

clear that they are expected to remain only if they are very willing to do so.¹⁵ And they should be given the opportunity to say so if they do not want to remain.

18. The Sisters should pay no attention to the affairs of the world, nor should they speak about them. They may do so if the matter concerns something for which they can offer a remedy or help those with whom they are speaking, assist them in finding the truth, or console them in some trial. If no effort is being made to make the conversation a fruitful one, they should bring it to a quick conclusion, as was said. It is very important that those who visit us leave with some benefit, and not after having wasted time, and that we benefit too. The companion should watch carefully whether this rule is observed. She is obliged to inform the prioress if it is not. When she does not do this, she incurs the same penalty as the one who breaks the rule. The punishment is that after having been warned twice by her companion, a nun on the third occasion should be given nine days in the prison cell and, on the third day of the nine, a discipline in the refectory. For the above rule is very important to the religious life.

19. As much as they can, the Sisters should avoid a great deal of conversation with relatives. Aside from the fact that they will become preoccupied with their relatives' affairs, they will find it difficult to avoid talking to them about worldly things.

20. Let them be very careful in speaking with outsiders, even though these may be close relatives. If these persons are not the kind who find their satisfaction in speaking about the things of God, they should be seen seldom, and the visit kept short.

On Accepting Novices

21. Let the nuns consider carefully whether those about to be received are persons of prayer desiring full perfection and contempt for the world. These aspirants should be at least seventeen. And if they are not detached from the world, they will find the way we live here hard to bear. It is better to consider these

things beforehand than to have to turn these persons away afterward. Aspirants should be healthy, intelligent, and able to recite the Divine Office and assist in choir. Profession should not be allowed if during the year of novitiate the novice does not show that she has the temperament and other qualities necessary for the kind of life she would have to live here. If some of these qualities are lacking, she should not be accepted, unless she is a person so taken with the service of the Lord and useful to the house that the deficiencies would give no cause whatsoever for disquiet and our Lord would be served by our consenting to her holy desires. If these latter are not great, for great desires will be the sign that God is calling her to this state, she should by no means be received. An applicant with whom the nuns are pleased should not be turned away because she has no alms to give the house; and this has always been the procedure. Should she desire to give an alms to the house, and holds it for that reason, she should not be refused profession if afterward she does not for some reason give it, nor should the nuns try to get the money through litigation. Let them be careful so as not to be motivated by self-interest. Little by little greed could so enter that they would look more to the alms than to the goodness and quality of the person. This should in no way be done, for doing so would be a great evil. They must ever keep in mind their profession of poverty that they might always in everything give off its fragrance. Let them reflect that it is not money that will sustain them but faith, perfection, and trust in God alone. This law should be considered carefully and be observed; it is appropriate and should be read to the Sisters. When someone is accepted, it should always be done in accordance with the majority opinion of the community, and the same holds for profession. Candidates being considered for admission as lay Sisters should be robust and be persons who show that they want to serve the Lord. They should spend a year before receiving the habit so that it may be seen whether they are fit for the demands of such a life, and so that they themselves may see whether they can bear up with it. They should not cover their faces with a veil, nor should they wear a black one. They may make profession two years after receiving the habit, unless through their great

virtue they merit making profession sooner. They should be treated with complete sisterly charity, and food and clothing should be provided for them just as they are for all.

On the Humble Offices

22. The Mother prioress should be the first on the list for sweeping so that she might give good example to all. She should pay careful attention to whether those in charge of the clothes and the food provide charitably for the Sisters in what is needed for subsistence and in everything else. Those having these offices should do no more for the prioress and the older nuns than they do for all the rest, as the rule prescribes,¹⁶ but be attentive to needs and age, and more so to needs, for sometimes those who are older have fewer needs. Since this is a general rule, it merits careful consideration, for it applies in many things. Let no Sister comment on whether the food given to eat is much or little, well or poorly seasoned. Let the prioress and the provider take care so that what is given (depending on what the Lord has given) is well prepared and the nuns will be able to get along with it, for they have nothing else. The Sisters should be obliged to tell the Mother prioress of their needs, and the novices to tell the novice mistress; this with regard to both clothing and food. And if they need something more than the usual things, they should, even though this may not be great, commend the matter to our Lord first. Our human nature often asks for more than what it needs, and sometimes the devil helps so as to cause fear about the practice of penance and fasting.

On the Sick

23. The sick should be cared for with fullness of love, concern for their comfort, and compassion in accordance with the poverty we practice. And they should praise God, our Lord, when they are well provided for. If they lack the things the wealthy possess for bringing relief in their illnesses, let them not