

## II. CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS

*The first document contained in this part (no. 225) is the oldest text of the rule that we have. It was written in beautiful handwriting by cleric Michael Rua between 1858 and 1859, beginning from an earlier draft by Don Bosco which has not been preserved. From this draft came all the other constitutional drafts up to the definitive document in 1874<sup>37</sup>. To draw it up Don Bosco, who had no experience of consecrated life, had recourse to constitutions of other religious institutes.*

*The text, divided into nine articles—origin; purpose; form; vow of obedience; poverty; chastity; internal government; other superiors; admission—and introduced by a preface and a historical outline on the origins of the Congregation, is still at the stage of being a draft and incomplete, the result in part of experience and in part of literary elaboration. Nevertheless it already presents a range of important choices attributable to Don Bosco himself. In particular the vows, common life and form of government take on their specifically Salesian character in the way they have been formulated, in terms that go beyond simple rules and reflect the urgent spiritual needs of the founder. Coming together in a congregation is motivated by three things: the imitation of Christ the “divine saviour”, the exercise of the Christian virtue of charity and the need to renew society by taking care of the young, especially the poorest of them, and the “ordinary people”.*

*The theme of charity, “understood as participation in divine grace and the extension of Christ’s salvific work”, is what best distinguishes the relationship between Salesians and the beneficiaries of their work. It is charity, “theologically understood and psychologically enriched, that gives a particular meaning to the classic evangelical virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience.”<sup>38</sup> But the most interesting aspect is the function assigned to the Oratory and the “home attached”: consecration of Salesian religious is in function of the oratorian mission, that is,*

<sup>37</sup> On the various stages for the drafting process of the Constitutions cf. Giovanni BOSCO, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales [1858]-1875*. Critical texts by Francesco Motto. Roma, LAS 1982.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Pietro STELLA, *Le Costituzioni salesiane fino al 1888*, in *Fedeltà e rinnovamento. Studi sulle costituzioni salesiane*. by Joseph Aubry and Mario Midali. Roma, LAS 1974, pp. 30-31.

*the boys to be gathered together and instructed in religion, to be given some art or trade, “as was actually done in the house attached to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales in this city”. In a word, other than models of reference, the charismatic feature emerges in this tendency of Don Bosco to give what is done at the Oratory a legal status<sup>39</sup>.*

*The second document (no. 226) is the Italian translation of the Rules or Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales, published in 1875. The edition here, compared with the Latin text approved by Rome (1874), has some special features to it: certain legal clauses are rendered less clearly; the chapter on the novitiate, made up of thirteen articles, is reduced to only seven; the 9th and 10th articles of Chap XI (De acceptatione)—not contracting even indifferent habits; for the glory of God and the salvation of souls being ready to put up with things like heat, cold, hunger, thirst— are transferred to Chap. XIII (Pietatis exercitia), as concluding articles, 12 and 13; an article on setting aside the Rector Major (deposing him!) in case of unworthiness is eliminated<sup>40</sup>. But the most important modifications concern economic matters, formulations which effectively sanction the almost complete autonomy in the matter from any competent civil and ecclesiastical authority; it is a legal exegesis that Don Bosco formulates in a note to Article 3 of Chap. VII on Internal Government of the Society: “The Salesian Society owns nothing as a moral entity, so except in the case where it is legally approved by some government, it would not be bound by this article. For the same reason each Salesian may exercise the civil rights of purchase, sale, etc., without recourse to the Holy See.”*

*The third document (no. 227), Rules or Constitutions for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians aggregated to the Salesian Society (1885), is the definitive draft, the last one revised by the Founder, and in force until 1906<sup>41</sup>.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>40</sup> *Constitutiones*, cap. VII, art. 8: “At si forte contingat, quod Deus avertat, ut rector maior gravissime officia sua negligat, praefectus vel quisque de superiore capitulo [...] poterit rectorem efficaciter admonere. Quod si non sufficiat [...] deponi potest” (G. BOSCO, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales...*, p. 125).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Giovanni BOSCO, *Costituzioni per l'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice (1872-1885)*. Critical texts by Sr. Cecilia Romero fma. Roma, LAS 1983, p. 161.

*The text was preceded by a letter of presentation by Don Bosco (cf. no. 48) and an Introduction, substantially the same as the item To the Salesians, which we do not include here. The document was written up on the basis of the rules for the Daughters of the Immaculate at Mornese, the Salesian Constitutions, the rules of the Sisters of St Anne (founded by Marquis Tancredi and Marchioness Giulia di Barolo). However, the religious profile that emerges is unmistakable: all-embracing and sober, permeated by intense apostolic energy, a marked educational charity, humanism which is unmistakably Salesian and a truly feminine and affectionate spiritual touch - as can easily be seen, for example, in the intense and beautiful Chapter XIII, dedicated to the Essential virtues proposed for study by the novices and for practice by the professed.*

### **225. First draft of the rules of the Salesian Congregation (1858/1859)**

Critical ed. in Giovanni BOSCO, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales [1858]-1875*. Critical texts by Francesco Motto. (= Istituto Storico Salesiano – Fonti, Serie prima, 1).

Roma, LAS 1982, pp. 58-172.

#### *Congregation of St Francis de Sales*

At all times it has been the special concern of the ministers of the church to promote, to the best of their power, the spiritual welfare of the young. The good or evil moral condition of society will depend on whether young people receive a good or a bad education. Our Divine Saviour himself has shown us the truth of this by his deeds. For in fulfilling his divine mission on earth, with a love of predilection he invited children to come close to him: “*Sinite parvulos venire ad me*” [Mk 10:14]. The Supreme Pontiffs, following in the footsteps of the Eternal Pontiff, our Divine Saviour, whose vicars on earth they are, have at all times promoted the good education of the young, by the spoken and written word and consequently they have favoured and supported those institutes that are dedicated to this area of the sacred ministry.

At the present time, however, this need is felt with far greater urgency. Parental neglect, the abusive power of the press, and the proselytising efforts of heretics, demand that we unite in fighting for the Lord’s cause, under the

banner of the faith. Our efforts must aim at safeguarding the faith and the moral life of that category of young people whose eternal salvation is more at risk precisely because of their poverty. This is the specific purpose of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, first established in Turin in 1841.

### *Origin of this Congregation*

As far back as the year 1841, Fr John Bosco, working in association with other priests, began to gather together in suitable premises, the most abandoned young people from the city of Turin, in order to entertain them with games and at the same time break the bread of the Divine Word to them. Everything he did was done with the consent of the ecclesiastical authority. God blessed these humble beginnings, and the number of young people that attended grew so large that in the year 1844 His Grace Archbishop [Louis] Fransoni gave permission to dedicate a building for use as a kind of church, granting at the same time faculties to hold there such services as are necessary for the observance of Sundays and holidays and for the instruction of the young people who attended in ever increasing numbers.

There the Archbishop came on several occasions to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. Likewise, in the year 1846 he permitted *the young people who attended this institution* to be admitted to [first] Holy Communion and to fulfil their Easter duty there. He also permitted [priests] to sing Holy Mass [celebrate solemn Mass, as in parish churches] and to hold triduum and novenas as the occasion demanded. This was the practice at the Oratory named after St. Francis de Sales up to the year 1847. Meanwhile the number of youngsters was rising steadily, and the church then in use could no longer accommodate them. Thus it was that, in that year, again with the permission of the ecclesiastical authority, a second oratory, under the patronage of St Aloysius Gonzaga, having the same purpose as the first, was established in another part of the city

And as with time the premises at these two institutions also proved inadequate, in the year 1849 a third oratory, under the patronage of the Holy Guardian Angel, was established in yet another part of the city.

By then the political climate had deteriorated to the point that [the Catholic] religion faced the gravest difficulties and dangers. In this situation, the ecclesiastical superior most graciously approved the regulations of these oratories, and appointed Fr Bosco their Director-in-Chief, granting to him *all the faculties that would be needed or might be helpful for the task.*

Bishops in many parts have adopted the very same regulations and have made an effort to introduce these festive oratories into their dioceses. But, an urgent need arose in connection with the care of the [youngsters in these] oratories. Numerous young people somewhat more advanced in age, could not receive proper [religious] instruction merely by attending the Sunday catechism. This made it necessary to open day and evening classes, with catechetical instruction [especially for them]. Furthermore, many of these youngsters found themselves in a situation of dire poverty and neglect. Hence they were received into a home [set up for them]. By this means they were removed from dangers, they received proper religious instruction, and they were started on a trade.

This is still the practice at present, especially in Turin, in the home attached to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, in which the youngsters given shelter number about two hundred. This is likewise the practice in Genoa, in the Work for Little Artisans, so called, where Fr Francis Montebruno is director and where the youngsters given shelter are forty in number. This is also the practice in the city of Alessandria, where the work is for the duration entrusted to the care of [our] Cleric Angelo Savio, and where the youngsters given shelter are 30.

When, in addition to the youngsters that gather in the festive oratories, one considers those that attend day and evening school, and those that are given shelter, one realises how the Lord's harvest has increased. Hence in order to maintain unity in spirit and discipline, on which the success of oratory work depends, as far back as 1844 a number of priests banded together to form a kind of congregation, while helping one another by mutual example and instruction.

They did not bind themselves by any formal vow; they merely made a simple promise to devote themselves solely to such work as would, in their superior's judgement, redound to the glory of God and to the benefit of their souls. They regarded Fr John Bosco as their superior. And although no vows were made, nevertheless the rules that are here presented were [already] observed in practice. Fifteen people at present profess these rules: 5 priests, 8 clerics, and 2 laymen.

*Purpose of this Congregation*

1. It is the purpose of this society to gather together members, priests, clerics and laymen too, for the purpose of aspiring to perfection through the imitation of the virtues of our Divine Saviour, inasmuch as that is possible.

2. Jesus Christ began to do and to teach; likewise shall the members begin by perfecting themselves through the practice of interior and exterior virtues and through the acquisition of knowledge; and then shall they go to work for the benefit of their neighbour.

3. The first exercise of charity shall be to gather together poor and abandoned young people in order to instruct them in the holy Catholic religion, especially on Sundays and holy days, as is presently done in this city of Turin in the three oratories of St Francis de Sales, of St Aloysius Gonzaga and of the holy Guardian Angel.

4. Furthermore, some young people are found that are so abandoned that unless they are given shelter every care would be expended on them in vain; to this end, as far as possible, houses of shelter shall be opened in which, with the means which Divine Providence will provide, lodging, food and clothing shall be supplied to them. Then, while they are instructed in the truths of the faith, they shall also be started on some trade or work, as is presently done in the house attached to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales in this city.

5. The need to uphold the Catholic religion also among adults of the lower classes is keenly felt, especially in rural settlements—hence the members shall endeavour to give retreats, spread good books, using all the means that charity

will prompt, so that, both through the spoken and the written word, a barrier may be erected against impiety and heresy, which in so many ways attempt to make inroads among simple and uneducated people. At present this is done by giving occasional spiritual retreats and by the publication of the *Catholic Readings*.

### *Form of the Congregation*

1. All the members lead the common life bound only by fraternal charity and by the simple vows, which bind them [together] so that they form one heart and one soul, in order to love and serve God.

2. No one on entering the congregation, even after making his vows, shall forfeit his civil right; therefore he retains possession of his goods, the power of succession and of receiving inheritances, legacies and gifts.

3. For as long as one remains in the congregation, however, the fruit of these goods shall be given over either to the congregation or to relatives or to some other person.

4. Clerics and priests, even after making their vows, retain possession of their patrimonies or simple benefices; but they may neither administer them nor, specifically, enjoy the fruits thereof.

5. The administration of patrimonies, benefices and of anything whatever that is brought into the Congregation or that is in the possession of an individual member pertains to the Superior of the house. He shall, administer them personally or through others, and receive their annual fruits for as long as that member remains in the Congregation.

6. Every priest will also hand over the stipend for the Mass to the superior; the others - clerics or laymen - will give him any monies that might be given them in any way whatsoever, so it can be used for the common good.

