

THE SACRED CONGREGATION
FOR RELIGIOUS
AND SECULAR INSTITUTES

Prot. n. C 100 b-1/87

DECREE

The nuns of the Carthusian Order lead a life entirely dedicated to contemplation, in the solitude and the silence of the desert, for the good of the whole Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church.

In accordance with the directives of the Second Vatican Council and taking into account other provisions of the Church, particularly those of the Code of Canon Law, the Carthusian Order has drawn up a new text of Constitutions for the nuns. With the consent of the nun's General Chapter, the Minister General has submitted it to the Holy See for its approval.

After careful examination of the text, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes hereby approves and confirms this text in its French version, of which a copy will be kept in its archives.

May the nuns joyfully live their consecration to God, animated by the example of Saint Bruno; and in a hidden life, in prayer, contemplation and work, may they generously aim at the perfection of their state of life.

Notwithstanding anything that is contrary.

Given at Rome, November 9, 1991, Dedication of the Basilica of the Lateran.

Cardinal Jérôme Hamer, O.P.
Prefect

Francisco Javier Errázuriz Ossa
Secretary

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Chapter 1

Prologue to the Statutes of the Nuns of the Carthusian Order

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

1 To the praise of God's glory, Christ, Word of the Father, has from the beginning chosen certain men through the Holy Spirit, in order to lead them into solitude, and unite them to himself in intimate love. In obedience to such a call, Master Bruno, with six companions, entered the desert of Chartreuse, in the year of our Lord 1084, and settled there. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they and their successors, learning from experience, developed their own particular style of hermit life, which was handed down to succeeding generations, not by the written word, but by example.

Other hermitages were founded in imitation of that of Chartreuse, and after their repeated entreaties, Guigo, fifth Prior of the Grande Chartreuse, wrote out a description of this way of life. They all willingly received it and decided to conform to it, so that it might be their rule of observance and the bond of love of their nascent family. Then for a long time, Priors of Carthusian observance repeatedly sought permission of the Priors and members of the Grande Chartreuse to hold a common Chapter in that House. Finally, during the priorate of Anthelm, the first General Chapter assembled, and all the Houses – that of Chartreuse included – entrusted their destinies to it forever. About the same time, the nuns of Prébayon, in Provence, decided to embrace the Carthusian way of life. This was the origin of our Order.

2 In the light of experience, and in taking into account new circumstances that arose, the General Chapter undertook henceforth to adapt the Carthusian life, in the course of the centuries; and in doing so, our way of life was strengthened and developed. However, this continuous and careful adaptation of our customs led, with time, to an accumulation of ordinances. So the General Chapter in 1271 combined the substance of the Customs of Guigo, of the ordinances of General Chapters, and of the usages of the Grande Chartreuse, and thus promulgated the **Ancient Statutes**. In 1368, these were made more complete by other documents, which were given the name of **New Statutes**, and in 1509 another series of texts was added, known as the **Third Compilation**.

On the occasion of the Council of Trent, the three collections then in use were fused into a single work, and named the **New Collection** of the Statutes, the third edition of which was approved *in specific form* by the Apostolic Constitution of Pope Innocent XI *Iniunctum nobis*. A new edition, revised and brought into conformity with the prescriptions of the Code of Canon Law then in force, was likewise approved *in specific form* by the Apostolic Constitution of Pope Pius XI, *Umbratilem*.

As was prescribed by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, an adaptation and renewal of our way of life were undertaken according to the spirit of the Council's decisions, our separation from the world and the exercises proper to the contemplative life being most carefully preserved.

3 It was decided by the monks' General Chapter in 1967 that the nuns would have Statutes edited apart, following closely, however, those of the fathers and the brothers, though with the necessary adaptations. This work was then undertaken with the

collaboration of all the Houses of the nuns, and was able to be finished, and given the name of **Statutes of the nuns of the Carthusian Order**, composed from the **Renewed Statutes** of the monks, approved and confirmed by the General Chapter in 1973. The Statutes of the nuns were approved by their first General Chapter in 1973.

To bring them into conformity with the Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1983, these Statutes were again revised and divided into two parts, the first of which, comprised of books 1 to 4 included, forms henceforth the Constitutions of the Order. We, therefore, humble brother Andrew, Prior of the Grande Chartreuse, and the other members of the nun's General Chapter of 1989, approve and confirm these present Statutes.

4 So, in the name of God's mercy and goodness – considering how he has lovingly cared for the Carthusian family right from its beginning until the present day, in protecting and guiding it, and has generously provided us with all the means useful for our salvation and perfection – we address the following prayer and exhortation to all the nuns of the Order : may each one of us, according to the duties of her vocation, strive to respond with all possible gratitude to such paternal generosity and kindness on the part of the Lord, our God. This we shall do if we endeavour to conform to the observance transmitted to us by these Statutes with such fidelity and care, that our outer man, having been instructed and formed by what they prescribe, may permit our inner man to seek God himself more ardently, to find him more quickly and to possess him more wholly. Thus, by God's grace, we may be enabled to attain perfect love, which is the aim of our profession, as of all monastic life, and which will lead us to eternal beatitude.

Chapter 2

Guigo's Praise of Life in Solitude

1 Those monks who have praised solitude wished to bear witness to a mystery, whose riches had been revealed to them by experience, but which is fully discovered only by the blessed in heaven. A great sacrament is accomplished herein, that of Christ and the Church, of which Our Lady is the outstanding exemplar. It lies hidden in its entirety in each faithful soul; but it reveals its depth to us better through the benefit of solitude.

So in the present chapter, taken from Guigo's Customs, we will gather up the sparks flown out, as it were, from the soul of him whom the Holy Spirit entrusted with the mission of drawing up the first laws of our Order. These words of our fifth Prior, while indeed interpreting Sacred Scripture according to ancient allegory, attain sublime truth, however, for those who know how to understand them rightly, and the possession of this truth unites us to our fathers in the fruition of the same grace.

