it is not fully imbued with the true and genuine Franciscan spirit.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF APPROACHING GOD

You know that the spirituality of any saint is his particular way of picturing God to himself, of speaking to him, of approaching him, of dealing with him. Every saint sees the attributes of God in the light of what he ponders most, of what he penetrates most deeply, of what attracts him most and what conquers him. For every saint one particular virtue of Christ is the ideal towards which he must tend; yet all the saints — indeed the whole Church — strive to imitate the whole Christ. In fact it is because of this that the Church is, so to speak, the total Christ, and the individual Christians — the individual saints — are his members, each more or less perfect.

THE DOCTRINE OF LOVE

There is, then, a Franciscan doctrine in accordance with which God is holy, is great, but above all is good, indeed the Supreme Good. For in this doctrine God is love: he lives by love, creates for love, becomes flesh and redeems, that is, he saves and sanctifies, for love.

There is also a Franciscan way of contemplating Jesus: the meeting of uncreated Love with created love. Similarly, there is a method of loving Him and of imitating Him: in reality it sees the Man-God, and prefers to consider him in his holy humanity, because it reveals him more clearly and, as it were, allows him to be touched. From this arises a burning devotion to the Incarnation and the Passion of Jesus, because these (mysteries) allow us to see God, not so much in his glory, in his omnipotent grandeur, or in his eternal triumph, as rather in his human love — so tender in the manger, so sorrowful on the cross.

THE WORLD NEEDS THIS SPIRIT

There is, finally, a Franciscan way of imitating Jesus. Your Seraphic Father searched for and found in the gospel, seemingly opened at random, three sayings of the Divine Master. The first said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Mt. 19, 21). The second gave warning: "If any one wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt. 16, 24). The third, finally: "Carry neither purse, or wallet, nor sandals" (Lk. 10,4). At that the holy Patriarch said: "This shall be our rule" (Anon, Perus, c. 10 & 11).

From this arises Franciscan poverty which flees from luxury and which loves the things that give less pleasure to the eye and to vanity. From this is born Franciscan simplicity which brings the soul to search for God directly, following the short way, the simple way, that is to say, paying less heed to its own disfigurement and more to the infinite beauty of God. From

this springs Franciscan renunciation, total and continual, but without shocks, without violence, without regrets — a sweet renunciation, made for the love of Jesus. From this surges that candid Franciscan joy, which is not the same as noisy gaiety or unseemly laughter, but is rather the tranquil smile, full of amiable serenity.

From this, above all, comes that universal charity which, because it sees everyone and everything in God, loves everyone and everything in him and for him, and which takes delight in everyone and everything because it takes delight in God. *Deus meus et omnia!* My God and my All!

The world has need of that Franciscan spirit, of that *Franciscan vision of life*. It is your duty, beloved children, to know it thoroughly, to love it with enthusiasm, and above all to live it with the perfection that your state of life allows.

REBUILD MY CHURCH

3. A school of fearless and prompt action for the building up of the Body of Christ.

Your Third Order will be able to form a select detachment in the peaceful lay army which today, as never before, is arrayed in the field for the defense and the spread of the kingdom of Christ in the world.

In the church of St. Damian your Seraphic Father heard the voice of the Crucified which exhorted him to rebuild His house, threatened by ruin. To defend the Church, to support the Church — that was the yearning of Francis of Assisi. Do you desire, beloved children, to be worthy of your Father and Master?

Look at the times we live in. They are no different, under some aspects, from the times that saw the birth of the Franciscan Order. We have repeatedly warned the world to stop in time at the edge of the precipice. We have invited men to reflect that there is no genuine and lasting salvation save in Jesus. Again and again We have made appeals to all true Christians — leaving aside those points that separate us — to work fearlessly and in concord for the revival and spread of

the Church. Many have answered the call, and many more, we are firmly confident, will yet answer it. Men are becoming aware that for those who stand aloof from Christ there is nothing but distress and woe. In very many parts of the world intense work is being done under the guidance of holy pastors.

To work you, then, too, beloved children! Jesus tells you so through the mouth of His Vicar, however unworthy. Join forces, all: bring aid to the world. Support the Church, where, though error and evil are not wanting — alas! — in some of its members, there is nevertheless so much heroism, so much holiness.

With these sentiments, and thanking you for the many charitable gifts with which you have accompanied your coming here, in pledge of the most abundant heavenly favors We impart to you all, to your families and to all your work Our Apostolic Blessing.

Pope Pius XII

INDULGENCED BLESSING INDULT

THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF RITES

Most Holy Father!

The Procurator General of the Order of Friars Minor, prostrate at Your feet, humbly implores the favor by which the Minorite provinces, custodes and commissariats in the United States of America and in Canada be allowed to impart the "Absolutio Generalis" to tertiaries of the Third Order secular of St. Francis "under the short formula" which begins with these words: "Auctoritate a Summis Pontificibus mihi concessa . . .," as is already conceded to the tertiaries of the Franciscan Province of St. Joseph in Canada: in this manner the General Absolution can more easily be imparted publicly.

