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COMMON RULES OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

(May 17, 1658)

[Coste, Vol. XIIIa, Doc. 117a]

Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, to my dear brothers in Christ, the priests, students, and lay brothers of the Congregation, greetings in the Lord.

Here at long last, my dear brothers, are the Rules or Common Constitutions of our Congregation. You have been very anxious to have them and have had to wait a long time for them.

It is now about thirty-three years since our Congregation was founded, but I have not had our Rules printed for you before now. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, I wanted to take our Savior as a model. He put things into practice before He made them part of His teaching. Secondly, delaying their printing has avoided many problems which most certainly would have arisen if these Rules or Constitutions had been published too soon. There could have been problems about living up to them later on, as they might have seemed too difficult or not so relevant. With the help of God's grace, delaying like this has saved us from such a risk. It has also made it possible for the Congregation gradually and smoothly to get used to living the Rules before having them in print. You will not find anything in them which you have not been doing for a long time, and I must say how pleased I am that you do live by them and that they have enabled you all to help one another.

So, my dear brothers, take these Rules with the same affection which I have in giving them to you. Think of them, not as the product of human ingenuity, but as a gift from the Holy Spirit. Everything good comes from Him, and we are not qualified of ourselves to claim anything as our own achievement. After all, can you find one single thing in them which will not be a help to you in avoiding evil, in growing in virtue, and in putting into practice the teachings of the Gospels? And, as you can see, I have tried to base all the Rules, where possible, on the spirit and actions of Jesus Christ. My idea was that men who are called to continue Christ's mission, which is mainly preaching the good news to the poor, should see things from His point of view and want what He wanted. They should have the same spirit that He had and follow in His footsteps.

That is why, my dear brothers, I ask you very sincerely, in the Lord Jesus, to make a genuine commitment to basing your life firmly on these Rules. You can take it as absolutely certain that if you do this you will find them sound guidelines which in the long term will lead you safely to the goal you long for, happiness in heaven. Amen.

JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH

CHAPTER I.--THE PURPOSE AND NATURE OF THE CONGREGATION

1.--We read in Sacred Scripture that Our Lord Jesus Christ, sent on earth for the salvation of the human race, did not begin by teaching; He began by doing. And what He did was to integrate fully into His life every type of virtue. He then went on to teach, by preaching the good news of salvation to poor people, and by passing on to His Apostles and disciples what they needed to

know to become guides for others. Now, the little Congregation of the Mission wants, with God's grace, to imitate Christ the Lord, in so far as that is possible in view of its limitations. It seeks to imitate His virtues as well as what He did for the salvation of others. It is only right that if the Congregation is to do the same sort of work, it should act in the same sort of way. This means that the whole purpose of the Congregation is: (1) to have a genuine commitment to grow in holiness, patterning ourselves, as far as possible, on the virtues which the great Master Himself graciously taught us in what He said and did; (2) to preach the good news of salvation to poor people, especially in rural areas; (3) to help seminarians and priests to grow in knowledge and virtue, so that they can be effective in their ministry.

2.--There are both clerical and lay members in the Congregation. The work of the former is to travel around through towns and villages, as Christ Himself and His disciples did, breaking the bread of the Divine Word for the neglected by preaching and catechizing. They should also urge people to make general confessions of their entire life and hear these confessions. Their ministry also includes settling quarrels and disputes, establishing the Confraternity of Charity, staffing seminaries which have been set up in our houses for diocesan clergy, giving retreats, and organizing meetings of priests in our houses. Their work also includes any other ministry which is supportive to those mentioned. The lay members help in these ministries like Martha in whatever way the Superior wants them to. This help includes "prayers and tears," mortification, and good example.

3.--If the Congregation, with the help of God's grace, is to achieve what it sees as its purpose, a genuine effort to put on the spirit of Christ will be needed. How to do this is learned mainly from what is taught in the Gospels: Christ's poverty, His chastity and obedience; His love for the sick; His decorum; the sort of life style and behavior which He inspired in His disciples; His way of getting along with people; His daily spiritual exercises; preaching missions; and other ministries which He undertook on behalf of the people. There is something on each of these in the chapters which follow.

CHAPTER II.--GOSPEL TEACHING

1.--Let each of us accept the truth of the following statement and try to make it our most fundamental principle: Christ's teaching will never let us down, while worldly wisdom always will. Christ Himself said that this sort of wisdom was like a house with nothing but sand as its foundation, while His own was like a building with solid rock as its foundation. And that is why the Congregation should always try to follow the teaching of Christ Himself and never that of the worldly-wise. To be sure of doing this we should pay particular attention to what follows.

2.--Christ said: *Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things which you need will be given to you as well.* That is the basis for each of us having the following set of priorities: matters involving our relationship with God are more important than temporal affairs; spiritual health is more important than physical; God's glory is more important than human approval. Each one should, moreover, be determined to prefer, like Saint Paul, to do without necessities, to be slandered or tortured, or even killed, rather than lose Christ's love. In practice, then, we should not worry too much about temporal affairs. We ought to have confidence in God that He will look after us since we know for certain that as long as we are grounded in that sort

of love and trust we will be always under the protection of God in heaven, we will remain unaffected by evil and never lack what we need, even when everything we possess seems headed for disaster.

3.--A sure way for a Christian to grow rapidly in holiness is a conscientious effort to carry out God's Will in all circumstances and at all times. Each one of us, then, should try to integrate into his life, as far as possible, these four principles: (1) We should conscientiously carry out what is ordered and avoid what is forbidden, when these orders or prohibitions come from God, from the Church, from our Superiors, or from the Rules or Constitutions of our Congregation; (2) when there is a choice open to us in matters neither ordered nor forbidden we should choose the less palatable rather than the more pleasing. This does not apply, of course, if the more pleasing things, being in some sense necessary, have to be chosen. Still, though, in such cases our motivation ought not to be that we like them, but simply that they are more pleasing to God. Finally, if when faced with a choice between things neither ordered nor forbidden there is no real element of personal preference between the options available, then any one of them may be chosen at random as coming from God's Providence; (3) when something unexpected happens to us in body or mind, good or bad, we are to accept it without fuss as coming from God's loving hand; (4) our motive for putting the above three principles into practice is that they are God's Will. It is in this way that we can imitate Christ the Lord. Christ always lived by these principles, and for that very motive. He tells us this Himself: *I always do what pleases the Father.*

4.--Jesus the Lord expects us to have the simplicity of a dove. This means giving a straightforward opinion about things in the way we honestly see them, without needless reservations. It also means doing things without double-dealing or manipulation, our attention being focused solely on God. Each of us, then, should take care to behave always in this spirit of simplicity, remembering that God likes to deal with the simple, and that He conceals the secrets of heaven from the wise and prudent of this world and reveals them to little ones.

5.--But while Christ recommends the simplicity of a dove He tells us to have the prudence of a serpent as well. What He means is that we should speak and behave with discretion. We ought, therefore, to keep quiet about matters which should not be made known, especially if they are unsuitable or unlawful. When we are discussing things which it is good and proper to talk about we should hold back any details which would not be for God's glory, or which could harm some other person, or which would make us foolishly smug. In actual practice this virtue is about choosing the right way to do things. We should make it a sacred principle, then, admitting of no exceptions, that since we are working for God we will always choose God-related ways for carrying out our work, and see and judge things from Christ's point of view and not from a worldly-wise one; and not according to the feeble reasoning of our own mind either. That is how we can be prudent as serpents and simple as doves.