7. Likewise whoever wishes to draw up a will [for the benefit of] the Congregation can leave the good he owns to whomsoever he chooses.

8. Whoever dies intestate shall be succeeded by his rightful heir(s).

9. The vows bind the individual for as long as he remains in the Congregation. Those who either leave of their own free will or are dismissed from the Congregation in consequence of a prudent decision by the superiors, are by that very fact regarded as released from their vows.

10. Let each one endeavour to persevere in his vocation until death. Should anyone, however, leave the Congregation he shall not be entitled to claim any compensation for the time he has remained therein nor to take with him any goods except those that the Superior of the house will judge to be appropriate.

11. If it should happen that a new House is to be established elsewhere, an agreement regarding matters spiritual and temporal should be reached with the bishop of the diocese in which the prospective House is to be opened.

12. The members who are assigned to open a new House shall not be less than two in number, and of these at least one shall be a priest. Each House shall be independently responsible for the administration of its own goods, but always within the limits laid down by the Superior.

13. It is the Superior's prerogative to admit candidates to the novitiate, to accept novices for profession or to dismiss them, as he may think best in the Lord. But he shall not dismiss anyone from the house without first consulting the Superiors [of the community] to which [the individual] belongs.

14. The obligations which each member takes upon himself by the profession of vows do not bind under pain of sin, except when the natural, divine or ecclesiastical law may be violated, or when [the matter is] expressly commanded by the Superior under [the vow of] holy obedience.

### *The vow of obedience*

1. The prophet David would beseech God that He would give him light to do His holy will. Our Divine Redeemer, moreover, has assured us that He came not to do His own will, but that of His heavenly Father. It is in order that we may be sure of doing the holy will of God that we make the vow of obedience.



2. This vow binds us not to apply ourselves except to those things which each one's superior judges to be conducive to the greater glory of God and the welfare of our own soul.

3. In particular, it extends to observance of the rules contained in the draft regulations for the house: as have been practised for many years in the house attached to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales.

4. The virtue of obedience gives us the assurance that we are doing God's will. As the Saviour says, "Whoever listens to you, listens to Me; and whoever rejects you rejects Me."

5. Let each one then look on his superior as a father, and obey him unreservedly, promptly, cheerfully, and humbly.

6. Let no one be anxious to ask for any particular thing or to refuse it. But when one thinks that a particular thing is harmful or necessary, let him respectfully mention the fact to his superior and accept his decision with resignation as from the Lord.

7. Let everyone place great confidence in his superior and let no secret of the heart be kept from him. Let him openly manifest his conscience to him whenever he should be asked or he himself feels a need to do so.

8. Let everyone obey without any sort of resistance, either in deed, or in word, or in heart. The more repugnant the thing commanded is to him who does it, the greater will be his merit before God for having obeyed.

9. No one may send out mail without the permission of his superior, or of his superior's delegate. Likewise, incoming letters will be handed over to the superior who may read them if he so judges fit.

### *The vow of poverty*

1. The essence of the vow of poverty [as practised] in our congregation lies in leading the common life regarding food and clothing, and in not keeping anything under lock and key without the superior's special permission.

2. It is part of this vow [that the members should strive] to keep the[ir] rooms in the simplest possible style, seeking to adorn the heart with virtue, and not to ornament either the[ir] person or the walls of their rooms.

3. Let no one, either in the House or out of it, keep any money in his possession or deposited with others, for any reason whatsoever.

4. When a member needs to travel, or the superior sends him to open or run a house or go out for ministry, the Superior shall provide whatever is necessary.

5. To lend, receive or dispose of those things which belong to oneself or to the house, it is forbidden to do these things not only with outsiders, but also with people in the house without the permission of the superiors.

6. Offerings given to members must be handed in to the Superior who will give it to the procurator of the house to be placed in the coffers of the Congregation.

### *The vow of chastity*

1. Whoever deals with abandoned young people must certainly try to enrich himself with every virtue. But the angelic virtue, the virtue so dear to the Son of God, the virtue of chastity, must be cultivated to an outstanding degree.

2. Whoever is unsure of preserving this virtue in deed, word, thoughts, should not join this Congregation because he would be exposed to risks at every step. Words and even nonchalant glances [are] understood badly by boys who have already been the victim of human passions.

3. Therefore the greatest caution [must be had] in speaking with or dealing with boys of almost any age or circumstance.

4. Avoid conversations with individuals of the other sex and lay people wherever you foresee that this virtue would be at risk.

5. No one should visit the home of acquaintances without the express permission of the superior who will always appoint a companion [to go with him].

6. Effective ways of guarding this virtue are the exact practice of the advice of one's confessor, modesty and mortification of all the bodily senses, frequent visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, frequent brief prayers to Mary, St Francis de Sales, St Aloysius Gonzaga, who are the principal protectors of this Congregation.

### *Internal Government of the Congregation*

1. The Congregation will be governed by a Chapter made up of a Rector, Prefect, Bursar, Spiritual Director or Catechist and two Councillors.

2. The Rector holds office for life; it is up to him to accept postulants or otherwise. He assigns each one his tasks be they spiritual or temporal.

3. The Rector will appoint a Vicar from amongst the individuals of the Congregation and will designate him by name and surname on a sheet of sealed paper, keeping it secret and under lock and key. On the envelope he shall write: temporary Rector.

4. The Vicar will take the place of the Rector at his death until his successor is definitively elected.

5. For one to be elected Rector he must have spent at least six years in the Congregation, and have completed his thirtieth year of age. He will have been exemplary in the mind of all the members. Should he have all the other gifts to an outstanding degree the bishop [ordinary] can lower the age [limit] to 26 years.

6. The Rector will not be definitively elected until approved by the ecclesiastical superior.

7. The election of the successor to the deceased Rector will happen thus: eight days after the Rector's death the Prefect, Bursar, Spiritual Director and two councillors will meet with the Vicar and the two oldest members of the Congregation. If time and place permit the Rectors of all the other houses will also be invited. Having recited the *De profundis* in suffrage for the deceased Rector, and called on the assistance of the Holy Spirit with the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*, they will commence the voting. Whoever gains two thirds of the votes will be the new Rector.

### *The other superiors*

1. The roles of the other superiors of the house will be given out by the Rector in accordance with the draft regulations for the boys who are given shelter.

2. The Spiritual Director, however, will take special care of the novices and will take the greatest care to see that they learn and practise the spirit of charity and zeal which should animate one who wishes to dedicate his entire life to the welfare of abandoned youth.

3. It is also the special task of the [Spiritual] Director to watch over the conduct of the Rector with the strict obligation of advising him if he should neglect to observe the rules of the Congregation.

4. But it is also the special concern of the [Spiritual] Director to watch over the moral conduct of all the members.

5. The Prefect, Bursar and Spiritual Director will be elected by majority vote of the superiors. The two councillors will be chosen by the Rector alone.

6. When a member is sent to run a house he has the authority of the Director, but his authority is limited to the house of which he is the Director. On the death of the Rector he too is invited to cast his vote in the election of the future Rector.

7. Each of the superiors with the exception of the Rector, will be in office for three years and can be re-elected.

### *Admissions*

1. Once someone who wishes to enter the Congregation has made his request, the Spiritual Director will collect the necessary information which he will pass on to the Rector.

2. The Rector will then present him or otherwise for admission as he thinks best in the Lord. But when he is proposed to the Chapter he will only be accepted if he obtains a simple majority of votes.

3. The trial period for being admitted to vows will be one year. No one can take vows unless he has completed his sixteenth year.

4. The vows will be renewed twice. They will be taken for three years on each occasion. After six years each one is free to continue for a further three years or to make them in perpetuity, meaning he obliges himself to fulfil his vows for the rest of his life.

## **226. Rules or Constitutions of the Society of St Francis De Sales (1874/1875)**

Critical ed. in G. BOSCO, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales [1858]-1875...*, pp. 73-90<sup>42</sup>.

### *I. Purpose of the Society of St Francis de Sales*

1. The purpose of the Salesian Society is the Christian perfection of its members; every kind of work of charity, spiritual and corporal, toward young people, especially poor [young people]; and also the education of young seminarians. It is composed of priests, clerical students and laymen.

2. Jesus Christ began to do and to teach; likewise shall the Salesian members also begin by perfecting themselves through the practice of every interior and exterior virtue, and through the acquisition of knowledge; and then shall they go to work for the benefit of their neighbour.

3. The first exercise of charity shall be that of gathering together poor and abandoned young people in order to instruct them in the holy Catholic religion, especially on Sundays and holy days.

4 Since it often happens that some young people are found that are so abandoned that, unless they are given shelter, every care in their case would

<sup>42</sup> This is the text translated from the Latin text approved by the Holy See 1874, published in 1875: [Giovanni BOSCO], *Regole o Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales secondo il decreto di approvazione del 3 aprile 1874*. Torino, [Tipografia dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales] 1875 (OE XXVII, 53-99).

be without effect—for this reason, as far as possible, houses shall be opened in which, with the means that Divine Providence will provide, shelter, food and clothing are supplied to them. And while they are instructed in the truths of the Catholic faith, they shall also be started on some trade or work.

5. Moreover, since the dangers that young people who aspire to the ecclesiastical state have to face are many and grave, this society shall take the greatest care to cultivate the piety of those who show a special aptitude for study, and are commendable for [their] good conduct. In admitting young people for the purpose of studies, those who are the poorest [or, poorer] shall be accepted by preference, for the very reason that they could not pursue their studies elsewhere—provided they give some hope of a vocation to the ecclesiastical state.

6. The need to uphold the Catholic Religion also among the Christian people at large is keenly felt, especially in villages— hence the Salesian members shall zealously endeavour to give spiritual retreats [designed] to strengthen and direct in piety those who come to hear them out of a desire to change their lives.

7. Likewise they shall endeavour to spread good books among the people, making use of all the means that Christian charity inspires. Lastly, through the spoken and written word, they shall try to erect a barrier against irreligion and heresy, which in so many ways attempt to make inroads among simple and uneducated people. To this end should be directed the sermons occasionally preached to the people, as well as the triduums, the novenas and the spreading of good books.

## *II. Form of this Society*

1. All the members lead the common life bound only by the bond of fraternal charity and of simple vows, which binds them [together] so that they form one heart and one soul, in order to love and serve God by the virtue of obedience, poverty and holiness of life, and by a committed Christian way of living.

2. Clerics and Priests, even after making their vows, shall retain possession of their patrimonies or simple benefices; but they shall neither administer them nor enjoy the fruits thereof, except in accordance with the Rector's will.

3. The administration of patrimonies, benefices and of anything whatever that is brought into the Society pertains to the Superior General. He shall administer them either personally or through others; and for as long as the individual remains in the Congregation the same Superior shall receive their annual revenues.

4 Every priest is also bound to hand over the Mass stipends to the same general or local superior. Everyone then, priests, clerics or laymen will hand over all money and any gifts they may receive in any way.

5. Everyone is bound by his vows, whether triennial or perpetual. Nor can anyone be released from vows except through dispensation from the Supreme Pontiff or through dismissal from the Society by the Superior General.

6. Let each one persevere in his vocation until the end of his life. Let him call to mind daily those most weighty words of Our Lord and Saviour: "*Nemo mittens manum ad aratrum et respiciens retro aptus est regno Dei* [Lk 9:62]. No one who has put his hand to the plough and looks back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

7. Nevertheless, should anyone leave the Society he shall not be entitled to claim anything for himself for the time he has spent therein. He shall, however, recover his full right over the immovable, as also the movable, goods the ownership of which he had reserved to himself upon entering into the Congregation. But he shall not be entitled to claim any fruit, nor demand any account of their administration for the time he has remained in the Society.

8. One who brings money, furniture or any other thing into the Congregation with the intention of retaining ownership of it must hand a list of all these things to the superior, who once he has seen it, will give him a receipt. Should the member then want to take back items that have become worn through use, he will receive them in the state in which they are then found and will not be entitled to any recompense of any kind.