2 We will say little concerning the solitary life, to which we have been specially called, for we know how much it has been recommended by a multitude of saints and learned men, of such authority that we are not worthy to follow in their footsteps.

3 In fact you know that in the Old Testament, and even more so in the New, the most sublime and deepest secrets were almost always revealed to God's servants, not in the tumult of the crowd, but when they were alone. They themselves, when they desired to devote themselves to deeper meditation or to pray with greater freedom, or to allow their souls to be carried away, as it were, beyond this world, ordinarily avoided the hindrance of human society and sought the advantages of solitude.

4 Thus, to say a few words about the subject – Isaac went alone into the fields to meditate; and it is to be thought that this was not just by chance, but was a customary practice with him. Jacob sent all his family ahead of him, so that he might remain alone; then he saw God face to face and was favoured with a blessing and a better name, obtaining more in one moment of solitude than in a whole lifetime lived among men.

5 Scripture bears witness also to how much Moses, Elijah and Elisha esteemed solitude, how they penetrated the divine secrets ever more deeply, thanks to it, and how they were in continual danger among men, whereas God visited them when they were alone.

6 Jeremiah, too, sat alone, filled with God's wrath. When he beseeched that his head might be a fountain, and his eyes a spring for tears, so as to weep for the slain of his people, he also asked for the appropriate place for carrying out such a holy work in full freedom. Thus he exclaimed, *Who will find me a wayfarer's shelter in the desert?* as if he could not carry out this same work in the city; thus is implied how much the gift of tears is hindered by the presence of companions. It is he too who said *It is good to wait in silence for God's salvation*, an occupation greatly helped by solitude. He adds too, *It is good for a man to have borne the yoke from his youth* – a text in which we find great strength and consolation, given that most of us have been living this life since our youth. And he says, *The solitary will sit in silence, so as to rise above himself*. By these words is expressed just about all that is best in our life: repose and solitude, silence and the ardent desire of heavenly realities.

7 He then shows what a transformation is brought about in a man formed in such a school, since he adds, *He will offer his cheek to the striker, and will be filled with insults.* In the first case, the height of patience shines forth, and in the second, perfect humility.

8 The usefulness and security which solitude procure are manifested also in John the Baptist, whom the Saviour praised, in saying that *among all the children born of women, no one has arisen greater than he.* He did not believe himself to be in safety, despite divine prophecy foretelling that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb and would go before Christ the Lord with the spirit and power of Elijah, and despite his miraculous birth and the holiness of his parents. So, fleeing the society of men as dangerous, he chose the greater security of desert solitude; in fact, he was able to avoid danger and death as long as he lived alone in isolated places. The virtue and merit he attained there are shown by the baptism of Christ and by his suffering death for the sake of justice. For he became so great in solitude, that he alone was judged worthy to pour the purifying water over Christ, source of all purity, and was capable of not refusing either imprisonment or death for the cause of truth.

9 Jesus himself, Lord and God, whose virtue needed no support from solitude, nor was hindered by the society of men, took care to leave us an example. Before beginning his ministry of preaching and miracles, he submitted, in a way, to the trial of temptation and fasting in the solitude of the desert. Holy Scripture tells us too of his leaving the crowd of his disciples and ascending the mountain alone to pray. Then, at the time that his Passion was imminent, he left even his Apostles in order to pray alone – an example above all others that makes us grasp how much solitude is advantageous for prayer, since he did not wish to pray in the company of others, not even that of his apostles.

10 In dealing with this, we cannot pass over in silence a mystery that, above all, we should imitate: he who is the Lord and Saviour of mankind, deigned to give us the first living example of our Order in his own person, when, alone in the desert, he gave himself to prayer and the interior life, treated his body severely by fasting, vigils and other fruits of penance, and overcame the devil's temptations by means of spiritual arms.

11 And now, reflect carefully, you yourselves, on those holy and venerable Fathers, Paul, Anthony, Hilarion, Benedict and so many others, whose number we ignore. Consider the spiritual profit which they gained from solitude, and you will acknowledge that for savouring psalmody and for applying oneself to spiritual reading, for praying with fervour and for meditating profoundly, for losing oneself in mystic contemplation and for obtaining the baptism of tears – nothing is more helpful than solitude.

12 But do not be satisfied with the few examples given here in praise of the life you have embraced; endeavour to gather others as well, taken from your daily experience or from pages of Sacred Scripture.

Book 1

The Carthusian Vocation

Chapter 3

The Nuns

1 Since the very beginning, the unity of our Order has expressed itself in different forms of life, like a body, whose members do not all have the same function.

The cloister monks live in the seclusion of the cell; they are priests, or called to become such. The lay monks dedicate their lives to the service of the Lord, not only by solitude, but also, and more than the fathers, by means of manual labour. To the first brothers, called converse brothers, was added another group in the course of time, that of the donates. Likewise, among us, there are cloister nuns, dedicated more specially to the solitude of the cell, converse nuns and donate nuns.

All share the same vocation, though in different ways. Thanks to this diversity, the Carthusian family fulfils its role in the Church with greater perfection.

The Cloister Nuns

2 Our Fathers in the Carthusian life followed a light which came from the East, the example of those early monks, dedicated to solitude and poverty of spirit, who thronged the deserts at a time when the memory of the Lord's recently-shed blood was still burning within hearts. The cloister nuns undertake to walk the same path, so, following the example of these first Fathers, they must dwell in a hermitage sufficiently distant from inhabited places and in cells where neither the noise of the world nor that of the house reach them. Above all, they must become alien to all worldly news.