6.--We should make a great effort to learn the following lesson, also taught by Christ: *Learn from me because I am gentle and humble of heart.* We should remember that He Himself said that by gentleness we inherit the earth. If we act on this we will win people over so that they will turn to the Lord. That will not happen if we treat people harshly or sharply. And we should also remember that humility is the route to heaven. A loving acceptance of it when we are humiliated usually raises us up, guiding us, as it were, step by step from one virtue to the next until we reach heaven.

7.--This humility was very often recommended by Christ Himself, by word and example, and the Congregation should make a great effort to master it. It involves three things: (1) to admit in

all honesty that we deserve people's contempt; (2) to be glad if people notice our failings and treat us accordingly; (3) to conceal, if possible, because of our personal unworthiness, anything the Lord may achieve through us or in us. If that is not possible, though, to give the credit for it to God's mercy and to other people's merits. That is the basis of all holiness in the Gospels and a bond of the entire spiritual life. If a person has this humility everything good will come along with it. If he does not have it, he will lose any good he may have and will always be anxious and worried.

8.--Christ said: *Anyone who wants to come after me must deny himself and take up his cross each day*; and Saint Paul added, in the same vein: *If you live according to your unspiritual nature you shall die, but if, by the Spirit, you mortify it you shall live*. Each one, therefore, should be most conscientious in accepting the overruling of his personal wishes and opinion, and in disciplining the gratification of each of his senses.

9.--In the same spirit each one is to avoid over-attachment to relatives. Christ indicated this when He refused to have as a disciple anyone who did not "hate" his father, mother, brothers, and sisters. He promised a hundredfold in this world, and eternal life in the next, to all who left family for the sake of the Gospel. All this goes to show what an obstacle to full Christian living blood relationships can be. Parents, of course, are to be loved in a spiritual way, as Christ showed.

10.--Each one should show a great eagerness in that sort of openness to God's Will which Christ and the saints developed so carefully. This means that we should not have a disproportionate liking for any ministry, person, or place, especially our native land, or anything of that sort. We should even be ready and willing to leave all these things gladly if our Superior asks it, or even hints at it, and to put up, without complaint, with any disappointment or disruption this causes, accepting that in all this the Superior has done well in the Lord.

11.--Christ the Lord wished to lead a communal style of life, so that He would be like other people and in that way win them over more easily to God the Father. All of us, then, as far as possible, are to maintain uniformity in everything; we should look on this as the safeguard of good order and of the holiness which comes of being together. In the same way we should avoid anything out of the ordinary, as it can be the cause of jealousy and disagreement. All this applies not only to food, clothing, bedding, and so on, but also to methods of direction, teaching, preaching, exercising authority, and even spiritual practices. Only one thing is needed for this uniformity to be maintained constantly among us, namely, the most exact observance of our Rules and Constitutions.

12.--Charitable behavior toward the neighbor should always be characteristic of us. We should try, then: (1) to behave toward others in the way we might reasonably expect to be treated by them; (2) to agree with others, and to accept everything in the Lord; (3) to put up with one another without grumbling; (4) to weep with those who weep; (5) to rejoice with those who rejoice; (6) to yield precedence to one another; (7) to be kind and helpful to one another in all sincerity; (8) finally, to be all things to all people so that we may win everyone for Christ. All of this is to be understood as in no way going against the commandments of God, or Church law, or the Rules or Constitutions of our Congregation.

13.--If Divine Providence ever allows a house or member of the Congregation, or the Congregation itself, to be subjected to, and tested by, slander or persecution, we are to be extra careful to avoid any retaliation, verbal abuse, or complaint against the persecutors or slanderers. We should even praise and bless God, and joyfully thank Him for it as an opportunity for great

good, coming down from the Father of Lights. We should even pray sincerely to Him for those who harm us and, if the opportunity and possibility present themselves, should willingly help them, remembering that Christ commanded us, and all the faithful, to do this: *Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for persecutors and slanderers.* And to get us to do this more willingly and more easily He said that we would be blessed in doing so and that we should be joyful and glad about it since our reward is great in heaven. And, more importantly, He was gracious enough to be the first to act in this way toward others so as to be a model for us. Afterward the Apostles, disciples, and numberless Christians followed His example.

14.--We should follow, as far as possible, all the Gospel teaching already mentioned, since it is so holy and very practical. But some of it, in fact, has more application to us, particularly when it emphasizes simplicity, humility, gentleness, mortification and zeal for souls. The Congregation should pay special attention to developing and living up to these five virtues so that they may be, as it were, the faculties of the soul of the whole Congregation, and that everything each one of us does may always be inspired by them.

15.--Satan is always trying to divert us from living up to this teaching by suggesting his own, which is the exact opposite. Each one of us, then, should be fully aware of this, and completely ready to oppose and overcome all those things. This applies especially to those values which conflict more obviously with our Congregation, such as: (1) mere human prudence; (2) the desire for publicity; (3) always wanting everyone to give in to us and see things our way; (4) the pursuit of self-gratification in everything; (5) attaching no great importance to either God's honor or the salvation of others.

16.--The evil spirit often disguises himself as an angel of light, and now and then tricks us by his illusions. All of us must be ever alert for these tricks and should pay particular attention to learning how to recognize and overcome them. Experience has shown that the most effective and surest remedy in such cases is to discuss them as soon as possible with those appointed by God for this. So, if anyone feels himself troubled by ideas which seem to be in some way misleading, or upset by acute anxiety or temptation, he should tell his Superior, or a Director appointed for this, as soon as possible so that the matter can be competently dealt with. And he should accept with approval, as coming from God's hand, whatever solution is suggested, and put it into practice with confidence and respect. Above all, he should take care not to discuss it in any way with anyone else, whether a member of the Congregation or not. Experience has shown that this worsens the problem, causes similar trouble for others, and can, in the long run, even do serious damage in the whole Congregation.

17.--God has told everyone to help others as members of the same mystical body. We, then, in the Congregation should help one another. So, if anyone is aware of someone else being greatly troubled by temptation, or of having been guilty of a serious fault, it will be his responsibility, promptly and in the best way possible, to see that effective remedies be suitably applied at the right time by the Superior. He must, of course, act from love and in the most practical way. Each one should accept it gratefully, as a means of spiritual progress, if his defects are pointed out to the Superior in a spirit of love by someone who has noticed them outside of confession.

18.--Our Lord came into the world to reestablish the reign of His Father in all persons. He won them back from the devil who had led them astray by the cunning deceit of a greedy desire for wealth, honor, and pleasure. Our loving Savior thought it right to fight His enemy with the opposite weapons: poverty, chastity, and obedience, which He continued to do right up to His

death. The little Congregation of the Mission came into existence in the Church to work for the salvation of people, especially the rural poor. This is why it has judged that no weapons would be more powerful or more suitable than those which Eternal Wisdom so tellingly and effectively used. Every confrere, therefore, should keep to such poverty, chastity, and obedience faithfully and persistently, as understood in our Congregation. And in order that each one might persevere until death in observing these virtues more certainly, easily, and meritoriously, he should try to the best of his ability to carry out what is prescribed about them in the following chapters.

