

8. The prioress should see to it that good books are available, especially *The Life of Christ* by the Carthusian, the *Flos Sanctorum*, *The Imitation of Christ*, *The Oratory of Religious*, and those books written by Fray Luis de Granada and by Father Fray Pedro de Alcantara.⁷ This sustenance for the soul is in some way as necessary as is food for the body. All of that time not taken up with community life and duties should be spent by each Sister in the cell or hermitage designated by the prioress; in sum, in a place where she can be recollected and, on those days that are not feast days, occupied in doing some work. By withdrawing into solitude in this way, we fulfill what the rule commands: that each one should be alone.⁸ No Sister, under pain of a grave fault, may enter the cell of another without the prioress's permission. Let there never be a common workroom.⁹

On Temporal Matters

9. Let them live always on alms and without any income,¹⁰ but insofar as possible let there be no begging. Great must be the need that makes them resort to begging. Rather, they should help themselves with the work of their hands, as St. Paul did;¹¹ the Lord will provide what they need. Provided they want no more than this and are content to live simply, they will have what is necessary to sustain life. If they strive with all their might to please the Lord, His Majesty will keep them from want. Their earnings must not come from work requiring careful attention to fine details but from spinning and sewing or other unrefined labor that does not so occupy the mind as to keep it from the Lord. Nor should they do work with gold or silver. Neither should there be any haggling over what is offered for their work. They should graciously accept what is given. If they see that the amount offered is insufficient, they should not take on the work.

10. In no way should the Sisters have any particular possessions, nor should such permission be granted; nothing in the line of food or clothing; nor should they have any coffer or small chest, or box, or cupboard, unless someone have an office in the

community. But everything must be held in common. This is very important because through small things the devil can bring about a relaxation of the perfection in which poverty is observed. For this reason the prioress should be very careful. If she sees that a Sister is attached to something, be it a book, or a cell, or anything else, she should take it from her.

On Fasting

11. A fast is observed from the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, which is in September, until Easter, with the exception of Sundays. Meat must never be eaten unless out of necessity as the rule prescribes.¹²

12. The habit should be made of coarse cloth or black, rough wool, and only as much wool as is necessary should be used. The sleeves should be narrow, no wider at the opening than at the shoulder. Circular, without pleats, and no larger in the back than in the front, the habit should extend in length to the feet. The scapular should be made of the same material and four fingers shorter in length than the habit. The choir mantle should be white, of the same coarse cloth, and equal in length to the scapular. They should use as little cloth for this as possible, attending always to the necessary rather than to the superfluous. Let them always wear the scapular over the toque. The toques should be made of fine tow and without pleats; the inner tunics of fine wool, and the sheets of the same. Let sandals made from hemp be worn and, for the sake of modesty, stockings of rough wool or of cloth made from rough tow. The pillowcases may be of fine tow or, when necessary, of linen.

13. Straw-filled sacks will be used for mattresses, for it has been shown that these can be tolerated even by persons with weak health. No hangings should be used except, in cases of necessity, hemp mattings or, to cover a doorway, a blanket or some rough, woolen cloth or something similar that is poor. Each nun should have her own bed. Let there be no carpeting or cushions, except in the church. These are all matters of proper

religious observance. They are mentioned here because with relaxation there comes sometimes a forgetfulness of what pertains to religious life and its obligations. Colored clothing or bedding must never be used, not even something as small as a ribbon. Sheepskins should never be worn. If someone is sick, she may wear an extra garment made of the same rough wool as the habit.

14. The Sisters must keep their hair cut so as not to have to waste time in combing it. Never should a mirror be used or any adornments; there should be complete self-forgetfulness.

On the Enclosure

15. No nun should be seen with her face unveiled¹³ unless she is with her father, mother, brothers, or sisters, or has some reason which would make it seem as appropriate as in the cases mentioned. And her dealings should be with persons who are an edification and help for the life of prayer and who provide spiritual consolation rather than recreation. Another nun should always be present unless one is dealing with conscience matters. The prioress must keep the key to both the parlor and the main entrance. When the doctor, barber surgeon, confessor, or other necessary persons enter the enclosure, they should always be accompanied by two nuns. When some sick nun goes to confession, another nun must always be standing there at a distance so that she sees the confessor. She should not speak to him, unless a word or two, but only the sick nun may do so.

16. In houses that have a choir, within the enclosure, where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, and have chaplains or help for taking care of the church, there should be no door leading into the church.¹⁴ Where this help is not present, and the nuns cannot dispense from having a door, the prioress should keep the key. The door should be opened only when necessary and by two Sisters. When there is help for taking care of the church, the entrance should be closed up if there had been a door there.

17. The novices should be allowed visitors just as are the professed. For if they are in any way unhappy, this should make it