3 The nun who perseveres faithfully in cell and lets herself be taught by it, will tend to make of her whole life one continual prayer. But she cannot enter this rest without going through the trials of a hard struggle, that is, the practice of austerities, as one used to the Cross, and the visitations of the Lord, come to prove her as gold in the furnace. Thus, purified by patience, nourished and strengthened by assiduous meditation of Sacred Scripture, and introduced into the depths of her heart by the grace of the Holy Spirit, she will henceforth be able, not only to serve God, but also to cleave to him.

4 Some manual work should be done as well, less for the momentary relaxation of the mind, than for submitting the body to the common law of mankind, and keeping alert the taste of spiritual activities. So the nun is furnished with the necessary work instruments, so as not to oblige her to leave the cell; for this is never permitted, except when the community assembles at Church or in the cloister, and on other occasions provided for by the rule. However, the austere path which we have chosen obliges us more strictly to use only modest things. We must follow the example of Christ in his poverty if we wish to share in his abundance.

5 According to ancient custom, our office, especially the night vigil, is fairly long, but does not exceed the limits of discretion. Thus the psalmody nourishes interior recollection, and we are able, at other moments, to give ourselves to secret prayer of the heart, without our being overcome by tiredness.

6 The love of the Lord, prayer, and zeal for solitude have gathered together the cloister nuns. They are also closely united in Christ to the converse nuns, thanks to whom they are able to live thus in the solitude of the cell.

The Converse Nuns and Donates

7 The first Carthusian brothers, Andrew and Guarin, wished to give themselves to a life of solitude and poverty of spirit, together with our first fathers. Today this is still the ideal of the converse nuns and donates. That is why it is necessary for them, not only to dwell in a hermitage sufficiently distant from inhabited places, but also to occupy cells whose seclusion allows them, once they are within and the door closed, to leave all cares and preoccupations outside, and in peace, to pray to the Father in secret.

8 In imitation of the hidden life of Jesus and Mary at Nazareth, the converse nuns, when carrying out the daily tasks of the House, praise the Lord in his works, consecrate the world to the glory of the Creator and put the gifts of nature to the service of the contemplative life. During the times dedicated to solitary prayer and those reserved for the Sacred Liturgy, they are entirely free for God alone. The places where they work, then, as those where they live, should be so fitted out as to further interior recollection. Though furnished with what is necessary and useful, they should have the appearance of being truly God's dwelling, and not merely secular places.

9 Since following in the steps of our founders is a most sure path to God, may the converse nuns learn from the example of the first converse brothers of the Grande Chartreuse, who, before any written rule, gave the form and spirit to their way of life.

With a joyful heart in thinking of these first brothers, St Bruno wrote, *Concerning you, beloved lay brothers, I say: my soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, for I perceive his boundless mercy reposing on you. I am full of joy for, even though you have no knowledge of letters, God almighty writes directly in your hearts, not only the love, but also the knowledge, of his holy law. In fact, you show what you know and love by what you do, in observing true obedience with all possible zeal and care. This obedience is the carrying out of God's will, and is both the key to, and the distinctive seal of, complete submission to the Spirit. It is never found without deep humility and outstanding patience, and is always accompanied by pure love for God and sincere charity towards others. By this it is clear that you are wisely gathering the delectable and life-giving fruit of what God writes in you. Remain then, my brothers, in the state that you have attained.*

10 Love of the Lord, prayer, zeal for solitude, and the same vocation of service through work, unite the converse nuns with one another. By their work, and in their own particular form of solitary life and recollection, they provide for the material needs of the House, particularly entrusted to them. Thanks to this, they enable the cloister nuns to devote themselves more freely to the silence of the cell, whose austerity they wholly assume in prayer and work. Thus, conforming themselves to Him who came, not to be served, but to serve, cloister nuns and converse nuns manifest the riches of a life totally dedicated to God in solitude, though in different ways.

United in one body, these two forms of life have different graces, but there is a communication of spiritual benefits between them, and thus they complete one another. By means of this harmony, the charism entrusted by the Holy Spirit to our father St Bruno is enabled to attain its plenitude.

11 Thus, different are the ways of life combining necessarily for the perfection of our unique vocation. Let each one pursue her course unswervingly towards this goal, remaining in the state wherein she has committed herself. It would be vain in fact to compare callings, since all receive their identical consecration and value from their participation in Christ's priesthood.

12 Cloister nuns and converse nuns live in a spirit of charity, outrivalling each other in showing consideration. True disciples of Christ, in deed as in name, they strive in shared

affection to harmonize their sentiments, to accept each other and to forgive every offence, so as to have one heart and voice for praising God.

13 The duty of the Prioress toward all her daughters, cloister and converse nuns, is to be a living sign of the heavenly Father's love for them ; to thus so unite them in Christ that they form one family, and as Guigo put it, that each of our Houses be truly a Carthusian Church.

14 The latter is rooted in and based on the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, efficacious sign of unity. This is the centre and the summit of our life, and the manna of our spiritual exodus which, in the desert, brings us back to the Father through Christ. By means of the liturgy, the mystery of Christ confers its unity to our monastic life; it is Christ who prays for us, as our Priest, and in us, as our Head. Thus we recognise our own voices in Him, and his in us.

15 Since our Order is totally dedicated to contemplation, it is our duty to maintain its separation from the world with the utmost fidelity. Hence, no matter how urgent may be the needs of the active apostolate, we are exempt from all pastoral ministry, so that we may fulfil our proper function in the Mystical Body of Christ.

It is for Martha to render a service that is truly praiseworthy, though not free from worries and agitation; let her leave her sister, however, seated at the feet of Christ, where in all freedom and docility she sees that he is God. She purifies her spirit, prays in the depth of her heart and listens to God who speaks within her. Thus, according to the faint degree possible to one who contemplates obscurely as in a dark mirror, she tastes and sees how good the Lord is. At the same time she prays for Martha and for all those who, like her, labour in the service of the Lord. In this, Mary has not only the most impartial of judges, but also the most faithful of advocates, the Lord himself who, instead of limiting himself to defending her vocation, praises it in saying, *Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her*. He thus dispenses her from involvement in Martha's worries and agitation, however charitable they may be.