### *III. The vow of obedience*

1. The prophet David would earnestly beseech God that He would teach him to do His holy will. The Lord, our Saviour has assured us that He came down to earth not to do His own will, but that of His Father in heaven. This is the purpose of the vow of obedience, namely, that we may be all the more certain of doing the holy will of God.

2. Let each one be submissive to his superior and look to him in all things as to a loving father. Let him obey him unreservedly, promptly, cheerfully, and humbly, as the person who expresses the will of God himself in that command.

3. Let no one be anxious to ask for any particular thing or to refuse it. But when one knows that a particular thing is harmful or necessary, let him respectfully mention the fact to his Superior who will take care to see to [the member's] needs.

4. Hence it is good that the members frequently give an account of their external life to their higher superiors of the Congregation. Let each one with simplicity spontaneously manifest to his Superiors external faults against the constitutions as well as his progress in virtue, so that he may receive from them counsels and comfort, and, if needs be, appropriate admonitions.

5. Let everyone obey without any sort of resistance, either in deed, or in word, or in heart, lest he lose the merit of the virtue of obedience. The more repugnant the thing commanded is to him who does it, the greater will be his merit before God for having faithfully obeyed.

### *IV. The vow of poverty*

1. The vow of poverty of which we speak here has to do only with the administration of something, whatever it may be, and not with its possession; those, therefore, who have made the vows in this Society can retain the radical ownership of their goods, but the administration and the disposal and use of their revenues is absolutely forbidden to them. Moreover, before taking the vows, they must cede, even if only in a private form, the administration,



and the usufruct [revenues] and use thereof to anyone they wish, also to the Congregation, if they think they would like to do so. To this cession they may also attach the condition that it may be at any time revocable: but still the professed cannot in conscience use the right of revocation, without the consent of the Holy See. All the foregoing must likewise be observed with respect to those goods which the member may acquire by inheritance, after making his profession.

2. Nevertheless the members can freely dispose of the ownership, either by will-and-testament, or with the Rector Major's permission by some public act. In this latter case, the concession which they have made of the administration, usufruct and use, shall cease, unless it is their desire that the concession should, notwithstanding the cession of ownership, still continue in force for a further such length of time as they may be pleased to specify.

3. The professed, moreover, shall not be forbidden to perform, with the Rector Major's permission, all those acts in respect of property that the laws prescribe.

4 The professed are not allowed to appropriate or reserve to themselves anything that they have acquired either by their own industry or by the means that the Congregation offers; but everything must be contributed to the common benefit of the Congregation.

5. It is part of this vow [that the members should strive] to keep the[ir] rooms in the simplest possible style, seeking with all their might to adorn the heart with virtue, and not the[ir] person or the walls of their room.

6. Let no one, either in the house or out of it, keep any money in his possession or deposited with others, for any reason whatsoever.

7. Finally, let each one keep his heart detached from every earthly thing. Let him be content with what the Society provides, as regards food and clothing; and let him not keep in his possession anything whatsoever, without the superior's special permission.

### *V. The vow of chastity*

1. Whoever deals with abandoned youth must certainly make every effort to enrich himself with every virtue. But the virtue that must be cultivated most, which must always be kept before our eyes, the angelic virtue, the virtue dearest of all to the Son of God, is the virtue of chastity.

2. Whoever does not have the well-founded hope, with divine help, of preserving this virtue in words, works, thoughts, should not join this Congregation, because he would be exposed at every step to great danger.

3. Words, looks, including the most innocuous, are sometimes badly interpreted by the young who have already been victims of human passions. Therefore one must use the greatest caution in speaking and dealing with anything with young people of any age and circumstance.

4. Keep away from worldly gatherings where this virtue could be endangered, especially conversations with people of the other sex.

5. Let no one visit homes of friends or acquaintances without the consent of the superior, who, if he can, will always provide him with a companion.

6. Ways of diligently safeguarding this virtue are frequent Confession and Communion, exactly carrying out the advice of the confessor, fleeing idleness, mortification of the senses, frequent visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, frequent brief prayers to Mary most holy, St Joseph, St Francis de Sales, St Aloysius Gonzaga, who are the principal protectors of our Congregation.

### *VI. Religious government of the Society*

1. The members shall recognise in the supreme Pontiff their Arbiter and absolute Superior, to whom they shall be in everything, in every place and at every time, humbly and respectfully submissive. Nay more, every member shall apply himself with the greatest solicitude to uphold his authority and to promote the observance of the laws of the Catholic Church and its supreme Head, who is the Legislator and Vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth.

2. Every three years the Rector Major will give the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars a report on the Society, and this Report will deal with the number of Houses and members, observance of the Rule and whatever regards financial administration.

3. To deal with things of greater moment and to provide for the needs of the Society that times and places require, the General Chapter will ordinarily gather every three years (<sup>43</sup>).

4. When the General Chapter is thus gathered it may also propose additions to the Constitutions and changes it believes are opportune but in a way that conforms to the end and the reasons for which the rules were approved. Nonetheless these additions and changes, although approved by a majority of votes, will not oblige anyone until consent has first been obtained from the Holy See.

5. All the Acts of the General Chapter will be sent to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, so they may be approved.

6. The members will be subject to the bishop of the diocese where the house they belong to is, according to the prescriptions of the sacred canons, always subject to the Constitutions of the Society approved by the Holy See.

7. Every member will do everything he can to help the bishop of the diocese; and inasmuch as it is possible, he will defend ecclesiastical rights, promote the good of his Church, especially where it is a case of poor youth.

### *VII. Internal government of the Society*

1. In its internal government the entire Congregation depends on the Superior Chapter which is made up of a Rector, a Prefect, a Bursar, a Catechist or Spiritual Director and three Councillors.

<sup>43</sup> The General Chapter is made up of members of the Superior Chapter and Directors of individual Houses. Every director will gather his particular chapter and in it deal with matters that are judged to be most necessary to propose to a future General Chapter (note in the original text).

2. The Rector Major is the Superior of the whole Congregation; he can establish his abode in any House of the Congregation. Offices, individuals, moveable and immovable goods, spiritual and temporal things depend totally on him. Therefore it is up to the Rector to accept or not accept new members into the Congregation <sup>(44)</sup>, assign each one his duties, whether spiritual or temporal. He will do these things either himself or through others whom he delegates. But he cannot make any contract to buy or sell real estate without the consent of the Superior Chapter.

3. In selling goods of the Society, or contracting debts, all things will be observed that must be observed by law in accordance with the sacred canons and apostolic constitutions <sup>(45)</sup>.

4. No one, except the Superior Chapter and the Directors of Houses, can write or receive letters without the permission of the Superior or another member delegated by the Superior. But all members may send letters or other writings to the Holy See and to the Superior General without asking permission of the Superiors of the House to which they belong, and the Superiors may not read them.

5. The Rector Major will remain in office for twelve years and can be re-elected; but in this latter case he cannot govern the Society until he is reconfirmed in office by the Holy See.

6. At the death of the Rector, the Prefect shall take his place until a successor has been appointed. But for the time he is guiding the Society, he cannot make alterations regarding discipline or administration.

7. As soon as the Rector has died, the Prefect shall announce his death immediately to the Directors of all the Houses who shall immediately see that

<sup>44</sup> The Superior General can by his authority receive the aspirants and present them or not as he judges best in the Lord, so that a pupil may be admitted to the trial of the novitiate or to vows (note in the original text).

<sup>45</sup> The Salesian Society owns nothing as a moral entity, so except in the case where it is legally approved by some government, it would not be bound by this article. For the same reason each Salesian may exercise the civil rights of purchase, sale, etc., without recourse to the Holy See. This was the answer from the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, April 6, 1874 (note in original text).

suffrages prescribed in the Constitutions are offered for the deceased. Then he shall invite the Directors to come together to elect the new Rector.

8. If by chance it were to happen *quod Deus avertat* [God forbid] that the Rector is gravely negligent in his duties, the Prefect, or another from the Superior Chapter in agreement with the others, shall clearly admonish the Rector. If this is unavailing, let the Chapter inform the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars who may strip him of office<sup>46</sup>.

### *VIII. Election of the Rector Major*

1. In order that anyone may be elected Rector Major, it is requisite for him to have lived at least ten years in the Congregation, to have completed his thirty fifth year of age, and be distinguished by his exemplary life, prudence and ability in the management of the affairs of the Congregation, and finally, that he be perpetually professed.

2. There are two reasons why the Rector needs to be elected: either because he has completed twelve years in office, or because of the death of his predecessor.

3. If the election takes place because twelve years have passed, it will be done in this way: three months before his term of office finishes, the Rector will call the Superior Chapter together and will advise them that the end of his term is imminent: he will also advise the Directors of each House and the members, who in accordance with the Constitutions, are allowed to vote. While indicating the time his term in office comes to an end he will also establish the day for the election of his successor. At the same time he will ask for prayers to be said to obtain heavenly light, and he will inform everyone clearly and distinctly of the serious obligation of voting for the one they judge to be most suitable for promoting the glory of God and the good of souls in the Congregation. The election of the successor ought to be completed within fifteen days from the expiry of the Rector's term of office.

<sup>46</sup> This article, found in the Latin edition approved by the Holy See, Don Bosco left out of the Italian edition of 1875.

4. From the end of his term of office until the completion of the election of his successor, the Rector Major will continue to guide and administer the Society with the authority that the Prefect has upon the death of the Rector, until the Rector has been definitively constituted in office.

5. Those voting for the Rector Major will be the Superior Chapter and the Directors of individual Houses, accompanied by one perpetually professed member, elected by the perpetually professed members of that House they belong to. If for any reason someone is unable to vote, the election will still be lawfully and validly carried out by the others.

6. The election will take place in this way. Kneeling before the crucifix, they will invoke Divine help by reciting the hymn *Veni, Creator Spiritus* etc. after which the Prefect will explain to the confreres the reason for which they have been called together. Then all the professed present will write the name of the one they judge to be worthy on a ballot paper and will place it in an urn prepared for this purpose. Then three scrutineers for the voting and two secretaries will be elected by secret ballot. Whoever obtains an absolute majority of votes will be the new Rector or Superior General.

7. If the election is to be held because of the death of the Rector, then the following order will be followed. On the death of the Rector Major, the Prefect will give this news by letter to the Directors of individual Houses, so that as soon as possible they offer up all the suffrages prescribed by the Constitutions for the soul of the deceased. The election should take place no earlier than three months and no later than six months after the death of the Rector. For this purpose the Prefect will call together the Superior Chapter and with its consent will establish the appropriate day for gathering all those who should take part in the election. He will then advise them of what is said in article 3.

8. Votes will then be cast by those who enjoy the right of electing the Rector as in art. 5 of this Chapter.

9. The one who obtains an absolute majority of votes will be the Superior General to whom all confreres must show obedience.

10. When the election is complete, the Prefect will advise all the individual Houses, doing so in a way that news of the new Rector is quickly known by all members of the Society. This act signals that the Prefect ceases to exercise any authority as Superior General.

### *IX. The other Superiors*

1. The Prefect, Spiritual Director, the Bursar [*Economo*] and three Councillors spoken of above will be elected by the Rector and other members who because they have made perpetual vows can take part in the election of the Rector Major. To be elected it is requisite that they have lived at least five years in the Congregation, completed their thirty fifth year of age and have perpetual vows. In order that their office may not suffer disadvantage, they should ordinarily live in the same house as the Rector Major.

2. The Prefect, Spiritual Director, Bursar and three Councillors will remain in office for six years.

3. Their election will take place on the Feast of St Francis de Sales, at which time all Directors of individual Houses are usually called together. Three months before the Feast the Rector will indicate to all the Houses the day on which the election will be held.

4. Therefore all the Directors will gather the perpetually professed in their House and then with a member elected by them, will proceed to the future election.

5. On the established day the Superior Chapter with the Directors and members gathered with them, they will vote and publicly hold a scrutiny. Three scrutineers and two secretaries will be elected for this purpose. Whoever obtains the majority of votes will be the new member of the Superior Chapter. If the Director or member of some House, because of distance or other just cause has not been able to come for the election, the election will nevertheless be valid and complete <sup>(47)</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> In electing the Rector Major an absolute majority will be sought, that is, more than half of the votes in his favour. For the other members of the Chapter a relative majority is sufficient, namely in comparison to all those who obtain votes (note in the original text).