CHAPTER III.--POVERTY

1.--Christ Himself, the Lord of all, lived in poverty to such an extent that He had nowhere to lay His head. He formed His Apostles and disciples, His co-workers in His mission, to live in the same sort of way so that individually they did not own anything. In that way they were freer to combat greed for wealth in a better and more practical way, a greed which is ruining almost the whole world. That is why each confrere must try, weak as he is, to imitate Christ in developing this virtue of poverty. We must all realize that it is the unbreachable rampart by which the Congregation, with the help of God's grace, will be defended.

2.--Our ministry on missions could hardly be carried out if we lived in total poverty, since missions are to be given without charge. Nevertheless, we should try, in the Lord, to maintain poverty as an ideal and, as far as we can, in practice as well, especially as regards what is set out here.

3.--Members of the Congregation, individually and collectively, should understand that, following the example of the first Christians, all our belongings are common property and are given out by the Superior to individual members, such as food, clothes, books, furniture, and so on, according to the needs of each. We have all accepted poverty, and so, to avoid any deviation from it, no one may, without the Superior's permission, dispose of any of this sort of property belonging to the Congregation, or pass it on to others.

4.--No one, either, should have anything which the Superior does not know about, or does not authorize, or which he is not prepared to give up at once if the Superior says so, or even hints at it.

5.--No one should use anything as though it were his own personal property. No one should give away or accept anything, or exchange or lend anything, or go looking elsewhere for something, without the Superior's permission.

6.--No one should take for himself what has been allotted to others or set aside for community use or abandoned. This goes for books as well. He should not pass on to someone else what has been assigned for his own use, without the Superior's permission. Nor should he allow such things to deteriorate or get damaged through his own negligence.

7.--No one should go in for useless or exotic things. Each one, too, should keep his needs within moderate limits, and curb his hankering after such things, so that his life style as regards food, room, and bedding is that of a poor person. And in this connection, and with regard to everything else for that matter, he should be prepared to put up with even the worst facilities in the house, willing to feel the bite of poverty in his life.

8.--And so that nothing which smacks of ownership to even the slightest degree may be seen

among us, our rooms are not to be locked in such a way that they cannot be opened from the outside. And we should not have a safe in our rooms, or anything else locked with a private key, without the Superior's express permission.

9.--No one moving from one house to another is to take anything with him, without the Superior's permission.

10.--The virtue of poverty can be infringed by even the undisciplined craving for personal belongings. For this reason each one should take particular care that this failing does not get a grip on him; and this includes wanting benefices, as being of spiritual value. No one, therefore, should covet any benefice or honor in the Church, under any pretext whatsoever.

CHAPTER IV.--CHASTITY

1.--Our Savior showed clearly how highly He rated chastity, and how anxious He was to get people to accept it, by the fact that He wanted to be born of an Immaculate Virgin through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, outside the normal course of nature. Christ allowed Himself to be accused of the most appalling charges, following His wish to be overwhelmed with disgrace. Yet He loathed unchastity so much that we never read of His having been in even the slightest way suspected of it, much less accused of it, even by His most determined opponents. For this reason it is very important for the Congregation to be strongly determined to possess this virtue. And we must always and everywhere uphold it in a clear and decisive way. This should be more obviously our practice since mission ministry almost all the time brings us into contact with lay men and women. Everyone, therefore, should be careful to take advantage to the best of his ability of every safeguard and precaution for keeping this chastity of body and mind intact.

2.--In order to succeed in this, with the help of God, we should be very careful to control internal and external senses. We are never to speak to women in a one-to-one situation in unbecoming circumstances of either time or place. When speaking or writing to them we should completely avoid using any words, even spiritual terminology, which smack of affectionate feelings toward them. When hearing their confessions, or when speaking to them outside of confession, we should not go too close to them nor take our chastity for granted.

3.--And since intemperance is, so to speak, the nursing mother of unchastity, each one should be moderate with regard to eating. We should, as far as possible, use ordinary food, and wine diluted with plenty of water.

4.--Moreover, each of us needs to convince himself that it is not enough for Missioners to have reached an above-average level in this virtue. We must also try with every means available to prevent anyone from having even the slightest suspicion of the opposite vice in any member of our Community. The mere suspicion of this, even though completely unfounded, would do more damage to the Congregation and its good work than the false accusation of any other wrongdoing, especially since it would result in our missions doing little or no good. Because of this we should use not merely every available ordinary means but even exceptional ones where necessary to prevent or remove this evil. For example, we should at times withdraw from some works, which in other respects are permissible and even good and holy, when in the judgment of the Superior or Director they seem to give reason for fearing such suspicion.

5.--And since a lazy life is the enemy of virtues, especially of chastity, each of us is to avoid

being idle and should always make good use of his time.

CHAPTER V.--OBEDIENCE

1.--Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us obedience by word and example. He wished to be submissive to the Most Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, and other people in positions of authority, whether good or disagreeable. For this reason we should be completely obedient to every one of our Superiors, seeing the Lord in them and them in the Lord. In the first place we should faithfully and sincerely reverence and obey our Holy Father the Pope. We should also humbly and consistently obey the most reverend Bishops of the dioceses where the Congregation has houses. Furthermore we should not take on anything in parish churches without the approval of the parish priests.

2.--Every one of the confreres should also obey the Superior General promptly, without complaining, and unwaveringly in all matters not obviously sinful. This obedience is, to some extent, blind. It implies giving up our own opinion and wishes, not only with regard to what he specifically tells us but even with regard to his intention, since we believe that what he asks us to do is always for the best. We should always leave ourselves open to what he wants, like a file in the hands of a carpenter.

3.--We are also to obey, in the same way, other Superiors, whether local or provincial, as well as lesser office-holders. Each one should also try to answer the call of the bell as Christ's voice, going so far as even to leave a letter unfinished as soon as the bell starts ringing.

4.--The Congregation wants to develop its commitment to this virtue quickly and smoothly. It should therefore try, as best it can, to see to it that the good practice of neither asking for, nor refusing, anything is always kept up among us. Of course when someone knows that something does not agree with him, or that he needs something, he should think about it in the presence of the Lord and make up his mind whether or not to tell the Superior about it, without worrying about which way his answer will go. In this frame of mind he should put the matter to the Superior. He should be convinced that the Superior's response indicates God's Will for him, and when he receives his answer he should accept it as God's Will.

5.--Each week there is to be a meeting, with the day, time, and place agreed, at which all can hear the Superior's arrangements for the running of the house and put to him any suggestions they may have.

6.--No one is to order anyone else to do something, or to reprove anyone, unless the Superior has asked him to do so or he already has the duty to do so because of his work.

7.--When someone gets a refusal from one Superior he must not go to another Superior about the same matter without mentioning the refusal and the reason for it.

8.--No one is to abandon any work he has been given, even if impeded by other business that needs to be done, without telling one of the Superiors in time, so that someone else can be appointed, if necessary.

9.--No one is to meddle in anyone else's work or ministry. But if asked to help out, especially by someone in charge of something, no matter how minor, he should readily do so, if possible. If the work, however, would take a lot of time, this is not to be done, without the Superior's permission.

10.--No one is to go into anyone else's place of work without the Superior's permission. If

there is some need to do so, however, permission from the confrere in charge of the place is enough.