Chapter 4

The Keeping of Cell

1 Our principal endeavour and our vocation are to find God in silence and solitude. There, the Lord and his servant frequently converse, as between friends. There, the faithful soul is often united to the Word of God, the bride with her spouse, earth is joined to heaven and the human to the divine. However, the road is long, and dry and barren are the paths that must be travelled to attain the fount of water, the promised land.

The Cloister Nuns

2 The cloister nun, specially dedicated to a life of silence and solitude in the cell, must be very carefully on her guard not to accept or invent occasions for going out, other than those prescribed by the rule. Rather, she will consider the cell as necessary for her salvation and life as water is to fish and the sheepfold to sheep. If she becomes accustomed to leaving it frequently, for trivial reasons, she will soon find it unbearable, since, as St Augustine has said, *For lovers of this world, there is no harder work than not working*. On the contrary, the more she has lived in cell, the more willingly will she dwell there, provided her time there is spent in a fruitful and orderly way, reading, writing, reciting psalms, praying, meditating, contemplating and working. During this time, let her accustom herself to tranquil listening with her heart, which allows God to penetrate it by all ways and all means of access. Thus, with God's help, she will avoid the danger that often lies in wait for the solitary: to follow too easy a path in cell, and finally to be counted among the mediocre.

3 A nun who has permission to go out of cell, does not speak to those she meets, without explicit permission. Even then, she will not speak of the affairs or administration of the House, or in any way interfere with them. It is not fit for the dweller in cell to know these things, entrusted to the care of the officers; moreover, it would be contrary to the peace of the House. Happy is she whose desire is to remain alone in silence.

The Converse Nuns

4 God calls the converse nun too, and the donate, to enjoy the benefits and the spiritual joy which solitude and silence provide. Let her heart be like a living altar, from which pure prayer ascends constantly towards the Lord, permeating all her acts.

5 She should carefully and attentively watch over her exterior solitude, which is not generally protected by the seclusion of the cell. But this exterior solitude will remain fruitless if at all times, even during work, it is not accompanied by solitude of mind, though without tension.

6 When the converse nuns are not occupied with the Divine Office in church nor with work in their obediences, they always return to cell as to a sure and tranquil haven. There they remain in peace and, as far as possible, without noise; they faithfully follow their timetable and do all in the sight of God, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through him. In cell they are to be usefully occupied in reading or meditating, especially Sacred Scripture, which is the food of the soul; or else, they give themselves to prayer, as much as they can. They will be careful not to seek or accept occasions of going out, apart from those normally prescribed or those arising from obedience. In fact, human nature would sometimes like to escape from the silence of

solitude and spiritual peace.

7 One of the principal acts of love for our sisters is respect for their solitude. We do not enter another's cell without permission; and she who has such a permission, does not enter without warning. She knocks and waits until the door is opened; she then gives a religious greeting, and the conversation remains brief.

8 If anyone is in another's cell or elsewhere outside cell with permission, she should leave immediately on hearing the bell for the evening Angelus, unless she has special permission to remain longer.

Between this moment and the morning Angelus, we cannot go, nor be called, to the cell of the Prioress or that of any other officer, without a very special reason.

9 If a nun lacks something strictly necessary or if some danger threatens, she may leave the cell and give or seek aid, and even explain the situation in a few words, if the necessity is sufficiently urgent.

10 Each year, for eight days, consecutive or divided into two periods, we devote ourselves more wholly to the peace of cell and recollection; the novices do so for at least three days. According to custom, the anniversary of our profession or donation is considered to be the favourable moment for this retreat. Also, a nun who wishes to do so, may make a similar retreat of one day each month, if the Prioress judges it fitting.

11 Only those who have experienced the solitude and silence of the desert can know what benefit and divine joy they bring to those who love them.

Here, those who are strong can enter into themselves as much as they will, and abide there; here they can carefully cultivate the seeds of virtue and eat of the fruits of paradise with joy.

Here one strives to acquire that eye whose limpid gaze wounds the Spouse with love, a love pure and transparent which sees God.

Here one is occupied in leisure without idleness, and is at rest in tranquil activity.

Here God gives his athletes the desired reward for the labour of the combat: peace that the world does not know and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 5

Silence

1 God has led us into the desert to speak to our heart; but he alone who listens in silence perceives the breath of the gentle breeze in which the Lord reveals himself. The fruit that silence brings is known to him who has experienced it. At the beginning of our Carthusian life, to keep silence requires an effort; however, if we are faithful in this, little by little, of our silence itself, something is born within us that draws us on to greater silence. To attain this, our rule prescribes that we are not to speak to one another without permission.

2 The keeping of silence being primordial in the Carthusian life, we must observe this rule with great care. However, in doubtful cases, not foreseen by the Statutes, each one will prudently judge, according to her conscience and the needs of the moment, whether and to what extent she may speak.

3 Nuns having permission to speak will restrain the number of their words and the extent of their conversation, out of respect for the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, and through love for their sisters. One may believe in actual fact that a conversation prolonged unnecessarily grieves the Holy Spirit more and causes more dissipation than a few words spoken without permission, but quickly interrupted. Often a conversation useful at the beginning, becomes rapidly useless, and finally blameworthy.

4 The nuns may speak of things useful for their work, but in a few short words, without raising their voice.

With regard to persons who enter the enclosure, we are to avoid even what might give rise to the occasion of a conversation with them.

5 When several nuns are together, the nun in charge of the group, and no one else, replies to persons encountered.

6 When nuns meet, they promptly and pleasantly give way to one another, with a humble bow of the head, and then pass on in silence.