6. The offices proper to each member of the Superior Chapter will be assigned by the Rector according to need.

7. Nevertheless, the Spiritual Director will take special care of the novices. He, along with the master of novices, will take the greatest care to see that they learn and practise the spirit of charity and zeal which should animate one who wishes to dedicate his entire life to the good of souls.

8. It is also the duty of the Spiritual Director to respectfully admonish the Rector whenever he may notice in him any grave negligence in carrying out the Rules of the Congregation or in promoting their observance by others.

9. It is a special task of the Spiritual Director to point out to the Rector anything that may be of advantage to the spiritual good; and the Rector will endeavour to provide for it as he sees best in the Lord.

10. In the absence of the Rector the Prefect will take his place both in ordinary government of the Society and for all things he has been expressly put in charge of.

11. He will take account of income and expenditure, and will note any bequests and donations of any importance given to a House and destined for something in particular. The fruits of movable and immovable goods will be under the protection and responsibility of the Prefect.

12. The Prefect is the centre from which the administration of the entire Congregation must begin and to which it must refer. The Prefect is subject to the Rector, to whom he must render account of his management at least once a year.

13. The Bursar governs all the material needs of the Society. Entrusted to him therefore is buying, selling, building and similar. It is also the task of the Bursar to see that each house is given the things it needs.

14. The Councillors intervene in all deliberations regarding admission to the novitiate, admission to vows or sending some member of the Society away; if it is a case of opening a new House or choosing a Director of some House; contracts for real estate; buying and selling. In short, all things of



major importance to do with the overall smooth running of the Society. Decisions will be taken by secret ballot. If when noting the result of the secret ballot, which has the force of a decision, the majority is not in favour, the rector will prolong discussion.

15. One of the Councillors by delegation of the Rector will look after scholastic matters for the whole Society. The other two, according to need, will take the place of those in the Superior Chapter, who for illness or other reason cannot attend to their office.

16. Each of the superiors with the exception of the Rector, will be in office for six years and can be re-elected. If someone from the Superior Chapter ceases to hold office either because of death or for whatever other reason before the six years are up, the Rector Major will entrust his office to the one he judges best in the Lord; this one will remain in office only until the end of the six year period commenced by the member who left that office.

17. Should it be necessary, the Rector Major, with the consent of the Superior Chapter, will establish some Visitors who will be given the task of visiting a given number of Houses whenever this is required because of their number or distance. These Visitors will take the place of the Rector Major in the Houses and for the affairs entrusted to them.

#### *X. Each House in particular*

1. Whenever by particular favour of Divine Providence, a House is to be opened, first of all the Superior General will endeavour to obtain the consent of the bishop of the diocese in which the new House is to be opened.

2. He should proceed cautiously with this, so that in opening Houses or taking up administration of any kind, nothing is established or done contrary to law.

3. If the new House is a junior seminary or seminary for adult clerics, then besides dependence in matters of sacred ministry, there will also be complete dependence on the ecclesiastical superior in teaching. In the choice of teaching materials, books to be used, discipline and temporal administration, what the Rector Major has established with the ordinary of the place must be followed.

4. The Society may not take on the direction of seminaries without the express permission of the Holy See. This permission will be sought in each individual case.

5. For new Houses to be opened, the number of members should not be fewer than six. The superior for each one is chosen by the Superior Chapter and will take the name of Director. Every House can administer goods donated or brought into the Congregation, so they may serve that House in particular, but always within limits established by the Superior General.

6. The Rector Major will visit each House at least once a year, either in person or by means of a Visitor, to diligently examine if it is carrying out the duties imposed by the Rules of the Congregation and observe whether the administration of spiritual and temporal things is really according to their purpose, which is to promote the glory of God and the good of souls.

7. The Director for his part must in all things act in such a way as to be able at any point to give an account of his administration to God and to the Rector Major.

8. The first concern of the Rector will be to establish in any new House a Chapter corresponding to the number of members dwelling there.

9. The Superior Chapter and the Director of the new House will intervene in setting up this Chapter.

10. The first to be chosen will be the Catechist, then the Prefect, and if necessary also the Bursar; finally the Councillors according to the number of members dwelling in the House and the things that need to be done.

11. Whenever distance, times, places advise some exceptions in forming this Chapter or assigning its tasks the Rector has full authority to do so, however with the consent of the Superior Chapter.

12. The Director cannot buy, sell real estate, nor build new buildings, nor demolish those already built, nor carry out serious renovation without the consent of the Rector Major. In his administration he must take care of the spiritual, scholastic and material running; but in matters of greater moment it

would be prudent to call his Chapter together and not decide without having their consent.

13. The Catechist will look after spiritual matters of the House, both with regard to the members and others who do not belong to the Congregation and when needed will advise the Director of these matters.

14. The Prefect will take the place of the Director and his principal office will be to administer temporal things, take care of the coadjutors, carefully watch over the discipline of the pupils in accordance with the rules of each House and the consent of the Director. He must be prepared to render account of his management to the Director whenever he may ask him to.

15. The Bursar, whenever need requires it, will help the Prefect in his duties and especially in temporal affairs.

16. The Councillors will intervene in all deliberations of any importance, and will help the Director in scholastic matters and everything he assigns them to do.

17. Every year each Director must render account of his spiritual and material administration of the House to the Rector Major.

## *XI. Admissions*

1. Whenever someone makes a request to enter the Congregation they need testimonial letters or certificates in accordance with the decree of 25 January 1848, which begins *Romani Pontifices* etc. given by the Sacred Congregation for Regulars. As for the health of the postulant, it should be such that he can observe all the rules of the Society without exception. For laymen to be received into the Congregation, other than these other items, they need to know at least the basics of the Catholic Faith. The Rector Major will accept the postulant if he has obtained a majority of votes from the Superior Chapter.

2. To admit postulants or novices who wish to embrace the ecclesiastical state, should there be some irregularity, dispensation should first be sought from the Holy See.

3. After the second trial year the candidate will depend on the House Chapter in which he was placed by the Superiors. When the third trial year is complete, the member can be admitted to renewal of vows by the Superiors of the House, but with the consent of the Rector Major. If he has obtained the majority of votes, this news will be given to the Rector, who with the Superior Chapter will confirm the admission or otherwise, as he judges best in the Lord.

4. If the Chapter is not present, the Rector Major, whenever there is just reason, can accept into the Congregation and admit to vows or also dismiss from the Society in any House, those whom he judges best: but this can be done with the consent and presence of the House Chapter. In this case the Director of the House where admission or dismissal is taking place, will give the news to the Superior Chapter with appropriate indications, so that the member can be inscribed or cancelled from the Society's list.

5. With regard to admission of members and profession of simple vows all things will be observed that were prescribed by the decree of January 23, 1848. *Regulari disciplinae* of the Sacred Congregation for Regulars.

6. To be admitted for vows it is requisite that the first and second trial years have been completed. But no one may be admitted to vows unless he has completed his 16<sup>th</sup> year.

7. These vows will be made for three years. After the three years, and with the consent of the Chapter, each one will be given the faculty of renewing his vows for a further three years or making perpetual vows if he wishes to bind himself for life. Nevertheless no one may be admitted to holy orders, *titulo congregationis*, unless he has taken perpetual vows.

8. The Society, supported by Divine Providence, which has never been lacking for someone who believes in it, will see that each one has what he needs in health or in sickness. Nevertheless it is only bound to provide for those who have made temporary or perpetual vows.

### *XII. Study*

1. Clerics and all members who aspire to the ecclesiastical state, must spend two years attending seriously to the study of philosophy, and then for at least another four years to ecclesiastical subjects.

2. Their main study will be directed with every effort to the Bible, Church history, dogmatic, speculative and moral theology and also the books and treatises that speak of instructing youth in religious matters.

3. Our teacher will be St Thomas and all other well-respected authors of catechetical instruction and explanation of Catholic doctrine.

4. For the teaching of the philosophical and ecclesiastical sciences, teachers or members or outsiders will be chosen by preference who are best known for their probity of life, intelligence and learning.

5. Each member, to complete his studies, as well as the daily moral lectures, should work to put together a course of sermons and meditations, firstly for youth and then to fit the understanding of all the Christian faithful.

6. While members are attending to the studies prescribed by the Constitutions, they should not apply themselves too much to the works of charity proposed by the Salesian Society, unless out of necessity, since this would usually be of serious detriment to their studies.

### *XIII. Practices of piety*

1. The active life to which our society is mostly committed deprives its members of the opportunity of engaging in many practices in common. They shall accordingly endeavour to make up [for this lack] by mutual good example and by the perfect fulfilment of the general duties of a Christian.

2. Each member shall approach the sacrament of penance every week [administered] by confessors who are approved by the ordinary and who exercise that ministry toward the members with the Rector's permission. The priests shall celebrate holy Mass every day: Seminarians [*chierici*] and Coadjutors shall take care to assist at the Sacrifice daily, receive holy Communion on

Sundays and holy days and every Thursday. Personal composure, a clear, devout, distinct pronunciation of the words contained in the divine offices, modesty in speech, looks and gait both inside and outside the house, ought to be so outstanding in our members that particularly by these traits they are to be distinguished from others.

3. Every day each one, besides vocal prayers, shall devote no less than half-an-hour to mental prayer, unless one is prevented [from doing so] by the calls of the sacred ministry. In that case he shall make up for it by frequent ejaculatory prayers and by offering to God with greater fervour and love those labours that keep him from the prescribed exercises of piety.

4 Every day the third part of the Rosary of the Immaculate Mother of God shall be recited, and some time shall be devoted to spiritual reading.

5. Friday in every week shall be kept as a fast in honour of the passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. On the last day of every month each one, leaving all temporal cares aside, shall recollect himself and shall make the exercise which is customarily made [to prepare] for a good death. He shall dispose all his affairs both spiritual and temporal as though he had to leave the world and set out on the way to eternity.

7. Every year, each one shall make a retreat for about ten, or at least six, days which will conclude with his annual confession. Before being received into the Society, and before taking vows, each one shall devote ten days to a retreat directed by spiritual masters [and shall make] a general confession.

8. When Divine Providence calls a member, whether he be a layman, cleric or priest, to eternal life, the Rector of the house in which the member lived will immediately see that ten Masses are celebrated in suffrage for his soul. Others then, who are not priests, will approach holy Communion at least once to this end.

9. Whenever the parents of a member die, priests in the house where that member lives will likewise celebrate ten Masses in suffrage for their souls. Those who are not priests will approach holy Communion.

10. On the death of the Rector Major all the priests of the Congregation shall celebrate Mass for him and all non-priest members will offer up the usual suffrages for two reasons: (1) out of gratitude for the pains and labours sustained in the government of the Society; (2) for his release from the pains of Purgatory of which we may have been the cause.

11. Every year after the Feast of St Francis de Sales all priests will celebrate Mass for deceased members. All the others will approach holy Communion and recite a third part of the Rosary of Our Lady with other prayers.

12. Each one will take special care: 1. not to cultivate any habits even in harmless things; 2. to keep their clothing, bed and cell clean and decent; and everyone will avoid any kind of silly affectation or ambition. Nothing adorns the religious better than holiness of life, making him an example to others in everything.

13. Each one will be prepared, when the need arises, to suffer heat, cold, thirst, hunger, fatigue, scorn whenever these redound to the greater glory of God, are spiritually useful to others and for the salvation of his own soul.

#### *XIV. The enrolled [ascritti] or novices*<sup>48</sup>

1. Everyone before being received into the Congregation must pass through three probationary trials. The first is that which has to precede the novitiate and is called the probation of the aspirants. The second is the novitiate itself, and the third is the period of the triennial vows.

2. It is considered sufficient for the first probation when the postulant has passed some length of time in one of our Houses, or has frequented our schools, and has distinguished himself in that time by his good conduct and ability.