11.--Letters can cause many problems, and not just minor ones. Because of this, no one is to write, send, or open letters without the Superior's permission. When a letter is written it should be submitted to the Superior, and it will be up to him whether to send it or not.

12.--Obedience should contribute to physical health. For this reason no one is to eat or drink outside the usual times, without the Superior's permission.

13.--Without the general or special permission of the Superior, no one is to go into anyone else's room, or open the door until he has heard "Come in," and while the two of them are together the door should be left open.

14.--Without the permission of the same Superior, no one is to bring anyone else, especially anyone not a member of the Congregation, into his room.

15.--No one is to write, translate, or publish a book without the explicit approval and permission of the Superior General.

16.--None of our lay Brothers should want to study Latin or wish to become clerics. Their role is that of Martha. If any of them feel such an inclination, they should try to get rid of it at once as something suggested by the evil spirit, who perhaps is aiming at their ruin by disguising pride as zeal. They also need the Superior General's explicit permission to learn reading and writing.

CHAPTER VI.--MATTERS CONCERNING THE SICK

1.--One of the principal things Christ did was to visit and care for the sick, and especially persons who were poor. He very often recommended this to those He was sending into His vineyard. For this reason the Congregation should have a special care for helping and visiting the sick, whether outside or inside the house. We should help them physically and spiritually, as far as is practical, especially on missions. As well as this we should pay particular attention to setting up and visiting the Confraternity of Charity.

2.--Wherever we visit a sick person, inside or outside the house, we should look on this person as Christ rather than as just a human being, since Christ said that He regarded any service done to such a person as being done to Himself. For this reason on such occasions we should be considerate and speak in a low voice. And what we say ought to console the sick person, put him in good humor, and help anyone else who is there.

3.--Members of our own Community who are sick should remind themselves that they are not kept in bed, or in the hospital, just to be nursed and brought back to health by medical help. They are also there, as if in a pulpit, to witness publicly to Christian virtues, especially patience and acceptance of the Divine Will, at least by their example. In this way they can make Christ present to those looking after them and to visitors. And through their sickness they themselves can grow in virtue. Obedience is one of the virtues most needed in the sick. They should be completely obedient to doctors and chaplains, as well as to the nurse and anyone else involved in their care.

4.--To prevent any abuse creeping in, in connection with the sick, all who feel unwell should notify the Superior, the person in charge of health, or the nurse. No one is to take any medicine, call in our doctor, or consult another one, without the Superior's permission.

CHAPTER VII.--DECORUM

1.--Decorum was such a feature of the appearance, activity, and speech of Christ the Lord that He drew many thousands of people to follow Him, even out into the desert. There they were pleased to be with Him and to listen to the words of eternal life which He taught. They even forgot about the need for food and drink. Missioners should imitate this attractive characteristic of such a great teacher. Since we are obliged by our Institute to deal frequently with the neighbor, we should always fear lest the slightest impropriety on our part, in giving bad example, destroy that which we have built up in the Lord by our work and ministry. For this reason all should carefully carry out what Saint Paul recommended to the first Christians. *Let your modesty be known to all.* In order to be capable of living up to this, we should be careful to put into practice the special Rules dealing with decorum drawn up for the Congregation, especially the following:

2.--First of all, we should keep our eyes from all undisciplined roving, especially in church, at table, and in public. We should see to it that there is nothing undignified or childish in our behavior, and nothing affected or mundane in our bearing.

3.--All should be careful not to touch one another, even in fun, apart from when it is normal to embrace as a sign of friendship or in greeting, for example when someone is leaving on a journey or just back from one, or has just joined the Congregation.

4.--Each one should make an effort to keep neat and clean, especially as regards clothes, completely avoiding, though, anything which is too elegant or stylish.

5.--Each one is to keep clean, and to look after, the modest furniture in his room, minimal though it may be. He should sweep his room every three days. In the morning, when he gets up, he should make his bed properly. In exceptional circumstances due to illness or work, someone else may be appointed to do this by the Superior.

6.--No one should come out of his room without being properly dressed.

7.--So that we can more easily and readily witness to decorum when others are present, each one, when at home, even alone in his room, should pay particular attention to behaving with modesty, realizing that God is present. We should be especially careful not to sleep at night with nothing on or with insufficient bedclothes.

CHAPTER VIII.--GETTING ALONG WITH EACH OTHER

1.--Christ our Savior formed Apostles and disciples into a community and gave them guidelines for getting along with each other. Here are some of them: love one another; wash each other's feet; seek reconciliation with a companion immediately after a disagreement; travel in pairs; and finally, anyone who wants to be the more prominent should keep in the background. There were other similar ones. Now our little Congregation wants to follow in the footsteps of Christ and the disciples, so it also should have the following regulations which concern good community living and communicating among us, and each of us should try our best to keep

them.

2.--Love, like that between brothers, should always be present among us, as well as the bond of holiness, and these should be safeguarded in every possible way. For this reason there should be great mutual respect, and we should get along as good friends, always living in community. We should particularly avoid exclusive friendships, as well as any sort of ostracism, as experience has shown that these give rise to factions and destroy Congregations.

3.--All should show the special respect due to Superiors by uncovering their head to them. We should be careful not to interrupt them while they are speaking or, even more reprehensible, contradict them. All should also uncover their head to priests, and seminarists and students to their Directors and professors. The priests should even try, in the Lord, to anticipate one another in showing this mutual respect. During meals, though, this gesture is to be made only to the Superior or an important visitor. This is to prevent the roving eye and wandering mind.

4.--Scripture tells us that there is a time for speaking and a time for keeping silent, and that in excessive talking sin is not lacking. And there is plenty of evidence from everyday experience that the good work of any Community dedicated to God is unlikely to last long if it has no guidelines about speaking and no provision for silence. We should keep silent, then, except during recreation. At other times no one should speak unnecessarily, apart from a brief passing remark in a low voice. This applies especially in the church, sacristy, sleeping quarters, and dining room, and particularly during meals. If someone at table, though, needs something, the person beside him should tell whoever is on duty, with a single word if a nod or other sign would not do. But no matter when we are speaking, even during recreation, we should avoid excessive argument and too loud a voice, since this could give bad example among ourselves or to visitors.

5.--Unless we have the Superior's permission, none of us should speak to the seminarists or students, or to others, even priests, who are less than two years out of the Internal Seminary. Charity, though, may call for a brief passing greeting.

6.--When anyone is in his own room, or is going around the house, especially at night, he should, as far as possible, avoid making noise, particularly when opening or closing doors. This will help in maintaining silence.

7.--During recreation, and in other everyday matters, we should aim at not letting good humor get out of control, mixing the useful with the agreeable. In this way we give good example to all. We will more readily achieve this if our conversation is usually about spirituality or theology for a Missioner.

8.--When together like this, and at other customary meetings which take place from time to time, we should try to bring up for discussion, among other topics of conversation, mainly those which help our commitment to our vocation or our growth in holiness. Thus we might, for example, encourage devotion, mortification, obedience, or humility. Or another time we might, gently and with humility, defend them against people who belittle them. But if we dislike any of these virtues, we should make this fact known only to the Superior or Director, and take care not to reveal it to others either publicly or privately.