7 On Sundays, solemnities and days of retreat, the converse nuns keep both silence and the cell more strictly.

8 Every day, between the evening Angelus and the morning Angelus, perfect silence should reign in the whole House, which no-one may break without a really urgent necessity. In fact, according to the examples of Sacred Scripture and the traditions of the monks of old, the night-time is specially favourable to recollection and to meeting God.

9 May the soul of the solitary be like a tranquil lake, whose waters well up from the purest depth of the spirit; they are untroubled by news coming from outside, and like a clear mirror, they reflect one image only, that of Christ.

Chapter 6

The Observance of Enclosure

1 From the very beginning, it was the intention of our Order that our absolute dedication to God be visibly expressed and sustained by a very strict enclosure. To what extent we are to avoid going out without a grave necessity is clearly seen in the fact that the Prior of the Grande Chartreuse never goes beyond the boundaries of the desert of Chartreuse. Since a religious Order prescribes the same rule of life for all its professed, and since we have adopted the form of life of the Chartreuse – hence our name of chartreuses – we do not readily admit exceptions on this point. However, if necessity obliges us to go out, permission from the Reverend Father is required, except in the case of urgency or that provided for by the Statutes.

2 No nun may leave the House, except the Prioress and the Cellaress, who will be careful to use this possibility only with extreme moderation. However, for administrative obligations that are unavoidable, the Prioress may permit one of us to go to a neighbouring town, among those designated by the Visitors with the approbation of the General Chapter or the Reverend Father; however, she must return the same day. A nun with permission to go out for a particular matter may visit only the persons and places concerning it. She is free to go out alone or accompanied, according to circumstances.

3 Normally, persons from outside are accompanied by a nun when they move about in the enclosure. We avoid the places where they will be found. If we must pass them, we greet them pleasantly, and go our way in silence. Without an exceptional permission of the Prioress, the nuns do not work with the brothers or workmen.

4 The doors giving access to the enclosure must remain locked. The portress, preferably a converse nun, is responsible for this. She does not allow anyone to enter or go out without the Prioress' permission.

5 The portress will be helpful to everybody; she will have a religious attitude and avoid chattering; thus her example will be beneficial for those from outside. If she judges that someone should be welcomed or refused, she will do so kindly, but with few words.

6 Strict observance of enclosure, however, would be pharisaical, if it were not the outward sign of that purity of heart, to which alone is promised the vision of God. To attain this, great abnegation is required, especially of the natural curiosity which one instinctively feels for human affairs. We must not allow our minds to wander around the world in search of news and novelties; on the contrary, our part is to remain hidden in the shelter of the Lord's presence.

7 We should therefore avoid secular books or periodicals liable to disturb our interior silence. It would be particularly contrary to the spirit of the Order to allow newspapers treating of political affairs to be introduced into our cloisters. Indeed, the Prioress should exhort her sisters to be very circumspect in the matter of secular reading. This exhortation, however, to be well understood, requires a mature and disciplined mind, capable of loyally assuming all the consequences of the better part that it has chosen, that of sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to his words.

8 Nevertheless, intimacy with God does not narrow the heart, but on the contrary,

enlarges it; it makes the heart capable of embracing, in God, the hopes and problems of the world, and the great causes of the Church, of which it is normal for the nuns to have some knowledge. However, if we have real concern for man's welfare, it will express itself, not by the satisfying of our curiosity, but by our remaining closely united to Christ. It is for each one to listen to the Spirit, so as to discern what she can admit into her mind without harm to interior conversation with God.

9 If we happen to learn something of events in the world, let us take care not to pass it on to others; rather, let us leave this news of the world there where we heard it. In fact it is for the Prioress to make known to her nuns what they ought to know, that is, above all, the life of the Church, and its needs.

10 If members of the Order, or other persons, come to the House, we should not seek conversation with them, without real necessity. In fact, making or receiving visits without a motive is of no advantage to the nun seriously attached to solitude, avid of silence and peace.

11 It is written: *Honour your father and your mother*. In order to receive the visit of our family and close relatives, we relax the rigour of our enclosure each year for two days, which may be separate or consecutive. Apart from this, unless the love of Christ really obliges us to make an exception, we avoid visits from friends and conversation with people from outside. We know that God is worthy of this sacrifice, more profitable to men than our words.

12 If, in exceptional circumstances, our close relatives ask for our presence at their side, we will remember that, in choosing to live in solitude for God, we have freely willed to give ourselves to Him there, completely and definitively. Thus our affection towards them helps them in a deeper way, since we trust that the Lord himself takes care of them for us.

13 An enclosure in which we were to keep up frequent correspondence would be futile. We neither send nor receive letters without the knowledge of the Prioress. However, all correspondence with the General Chapter, the Reverend Father, the Visitors of the House, the General Procurator, the Scribe and the Holy See is exempt from this rule. Also, the nuns under the authority of the Novice-Mistress may freely correspond with her. Furthermore, we abstain from having private conversations by telephone, save in exceptional circumstances.

14 We do not receive persons at the guest-house for retreats, with the exception of aspirants to the Carthusian life. These, if they wish to and the Prioress judges it useful, may stay within the enclosure for a period not exceeding a month, in one or two stays.

15 Since one leaving the solitary life does not have the office of teaching, no member of the Order is free to publish a study or other writing, even in a periodical, unless this be first approved by the General Chapter or the Reverend Father. Also, we should do all we can to avoid the interviews that are sometimes proposed to us. If our silence is not beneficial to men, of what use would be our words to them?