3. When an adult moreover is desirous of being enrolled in our Society and has been admitted to the first probationary trial, he shall devote himself to some days of spiritual Retreat, and then he shall be employed for at least a few

<sup>48</sup> In the Italian edition printed in 1875 Don Bosco left out articles presented here in italics.

months in the various duties of the Congregation, so that in this way in some manner he may learn and practise the mode of life he is desirous of embracing.

4. *At the time of the first probationary period the master of novices and the other superiors must diligently observe the conduct of the aspirants, and refer to the Superior Chapter everything they think best in the Lord.*

5. *Since the principal purpose of our Society is to teach the young, especially if they are poor, knowledge (science) and religion and direct them amidst the dangers of the world on the way to salvation, everyone at the time of his first probationary period should be tried out in study and in everything belonging to the day and night classes, teaching youngsters catechism and lending a hand also in difficult cases.*

6. *Once he has satisfactorily completed his first probationary period and he has been accepted as a member in the Congregation, the master of novices will immediately begin work with the new novice and omit nothing that could contribute to observance of the Constitutions.*

7. *The Rector Major with the consent of the other superiors will determine in which Houses the probationary periods for aspirants and novices should be held; but these probationary Houses should never be established [without] the permission of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.*

8. *The place for the novitiate should be separate from that part of the House where the professed live, and have as many separate cells as there are novices; that is, a dormitory large enough to accommodate each one's bed. There should also be a cell or other suitable place for the master of novices.*

9. *The master of novices is chosen by the General Chapter from amongst those who have made perpetual vows. He must have completed his thirtieth year and have lived ten years in the Society. He will remain in office for six years and if he dies before the six years are up, the Rector major, with the consent of the Superior Chapter will substitute him with another until the next General Chapter.*

10. *The master of novices will endeavour to show himself amiable, gentle and of kindly disposition so that the novices may open their hearts to him in every*



*case that could see their progress in virtue. He will direct and instruct them on the general fulfilment of the Constitutions and especially in those that regard the vow of chastity, poverty and obedience. In the same way let him see that they fulfil and carry out, in the most exemplary manner, the practices of piety prescribed by our Constitutions. Each week he will hold a religious instruction or conference on matters referring to our Institute. At least once a month let him call the novices one by one, and lovingly exhort them to have confidence in him so that his salutary [advice] may be received to good effect.*

*11. In accepting novices everything will be observed that was said in the previous Chapter from article 1 to article 5.*

*12. When the second probationary period is over, that is, the novitiate year, the novices should not take up any of the duties proper to our Society, so they can apply themselves solely to profiting in virtue and perfecting themselves in the vocation to which they have been called by God. Nevertheless in their own House they can teach catechism on Sundays to boys in accord with the master's opinion and under his watchful eye<sup>49</sup>).*

*13. After a year of novitiate, if the novice shows that in everything he is solicitous for the greater glory of God and the good of the Congregation, and is exemplary in the practice of piety, the time of probation is considered finished. Alternatively he may defer for some months or even a year.*

4. Once the member has completed the novitiate and been accepted in the Congregation, with the opinion of the novice master the Superior Chapter can admit him to triennial vows. The practice of the triennial vows is the third probationary period.

<sup>49</sup> *Pius Papa IX benigne annuit tyrones, tempore secundae probationis, experimentum facere posse de iis, quae in prima probatione sunt adnotata, quoties ad maiorem Dei gloriam id conferre iudicabitur. Vivae vocis oraculo die 8 aprilis 1874* (Pope Pius IX granted that novices could be tried out in those offices which are noted for the first probationary period, whenever it deemed to be for the greater glory of God. Granted viva voce, on April 8, 1874); note included in the printed edition of the Latin text reviewed by Latinists Vincenzo Lanfranchi, Tommaso Vallauri and Barnabite Innocenzo Gobio, cf. *Regulae seu Constitutiones Societatis S. Francisci Salesii. Juxta approbationis descretum die 3 aprilis 1874. Augustae Taurinorum, ex Officina Asceterii Salesiani, 1874, p. 45* (OE XXV, 455).

5. Over the space of three years while being bound by triennial vows, the member can be sent to any House of the Congregation, so long as studies can be pursued there. Over this time the Director of that House will take care of the new member, like the master of novices.

6. Over all this period of probation the master of novices or the Director of the House will endeavour to recommend and kindly inspire the new members to mortification of their outward senses and especially in sobriety. But prudence is needed in all this, to see that members are not weakened or that they are not overburdened and are thus unable to carry out the duties of our Congregation.

7. When these three probationary periods have been completed in a praiseworthy manner, if the member really wishes to remain in the Congregation with perpetual vows, he can be admitted to making them by the Superior Chapter.

#### *XV. The habit*

1. The habit which the members wear shall vary according to the custom of the country in which they fix their abode.

2. Priests shall wear the long cassock, unless necessity when travelling or any other just cause shall counsel otherwise.

3. The lay-brothers shall, as far as possible, be dressed in black. But everyone alike shall strive to avoid the new fashions of people in the world.

#### *Rite of profession for members of the Society of St Francis de Sales*

Before pronouncing the vows, each confrere will make ten days of retreat, directed especially to reflection on vocation and instruction on the vows he intends to profess, so that he may clearly know what should be according to the Lord. At the end of the retreat the Chapter will gather and if possible all the members of the House. The Rector, or another delegated by him, in cotta and stole will invite everyone to kneel. Then everyone will call on the light of the Holy Spirit, and alternatively sing the hymn *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, etc.

*V. Emitte Spiritum etc. / R. Et renovabis etc.*

*Oremus. Deus, qui corda fadelium ecc.*

The Litany of the Blessed Virgin follows, then:

*Ora pro nobis etc.*, and the *Oremus. Concede nos etc.*

Then in honour of St Francis de Sales, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

*V. Ora pro nobis, beate Francisce / R. Ut digni efficiamur etc.*

*Oremus Deus, qui ad animarum salutem etc.*

The novice will kneel between two professed and before the Rector or whoever takes his place, who will then ask the following questions in the singular, if there is one novice, or plural if there are more.

*Rector.* My son, what are you asking?

*Novice.* My Reverend Superior, I ask to profess the Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales.

*R.* Do you know these Constitutions well and have you already put them into practice?

*N.* I think I know them sufficiently well and in accordance with the explanations which my Superiors have given me of them. I have done what I could to practise them in the time of my novitiate. Although I am aware of my weakness I hope, however, with God's help, to be able to practise them in the future with greater exactitude, and also with greater advantages to my soul.

*R.* Have you perfectly understood what is involved in professing the Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales?

*N.* I think I have understood it. By professing the Salesian Constitutions I intend to promise God that I will aim at the sanctification of my soul, by renouncing the pleasures and vanities of the world, by fleeing from all deliberate sin, and by living in exemplary poverty, perfect chastity and humble obedience. I also know that by professing these Constitutions I must renounce all the conveniences and comforts of life and this only and solely for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ to whom, I intend to consecrate my every word, my every work and my every thought for the rest of my life.

*R.* Are you then disposed to renounce the world and all it can promise and to profess by vow the Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales?

*N.* Yes, Reverend Superior, I am ready and I do desire it with all my heart and I hope with the help of God' grace to be faithful to my promises.

*R.* Are they the triennial or perpetual vows you now propose to make?

*N.* *If making triennial vows he will respond:* Although I have a firm desire to pass the rest of my life in this Congregation, yet in conformity with what our Constitutions prescribe I now make the triennial vows only, full of confidence however, that after these, I shall be able to make them in perpetuity.

*If he is making perpetual vows, he will say:* As it is my firm desire to consecrate myself forever to God in the Congregation of St Francis de Sales, I intend now to make the perpetual vows, that is to say, to bind myself by vow to observe the Salesian Constitutions for the rest of my life.

*R.* May God bless this your good desire and grant you the grace to be able to persevere in it faithfully even to the end of life, even unto that time when Jesus Christ will give you an ample reward for all you have left or done for him.

Place yourself now in the presence of God and pronounce the prescribed form of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in accordance with our Constitutions, which are to be for the future, the constant rule for your life.

### *Formula of the vows*

“In the name of the most Holy [and undivided] Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I N. N. place myself in the presence of the Almighty and Everlasting God, and unworthy though I am to appear in his sight, nevertheless relying on his great goodness and infinite mercy, and in the presence also of the most Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, and of St Francis de Sales and all the Saints of heaven, I make the vow of poverty, chastity and obedience to God and into your hands N.N. Superior of our Society, (or to you who take the place of the Superior of our Society) for three years (or—in

perpetuity in accordance with the Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales.” *All answer:* Amen.

R. May God assist you with his holy grace to be faithful to this solemn promise even unto the end of life. Call frequently to mind the great reward which our Saviour promises to him who forsakes the world in order to follow him. He shall receive a hundredfold in the present life and an eternal recompense in the life to come. And if the observance of our Rules causes you at some time to suffer some pain, then call to mind the words of St Paul where he says that the sufferings of this present life are but for a moment whilst the joys of the life to come are eternal; and he that suffers together with Jesus Christ upon earth shall, together with Jesus Christ, be one day crowned with glory in heaven.

Then the new member will write his name in the Register by completing the following.

“I the undersigned, have read and understood the rules of the Society of St Francis de Sales and I promise to observe them constantly in accordance with the formula of vows I have just pronounced.”

Turin, etc., year etc. N.N.

Afterwards there will be the *Te Deum*, then if the Rector so judges, he will give a brief moral exhortation and will conclude with the Psalm *Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes* etc.

### *Conclusion*

For the tranquillity of souls, the Society declares that these Rules do not, of themselves, oblige under the pain of either mortal or venial sin. Wherefore if anyone, by transgressing them, is guilty before God, this proceeds not directly from the Rules themselves but either from the Commandments of God or of the Church, or from the vows, or finally, from the circumstances that may accompany the violation of the Rules, such as the bad example given, the contempt shown and the like.

## **227. Rules or Constitutions for the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1885)**

Critical ed. in Giovanni BOSCO, *Costituzioni per l'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice (1872-1885)*. Critical texts by Sr. Cecilia Romero fma. (= Istituto Storico Salesiano – Fonti, Serie prima, 2). Roma, LAS 1983, pp. 287-335.

### *Chapter 1. Purpose of the Institute*

1. The object of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians is to seek their personal perfection, and to cooperate in the salvation of their neighbour especially by Christian education to the children of working class families.

2. The Institute will be composed of unmarried women who profess to live the common life in everything. They will make temporary vows of three years or also in perpetuity.

3. The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians will endeavour before anything else to exercise Christian virtues, then they will work for the good of their neighbour. It will be their special concern to take up the direction of schools, orphanages, infant schools, festive Oratories, and also to open work shops to help the poorest girls in the cities, villages and foreign missions. Where there is need they will also accept the direction of hospitals and other similar works of charity.

4. They can also open boarding schools preferably for young women of the lower class, whom they will teach those subjects and arts which conform to their state in life and demanded by their social situation. They will see it as their task to form them in piety, make them good Christians who are also able eventually to earn an honest living.

### *Chapter 2. Form of the Institute*

1. The Institute is immediately dependent on the Superior General of the Society of St Francis de Sales, to whom they will give the name Major Superior. In each House belonging to the Congregation he will be represented

by a priest with the name of particular Director and for the whole Institute by a member of the Salesian Superior Chapter, or another suitable priest, with the title of Director General of the Sisters. The Director General will take care of everything regarding the material, moral and spiritual smooth running of the Institute.

2. The Major Superior, in agreement with the Superior Chapter of the Sisters, after a Sister has completed her period of triennial vows once or twice in a praiseworthy manner, may also admit her to perpetual vows when he judges it to be of advantage to the Sister and the Institute. The Major Superior gives the religious habit and receives the vows himself or by means of another priest delegated by him.