* * * * *

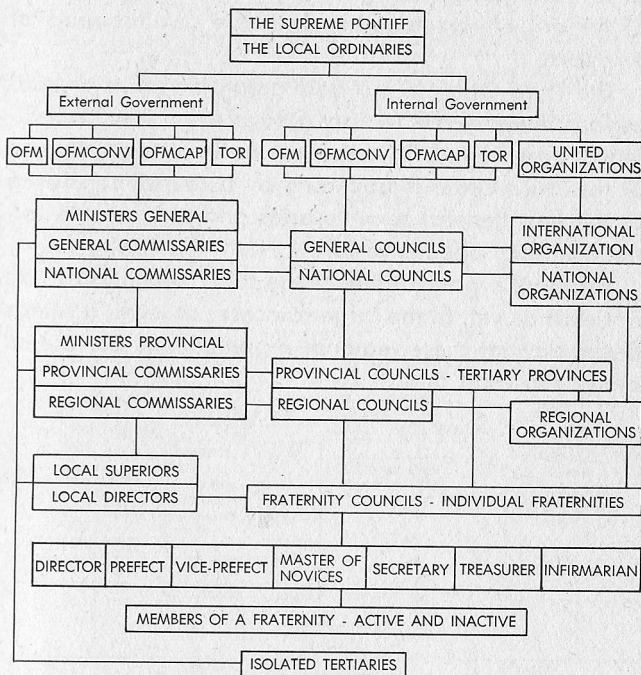
THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF RITES, using the faculties given to it by our Most Holy Father Pope John XXIII, graciously grants the petitioner the favor asked: observing those things that must be observed.

Everything to the contrary notwithstanding.

March 2, 1959

s/Henricus Dante, S.R.C. Pro-Segretario

THE THIRD ORDER SECULAR OF SAINT FRANCIS



The above chart is an outline of what is contained in the general constitutions, articles 95 to 146.

The spiritual direction and supervision of internal discipline (external government) has been committed by the Holy See to the three branches of the First Order of St. Francis (Franciscans, Conventuals, Capuchins) and the Third Order Regular properly so called. They are called the four "obediences."

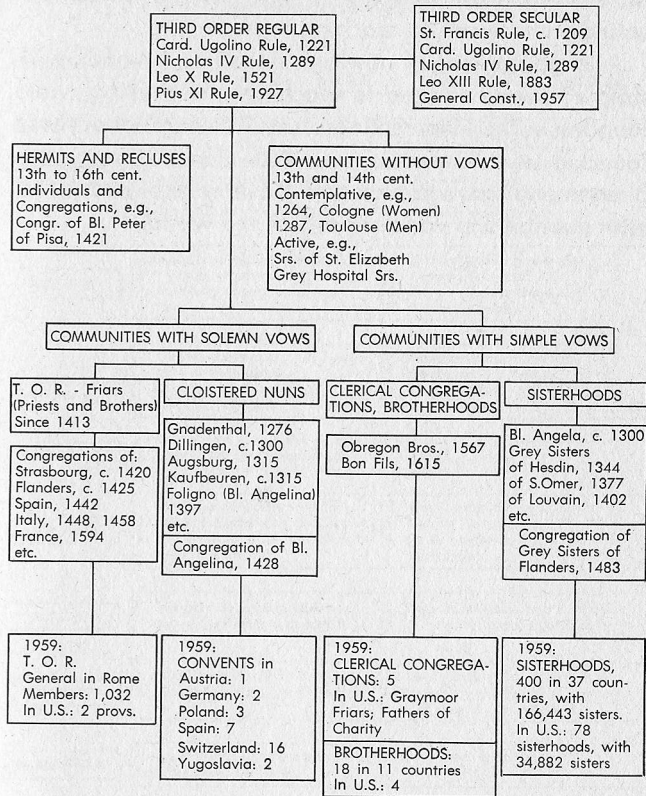
All Third Order fraternities as well as provinces are subject to one of these "obediences." In each of the "obediences" the internal affairs of the Third Order

as a moral person are governed by councils made up of tertiary officers together with the commissaries or directors.

The Third Order in a certain area also forms organizations in which the tertiary groups of all four "obediences" are united. Thus the international organization of the Third Order is governed by a council consisting of the four general commissaries and at least one tertiary of each obedience (art. 121).

Regional organizations of the four "obediences" do not exist as yet. In the larger dioceses at least, it seems desirable that these regional organizations be formed along diocesan lines.

THE THIRD ORDER OF SAINT FRANCIS



About 1400 many of the early communities of tertiaries without public vows took solemn public vows, but continued to devote themselves to the works of charity. Previously many of them had made the private vow of chastity.