16 The charism of chastity, more precious than exterior solitude, is a gift of God which frees the heart in an exceptional way, and encourages each of us, captivated by Christ, to devote herself entirely to his service. This grace leaves no room for any meanness or selfishness in our heart. Rather, in response to the inexpressible love which Christ has shown us, it should gladden our souls in love and enable them to hear an irresistible call to an ever more complete sacrifice of self. By this spiritual virginity, which is silence and simplicity when it has become possession of God, we herald that wondrous marriage

established by Him, to be fully revealed in the future age and in which the Church has Christ as her only Spouse.

Chapter 7

The Norms of our Enclosure

- 1** Our enclosure is a papal enclosure: a stricter separation from the world, to devote ourselves in solitude to more intense prayer. It is a particular way of living and expressing the Pascal mystery of Christ, which is a death and resurrection.
- 2** According to the norms given by the Holy See, the nuns, novices and postulants, do not go out of the enclosure, except in determined cases. Likewise, only those persons whose presence is provided for by these norms, may enter the enclosure.
- 3** When it is necessary to visit the doctor or for administrative obligations, we follow the rules of our own legislation (21.5-6; 6.2). Moreover, on account of the solitary life that we lead, we may take our weekly walk outside the enclosure. (15.9)
- 4** The Prioress may permit nuns to carry out manual work outside the enclosure, but only inside the buildings (Church, guest-house, parlours). However, they are not to go into that part which is the lodgings of the monks.
- 5** Nuns of our Order, merely visiting one of our Houses, may lodge within the enclosure.
- 6** During Offices, the required separation from the part of the Church which is not enclosure will be guaranteed by means approved by the Holy See, in accordance with the judgement of the Visitors and taking into account the diversity of the Houses.
- 7** All visits are received in the parlour. However, no-one goes there without the Prioress' permission, or in her absence, that of the Sub-Prioress.
- 8** The parlour has a material separation, such as a grill or a fixed table. When we receive our families, the nuns who desire it may, according to the judgement of the Prioress, receive them where there is no separation, and go out into the garden with them, within fixed limits. If there is a grill in the parlour, we may open it. In no circumstances, however, are the nuns to be present during the meals of their relatives, and the latter are not to enter the enclosure.
- 9** When young girls, come to examine their Carthusian vocation, are staying outside the enclosure, we may receive them as described in 7.8 for our families, if this is in accordance with the Prioress' judgement.
- 10** During the Visit, the Visitors enter the enclosure to inspect the House. They may also enter to talk with the assembled community; and according to the custom of the House, their conversation with each nun in the parlour may take place with the grill open, if they judge it appropriate.
- 11** It is to them that is entrusted the care of watching over the observance of the enclosure in each House. During the Visit, they will examine everything relating to this observance, especially the confessionals and the parlours.
Also will be borne in mind the responsibility that the Church entrusts to the diocesan Bishop concerning the enclosure.

12 However, each nun must be conscious of her responsibility before God for her own solitude and that of the community. Above all, it is our interior fidelity which enables us to assume the norms of our enclosure, it being in these norms that our spirit of solitude takes flesh.

Chapter 8

Fasting and Abstinence

1 Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, so that we should follow in his steps. This we do when we accept the trials and anxieties of life, or when, in the freedom of God's children, we choose to live in poverty and we renounce our own will. However, according to monastic tradition, it is also our part to follow Christ in his fast in the desert, in treating the body severely and mastering it, so that the desire of God may enlighten our minds.

2 We observe abstinence once a week, usually on Friday. That day, fish or eggs are not served to us, nor milk, butter or cheese. On certain days and at certain times of the year we observe the fast of the Order, that is, we take a meal at midday, and only a very light meal in the evening (see chapter 43).

3 We should not practice corporal penance solely to obey the Statutes. Its main purpose is to free us from the will of the flesh, so that we may follow the Lord more promptly.

If, in some particular circumstance, or with the passing of time, a nun realizes that one of our observances is beyond her strength, and hinders her fervent following of Christ, instead of sustaining it, she will come to a filial understanding with her Prioress, so as to decide the measure which is suitable for her, at least for a time. However, ever mindful of Christ's call, she will acknowledge what she is still able to do ; and what she cannot give to the Lord by common observance, she will offer to him in another way, in denying herself and in carrying her cross each day.

4 Novices, then, are to be accustomed gradually to the abstinences and fasts of the Order, so that, under the watchful eye of the novice-mistress, they may be brought to follow strict observance, without risk or imprudence. Thus they will learn to mortify the deeds of the flesh by the spirit, and to carry in the body the imprint of the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in their bodies.

5 In accordance with an observance introduced by our first fathers, and always most carefully kept, we have renounced the use of meat. In fact, this is a characteristic mark of the Order and a sign of the eremitical austerity in which, with God's help, we intend to persevere.

6 It would be out of keeping with Carthusian sobriety and voluntary poverty to complain about the food, especially in the presence of the community. By this, however, we do not intend to prevent anyone from explaining her needs to the Prioress, with simplicity and detachment; and the Prioress will provide her nuns adequately with what is necessary, in accordance with the practice of the Order.

7 Let us observe frugality at all times, even on festival occasions, although at such times it is permitted that the joy in our hearts be manifested in a visible way. If the Prioress considers it necessary to correct certain abuses which may have crept in, all will gladly accept her decision.

8 No-one, without the knowledge and approval of the Prioress, may practise penances other than those prescribed by these Statutes. But if the Prioress wishes us to have some extra food or sleep, or anything else whatever, or if, on the contrary, she wishes to impose

something on us that is hard and laborious, we are not allowed to refuse; for in resisting her, it is not her that we would resist in reality, but the Lord, whose place she holds in our regard. For however numerous and divers are our observances, we cannot hope for any benefit from them without the blessing of obedience.