9.--We should take great care to avoid being in any way stubborn or argumentative in conversation, even if only in fun. We should even try, in the Lord, to prefer, as far as possible, other peoples' opinions to our own on all matters where freedom of opinion is allowed. If someone, though, holds an opposite view to that expressed about something, he can put forward his point of view calmly and with humility. Above all, though, everyone in conversation should try to avoid anger or bad temper, or showing he is annoyed with someone, and no one should

hurt another in word or deed, or in any other way.

10.--Everyone must consider it a matter of prime obligation to maintain confidentiality, not only about matters of confession or direction, but also about what is said or done at Chapter with regard to faults and penances. This also applies to other matters when we know confidentiality is requested by the Superiors or is demanded by the nature of the case.

11.--No one should damage the reputation of others, especially Superiors, in even the slightest way, or grumble about them, or criticize what is done or said in our Congregation or in other Communities.

12.--No one is to snoop around, prying into how the house is run, or discuss this with others, or criticize explicitly or implicitly the Rules or Constitutions of the Congregation or even its respected customs.

13.--No one should grumble about food, clothing, or sleeping accommodation, or even discuss them unless his assigned work calls for this.

14.--No one should speak deprecatingly about other countries or provinces, as this usually causes no small trouble.

15.--Disagreements and wars can take place between Christian rulers, and on such occasions no one should reveal a preference for either side. This is following the example of Christ, who did not want to adjudicate in a quarrel between brothers or decide about the rights of rulers. All He said was to give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and so forth.

16.--Each one should keep well away from discussions about national or international affairs and other political matters, especially with regard to war and current disputes between rulers and other similar rumors in the world. And each one should take care, as far as possible, not to write anything about all this.

CHAPTER IX.--GETTING ALONG WITH NON-CONFRERES

1.--Besides the guidelines which our Savior gave His Apostles and disciples about getting along with one another, He also gave certain instructions about how to behave toward other people, toward the Scribes and Pharisees and the authorities when brought before their synagogues and courts, how to behave when invited to meals, and so on. Modeling ourselves on Him, then, it is right for us to have some guidelines for our behavior toward non-confreres, and we should try to live up to them.

2.--By the very nature of our Congregation we are bound to come into frequent contact with lay people, especially on missions, but we should not seek such contact unless obedience or necessity calls for it. On such occasions we should keep in mind our Lord's words: You are the light of the world. We should take the sun's light as an example; it gives both light and warmth, and is undiminished even when it beams on what is not clean.

3.--St. Paul wrote: *No one in God's army gets involved in secular affairs.* Following this advice we should take great care not to be implicated in other people's lawsuits, nor to be executors of wills or involved in matrimonial or business negotiations or anything like that.

4.--No one should take on the administration of even religious business matters, or promise his help in dealing with them, or hint that he is available for them, without the Superior's permission.

5.--When at home in the house, no one should make himself available to strike up a conversation with strangers or become involved in getting another confrere for this purpose, unless the Superior advises otherwise.

6.--No one should invite non-confreres to a meal, without the Superior's permission.

7.--No one should deliver messages, letters, or anything else in either direction between confreres and others, without the Superior's permission.

8.--No one should show our Rules or Constitutions to non-confreres without the explicit permission of the Superior General or the Provincial. These Common Rules, though, may be shown to aspirants during a retreat, with the permission of the local Superior, and sometimes earlier on if he thinks it would be useful in the Lord.

9.--No one should irresponsibly or pointlessly mention to non-confreres what has been, or is going to be, done in the house, nor should we discuss with them any matters which are not allowed in or our conversation, especially concerning the state or kingdom.

10.--When anyone is authorized to meet non-confreres, he should speak to them only about what needs to be said, or what can promote the salvation and spiritual development of either party, or of both, and with a sense of what is serious, religious, and moderate, according to circumstances of persons, places and times.

11.--When anyone goes out of the house, he is to follow the Superior's wishes as regards manner, time, and companions; it is for the Superior or his delegate to designate a companion. The person designated as a companion should defer to the other and be a willing listener.

12.--When anyone asks permission from the Superior to go somewhere, he should explain where he wants to go, and why, and as soon as he gets back report to him what he did.

13.--Everyone should use the usual door for leaving or entering the house, unless either necessity or the Superior's permission allows otherwise.

14.--When leaving the house, even when it is allowed to go and come by the back door or through the church, we are to mark ourselves "out" and let the doorkeeper know when we will be back so that he can inform callers. We should not go out in the morning before daylight, and should be back before nightfall, and, as soon as we get back, mark ourselves "in."

15.--Except while traveling, no one is to eat while out of the house, without the Superior's permission.

16.--If, while traveling, anyone passes through a place where the Congregation has a house, he should stay in that house rather than anywhere else. While in that house, he is to be answerable to whoever is in charge and should not do anything while there without his advice and direction. This also applies to someone coming to such a house on business.

CHAPTER X.--SPIRITUAL PRACTICES USED IN THE CONGREGATION

1.--Christ the Lord and His disciples had their spiritual practices, such as going to the temple on certain days, sometimes going off by themselves for a while, giving time to praying, and other such practices. It makes sense, then, for this little Congregation to have its own spiritual practices. It should prefer conscientious fidelity to these rather than to any others, unless necessity or obedience rules this out. Moreover, these spiritual practices help us more effectively

to keep the other Rules or Constitutions and to grow in holiness.

2.--According to the Bull which established our Congregation, we are bound to honor in a special way the Most Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, mysteries beyond words. We should therefore try to carry this out most faithfully and, if possible, in every way, but especially in these three ways: (1) frequently honoring these mysteries by a prayer of faith and adoration, coming from our inmost heart; (2) dedicating certain prayers and good works each day to their honor and, above all, celebrating their feast days with special dignity, and the greatest possible personal devotion; (3) trying constantly, by our teaching and example, to get other people to know these mysteries and to honor and worship them.

3.--There can be no better way of paying the best honor possible to these mysteries than proper devotion to, and use of, the Blessed Eucharist, sacrament and sacrifice. It includes, as it were, all the other mysteries of faith and, by itself, leads those who receive Communion respectfully or celebrate Mass properly, to holiness and ultimately to everlasting glory. In this way God, Unity and Trinity, and the Incarnate Word, are paid the greatest honor. For these reasons, nothing should be more important to us than showing due honor to this sacrament and sacrifice. We are also to make a great effort to get everyone else to pay it similar honor and reverence. We should try, to the best of our ability, to achieve this by preventing, as far as we can, any lack of reverence in word or act, and by carefully teaching others what to believe about so great a mystery, and how they should honor it.

4.--Because this Bull also expressly recommends it, and for other reasons as well, we should likewise have special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Confreres, therefore, both individually and collectively, should, with God's help, try to carry this out perfectly: (1) by specially honoring every day this preeminent Mother of Christ, who is also our Mother; (2) by putting into practice, as far as possible, the same virtues as she did, particularly humility and chastity; (3) by enthusiastically encouraging others, whenever opportunity and means permit, to show her the greatest reverence and always to serve her loyally.