Of the convents of cloistered tertiary nuns, many joined the Poor Clares, whom they resembled to a

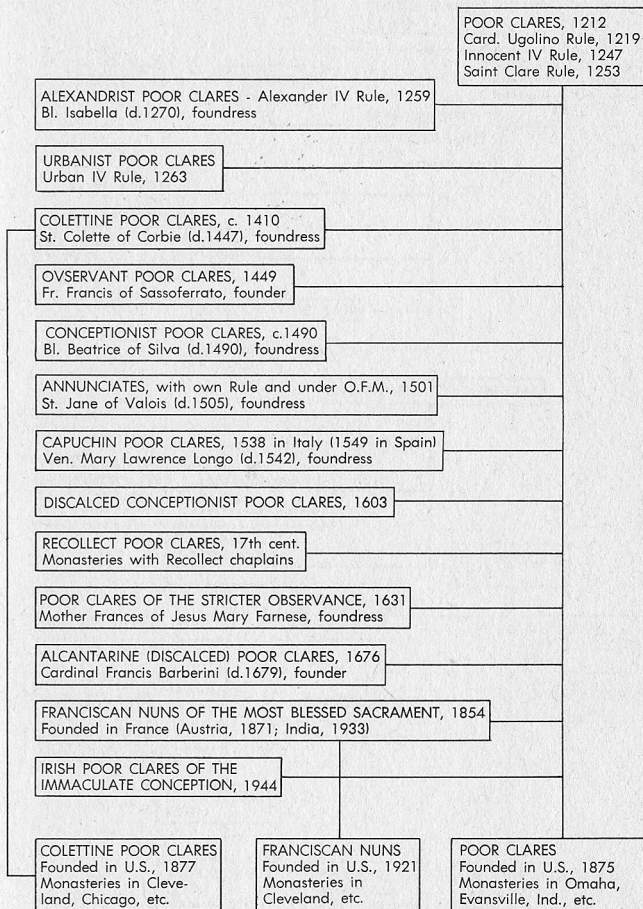
great extent; others adopted the active life and became Franciscan sisterhoods with simple vows, devoting themselves to teaching and nursing.

A large number of new Franciscan sisterhoods with simple vows, engaged in teaching and nursing, were founded in the nineteenth century. The number of those founded at this time is over 200. Some have had a phenomenal growth and now have several provinces, with members in various parts of the world.

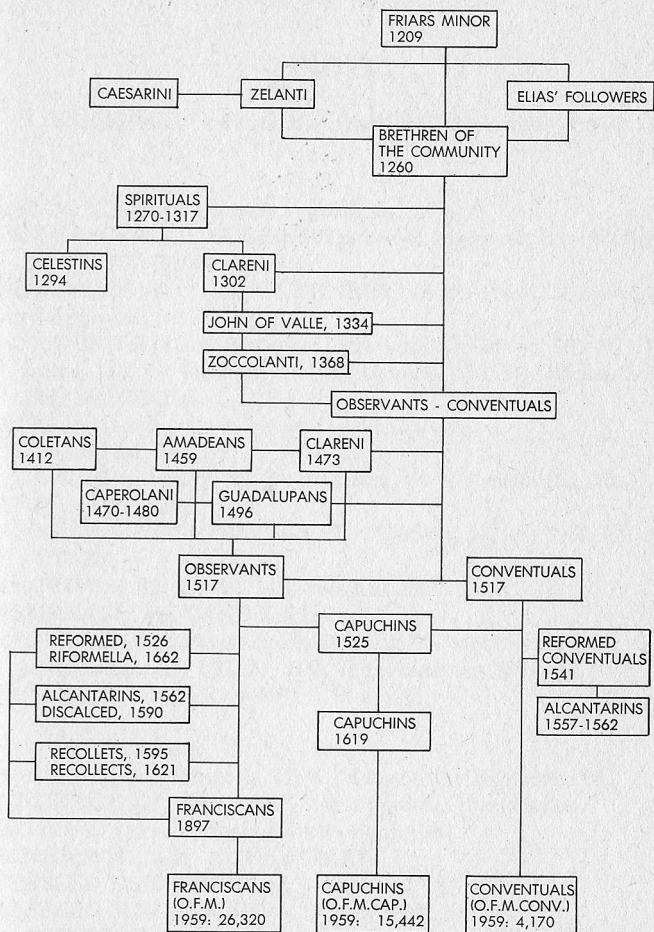
THE THIRD ORDER FRATERNITY

| | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| REQUIREMENTS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Three professed tertiaries. 2. Written consent of bishop. 3. Document from Fran. superior. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Register of members. 5. Place for religious functions. 6. Director and council appointed. |
| THE COUNCIL | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consists of director and at least four officers. 2. Assigns offices to elected councilors, except prefect. 3. Meets at least once a month. 4. Promotes purposes of order. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Supervises special projects. 6. Passes on new members. 7. Administers possessions. 8. Distributes alms. 9. Liaison with tertiary province, national organization, etc. |
| DIRECTOR | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appointed by Fran. superior. 2. Presides at elections and frat. and council meetings. 3. Receives postulants and novices. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Gives monthly conference. 5. Imparts G.A. and P.B. 6. Grants dispensations. 7. Examines books. |
| PREFECT | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elected, as prefect, for 3 yrs. 2. May be re-elected. 3. Directs council meetings, with the director. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Represents the fraternity. 5. Makes annual report. 6. Promotes frat., its projects. 7. Duties toward poor, sick, deceased. |
| VICE-PREFECT | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Substitutes for, succeeds pref. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Assists prefect. |
| SECRETARY | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has care of books and files. 2. Records admissions, professions. 3. Keeps minutes of council meetings and elections. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Keeps chronicle of fraternity. 5. Reports fraternity events. 6. Sends report to the provincial commissary. |
| MASTER | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instructs postulants and novices with director's guidance. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Tests knowledge and intentions of novices before profession. |
| TREASURER | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guards common fund. 2. Distributes alms, as directed by the council. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Records receipts and expenses. 4. Makes three reports to council, and one to frat. annually. |
| INFIRMARIAN | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Care of all sick members. 2. May have assistants. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Sees that assistants fulfill duties in their districts. |
| MEMBERS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attend monthly meetings. 2. Contribute to a common fund. 3. Participate in frat. projects. 4. Receive G.A., or P.B., at most monthly meetings. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Receive instruction from dir. 6. Receive inspiration mutually. 7. Aid, in sickness and need. 8. Share in prayers of frat. and Masses, after death. |