Book 2

The Formation

Chapter 9

The Novice-Mistress

1 The novices' formation is entrusted to the novice-mistress, who should be a nun noted for her good judgement, her charity and her faithful observance of the rule; she should have the necessary maturity and experience of the things of the Order. She must be one who loves our vocation deeply, and who knows how to discern what pertains more specially to the vocation of the cloister nuns and more specially to the converse nuns or donates. She will have an understanding of the diversity of characters and be open-minded with regard to the needs of youth. On the other hand, although having the spiritual perfection of the novices intimately at heart, she must know how to excuse the defects of others before them.

The cloister-novices' mistress

2 The cloister-novices' mistress will cherish contemplative repose and life in cell, and above all, give the example of recollection. She is strongly advised not to lose contact with the solemn professed, and even to take part sometimes in community recreations, where one learns to know and love one another better. On her part, the prioress will free the novice-mistress from secondary occupations that would prevent her from acquiring the necessary knowledge for accomplishing her office or from living in the peace and silence of the cell.

3 The mistress should let her novices experience solitary life in cell, and its austerity. She is to form them, from the beginning, indeed, though above all, during their last year, in the use of their responsibility and of their liberty in solitude.

4 During the first three years of temporary profession, the cloister junior professed remain under the direction of the novice-mistress. When they pass over to the solemn professed, they are no longer under the government of the mistress.

The mistress of the converse novices and donate novices

5 The mistress of the converse and donate novices will be a lover of silence and contemplation. This function may be carried out by the Cellaress. In this case, the Prioress can divide the economic administration between the Cellaress and a Sub-Cellaress, in order to avoid the novice-mistress' being unduly burdened by the care of temporal affairs.

6 The novice-mistress forms those in her care to a life of prayer, rooted in faith and love, and nourished by the pure source of the Word of God. They are to learn how to harmonise this life of prayer with the elements that are proper to their vocation, namely, solitude, silence, liturgy and work.

7 However, the Cellaress, whose office puts into daily contact with the sisters, will form them still more efficaciously in the practice of the virtues and the life of prayer by her own example. This teaching, in fact, is communicated more by living than by words.

8 During the years of probation, novices are given more time in cell, to allow them to

devote themselves more effectively to their spiritual formation.

9 Converse sisters remain in the care of their mistress until perpetual Profession, and the donates until perpetual Donation or entry into the regime in which donation is renewed every three years. These sisters and donates are formed to use their responsibility and their liberty in solitude and in the obediences, above all, during the last two years of formation.

10 The elder converse sisters, especially those in charge of an obedience, contribute effectively towards the formation of their younger sisters who work with them, by giving them the example of regular observance, of virtue and of prayer, in the circumstances of daily life. However, in order to respect the interior silence and the particular grace of each, they will ordinarily abstain from conversations with them, even about spiritual matters, since they are not to intervene in the formation of their sisters in this way.

Chapitre 10

The Formation

1 The novice-mistress' role is to form the novices to regular observance, to guide them in their spiritual exercises and to give them suitable help in times of difficulty. Although, like our father St Bruno, she should have the heart of a mother, she will also show the firmness of a father, so that the novices may receive a truly monastic formation. She will teach them to help one another spiritually, in sincere love and simplicity.

2 She will seek to make them grow continually in love for Christ and the Church, by returning tirelessly to the sources of all Christian life, to the teaching of monastic tradition and to the original inspiration of our Order. She will clearly bring out the spirit of our father St Bruno and cultivate the authentic traditions, faithfully preserved in the Order since its beginning, and which were collected particularly by Guigo.

She will also make known to them the value of the Virginal Consecration which the Carthusian nuns have always kept, as a concrete sign of the vocation to which the Lord has called the whole Order, that is, to lead a life purely consecrated to him.

3 The mistress is to take great care that her novices acquire a sound knowledge of our Statutes, by means of attentive and regular study, which will enable them to understand and love them more and more. Once a week, she unites the novices to instruct them for at least half-an-hour, in which time she teaches them, above all, the spirit of our vocation and the observances of the Order, of which they must not be ignorant.

4 The novice-mistress visits the members of the novitiate and talks with each one in private with simplicity. Thus she learns to know them better and gives them advice suited to their individual needs, so that each one may attain to the plenitude of her vocation.

The young sisters should always be able to meet and converse with the Novice-mistress – spontaneously, however, and without constraint. We encourage them to expose their difficulties to her with simplicity and trust, and to consider her as having been chosen by divine Providence for guiding and helping them.

5 The Prioress should know the novices personally and watch over their formation, in such a way, however, as to leave the novice-mistress the necessary freedom in guiding them. The latter should willingly have recourse to the Prioress in carrying out her office, and will teach the novices to have the same trust in their mother.

6 The novice-mistress is to be very careful and prudent in the reception of novices, putting quality before number. To become truly a Carthusian nun, and not just in name, good will is not enough; besides love of solitude and of our life, particular aptitudes of mind and body are required, thanks to which a call from God may be recognised. The novice-mistress will give great attention to this, since she is principally responsible for examining and testing candidates. She must be aware that defects at first apparently trivial very often develop after Profession. To refuse someone or send someone away, is certainly a serious decision, to be taken only after mature reflection; but to accept or keep too long a person clearly lacking the necessary qualities, would be an act of false and cruel compassion, as well as an injustice towards the community. The novice-mistress must be watchful, too, that the novice chooses her life with complete freedom; she will be careful not to put the least pressure on her to make Profession or Donation.

7 Four times a year, the novice-mistress gives a report of each novice to the Prioress and her Council; she replies also to any questions that may be asked her concerning the other sisters of the novitiate. When they have to take a step in their formation, the Novice-Mistress presents them to the community, exposing their qualities and defects clearly and accurately; for from the information furnished by the Novice-Mistress the community must form a judgement and vote for or against admission.

8 From the second year of their novitiate, the novices begin studies, with the purpose of completing their doctrinal and monastic formation, according to the directives of the *Program of Studies*.

