

*On the Obligations of Each Office*

34. It is the duty of the Mother prioress to take great care in everything about the observance of the rule and constitutions, to look after the integrity and enclosure of the house, to observe how the offices are carried out, and to see that both spiritual and temporal needs are provided for; and these things should be done with a mother's love. She should strive to be loved so that she may be obeyed. The prioress should appoint as portress and sacristan persons whom she can trust. So as not to allow for any attachment to an office, she may remove them as she sees fit. She should appoint nuns to all the other offices as well with the exception of those of subprioress and key-bearer which are elected offices. At least two of the key-bearers should know how to write and keep accounts.

35. It is the duty of the Mother subprioress to take care of the choir so that the recitation and chanting be done well, and the pause observed. This should be looked after carefully. When the prioress is absent, the subprioress should preside, be always present in the community, and correct the faults that are committed in the choir and refectory.

36. The key-bearers should receive a monthly report from the treasurer with the prioress present; the prioress should seek the opinion of the key-bearers in serious matters and have a chest, to which there should be three keys, for the community documents and funds. The prioress must have one key, and the oldest key-bearers the other two.

37. It is the duty of the sacristan to take care of all the things pertaining to the church and to see to it that the Lord is served there with much reverence and cleanliness. She should arrange that the hearing of confessions proceed in good order and, under pain of grave fault, she must not allow anyone to approach the confessional without permission unless to confess to an appointed confessor.

38. The duty of the treasurer and elder portress (offices that should be held by the same person) is to take care of providing in due time, if the Lord gives the means, for all that must be

bought for the house. This Sister must speak at the turn with a subdued voice and in an edifying way. She must look after the needs of the Sisters with charity and keep accounts of income and expenses. When she buys something she should not engage in haggling and bargaining over the price, but after discussing the cost twice she should either take the item or leave it. She shouldn't allow any Sister to come to the turn without permission. If a Sister must go to the grate to speak with someone, another Sister should be called to accompany her. The portress should tell no one about what comes to pass at the turn except the prioress, nor should she give anyone a letter without first giving it to the prioress to read. Neither should she, under pain of grave fault, give a message to any Sister or pass one along to someone outside without first giving it to the prioress.

39. The monitors should take great care to notice faults, for this is an important office, and they should tell the prioress about them, as was mentioned.<sup>23</sup>

40. The novice mistress should be very prudent, prayerful, and spiritual. She should take great care to read the constitutions to the novices and teach them all that they have to do with regard to ceremonies and mortification. She should stress the interior life more than exterior things, taking daily account of how the novices are progressing in prayer, how they get along with the mystery on which they must meditate, and of the benefit they are deriving from it. She should teach them how to proceed with this practice and how in times of dryness to break their own will even in small things. Let the one who has this office be careful lest she grow careless in anything, for it is a matter of educating souls so that the Lord might dwell in them. Let her treat them compassionately and lovingly, not being surprised by their faults, for they must advance little by little, and mortify each one according to what her spirit can suffer. She should lay more stress on doing away with the lack of virtue than on rigorous penance. The prioress should send someone to help her teach them to read.

41. All the Sisters should give the prioress a monthly account of how they have done in prayer, of how the Lord is leading

them, for His Majesty will give her light so that if they are not proceeding well she might guide them. Doing this requires humility and mortification and is very beneficial. Should the prioress find that she has no one competent for the office of novice mistress, she should herself take on the office and regard this work as something most important and appoint someone to help her.

42. When those who have an office must spend the hour designated for prayer at their task, they should take another hour for prayer in which they are the most likely to be free. This should be understood to apply when they are not able to give themselves to prayer for the whole, or greater part, of the hour.<sup>24</sup>

57. In each monastery a copy of these constitutions should be kept in the chest of three keys, and there should be other copies so that they may be read once a week to all the Sisters gathered in community at a time fixed by the Mother prioress. Each Sister should keep them very much in mind, for this is what they must do in order, with the help of the Lord, to advance far. They should read them at times, and thus there should be more copies in the monastery than those mentioned so that each one, if she desires, may take a copy to her cell.

58. Alms in the form of money that the Lord might give should always be placed at once in the chest of three keys save when it amounts to less than nine or ten ducats. In this latter case it should be given to the key-bearer designated by the prioress, and she in turn will give the procuratrix what the prioress has told the latter to spend. Each night before the bell is rung for silence, the procuratrix should give a detailed account to either the prioress or the key-bearer. And when the accounting is made, they should together record it in the monastery book so as to render a yearly account to the visitor.

Deo Gratias

59. The ordinal prescribes some of the disciplines that are to be taken when the ferial Office is recited; the discipline is taken

on ferial days in Advent and Lent; outside these times, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays when the ferial Office is recited. In addition, it should be taken every Friday of the year for the increase of the faith, for benefactors, for souls in purgatory, for captives, and for those in mortal sin. A *Miserere* and prayers for the Church and for those intentions mentioned should be recited. Each one should take these disciplines herself in the choir after Matins. The others are given with twigs as the ordinal prescribes.<sup>25</sup> No one should take any more disciplines without permission, nor do anything penitential without it.