THE SECOND ORDER OF SAINT FRANCIS



THE FIRST ORDER OF SAINT FRANCIS



INDEX

(The numerals indicate the articles of the Constitutions)

- ABROGATION of contrary regulations: 171.
ACTA APOSTOLICAE SEDIS: Decree of Approval; Introduction; 39; 67; 75; 77; 84.
ADDRESSES TO THE TERTIARIES (Pope Pius XII): Decree of Approval; 39; 41; 77; 84.
ADMINISTRATION: Superiors, 91; local Ordinary, 96, 3); Director, 113, 7); Visitor, 117, 3); Council, 133, 5); Officers, 136-146; see GOODS.
AGE: for reception, 13; for profession, 25, 1).
ALMS: 63-64; 144.
ALTAR: of fraternity, 93, 5); visitation, 96, 2); privileged, 168.
APOSTATES: 152.
APOSTOLIC VOCATION: 4-6; 21; 77; 80-81; 84; see CATHOLIC ACTION.
ARCHIVES: 93, 2), 3); 142; see REGISTER.
ASPIRANTS: see CANDIDATES.
ASSOCIATIONS, Pious: candidates, 12; 82; monthly meeting, 63; co-operation, 81; 107, 3); 109, 7; precedence, 155; 157.
AUSPICATO (Pope Leo XIII): 76.
BADGE, Franciscan: 17; 53
BAPTISM: and profession, 24; 41; 44; and the Eucharist, 56.
BENEDICT XV, Pope: Decree of Approval; Introduction.
BINDING power of these Constitutions: 169.
BISHOPS: 45; 102; see ORDINARY.
BLESSED SACRAMENT: 56; see EUCHARIST.
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY: 17; 59; 68-72; 167.
BLESSING, the indulgenced; 113, 5); 117, 7); 161ff.
BOOKS: 73; 83; see READING and ADMINISTRATION.
BREVIARY, Franciscan: 59-60; 167.

BUSINESS: 74-6; see EMPLOYERS.
 CALENDAR, Seraphic: 167.
 CANDIDATES: for fraternity, 11-14; 82; for Council, 125; 129.
 CATHOLIC ACTION: Decree of Approval; Introduction; 1-10; 39-89.
 CENSURE, Those under: 13, 3); 152.
 CEREMONIAL, The (to be observed): 16; 25; 27; 63; 113; 2); 122; 130.
 CERTIFICATE: 18; 28.
 CHAPTER, Electoral: 124ff.
 CHARITY: 14 (end) 40-4; 46-8; 53; 74; 78-9; 86; 133, 2) 145; 147; see CATHOLIC ACTION.
 CHASTITY: 50-1.
 CHRONICLE: 142.
 CHURCH, The: guided by, 1-2; 90; Decree of Approval; love for, 45; 158; obedience to, 49-50; living with, 3; 92; see MYSTICAL BODY; praying with, 59; suffering with, 10; safeguarding the life of, 71; 84; 133, 2); Introduction; defending and spreading, 4; 77-8; 84.
 CHURCHES: attendance at, 55; reverence for, 58; place for functions, 93, 5); 96, 2); 99; indulgences, 161-2.
 CINEMAS: 50.
 CIRCLES: see GROUPS.
 CIRCULAR LETTERS: 36; see PERIODICALS.
 CIVIL affairs: 75.
 CLARE, Saint: 70.
 CLERGY: see SECULAR CLERGY.
 CLOTHING, The: 16; 34; 133, 3).
 COLLEGES: 162.
 COLOSSIANS, Epistle to the: 56.
 COMMISSARY — habitual delegate, 98; 105; Visitator *ex officio*, 115.
 general: office, 107; 150-1; see also 98; 102; 105-6; 115; 121; 170.
 national: office, 108; see also 98; 102; 105-6; 109, 8); 115; 121.
 provincial: office, 7; 10; 34-6; 82; 93; 109; see also 98; 102; 105-6; 115; 121; 127; 131; 142; 148-154.
 regional: office, 110; see also 93; 98; 102; 105-6; 115; 121.