3. The vows oblige so long as someone remains in the Congregation. If for any Sister for reasonable reason, or after the prudent judgement of her superiors, were to leave the Institute, she can be released from her vows by the Supreme Pontiff or the Major Superior. Otherwise let each one persevere in her vocation until death, always mindful of the serious words of our Divine Saviour: “No one who puts their hand to the plough, and looks back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

4. All the Houses of the Institute, in what concerns the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of religious worship, shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the bishop. The Sisters then of each House belonging to the Congregation will have a Salesian priest for their ordinary confessor, appointed by the Major Superior and approved for confessions in the diocese; in Houses belonging to others they will have the parish priest, or other priest appointed by the bishop for their confessor. Among the tasks of the particular Director is that of holding a conference for the Sisters two or more times a month, dealing with some topic of religious perfection, or explaining some points of the Rule.

5. The Sisters and the girls of the House who do not belong to the Salesian Congregation will be subject to the jurisdiction of the parish priest in matters that regard the parish and its rights.

6. The Sisters will retain their civil rights even after profession, but they cannot administer their goods except within the limits and manner indicated by the Major Superior.

7. The fruits of stable and movable goods brought into the Congregation must be yielded to the same.

8. The Institute will see that each Sister has what is needed for food, clothing and those things that may be needed for health, or in case of sickness.

9. Whoever dies intestate shall be succeeded by her rightful heir(s), in accordance with civil legislation.

10. Whenever a Sister leaves the Congregation, she cannot ask for any kind of remuneration for any office she has exercised for the time she remained there. She may however ask for real estate or other items that she had before entering the Institute, and will receive them in the state in which they are. She has no right to ask account of the Superiors for the fruits and administration of these items over the time she spent in religious life.

### *Chapter 3. The vow of chastity*

1. In order to practise works of charity to one's neighbour continually and to work fruitfully with the young an indefatigable study of all the virtues is needed and this in a more than ordinary fashion. But the vow of chastity, the angelic virtue, the virtue dear above all others to the Son of God should be cultivated in an eminent degree by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Firstly because the duty they have of instructing and guiding their neighbour in the way of salvation is like that of the holy Angels. It is therefore necessary that they should live with a pure heart and in the angelic state since virgins are called "angels of the earth". Secondly, because their vocation to be properly carried out demands a total detachment both internal and external from all that is not God. This is why they make a vow of chastity with which they consecrate themselves to Jesus Christ, resolved to preserve themselves in mind and heart as His pure and immaculate spouses.



2. In order to observe this vow they must practice a most vigilant guard over the senses which are the doors through which the enemy of souls enters. They must no longer live and breathe but for their heavenly Spouse alone, with all purity and holiness of spirit, of words, of deportment and of deeds, bearing in mind the words of Our Lord who says, “Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God.”

3. In order to preserve so great a treasure they shall call to mind the presence of God, turning to Him often with acts of lively faith, firm hope and ardent charity, fleeing from idleness and freely and voluntarily avoiding dangerous occasions of friendship of any kind other than for Jesus Christ. They will exercise interior and exterior mortification, the first, without limit and the second in the measure permitted by obedience.

4. Let the Sisters foster a special devotion to Mary Immaculate, to glorious Saint Joseph and to their Guardian Angels. If with deep humility they put into practice their Rules and all that this chapter suggests, trusting in Jesus Christ, they will one day go to sing the hymn to the Immaculate Lamb in heaven reserved by God for those to whom He has given the grace of living and dying in the state of virginity.

#### *Chapter 4. The vow of obedience*

1. The life of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, needing to be a continual burnt offering, would be lacking the best in this, if the sacrifice of one’s will were not part of it. This in fact is offered by the vow of obedience to the divine Majesty. Our Divine Redeemer, moreover, has assured us that He came not to do His own will, but that of His heavenly Father. It is in order that we may be sure of doing the holy will of God that the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians make the vow of obedience.

2. By the vow of obedience we are obliged to occupy ourselves only with what the Superior judges to be for the greater glory of God and the good of one’s own soul and the souls of others, according to the Rule of this Institute.

3. The Sisters should obey in the spirit of faith seeing God in their Superior. Their obedience should be trustful, expectant and full of hope, convinced

that what is ordained by obedience will redound to their greater spiritual advantage, and indeed when the thing commanded is repugnant the reward they receive from God will be greater, if they faithfully carry it out.

4. Let their obedience be prompt and cheerful and without delay, dispute or sadness, and without judging and criticising the reasons given for the command, be they clear or hidden.

5. Let no one be unduly anxious to ask for anything or to refuse. On perceiving that something is harmful or necessary let her mention the fact to the Superior who will provide what is required.

### *Chapter 5. The vow of poverty*

1. The observance of the vow of poverty in the Institute of Mary Help of Christians consists essentially in detachment from temporal goods. It is practised by observing the common life regarding food and clothing and keeping nothing for personal use without the permission of the Superior.

2. It is part of this vow to see that the rooms are very simple, with more emphasis given to decorating the heart with virtue than one's person or the walls of the room.

3. No one may use money in a spirit of ownership either in the Institute or outside, neither may she use it as a deposit for any reason whatsoever without the express permission of the Superior.

4. Whatever is brought as a gift to the Sisters will be delivered to the superior, who will dispose of it as she thinks best, without being obliged to give an account of her arrangements. The Sisters will not give gifts to any people outside and even amongst themselves without express permission. They will also not be allowed to borrow, or exchange anything, except with the consent of the superior.

5. Where needed let each be prepared to suffer heat, cold, thirst, hunger, fatigue and contempt, if this redounds to the greater glory of God, the spiritual advantage of others, and to the salvation of her own soul.

6. To encourage the observance of voluntary poverty the Sisters reflect that this virtue makes them true followers of the Divine Saviour, who being rich became poor and to leave us a great example espoused poverty and remained poor from birth to death.

#### *Chapter 6. Internal government of the Institute*

1. The Institute of Mary Help of Christians is governed and directed by a Superior Chapter made up of a Superior General, a Vicar, a Bursar and two Assistants, depending on the Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation.

2. The Superior Chapter will be presided over by the Major Superior, or by the Director General, or by the local Director delegated for this purpose. The Superior Chapter will meet when there is a need to open a new House or establishment, or for any other business concerning the general interests of the Institute. When it is a question of admission to clothing or profession the mistress of novices will also intervene.

3. The Sisters will never open a House or take up direction of some institution, kindergarten, school and the like, before the Major Superior has dealt with the bishop and is in full agreement with him regarding ecclesiastical authority.

4. The Superior General [for the Sisters] will have full direction over the Institute, under the Major Superior. It is up to her to determine the duties of the Sisters, according to need, and to move superiors from one House to another after hearing the opinion of her superiors. In cases of buying and selling real estate, demolishing buildings or undertaking new constructions she should first have an understanding with the Director General, and obtain the consent of the Major Superior.

Once a year, and any time it is requested, she should also render a general account to the Major Superior on the moral, physical and material state of the Institute, and if she should have monies beyond what is strictly needed she should hand them over to him to be used as he judges best for the greater glory of God.

5. The Vicar will take the place of the Superior General and will note income and expenditure of the entire Congregation; she will look after legacies, wills and how to handle them, donations regarding the Houses of the Institute and will keep a register of them. The administration of movable and immovable goods and their fruits is also entrusted to her care and responsibility. She will however depend on the Superior General, to whom she should give account of her management every quarter.

6. The Vicar is also entrusted with the task of secretly admonishing the Superior General but will not warn her unless there are serious reasons and not before having prayed and consulted God about it, in order to know what to say, how to say it, the place and time for it to be of most advantage. The Superior herself from time to time will ask her if she has observations to make, to more easily provide her with the opportunity of offering this charitable service.

7. The Bursar will take care of everything regarding material matters of the Houses. Repairs to buildings, new buildings, purchases, sales, wholesale supplies of clothing, food, furnishings and everything relating to management of these, are especially entrusted to the Bursar, in dependence on the Superior General.

8. The first assistant will keep the correspondence between the Superior Chapter and all the Houses of the Institute, and also with outsiders, but after being appointed by the Superior General. She will keep account of decrees, letters and all written material referring to ecclesiastical, municipal and civil authorities.

9. The second assistant will be entrusted with everything regarding schools and teaching in the various Houses of the Institute.

#### *Chapter 7. Election of the Superior General, Vicar, Bursar and the two Assistants*

1. The Superior General and other offices will have a six year term of office and can be re-elected.

2. The elections can be held over two occasions in accordance with the opinion of the Major Superior, but if there is no impediment they will take place on the octave of the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, or on the occasion of a General Chapter.

3. Three months prior, the Superior General will advise all the Houses of the expiry of her term and that of her other officials. At the same time the Major Superior will ask for prayers to be said to obtain heavenly light, and he will inform everyone who will take part in the new elections of the obligation of voting for the one they judge to be most suitable for governing the Institute and best suited to work for the glory of God and the good of souls in the Congregation.

4. The election of the Superior General, as far as possible, should not be delayed more than fifteen days from the expiry of her term of office. During this time the Superior General will act as Vicar in everything referring to direction and administration of the Institute.

5. The Superior Chapter and the superiors of each House will intervene in electing the Superior General. If for any reason someone is unable to vote, the election will still be valid. The election will be presided over by the Major Superior, or by the Director General, accompanied by two assistant priests.

6. Since the election of a good Mother General usually brings great good to the Institute and for the glory of God, so as to facilitate the best choice, the Major Superior, just before the election, may also propose a short-list of Sisters who seem to him to be more suited for the office of Superior General.

7. This election will take place in the following way: A crucifix will be placed on a small altar or table, and two candles lit. The Major Superior or his delegate will intone the *Veni Creator*, followed by the *Oremus Deus qui corda* etc. Then following a brief address, voters will write the name on a form of the one they intend to elect, and folding this form they will go in order to place it in the appropriately prepared urn. Strict secrecy will be maintained in everything, so that no one will know the voting for one or the other, before or after the vote. Whoever obtains an absolute majority of votes will be elected

as Superior General. Absolute majority means that more than half the ballot papers placed in the ballot box are in favour.

8. The Major Superior, by his authority, will confirm that the election has been completed.

9. If the election does not succeed in the first round of voting, it can be repeated on the same day or the following day. When the election has not succeeded after the second round of voting, because voting is too scattered, the Major Superior has the faculty of choosing as Superior the Sister he judges most suited to the task.

10. The election of the Vicar, Bursar and two Assistants will be carried out the same way, in different rounds, but the election will be valid with a relative majority of votes, meaning the one elected will be the one who gains more votes than any other. Their election will also be approved and confirmed by the Major Superior.

11. The Superior General whose term has expired, unless she was deposed, if not elected as Vicar or Bursar, will have full right to be first assistant for the six year period without any need to be elected.

12. The scrutiny for the ballots will be done by two assistants and the president, who will see that the ballot papers are burned in the presence of the Chapter which is voting.

13. When the election is complete and confirmed, the *Te Deum* will be sung, and the Director General in the name of the Major Superior will advise all the Houses.

14. A Sister, to be elected Superior General, Vicar, Bursar or Assistant should: 1. Be 35 years of age and 10 of profession, but if needs be the Major Superior either before or after the election may alter these conditions; 2. Have always been exemplary; 3. Be gifted with prudence, charity and zeal for regular observance; 4. Be perpetually professed.

15. Although one may assume that a humble Daughter of Mary Help of Christians would not be led by the ambition to use intrigues and scheming to

gain promotion, nevertheless to prevent such a case we declare that notoriously ambitious Sisters are deemed to be ineligible—they are inept and unworthy.

16. In the case where any member of the Superior Chapter must cease office before the six years are up, the Superior General with the consent of the Major Superior, will choose a substitute as she thinks best in the Lord. This person will remain in office only until the end of the six year period already begun by the one who preceded her.

17. Whenever the death of the Superior General occurs during the six year period, or she has to relinquish office for some reason, the election of a new superior will take place in the manner described above; with the exception that in order to avoid further disturbance the Major Superior may choose her by his own authority. In both cases the one chosen will remain in office until the completion of the six year period already begun, when there will be new elections for the Superior Chapter.

18. During the vacancy the Vicar will govern the Institute until the election of the new superior.

19. When the new superior is to be elected by the General Chapter, the Vicar will advise all the Houses and in agreement with the Major Superior will choose the appropriate time for the election.