5.--We should take the greatest care to pray the Divine Office properly. We pray it in the Roman rite and in common, in a middle tone of voice, even when on missions. We do not sing it so as to leave more time for helping others. Exceptions to this would be houses where we are bound to Gregorian Chant because of obligations accepted, or students preparing to receive orders, or seminaries for diocesan students, and other suchlike commitments. No matter in what place or at what time we pray the canonical hours, we should remember the reverence, attention, and devotion with which we should do so, since we know for certain that we are at that moment praising God in our celebration, and therefore sharing in the role of angels.

6.--One of the most important ministries on our missions is to encourage people to receive the sacraments of penance and Eucharist frequently. It is right, then, that we ourselves should, with greater reason, give good example to them in this matter, or even far more than just good example. We should therefore aim at giving good example in the most perfect way possible. And since everything should be done in an orderly way, the priests are to go to confession twice a week, or at least once, to one of the confessors appointed for the house, and not to anyone else, without the Superior's permission. They are to celebrate Mass every day unless something prevents this. Those who are not priests, though, are to go to confession every Saturday and on the eves of the main feast days, to one of the above-mentioned confessors, unless the Superior has appointed someone else, and they are to receive Communion, with the advice of their Director, every Sunday and on the above-mentioned feast days, and are to go to Mass every day.

7.--Christ the Lord in addition to His daytime meditations, sometimes used to spend the whole night in prayer to God. We cannot fully follow His example in this, though we should try to do so while making allowance for our weakness. All the confreres, therefore, should conscientiously spend one hour a day in mental prayer, and the custom of the Congregation is that this is to be done together and in the assigned place.

8.--Each one should see to it that he does not let a day pass without reading from some spiritual book suited to his own needs, spending at this whatever length of time the Superior or Director indicates. As well as this, the priests and all the students are to read a chapter of the New Testament, reverencing this book as the norm of Christian holiness. For greater benefit this reading should be done kneeling, with head uncovered, and praying, at least at the end, on these three themes: (1) reverence for the truths contained in the chapter; (2) desire to have the same spirit in which Christ or the saints taught them; (3) determination to put into practice the advice or commands contained in it, as well as the examples of virtues.

9.--All of us are to make two sorts of examination of conscience every day so as to have a clearer understanding of our failings and, by doing so, to make up for them with God's help and to sharpen our sensitivity in this matter. One is to be made briefly before the midday and evening meals, focusing on some virtue to be acquired or on some failing to be overcome. The other is a general review of all the day's activity and is to be done shortly before going to bed.

10.--So that we may show reverence for Christ's withdrawal from the crowds, especially the forty days which He spent out in the desert, all those entering the Congregation, clerical and lay, are to make a retreat and a general confession of their whole lives up to then, to a priest designated by the Superior. Those already members are to make a similar retreat, with a general confession covering the period since their last one. The seminarists are to do both every six months and the others once a year.

11.--It is hardly possible to make progress in the spiritual life without the help of a spiritual director. So, unless a director sometimes talks about the state of his interior life to his personal director, as he should, it is extremely difficult for him to reach a level of holiness appropriate for him. Each one of us, therefore, should with complete openness and due reverence give an account of his conscience to the Superior, or someone assigned by him, in the manner customary in the Congregation. We should do this every three months, especially when on retreat, and as often as the Superior thinks necessary.

12.--Everyone is to be particularly conscientious about being present at the spiritual conferences which we have once a week. These should usually cover topics like yielding in our own personal wishes and opinions, the practice of following God's Will in everything, getting along well together like brothers, zeal for personal holiness, and progress in other virtues, especially those which make up the spirit of the mission.

13.--So that we in our weakness can to some extent imitate Christ's self-humiliation and His willingness to be ranked with sinners, each one every Friday in the presence of the others is to acknowledge his failings to the Superior or to someone replacing him. This applies both at home and on missions. We should take in good part whatever corrections and penances are given. The brotherly custom of asking in Chapter to be publicly admonished about our failings is to be kept up, and each one therefore should take great care to give this type of admonition in a spirit of charity and humility.

14.--As well as this, we should make an effort to accept uncomplainingly whatever humiliations come our way, even apart from Chapter or, for that matter, at any time. In this way

we deepen more quickly a willing acceptance of the experience of rejection, and accordingly advance more and more along the path to holiness. When, therefore, at the end of mental prayer or a conference, the Superior indicates to someone that he wishes to point out to him some failing, the person concerned should kneel down at once, listen to the admonition willingly, in a spirit of humility, and without comment, accept any penance given, and faithfully do it.

15.--The continuous work of the Missioners is such that we cannot be obliged by any rule to undertake severe physical mortifications and austerities. In spite of this, though, each one should value them highly and always have a leaning toward them and even, health and important work permitting, make use of them. We have as example Christ and the early Christians, and even many lay people conscious of the need for penance. No one, though, should take on any such penances without consulting the Superior or Director, unless they are imposed in confession.

16.--Every Friday each one is to be satisfied with only one course at the evening meal, a course of vegetables of either leaf or bean variety. This does not apply on missions or while traveling.

17.--On the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday we are to abstain from meat if at home, honoring God by this minimal self-discipline at a time when many Christians seriously offend Him by their licentiousness and gluttony.

18.--Moreover, the timetable which is customary in the Congregation is to be strictly followed by everyone, whether at home or on missions, particularly as regards the times for getting up and going to bed, prayer, the Divine Office, and meals.

19.--There is to be spiritual reading in the dining room all through the meal, both at home and on missions, so that the mind may be nourished as well as the body.

20.--We should also keep up other worthwhile practices customary in the Congregation, such as to visit the chapel immediately before going out and after coming in, greeting Christ in the Blessed Sacrament; to catechize poor persons, especially beggars, particularly while traveling, if the opportunity occurs; to kneel down on entering and on leaving our rooms in order to invoke God before doing anything and to thank Him afterward.

21.--If anyone wants to take on any spiritual practices over and above those prescribed in these Rules, he ought to discuss it with the Superior or Director and should do only what they authorize with regard to them. If he were to do otherwise, he might perhaps be doing his own will, or even the devil's. Thus, as punishment for his imprudence or disobedience, he might be tricked by the devil into something with only the appearance of being worthwhile and, in the long run, do himself spiritual harm.

CHAPTER XI.--MISSIONS AND OTHER MINISTRIES OF THE CONGREGATION ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE

1.--Our Lord Jesus Christ gave His disciples rules for giving missions. He told them to ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers to His harvest, and He indicated the peoples to go to, how to behave on the way, what houses to stay in, what to preach, what to eat and, finally, how to deal with those who did not welcome them. We want to follow in their footsteps, as far as our limitations allow, so we should be careful to live up to the following Rules, and to the advice usually given in the Congregation. These indicate the proper program and method for our

missions and other ministries.

2.--Each one should try, as the occasion arises, to help people by advice and correction and to encourage them in good works. No one, though, should become anyone's director, except during retreats, on missions, in houses where we have pastoral ministry, or on other occasions when appointed by the Superior. But even in these circumstances no one is ever to give any instructions or rule of life in writing, without the Superior's permission and approval.

3.--To avoid our Missioners having Saint Paul's words justly quoted against them, *How can they preach unless they are sent?* no one is to preach in public or catechize from a pulpit without both approval from the Provincial and appointment to it by either the same Provincial or the local Superior. On missions, though, the Director of the mission may make temporary changes of preachers and catechists by substituting others when he judges in the Lord that it is necessary, and when waiting for a written answer from the Superior would cause problems. He is, however, to tell the Superior as soon as possible why he made such changes.