COMMUNICATION of Indulgences: 160.
 CONFESSION: see PENANCE.
 CONGREGATION of Indulgences, Sacred: 161-3; 165.
 CONGREGATION of Religious, Sacred: Decree of Approval;
 103-4.
 CONGREGATION of Rites, Sacred: 161; 165-7.
 CONGRESSES: 67; 79; 109, 5).
 CONSECRATION to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary: 68; 72.
 CONSTITUTIONS, The: reasons for, Decree of Approval; observance of, 169-173; learning, 11; 21; 32; reading, 64; enforcing, 117, 2), 5); interpreting, 170; the dismissed still bound by, 154.
 CONVENTIONS: see CONGRESSES, REUNIONS, MEETINGS, SESSIONS.
 CO-OPERATION: internal, 79; 83; 92; 107, 3); 109, 7); 121; 133, 2); 135; 172; external, 81; 92; 107, 3); 109, 7); 133, 2).
 CORD, The: 16-17; 159.
 CORRECTION: 24; 147-154; Visitor, 117, 5), 6).
 COUNCIL, The: nature and kinds, 120-1; 135; election, 93,6); 111; 122-9; meetings, 130-1; 134; secrecy, 132; 134; duties, 15; 17; 23; 86; 133; offices, 120; 136-145; qualities of Councillors, 129; relation to Director, 113, 3); 120; 131; 142.
 COUNCILLORS: see COUNCIL.
 COURTESY: 42; text preceding 90; see CHARITY.
 CROWN, The Franciscan: 72.
 CRUCIFIX, The: 72.
 CUSTOMS: at death, 88; at elections, 124.

 DANCES: 50.
 DAY of Recollection: 65.
 DAY of Reunion: 36.
 DEATH: of novice, 22; notification of, 140, 5); see OBSEQUIES, DECEASED.
 DEBTS: 14; 74.
 DECEASED Tertiaries: 88-9; 140, 5); 166.
 DEFINITION of Third Order: 1; 90.
 DEFINITORY: general, 107; 108; provincial, 109.
 DELEGATES: Commissaries, 98; 105; for Groups, 136-9; 146; others, 25, 3); 31;33; 99-100; 102; 105.
 DELINQUENT, The: 24; 117, 5); 147ff.
 DEPRIVATION of vote: 122-3.

- DIRECTION of Third Order: 1; 97.
 DIRECTOR, The: qualities, 111; 114; appointment, 93, 6); 99; 103; 105; 112; 122; duties, 14; 15; 17; 20; 23; 63; 81-2; 106; 113; 114; 131; 140, 1), 6); 143; 147-9; presides, 113, 3); 130-1; 140, 1); advisory Board, 120; 131; 142; dismissal, 113, 7); 147-9; transferring, 104; dispensation, 17; 113, 6).
 DISCIPLINE: text preceding 90; 97; *passim*; see OBEDIENCE.
 DISMISSAL: by local Ordinary, 96, 5); by Visitor, 117, 5); from fraternity, 133, 7); 147-9; 151-4; from Order, 150-4.
 DISPENSATION: 17; 113, 6); 117, 4).
 DISSIPATION: 50.
 DIVINE OFFICE: 59-60.
 DIVISION of Third Order: 91.
 DOCTRINE: see INSTRUCTION.
 DRESS: 49.
 DRINK: 49.

 ELECTION of Council: 113, 8); 117, 8); 122ff.
 ELECTORIAL Chapter: 124ff.
 ELIZABETH, Saint: 70.
 EMBLEM, Franciscan: 53.
 EMPLOYEES: 2; 40-4; 46-8; 74-6; 152.
 EMPLOYERS: see EMPLOYEES.
 ENCYCLICALS of the Popes: see under titles or Popes.
 ENGAGED, The: 9; 51.
 ENROLMENT: 11-12; 151.
 ESTABLISHMENT of fraternity: 93; 96, 1); 99-103; 122.
 EUCHARIST, The Holy: love, 45; 56-8; frequent Communion, 57; visits, 58; Benediction, 63; recitation of Office, 59; see MASS.
 EXAMINATION of conscience: 61.
 EXAMPLE: 2; 4; 71; 76-7.
 EXHORTATIONS of Saint Francis: see FRANCIS.
 EXPULSION: see DISMISSAL.

 FACULTIES: 25, 3); 31; see OFFICIATING PRIEST.
 FAMILY Life: see LIFE.
 FAMILY Spirit: 3; 6; 24; see CO-OPERATION.
 FASTS: 49.
 FAVORS, Spiritual; see PRIVILEGES.
 FEASTDAYS, Fervent celebration of: 55; 62; 69.

FILMS: 50.

FIRST LETTER TO ALL CHRISTIANS (Saint Francis): text preceding 39.

FOOD and drink: 49.

FORGIVENESS: 14 (end); 40-4; 74; 147; see CO-OPERATION.

FORMATION: 109, 2); see INSTRUCTION.

FOUNDING of the Third Order: Introduction.

FRANCIS, Saint: follow and imitate, 1; 5; 11; 20; 24; 29; 43; 45-6; 54; 58; 70; 72; 77-9; 86; text preceding 90; 95; 111; 133, 2); 147; reading the life of, 12; 21; 62; 64; exhortations of, Introduction; text preceding 39; 54; 56; Blessing of, text following 173; honoring, 55; 60; medal of, 17.