20. The Superior General will visit each House at least once a year. Where because of distance or number of Houses she cannot do this in person she will choose, with the consent of her superiors, some visitors to whom she will give the task of doing this in her stead. The Visitors will take the place of the Superior General for matters and affairs entrusted to them.

### *Chapter 8. Election of superiors of individual houses and their respective Chapters*

1. There will be a superior [*direttrice*] in every House of the Institute, to whom the Sisters assigned there will give their obedience.

2. The Superior Chapter of the Sisters, with the approval and confirmation of the Major Superior, will choose the superior for each House and its Chapter

in proportion to the number of Sisters living there. After the superior the first to be chosen will be the vicar and assistants according to need. The new superior will also work with the Superior Chapter for these.

3. The superior can administer goods brought into the Congregation and donated for a particular House, but always within the limits fixed by the Superior General, or by the local Director, if the Sisters are working at a Salesian Institute. She cannot buy or sell real estate or put up new buildings, nor carry out renovations without the consent of her superiors. In her administration she must take care of all the moral, material and scholastic running, if there are schools, and for more important matters will call together her Chapter and will make no decisions without hearing their opinion. Every year she will give an exact account of her administration to the Superior General.

4. The vicar takes the place of the superior when she is absent, and her task will also be to administer temporal things. Therefore she will keep a vigilant eye on everything regarding domestic economy. She will see that nothing is lacking, nothing is wasted or damaged and will see to all the necessary provisions for the House. If the House is annexed to a Salesian College or some other Institute she will also consult with the appropriate person regarding norms for expenditures. The vicar should render account of her management to the superior as often as she is asked to.

5. The assistants will be part of all important decision-making, and will help the superior in scholastic and domestic matters, and in everything that is assigned to them.

### *Chapter 9. The Novice Mistress*

1. The Novice Mistress will be chosen and constituted by the Superior General after hearing the opinion of her Chapter and with the consent of the Major Superior.

2. The Novice Mistress needs to be a Sister of proven virtue and prudence. She should have full and clear understanding of the holy Rule and be known for her spirit of piety, humility and patience under all odds. She should be at



least 30 years old and 5 of profession. Her term in office will depend on the arrangements of her superiors.

3. The Novice Mistress will endeavour to show herself amiable and full of kindness, so that the daughters will open their hearts to her in everything that could help their progress in virtue. She will direct and instruct them in the observance of the Constitutions, especially in what regards the vow of chastity, poverty and obedience. In every case she will be their model in fulfilling all the prescriptions of the Rule. She is also encouraged to inspire a spirit of mortification in the novices, but to use great discretion in external mortification in order not to weaken them to the point where they cannot carry out the duties of the Institute.

4. She will watch over the imperfections of the novices and will often turn to God asking his enlightenment to discern the defects which are natural and those which are wilful: the former kind she will put up with and lead them to useful reform, while the latter she will correct, lessen and eliminate with prudent discretion and charity.

5. Saint Teresa wanted her Sisters to be cheerful, sincere and open. Therefore the Novice Mistress will see that her novices are the same, because Sisters of this kind are the best suited to inspiring the girls and people in the world to respect and love piety and religion.

6. Finally she should not forget that the spirit of the Institute is a spirit of charity and kindness, a spirit of abnegation and sacrifice, and therefore she will endeavour to inform and encourage the novices with this spirit so that once professed they will be able instruments for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

7. What has been said of the Novice Mistress also applies to the assistant or one looking after the postulants. Especially for the early days of probation she will be their consolation and comfort; then later she should see if they have a true vocation to the religious state and if they have the physical and moral qualities required by the rules.

### *Chapter 10. General Chapter*

1. Every six years and possibly whenever the Superior Chapter has to be elected, there will be a General Chapter. Taking part in this will be the Major Superior or Director General with two priest assistants, the Superior Chapter and superiors of each House, if distance and other circumstances allow.

2. The General Chapter will deal with matters of common interest for the Congregation and can also modify articles of the Constitutions, but in accordance with the spirit of the Institute.

3. If the Major Superior has not personally taken part in the General Chapter, all the acts will be given him to examine them and will not oblige until he has given his approval.

### *Chapter 11. Terms of admission*

1. Girls who wish to be aggregated to the Institute of Mary Help of Christians will put their request to the Major Superior or the Superior General, who either him or herself or through a Sister appointed for this purpose, will find out the necessary information about their circumstances, conduct, abilities, etc., and if they have the required qualities, will admit them to the postulancy.

2. Personal conditions: Legitimate birth, excellent morals, good character, sincere inclination to the virtues proper to the Institute, testimonial of good conduct and testimonial of good repute of the postulant's family, from the parish priest; healthy body, including the absence of every physical defect and inborn sickness; certificate of vaccination or whether she has suffered from smallpox, aged between 15 and 30 years and has not previously been a member of another Religious Congregation.

3. The postulants will pay a fee of 30 francs per month for their time of probation in preparation for the novitiate. This probationary period will last at least 6 months. They will bring with them a sufficient outfit, in accordance with the note that will be provided. Since the Sisters retain their civil rights, they will bring with them the same dowry that would be expected in the

family. This dowry however will be no less than a thousand lire. The Superior General with the consent of her superior can modify this article when she believes it to be for the greater glory of God.

4. Should a daughter leave or die during this time of probation the dowry and her outfit will be returned to her family, though her residential fee, and expense for sickness and funeral will be up to her family.

5. If a novice leaves or dies, her outfit will be returned to her family in the state in which it is, provided however that 15 lire per month is subtracted for the time spent in the novitiate.

6. The dowry and outfit will go in its entirety to the Institute if the Sister leaves or dies once professed.

### *Chapter 12. Clothing and profession*

1. The girl accepted as a postulant should spend no less than 6 months exercising the virtues proper to the Institute, learning the spirit and becoming accustomed to everything that could help her with the tasks, ways of teaching and teaching catechism.

2. When this time of probation is over, the Superior General will ask the Major Superior the faculty for giving her the vocation exam by the Director or other person appointed. They will then proceed to a vote by the House Chapter where the postulant is living and if she gains a majority of votes, an exact report of this will be given to the Superior Chapter, which will decide on admitting her for clothing in the religious habit with the prescribed ceremonies. In the case where the postulant is not admitted to clothing, her family will be advised and she will be sent back to them.

3. After clothing there will be two years of novitiate. A month before this period concludes the conduct and attitude of the novice will again be examined and if she obtains the majority of votes in the scrutiny she will be admitted to holy profession, in accordance with the prescribed formula. The day of the profession will be put in the appropriate register along with the

signature of the professed and two Sisters who are witnesses. If she should not be approved she will return to her family unless the Chapter decides to extend her probation for a further 6 months after which a definitive and final decision will be made.

4. Clothing will be preceded by some days of retreat and profession by the normal retreat.

5. A book will be kept in every House of the Institute, in which will be written the age, provenance, name and surname of the Sisters there, and their parents.

6. For serious moral and behaviour reasons novices may be sent away from the Institute by the Superior General and the professed Sisters by the Superior Chapter with the consent of the Major Superior who by that act will release her from her vows.

*Chapter 13. The principal virtues recommended for novices to study and for the professed to practise*

1. Patient and zealous charity, not only with children, but also with young girls and any other person, with the purpose of doing the greatest good possible for souls.

2. Simplicity and modesty; inward and outward spirit of mortification; strict observance of poverty.

3. Obedience of will and judgement, willingly, and without comment accepting advice and corrections and the duties entrusted to her.

4. The spirit of prayer with which the Sisters carry out their practices of piety will keep them in God's presence and surrendered to his sweet Providence.

5. These virtues must be well-proven and deep-rooted in the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians since they must combine the active and contemplative life in equal measure, copying Martha and [Mary] Magdalene, the life of the apostles and the angels.

*Chapter 14. Arrangement of the various hours of the day*

1. Since the occupations of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are many and varied, great solicitude is required to carry them all out exactly and in an orderly way. Therefore it will be very helpful to arrange an accurate distribution of the hours of the day.

2. From the 1st April to the end of August rising will be at 5; from the 1st September to end of March, at 5.30. Half an hour will be allowed for dressing, making the bed, washing etc. At the sound of the bell the Sisters will meet in their chapel for community prayer according to the set formula. This will be followed by half an hour's meditation for which the subject will be read aloud. They will then assist at holy Mass. The time that follows until lunch time will be occupied in work imposed by obedience, except for half an hour for breakfast.

3. A quarter of an hour before midday they will go to the church or private oratory to make the particular examen of conscience and say the Angelus, after which they will go to the refectory for lunch. There will be reading throughout the meal from some spiritual book which is instructive and also raises the spirit. On principal Solemnities the superior may dispense from part or all of the reading.

4. The usual prayers will be said before and after meals. After dinner there will be about an hour's recreation. During this the Sisters will relate to one another with sisterly affection, animating one another in the divine service and rejoicing to see themselves in God's house away from the danger of offending Him. To uplift both spirit and body, honest and innocent games are not forbidden. No one should be absent from recreation without permission. When this is over they will go to the chapel for a brief visit to the Blessed Sacrament, after which they will diligently continue with their tasks.

5. At a quarter past four they will have fifteen minutes of spiritual reading in common, after which half an hour of moderate recreation is granted. About half an hour before supper they will go to the chapel and say the rosary.

6. There will be reading during supper as at lunchtime. After recreation they will go to the chapel, say the prayers in common, and having read some topic for meditation the following morning, they will go to rest in silence.

### *Chapter 15. Enclosure*

Although it is not possible for the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians to observe strict enclosure on account of the works of charity, they should observe the following rules:

1. People from outside should only be introduced into those parts of the House set aside for them or, when there is need in the rooms used by the boarders. In all other areas occupied by the Sisters, and especially in the dormitories, no other individuals are permitted to enter, except when duty or need require it or when, in an extraordinary case, the superior allows an exception. The doctor, director and closest family members may come to the infirmary when someone is sick, but always accompanied by a Sister.

2. After the bell rings for the *Hail Mary* in the evening, no outsiders may be admitted to the House, except in the case of a daughter being gravely ill.

3. The Sisters shall not leave the House for walks or visits, or for duty without the permission of the Superior who will provide them with a Sister or a pious lay woman as a companion.

4. Except when travelling or for a work of charity, the Sisters will not leave the House after the bell has rung for the evening *Hail Mary*.

5. They should not stop in the street to talk to anyone whosoever, apart from a grave necessity which is justifiable in the eyes of those who see it.

6. They should never take food in the houses of lay people or even of their relatives unless on a journey or when there is serious need.

7. If Sisters have to pass the night away from their own convent in the course of a journey and there are Sisters of the same Institute in the place they should choose to stay with the Sisters rather than with friends and relatives. The Sisters who are the hosts should receive the travellers with sisterly joy and kindness and accept no payment for expenses.

8. The Sisters will not frequent the houses of parish priests or other priests or render services to them. Neither shall they stay for dinner or take part with them in recreational or devotional gatherings. Of course visits which respect and recognition demand are not forbidden, especially to benefactors of the Institute.

9. The Sisters' rooms will be entirely separate from other rooms such that no one can enter or leave except by the door that leads outside.

10. Where the Sisters work in colleges or seminaries they must only have communication through the turntable [*ruota*] for meals, clothes, linen, sacred vestments, etc.

11. In every House there will be a parlour, where the superior needs to confer with the director and people outside; but this must not be used at night without grave need, nor ever with the door locked.

12. Without the permission of the superior no Sister, not even in the parlour, can confer with any person alone, except with the bishop, the Major Superior or with the Director General.

13. Conversations should be brief, about essential or useful matters, and always marked by reserve and seriousness as if one were speaking to God.

14. The superior should watch carefully over the selection and comportment of Sisters who have some engagement with people outside, as for example for the school, festive oratory and workshops, the kitchen, laundry, etc.

15. In every House the Sisters will have their own chapel for practices of piety. Where this cannot happen, they will assist at sacred functions in the community church where they work, but in a separate area, or in the parish church in an appropriate and convenient area.