4.--None of us is allowed to hear confessions, either of members of the Congregation or of others, without approval by the Ordinary. To avoid any abuse, though, those who have such approval should not engage in this ministry unless they have been designated for it by the Provincial and appointed to it by the same Provincial or local Superior.

5.--Those who are going on missions are always to bring with them the mandate of the most reverend Bishops in whose dioceses the missions are being given, and should show it to the Pastor or whoever is in charge of the churches to which they are going. Before they go home at the end of the missions they should report to the Bishops on what they did, if the latter wish this. But the Superior is first to be consulted so that he can indicate how this is to be done and who is to do it.

6.--At the beginning and end of each mission all should ask for the blessing of the Pastor or, if he is absent, of the Assistant, and they should not do anything of importance without first mentioning it to him, and be careful not to proceed with anything to which he objects.

7.--St. Paul and his co-workers used to do manual work night and day so as not to impose on the people to whom they were ministering. Following their example we are not to impose on anyone during our missions, and all our ministry is to be done gratuitously. We do not accept any money as stipend or for food. There is nothing wrong, though, in accepting an offer of furnished lodgings.

8.--Everyone should sincerely wish to be appointed to visiting the sick, or settling quarrels and disputes, especially on missions and even, when the situation calls for it, ask, with humility, to be appointed to this. Charity, however, should be properly regulated by obedience, so no one is to take on this sort of caring ministry, without the Superior's permission.

9.--Much prudence and care are called for when problems about cases of conscience from confession are discussed, in order that the person concerned may never be identified. To avoid the harm which can be caused by this no one should bring up for discussion problems arising from any case of conscience of any importance heard in confession without first consulting the Director of the mission.

10.--The name Missioners, or Priests of the Mission, clearly indicates that the work of missions is the primary and most important of all ministries to people. And we did not invent this name for ourselves, but popular usage, reflecting Divine Providence, gave it to us. For this reason the Congregation should never replace missions with other ministries apparently more effective. Each one, rather, should have a deep commitment to them and be always ready to go on missions when obedience calls.

11.--The direction of nuns could interfere quite a lot with missions and other ministries of our Congregation, so each one of us should abstain completely from directing them. No one should call on them or preach in their convents, even during missions, without previous explicit permission from at least the local Superior. And although our Congregation was appointed to direct the Daughters of Charity right from their foundation, no confrere is to take on their direction, or go to them, or even talk to them, without the same Superior's permission.

12.--Finally, confreres, individually and collectively, are to understand that the plea of missions should not mean neglect of the ministry to the clergy who are not members of our Congregation, especially ordinands and seminarians, as well as to other people on retreat, carried on in our houses. Though our preference is for missions, giving them should not mean omitting our work for the clergy whenever we are asked to do this by Bishops or Superiors. The reason is that by the nature of our Congregation we are bound almost equally to both. Also, everyday experience shows that no matter how effective these missions may be there will be no lasting effect without the help of the Pastors, to whose holiness the above-mentioned ministries contribute quite a lot. Each one should therefore give himself ungrudgingly to God in such ministry, bringing care and devotion to it. And to do this more easily and effectively we should make an effort to follow out exactly the instructions usually given by our Superiors about this.

CHAPTER XII.--SOME USEFUL MEANS NEEDED FOR PROPERLY AND EFFECTIVELY CARRYING OUT THE MINISTRIES JUST MENTIONED

1.--In the beginning of these Rules or Constitutions the Congregation took Christ the Lord as a model, as someone who did not begin by teaching but by doing. In this last chapter, therefore, it is equally necessary to point out that He is a model also for doing all things well, because whatever good we may do deserves blame rather than praise if it is not done well. For this reason it is right to add these few guidelines and means helpful for properly carrying out the ministries just mentioned. All our Missioners should make a real effort to put them into practice.

2.--Each one, in every single thing he does, especially in preaching or other ministries of the Congregation, should make an effort to have, to the best of his ability, as pure an intention as possible of pleasing God alone. We should renew this intention many times, particularly as we begin more important activities. We should be careful above all not to indulge any wish for human approval or self-gratification. Such a wish can infect or spoil the holiest action, as Christ taught it: *If your eye is evil your whole body will be full of*

darkness.

3.--St. Paul says that it can sometimes happen that though we begin in the Spirit we end up in the unspiritual. This usually happens when our activity leads to a certain foolish self-congratulation which we are stupid enough to feed on if it went off well with people praising us. Or it can happen when we feel so downhearted and distressed that we cannot in any way find peace, if our activity has not gone well. We should, therefore, take every care never to fall into either of these faults. In order to counteract the first we should keep in mind this truth, that all the glory is to be given to God and nothing to ourselves but embarrassment. On top of this, if we were vainly gratified with that sort of praise, we should be very much afraid of hearing these words of Christ: *I tell you, you have received your reward.* The cure for the second is this: to turn at once to genuine humility and the willing acceptance of the experience of rejection, which is what God asks of us in such circumstances. After that, to reflect carefully on the fact that very often we can hope for as much glory for God's name and usefulness for others from this type of disappointment, patiently put up with, as from sermons which please people and are apparently beneficial.

4.--Since these two evils, foolish self-congratulation and disproportionate disappointment, which corrupt preachers, usually stem from praise on the one hand and criticism on the other about this type of public activity, no one should praise any confrere, especially in his presence, for exceptional natural gifts or talents, above all with regard to eloquent sermons which have attracted public attention. On the other hand, no one should unfavorably criticize anyone for lack of eloquence or knowledge or any similar shortcomings noticed in his preaching. But if anyone needs a bit of encouragement to boost his lack of confidence, or a warning to curb his itching vanity, it is up to the Superior to give it, or to delegate someone to do so, with prudence and in private. It is not wrong, though, to praise others for acts of humility, mortification, simplicity, or other such virtues, even with regard to preaching, provided that this is done in their absence, with restraint and discernment, and with God in mind.

5.--As simplicity is the principal and most characteristic virtue of Missioners, we should show it at all times and in all circumstances. We should be more careful to practice it during missions, especially when we proclaim the Word of God to country people, to whom, because they are simple, God speaks through us. For this reason our style of preaching and catechizing should be simple and suited to the people, and in line with the simple method the Congregation has used up to now. Each one, therefore, is to avoid completely speaking with too much tenderness or with affection. We should take care not to preach any far-fetched or too subtly contrived ideas, or pointless distinctions, from the pulpit of truth. We should remember that Christ the Lord and His disciples made use of a simple way of speaking and, because of this, reaped a much better harvest with a most abundant yield.

6.--Those who are appointed to seminaries for students not of our Congregation, to direction of ordinands, to conferences with Pastors and other clergy, and similar ministries should also use this simple, ordinary way of speaking. And they should take special care, by word and example, to urge all those to whom they minister to develop their spiritual lives as well as their learning. Our Missioners should try especially to behave with great humility, gentleness, respect, and cordiality toward them. Those who are giving retreats should, as far as possible, do the same.

7.--Since novel or merely personal opinions usually harm both their originators and their followers, all confreres should be careful to avoid such novelties and personal opinions. In fact, we should always be in agreement, as far as possible, on doctrine and in what we say and write so that we can, as Saint Paul says, *be united in spirit and ideals*, and even in speech.