FRATERNITY: nature and erection, 3; 90-3; 96, 1); 101-3; 122; 135; direction, 99-101; meetings, 63-4; 123; consecration to Sacred Hearts, 68; suppression, 96, 5).

FRIDAY: 62.

FRUGALITY: 49; 74.

FUNCTIONS, Solemn: 35; 54-5; 68; 70; 79; 93, 5).

FUNDS: 63; 144; see also 96, 3); 113, 7); 117, 3).

GALATIANS, Epistle to the: 42.

GOODS, Temporal: use of, 44; 46ff; justice, 74.

GOSPEL, The: living, 2-3; 21; 24; 29; text preceding 39 and 90; 40-51; 133, 1); reading, 62; 72; instructed in, 5; 21; leaven of, 4; 8; observance of, 41 (reason for the Third Order Rule).

GOVERNMENT of the Third Order: in general, 90-94; external, 95-119; internal, 120-146.

GRATITUDE; 44; 85; see CHARITY.

GREETING, Franciscan: 53.

GROUPS: within the fraternity, 6-10; 145; the isolated, 36; delegates, 136; statutes, 146.

GROWTH, Spiritual: 114; 116; 140, 3); 143; 173.

HABIT of the Third Order: 16; 17; 96, 4); for burial, 89; for precedence, 155.

HARMONY: see CO-OPERATION, CHARITY.

HEAD-INFIRMARIAN: 145.

HERALDS of the Great King: Introduction; 4; 54; 77-8; 133, 2).

HOLY COMMUNION: 57.

HOLYDAYS: 55; 62; see FEASTDAYS.

HOME: see FAMILY LIFE, HOUSE.

HONORIOUS III, Pope: Decree of Approval.
 HOSPICES: 162.
 HOSPITALS: 162.
 HOUSE, decoration of: 72.
 HUMILITY: 40-4; 49-51; 74; 76.

 IDLENESS: 48.
 IMAGES: 73.
 IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, The: 167.
 INCARNATION, The: 44.
 INCORPORATION of isolated tertiaries: 38; 133, 6).
 INDULGENCED Blessing: 113, 5); 117, 7); 161; 165.
 INDULGENCES: Decree of Approval; 159ff; novices, 22.
 INDULTS: 13, 2); 158; 160; 168.
 INFIRMARIANS: 86; 136-9; 143; 145.
 INNOCENT XI, Bl. Pope: Decree of Approval.
 INTERPRETATION of the Constitutions: 170.
 INTRET ORATIO: 165.
 INSTRUCTION: postulants, 12; 143; novices, 20-1; 23; 143; professed, 39ff; 63; isolated, 32-3.
 ISOLATED Tertiaries: instruction, reception and profession, 12; 23; 30-7; with 16 and 25; retreats, 66; care of, 109, 4); incorporation, 38; 133, 6).

 JESUS CHRIST: love for, 69; consecration to, 68; the Life of tertiaries, Introduction 2-5; 10; see LIFE and MYSTICAL BODY; His commandment of Love, 40ff; see CHARITY, CO-OPERATION; His Sacrament of Love, see EUCHARIST; His Gospel, see GOSPEL; medal of, 17.
 JOHN, Saint: 41-2; 44.
 JOSEPH, Saint: 70.
 JOY: for Creation and Redemption, 44; 54; in work, 48; in adversity, 85; in home, 72-3.
 JURISDICTION: 91; 99.
 JUSTICE: 47; 74; 152.

 KINDNESS: 14 (end); 41-4; 147.

 LEAVEN in the world, Franciscan: 4; 8; 39-53.
 LENT: 63.

LEO XIII, Pope: Decree of Approval; 75-6; 163; 168.
 LETTERS, Circular: 36; see PERIODICALS.
 LETTER TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER (Saint Francis): 56.
 LIBRARIAN: 136-9.
 LIFE: the tertiary's, 2; see APOSTOLIC VOCATION; family, 9; 51; 71-3; social, 47-53; 71-6; 152.
 LITERATURE, Franciscan: 35; 83; see PERIODICALS.
 LITURGICAL Prayer, painstaking attendance at: 54-55.
 LOUIS, Saint: Decree of Approval; 70.
 LOVE of God and neighbor: see CHARITY; *passim*.
 LUKE, Saint: 29.