16. The superior will see that the Sisters do not go to confession at night time. Where it should be necessary, she will see that the place is lit so that no problems arise.

### *Chapter 16. Silence*

1. As silence greatly promotes the observance of regular life, so in a religious house where it is observed, spiritual fervour, recollection, solid piety and union with God is maintained. Therefore it is strongly recommended that the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians observe it exactly.

2. Silence in the Institute is of two kinds: rigorous and moderate. Rigorous silence begins with the bell for prayers in the evening and lasts until morning after holy Mass. This silence requires not only that one does not speak but that one avoid too much walking around, or any other noise that might disturb the recollection of the community.

3. Moderate silence covers the rest of the day, outside of recreation times mentioned in Chapter 14. Of course people can speak softly to one another when there is need or duty, such as in directing work, going on errands, doing things around the house, or other affairs requested from people outside.

4. This silence can be broken for half an hour in the workshops, after 10 in the morning, speaking moderately, or even singing hymns. The same can be done, including outside the workshops, from 4.30 to 5 in the afternoon.

5. Without real necessity, no one should stop to talk in the dormitories, corridors or on the stairs.

6. In particular cases where for reasons of duty, silence cannot be observed as above, it is up to the superior to establish a freer and more suitable time for this.

7. Let everyone take advantage of the opportunity for silence, to be more united with God, often thinking of him and being moved to affectionate aspirations.

### *Chapter 17. Particular practices of piety*

1. Each day the Sisters will commemorate the Seven Sorrows of Mary, on seven occasions, and at the end of each they will recite a *Hail Mary* with the prayer that they shall also often repeat in the course of the day: Eternal



Father, we offer you etc. Then from Vespers on Holy Saturday until Sunday *in Albis* [What used to be called Low Sunday, First Sunday after Easter] and throughout the octave of the Feast of Mary's Assumption into Heaven they will recite the Seven Joys of Mary, one for each occasion.

2. In the quarter of an hour assigned for spiritual reading they will use books that the Superiors will indicate. Recommended above all are: *The Imitation Of Christ*, *the Holy Nun and the Practice Of Loving Jesus Christ* by St Alphonsus, Doctor of the Church; the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St Francis de Sales adapted for youth, the Rodriguez and lives of the saints who dedicated themselves to the education of the young. But for no reason, either greater perfection, study or instruction should the Sisters provide or read books that have not first been examined or allowed by the superiors.

3. On Sundays and holy days of obligation, the Sisters will say the Office of the Blessed Virgin, unless taking part in parish functions, or assisting at some sodality. The office of the Blessed Virgin should be said with great devotion, slowly, in unison and observing the asterisk for pauses.

4. They will go to confession every week. If in this space of time a Sister wanted to confess, or speak to the confessor about her soul, and is able to do so, she will be free to do so, but sooner or later will inform the superior, who will refrain from asking why. In the accusing themselves of their faults they strive to omit unnecessary circumstances. Let them be brief and say their sins with simplicity and humility in the same way as if they were making these accusations to Jesus Christ. Let them show their confessor great respect and confidence, as befits those who are destined by God to be father, teacher and guide of their souls. But let them never speak of these things amongst themselves, and much less so about the confessor.

5. On the first Sunday or the first Thursday of the month there will be a day of spiritual retreat, where, leaving temporal affairs aside as much as possible each will be recollected, make the exercise of a happy death, arranging her spiritual and temporal affairs as if about to leave the world for eternal life. Some reading will be done suitable to need or where possible the superior will ask the director to give a sermon or conference on some topic.

6. Every 6 months the Sisters will have an extraordinary confessor, appointed by the Major Superior and approved for confessions in the diocese. Outside of this time, should someone have need, she will ask her superior who will make it easy for her to do so.

7. Ordinarily Holy Communion will be approached on Sundays and holy days of obligation, Thursday and Saturday of each week, the anniversaries of clothing and profession. But anyone may approach the altar every day with permission of her confessor.

8. If for any reason a Sister chooses not to take communion the superior is not obliged to ask why but will speak to her in a nice way; if the Sister abstains for over a week, and if necessary she will provide for her spiritual need.

9. Particular devotion and solemnity will be shown for the Feast of St Joseph, St Francis de Sales and St Teresa of Jesus who are the particular patrons of the Institute.

10. The principal Feast of the Institute are the Solemnities of the Immaculate Conception and Mary Help of Christians, preceded by the novena. The Sisters will prepare for these with sentiments of great piety, approaching the sacraments and thanking the Lord and the Blessed Virgin for having granted them the grace of a religious vocation.

11. There is no rule that prescribes abstinence and particular fasting for the Sisters in addition to those commanded by the Holy Church. In any of these they may not follow their own will but obey the confessor and the superior. Likewise they will not engage in bodily penances without first asking due permission.

12. However they should endeavour to comply with the laudable habit of fasting every Saturday in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. If during the course of the week there is fasting commanded by the Church, or Saturday falls on a public holiday, they are dispensed from this fasting rule.

### *Chapter 18. General rules*

1. All the Sisters, from their various Houses, should come once a year to the Central House, or if they are a long distance away, to the House on which they depend, to make their retreat. If the work they have does not make it possible for them to come together for the retreat, there will be two or three separate possibilities, as judged by the Superior. At the end of the retreat the professed Sisters will renew in common and before the Blessed Sacrament the vows they made on the day of their profession.

2. Letters to the Sisters, or that they wrote to others, will be opened and read where the superior judges this to be good. She then may pass them on or keep them.

3. However they have permission to write, without requesting it, to the Supreme Pontiff, the Major Superior and Superior General and likewise to receive answers to these letters without them being opened.

4. When they are visited by family members or other people, these will be taken to the parlour accompanied by a Sister who is assigned by the Superior. On other occasions for essential visits it is recommended that the Sisters exercise great prudence and Christian modesty and superiors should take all the necessary cautions to avoid everything untoward. Since the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians have many things to do, and when it is not a case of matters of importance, these people should not be allowed to visit more than once a month.

5. Let the Sisters love one another in the Lord but be careful about relationships amongst themselves or with anyone in terms of particular friendships which take us away from perfect love of God and end up being a plague in the community.

6. No one is allowed to give commissions, not to school children or family or anyone, except with a prior understanding of the superior, to whom any correspondence should be referred.

7. Each Sister should regard herself as less than all the others, thus no one will be lacking in humility nor will she refuse even the most humble tasks

in the house as assigned her by the superior according to her abilities and according to what she prudently judges to be good in the Lord.

8. The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians will always be happy with their Sisters, laughing, joking etc., always, however, as it would seem the angels do amongst themselves; but whenever people of the other sex are present they will deport themselves seriously and with dignity. When out on the street they will walk with great composure and modesty, never staring at people or things they come across, but nevertheless greeting people who greet them, or ecclesiastics who are nearby, with a nod of the head.

9. In the house and outside they will always speak humbly, not maintaining their own point of view, avoiding especially any harsh or biting words, words of reproach, vanity regarding themselves or the good things the Lord has deigned to do for them. All their activities in private and in common will be done solely for God. They will never speak about status, age, wealth, if they had any of this in the world. They will never raise their voice when speaking with someone, even during recreation.

10. They will always speak respectfully of the ministers of God. And when someone has some observation to make in this regard, she will confide it only to her superiors. They will do similarly when speaking of their own superior and religious of other congregations, as well as of Sisters who have left the Institute.

11. When in the presence of people of the other sex, their speech will be serious. Should they be people superior to them, ecclesiastics for example, they will give due respect to their status. If they are lay people, then decorum and good example are required. All their efforts will be to show, in their dealings and whole demeanour, who they need to be, that is, brides of Jesus Christ Crucified and daughters of Mary.

12. In church they will stand in a composed manner, erect, will make a full genuflection when passing in front of the altar of the Blessed Sacrament. The professed Sisters will have the crucifix visible, hung around their neck, and the novices will have the medal of Mary Help of Christians.

13. Each one will look after her own health; so when a Sister does not feel well, without hiding or exaggerating her illness she will advise the superior so that she can provide for her need. While ill she will obey the infirmarian and doctor or surgeon so they may look after her body as they judge best before God. She will endeavour to show patience and resignation to the will of God, enduring the hardships inseparable from poverty and always keeping an imperturbable peace of mind in the hands of the Lord, who is a loving Father, both when preserving her health or when afflicted with sickness and pain. To do the best for their spirit, those who are confined to bed will be given Holy Communion once or twice a week where the nature of the illness and the place permit this.

14. The Sisters will strive always to keep closely united by the bond of mutual charity, for it would be a deplorable thing if those who have committed themselves to imitate Jesus Christ should neglect to observe the commandment most recommended by him to the point where he called it his precept. Hence besides mutual forbearance and impartial affection it is prescribed that should any Sister fail in charity towards another she must apologise as soon as she has become sufficiently calm or at least before retiring to rest and that the one offended should immediately offer her cordial forgiveness.

15. That charity be more perfect, let each one prefer the convenience of her Sisters to her own and let all on every occasion help and encourage one another by acts of kindness and holy friendship and let them never yield to any feeling of jealousy. As for the way the Sisters treat each other they will use the familiar form of address and to the superiors of the Institute and their own superior, the more formal address.

16. The Sisters should desire and do all the good they can for their neighbour, always striving to help and serve Our Lord Jesus Christ in the person of His poor, especially by assisting, serving, consoling Sisters who are ill or afflicted and promising spiritual good for the girls in the town or village where they live. They will be careful not to ask or permit girls from outside the school, workshops or festive oratories to speak to them about worldly amusements, or less pleasant activities or practices.

17. They should consider themselves fortunate when they can do something good for someone, but be very careful never to offend anyone by what they write, or with less than courteous words. When they cannot do a favour asked, they should use cordial words showing how sorry they are that they have to refuse. Likewise, especially in conversations with people outside the Institute and anyone inferior to them they should find an opportunity to talk about God, or religious matters, or some virtue or uplifting deed. By acting thus each one in her own little way can be salt and light for her neighbour and deserve the praise that the Church gives to St Catherine of Siena, that no one ever left her without improvement.

18. Keeping their heart open to the superiors will help much in advancing in religious perfection, since they are the ones who are destined by God to direct her in the way of virtue. Therefore all the Sisters will have great confidence in the superior and their own superior, regarding her as an affectionate mother, and she should show herself to be truly so. They will turn to her in their doubts, express their sorrows to her, explain their needs and difficulties.

19. They will do similarly with the Major Superior and whoever represents him, especially for manifestations and any time they are appropriately asked, convinced that the superiors desire only to help them love God and become saints.

20. Therefore once a month and even more often, if needed, the Sisters of each house will manifest their external activity to their superior with all simplicity and sincerity, and receive advice and counsel from her in order to succeed well in the practice of mortification and the observance of the holy rules of the Institute. Internal matters are excluded from these manifestations as well as external matters when these are matter for confession.

21. All the Sisters will be present at the conference that the superior will give each Sunday to instruct them in their duties, as also to correct defects that could diminish fervour and observance in the community.

22. Each will take the greatest care with the practices of piety, from the observance of which comes that inner fervour which moves us to unite

ourselves in everything with Jesus Christ our divine exemplar and spouse of faithful souls.

23. The charity then which keeps the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians united during life, should not cease after their death. So when a Sister is called to eternal life, the holy Mass *de requie* will be celebrated and the Sisters of the House where the deceased came from will go to Communion and say the complete rosary. The body will be dressed in her religious habit and accompanied with decorum to burial, following local custom for each town.

24. If the deceased Sister was professed, or was the superior, besides the *de requie* Mass, 5 others will be applied in suffrage for her soul. Every year on the day after the feast of Mary Help of Christians Mass will be said or sung in the Mother House and all the Sisters will offer their Communion in memory of the deceased Sisters. This will also be done at the end of each Retreat.

25. On the occasion of the death of the Major Superior, Director General and the Superior General, besides the above suffrages a Requiem Mass will be celebrated in all churches belonging to the Institute.

26. May the abundant peace and mercy of God come down upon all who follow these rules.