8.--Saint Zeno says, *Curiosity makes a person guilty, not learned*, and Saint Paul says: Learning puffs up. This is especially so when his other advice is overlooked: *Not to think more highly of oneself that one ought, but to estimate oneself soberly*. All of us, therefore, but especially the students, should always be alert in case undisciplined craving for learning insidiously invades our heart. We are not, though, to neglect the dedicated study which is needed for the proper carrying out of the work of a Missioner, as long as our primary aim is to acquire the learning of the saints, which is taught in the school of the cross, so that we may preach only Jesus Christ, following the example of Saint Paul, who also admitted frankly, when writing to the Corinthians, that he had decided that, when among them, he would speak of nothing except Jesus Christ, and of Him crucified.

9.--Of all the guidelines in the Gospel needed by those who work in the Lord's vineyard, this is the one that should appeal most to us: *Whoever wishes to be the greatest among you, let him be like the least and the servant of the others*. For, the moment the Congregation gives up following this advice, with uncurbed ambition taking over, it will be completely ruined. It is because this desire, slipping easily into minds which by nature are inclined toward ambition, urges them on to many evils. In particular it urges them to hope for appointments of distinction, to envy those who receive them, or to congratulate themselves if they have received such appointments. And so, lured on and deluded by the false glamour of superficial fame, which is the only thing they set their eyes on, they do not notice the nearby cliff and end up disastrously by falling over it. That is why it should be a prime concern of ours to get away from the monstrosity of pride. But if it already has a place in our hearts, then a suitable way to get rid of it immediately, following the Lord's advice already quoted, would be to try, through genuine humility, to have a less inflated opinion of ourselves and to want always to have the lowest place. If it should happen that we notice traces of foolish self-congratulation in ourselves because of the prominent duties or works we carry out, the remedy is to ask the Superior immediately, though with respect for his authority, to relieve us of these duties and to appoint us to some unremarkable work of his choice.

10.--All of us should as well make a particular effort to repress the first feelings of envy which can arise when the reputation, public estimation, and prominent works of other Congregations are better than ours. We must definitely convince ourselves that it does not matter by whom Christ is preached, as long as He is preached, and that as much--sometimes even more--grace and merit come to us when we are pleased at other people's good work as would come if we had done it ourselves with self-congratulation or from a less worthy motive. For this reason everyone should try to have Moses' way of thinking. When He was asked to stop some people from prophesying, He retorted: *Would that all the people were prophets. Would that the Lord might bestow His Spirit on them all*. As well as this we should think of other Congregations as being far worthier than our own, though we should have greater affection for ours, just as a well-brought-up child will have far greater love for his own mother, poor and unattractive as she may be, than for any others, even if they are outstanding for wealth and beauty. All should realize, of

course, that this feeling of affection is only for the persons, virtues, and grace found in the Congregation, and not for anything it has which is attractive and brings public acclaim; that is something we should make a special effort not to give in to and to shun. And this is not just for the individual with regard to himself, but applies to the Congregation as a whole. This means that not only do we not seek publicity or applause for it, but even that we want it disdained and kept unobtrusive in the Lord, remembering that it is the mustard seed, which cannot grow and bear fruit unless it is sown, hidden underground.

11.--In the same way, all should be on their guard against two further vices, from opposite extremes, both militating against the whole purpose of the mission. They are all the more dangerous because it is not immediately apparent that they are vices, as they insidiously assume so different an appearance that they are very often taken to be real virtues. This pair are laziness and undisciplined enthusiasm. The first vice, under the guise of the prudent care of health needed for better worshiping God and helping others, gradually infiltrates our way of thinking and makes us look for bodily comforts and excuse ourselves from the effort which virtue demands. Laziness suggests to us that this effort is far greater than it really is, so that virtue, which in itself should be universally loved, strikes us as repugnant. This vice draws down upon us the curse fulminated by the Holy Spirit against the sort of workers who do God's work carelessly or fraudulently. The second vice, on the other hand, masking our self-love or anger, impels us to act harshly toward both sinners and ourselves, and to take on more work than we can manage, even against obedience, resulting in damage to physical and mental health, involving us later in a frantic search for cures, so that we end up sluggish and sensual. For these reasons all of us should make every effort to shun these two extremes, always steering a middle course. And there is no doubt that we will find this middle course by carefully keeping our Rules and Constitutions, properly understood, and by listening to those guardians of wisdom in whose hands God's special providence has placed us, but only if, when necessary, we humbly and trustingly look for a ruling from them and accept their direction totally and unreservedly.

12.--We must remember, above all, that although we are always to be guided by those virtues which make up the spirit of the mission, we should be armed with them to the fullest possible extent when the time comes for us to minister to the country people. At that time we should look on them as the five smooth stones with which, even at the first assault, we will defeat the Goliath from hell in the name of the Lord of Armies and will bring the Philistines, that is, sinners, under God's rule. But this will happen only if we first lay aside Saul's armor and make use of David's sling. In other words, we must go out preaching the Gospel like Saint Paul, not with a show of oratory or philosophy, but grounded in doctrine, and in the power of the Spirit, even if eloquence is lacking. We should remember that since, as the same Apostle says, God chose those who, by human standards, are weak, foolish, and contemptible in order to rout and destroy those who, by the same standards, are learned and powerful, we can hope that in His boundless goodness He will give us the grace to cooperate in our own way in His work of saving people, especially poor persons in country areas, even though we are the least deserving of workers.

13.--All should foster a special respect and love for our Rules or Constitutions, even including the ones which do not seem to be all that important, regarding all of them as

means given to us by God Himself for growing in the holiness which our vocation calls for, leading to our working with greater ease and efficacy for people's salvation. All should therefore fervently make a deeply felt self-giving commitment to living according to them. As regards any points we find intellectually or psychologically distasteful, we should keep on trying to overcome self-centeredness and to defeat the merely natural, remembering that, according to Christ's words, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent bear it away.

14.--Each one is to have his own copy of these Rules or Common Constitutions, and also of the particular ones concerning his own duties, and should read them through, or hear them read, every three months. That is so they will be more deeply rooted in our memory and mind, and therefore more completely lived up to. We should try to understand them correctly, and on a few occasions during the year we should each humbly ask the Superior to impose some penance for faults against them. By this humbling of ourselves we will more easily obtain forgiveness from the Lord for our faults, and be strengthened against further ones in the future. The fidelity with which we do this will, in fact, be an indication of our fidelity in following these Rules or Constitutions, and of our commitment to growth in holiness. However, if anyone notices that he has made some progress in living up to them, he is to thank Christ the Lord for it and should ask Him to give him, and the whole Congregation, the grace to live up to them even more completely in the future. As well as this, we must get it firmly into our heads that when we have carried out all we have been asked to do, we should, following Christ's advice, say to ourselves that we are useless servants, that we have done what we were supposed to do, and that, in fact, we could not have done anything without Him.

Document 117a. - The editors have made use of the translation of the “Common Rules or Constitutions” contained in *Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission*, published in English in 1989. The Latin text for the Rules published in 1658 and the English translation of the 1954 edition of have also been consulted. A few minor changes in translation and style have been made. In line with the 1917 Canon Law, articles V, 16; X, 6,11; and XI, 4, were superseded by other legislation.