 MAGAZINES, Franciscan: see PERIODICALS.
 MAJOR Superiors: 17; 45; see SUPERIOR.
 MAJORITY in voting: 125, 2); 130-1.
 MARRIED tertiaries: 4; 9; 51; 71-3.
 MARRIED women candidates: 14.
 MASS, The: reverence for, 45; at profession, 27; at meetings, 63; daily; 57; for the dead, 88; 140, 5); 166; privileged Masses, 166; of priest tertiaries, 166-8.
 MASTER of Novices: 136-9; 143.
 MATTHEW, Saint: 40; 43; text preceding 90.
 MEDAL (in place of scapular and cord): 17.
 MEETINGS of fraternity: 63-4; 123.
 MENTAL Prayer: 62; see RECOLLECTION.
 MINISTER — General: head of Third Order, 90; 98; powers, 17; 31; 93, 3); 107-8; 170; 172; Visitor *ex officio*, 115; see SUPERIOR.
 Prefect of fraternity: qualities, text before 90; 129; appointment, 93, 6); 122-7; duties, 20; 64; 86; 120; 130-141; 147.
 Provincial: Superior of Third Order, 98; 105; powers, 108-10; 115; 127, 131; 172; see SUPERIOR.
 MINUTES: 142; 151.
 MISERICORS DEI FILIUS (Pope Leo XIII): 168.
 MISSAL, Franciscan: 60; 167.
 MISSION of Third Order: see APOSTOLIC VOCATION.
 MISSIONS, The: 78.
 MODERATION: 49.
 MYSTICAL BODY: 3; 55; 58; 85.

NATURE: joyous gratitude for God's gifts in, 44; 54.
 NATURE of Third Order: 1-10; see APOSTOLIC VOCATION.
 NEGLIGENT, The: see DELINQUENT.
 NEIGHBOR: 47; 78; see CHARITY.
 NE REMINISCARIS: 165.
 NEWSPAPERS: see PERIODICALS.
 NICHOLAS IV, Pope: Decree of Approval.
 NON-CATHOLICS: 13, 3).
 NOVICES: 133, 3); see NOVITIATE.
 NOVITIATE: 13-23; repeated, 151; the isolated, 32-4.

 OBEDIENCE: 75; 95-6; 111; 133, 7), 10); see DISCIPLINE.
 OBSEQUIES: 88.
 OFFICES of Fraternity: 120; 133, 10); 136ff.
 OFFICIATING Priest: 18; 25, 3); 30-1; 34-5.
 ORATORY: 93, 5); 96, 2); 161-2.
 ORDINARY, Local: 31; 75; 93, 2); 96; 99; 119; 157.

 PATRONS: 69-70.
 PAX ET BONUM: 53.
 PAUL, Saint: 42; 44; 56.
 PEACE: 43; 74; 79; 81; 92; see CO-OPERATION.
 PENALTIES: see CORRECTION.
 PENANCE: 2; 17; 21; text preceding 39; 46; 48; 50; 71-4.
 PENANCE, Sacrament of: 61.
 PENITENTIARY, The Sacred Apostolic: 164; 168.
 PERIODICALS: for the sick, 10; for the isolated, 35; exclude the
 bad, 73; spread the good, 83; send in reports to them, 142.
 PICTURES: 73.
 PILGRIMAGES: 79; 109, 6).
 PIUS X, St. Pope: Decree of Approval; 67; 75; 160.
 PIUS XI, Pope: Decree of Approval; 75.
 PIUS XII, Pope: Decree of Approval; 39; 41; 77; 84.
 POLITICS: 75.
 PONTIFFS, Roman: Decree of Approval; Introduction; 7; 45; 67;
 75; 78; 81; 95; 97; 163.
 POOR, The: 46-7; 63; 74; 76; 86; 140,5).
 POPES — Benedict XV: Decree of Approval; Introduction.
 Honorius III: Decree of Approval.
 Innocent XI, Blessed: Decree of Approval.

Leo XIII: Decree of Approval; 76; 163; 168.
 Nicholas IV: Decree of Approval.
 Pius X, Saint: Pius XI: Pius XII: see PIUS.
 POSTULANTS: 11-16; 133, 3).
 POVERTY: 46-7; 76; see POOR.
 PRAYER: 54-5; 62; 72; 88; see RECOLLECTION, LITURGICAL
 PRAYER, FUNCTIONS, DIVINE OFFICE.
 PREACHERS: 63; 106.
 PRECEDENCE: 98; 155ff.
 PREFECT: See MINISTER PREFECT.
 PRESIDENT: at elections, 113, 8); 117, 8); 124ff; at meetings,
 121; 130.
 PRIESTS: see OFFICIATING PRIESTS, SECULAR CLERGY.
 PRIVILEGED Altar (personal): 168.
 PRIVILEGED Masses: 166.
 PRIVILEGES: novices, 22; the isolated, 37; the suspended and
 dismissed, 154; others, 155-168.
 PROCESSIONS: 155ff.
 PROFESSION: aim, 2-3; 24; spirit, 41; 44; requirements, 24-9;
 133, 3); the isolated, 33-4.
 PROGRESS of Third Order: see GROWTH, PROPAGATION.
 PROPAGATION of Third Order: 82-3; 106; 142.
 PROPERTY, Private: 46-7; 96, 2), 3).
 PROPRIETY: 49.
 PRUDENCE: 147.
 PURITY: 49-51.
 PURPOSE of Third Order: see NATURE.

 QUADRAGESIMO ANNO (Pope Pius XI): 75.

 RADIO: 73.
 READING: 62; 72-3; 83; see PERIODICALS.
 RE-ADMISSION to Third Order: 151.
 RECOLLECTION: 50; 62; day of, 65.
 RECORDS: 142; see ARCHIVES.
 REGION/-AL: division, 91; Commissary, 110; Councils, 121.
 REGISTER: 93, 4); 133, 9).
 REGISTRATION: 16; 25, 3); 34; 38; 142; 151.
 RELIGIOUS: 13, 1); 106; 162; 164-5; see PRIESTS.
 RENEWAL of consecration: 68; of profession: 29; 151.

RETREATS: 26; 29; 65-6.
 REPORT: of Commissary, 107, 4; 108; 109, 8); of Council, 133, 11); of Minister Prefect, 140, 4); of Secretary, 142; of Treasurer, 144; of the isolated, 35.
RERUM NOVARUM (Pope Leo XIII): 75.
 RESIDENCE: of fraternity members, 142; of the isolated, 34.
 REUNION of the isolated tertiaries: 36.
 RICH, The: see EMPLOYERS.
 RIGHTS: novices, 22; the isolated, 37; the suspended, dismissed and others, 154-168.
 ROMANS, Epistle to the: 44.
 ROSARY: 72.
 RULE, The: norm of life, 1-2; reason for, 41; must be studied, 11; 21; 64; 143; must be observed, 24; binds those suspended or dismissed from the fraternity, 154; the Constitutions explain it, Decree of Approval; 13; 19; 49; 55; 61; 63; 73; 86ff.
 SACRAMENTS, Last: 87.
SACRA PROPEDIEM (Pope Benedict XV): Introduction.
 SACRED HEART of Jesus: 68; 72.
 SACRED SCRIPTURES: 56; 62; 72; see GOSPEL.
 SACRIFICE: 71; see PENANCE.
 SAINTS, Franciscan: 62; 64; 72.
 SCANDAL: 149; 151.
 SCAPULAR, The: 16-17; 159.
 SECRECY: 125, 2); 132; 134.
 SECRETARY of fraternity: 136-9; 142.
 SECULAR CLERGY: urged by Popes to join the Third Order, 7; reverence for, 45; consultation with, 119; as members, 12; 60; 162; 166-8; as Directors and delegates, 31; 99-102; 118; 164-5.
 SEMINARIES: 7; 162.
 SERVICE: 43; see CHARITY.
 SESSIONS of Council: 113, 3); 130ff.
 SHOWS: 50.
 SICK, The: 10; 85-7; 109, 4); 140, 5); novices, 22; 143; indulgences, 163.
 SIMPLICITY: 49.
 SINNERS, Public: 13, 3); 152.
 SOCIAL Encyclicals: 75.
 SOCIAL Life: see LIFE.

SOCIETIES, Forbidden: 13, 3); 152.
 SODALUM E TERTIO ORDINE (St. Pius X): 160.
 SPIRIT of Third Order: Decree of Approval; Introduction; 11; 32;
 see APOSTOLIC VOCATION.
 SPIRITUAL — communion, 57; — director, 14; 52; 61; — reading,
 62; 72.
 SPREADING the Third Order: see PROPAGATION.
 STATIONS of the Cross: 62.
 STATUTES, Particular: 108; 112; 117; 121; 146; 172.
 STRUCTURE of Third Order: 1-38.
 SUBJECTS: text preceding 90; see OBEDIENCE: *passim*.
 SUFFERING: 10; 62; see SICK.
 SUNDAYS: 55.
 SUPERIORS — ecclesiastical: 81; see PONTIFFS, ORDINARY.
 general: 98-100; 106; see MINISTER.
 local: powers, 24; 25, 3); 31; 33; 98-100; 105-6;
 duties, 7; 24; 25, 3); 31; 33; 79.
 provincial: 83; 98-100; 106; see MINISTER.
 SUPPRESSION of a fraternity: 96, 5).
 SUSPENSION: 148; 151; 154.

 TELEVISION: 50; 73.
 TELLERS: 125, 2).
 TERTIUM FRANCISCALUM ORDINEM (St. Pius X): 67; 75.
 TESTAMENT of Saint Francis: text following 173.
 THEATRICAL performances: 50.
 THOMAS of Celano: text preceding 90.
 TRANSFERRING: 103-4; 133, 6).
 TREASURER of Fraternity: 136-9; 144; see FUNDS.

 UNAFFILIATED tertiaries: see ISOLATED.
 UNITY: see CO-OPERATION, GROUPS.

 VANITY: 49.
 VESTIGES of God: 54.
 VICE-MINISTER: 128; 130; 136; 141.
 VISITATION: local Ordinary, 96, 2), 3), 5); Third Order, 35;
 109, 3); 140, 6); see VISITATOR.
 VISITATOR: 24; 115-9; 131; 147.
 VISITS to the Blessed Sacrament: 58.

VITA SECUNDA (Celano): text preceding 90.

VOCATION of tertiaries: 11; 24; 82; see APOSTOLIC VOCA-
TION.

VOCATIONS, Promoting: 78; 82-3.

VOICE — active and passive, 123; — consultative or deliberative,
131.

VOTING: 122ff; 134.

VOWS, Private: 8; 52; 164.

WAY of the Cross: 62.

WILL, Last: 47; 89.

WORK: 48; 74-6.

WORKERS: see EMPLOYEES.

YOUTH: Franciscan associations for, 82; see FAMILY LIFE.

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