9 It is certainly very useful for a novice to study and to do manual work; but it is not enough to be occupied in her cell and to persevere there respectably until death, or to devote oneself generously in the obediences. Something more is required: a spirit of prayer. If life with Christ and intimate union of the soul with God were lacking, faithfulness to ceremonies and regular observance would be of little profit: our life in this case could be justly compared to a body without a soul. The novice-mistress should have nothing more at heart than, than to instil this spirit of prayer in them, and to develop it with discernment, so that the novices, after their Profession or Donation, may draw daily closer to God and so attain the end of their vocation.

10 The spiritual formation received from the Novice-Mistress is the first stage of a work of interior transformation that lasts throughout life. Each nun must constantly remain vigilant in listening to the Spirit. While remaining in the bounds of her Carthusian vocation, she will be attentive then to use the means which the Church indicates for this. The community will wholeheartedly strive to promote and sustain the human and spiritual growth of its members, and keep alive the desire of God in each.

Chapter 11

The novitiate

1 Those who, aflame with divine love and seeking eternal realities, long to leave the world, should feel, in coming to us, that we receive them in the same spirit. It is therefore very important that in the Houses where novices are to be formed, they should find an example of regular observance and piety, of silence and solitude, and likewise of fraternal love. Without this example, there would be little hope of their persevering in our vocation.

2 Candidates who come to us are to be examined carefully and prudently, as St John has cautioned us: *Test the spirits, to see if they come from God*. It is certainly true that, both in the quality and number of its members, the Order progresses or declines according to the good or bad selection and formation of novices.

Prioresses should carefully inquire about their family, their past life and their physical and psychological aptitudes. With regard to this, it will be helpful to consult prudent doctors, familiar with our way of life. Among the qualities that are required of a candidate for solitary life, a well-balanced mind and good judgement are of first importance.

3 Only those candidates may be received whom the Prioress and the majority of the community will have judged to have sufficient maturity and religious spirit, and who have the physical strength to carry the weight of our observance. They should, certainly, have an aptitude for solitude, but also for life in common.

It is not our custom to admit novices before the age of twenty.

4 More caution is required for the admission of those whose adaptation to our observance and our way of life is usually more difficult: those who are over thirty-five years of age, those who are bound, or have been bound, by vows in another Institute and those who have already lived in any status whatever in a House of the Order and have then left. These persons cannot be received as postulants without express permission being first asked of the General Chapter or of the Reverend Father. If these latter judge it necessary, they may defer the permission until the end of the postulate, but no longer than a year. This dispensation may be granted only for motives that are really exceptional, and if it concerns one who has made Perpetual Profession, the Reverend Father must obtain the Consent of the General Council.

The candidate who desires to seek one of these dispensations must reflect well on the matter, and consider that the Order, in giving such a dispensation, by no means commits itself to accept her definitely, if it happened that after long years of probation she were finally judged to be inapt for our life.

5 Those who have lived, in any status whatever, in a House of the Order, and then have left, are not to be received in the same House or in any other without prior consultation of the superiors who have known them. A former novice or professed of the Order must recommence her probation from the beginning.

6 When a candidate comes to us, she is questioned in private as to her motives and intentions. If she seems to be truly seeking God alone, the purpose of our life is explained to her: the glory we hope to give to God through our participation in the Redemption and the joy and happiness of leaving all to follow Christ. However, hard and austere perspectives are presented to her as well, and as far as possible, all the aspects of the life she wishes to embrace are exposed to her view. If she remains unperturbed, and by faith in

the Lord's word, undertakes resolutely to walk this difficult path, resolved to die with Christ in order to live with him, then according to the spirit of the Gospel, she is asked to make peace with anyone who may have something against her.

7 A candidate for the cloister must be suitable for living in solitude, and in particular have a certain general education, be capable of learning the Gregorian chant, and have some knowledge of Latin, if possible.

With a candidate for the converse nuns, one will make sure that she is able to progressively achieve that harmonious unity which should exist between contemplation and action in our solitary life. One will examine also if she has the aptitudes required for the ordinary work of the converse nuns.

8 The postulant will be treated, above all, with kindness and gentleness, and is not allowed to confront all the austerity of our life immediately, but only little by little, according to her possibilities. (Cf. 8.4)

Before the converse or donate postulant begins her novitiate, one will accustom her progressively to her new life. She will participate in the liturgy at Church and will recite the Office like the converse nuns and donates. She will be given experience of different works and obediences.

9 The probation lasts from six months to a year, towards the end of which the postulant is proposed to the community for her admission to the novitiate. The vote takes place another day. (For the admission of converse nuns and donates to the novitiate, see 17.3).

10 The community is called to vote each time that a candidate is to pass from one stage of her formation to another, and this vote is deliberative.

This is what is meant by a deliberative vote: if the majority of the community votes negatively, or if there is an equal division of votes, the candidate must withdraw; if the vote is positive, this means that the community, for its part, is willing to receive the candidate. However, the decision of her admission depends on the Prioress, as mother of all. It is to be noted that the Prioress is not obliged by the affirmative vote of the community to receive the candidate.

11 The cloister postulant will make a retreat of eight days before beginning her novitiate. For the converse or donate postulant, the retreat will be of four days, at least.

No novice can be received in the absence of the Prioress, unless her express permission is given.

12 Since the novice has decided to leave all to follow Christ, she entrusts any money or other possessions brought with her to the safe keeping of the Prioress or her delegate. As for us, we ask nothing at all of those who choose to enter our Order, nor of novices.

13 The novitiate lasts for two years. The Prioress may prolong it, if she sees fit, or at the request of the novice, but no longer than six months.

A candidate for the converse or donate way of life, must make her choice between these two before the end of her first year at the latest. She will make this decision herself in total freedom.

14 When a candidate is perpetually professed of another institute, her postulate will take place as it has been said in n°11.9, during which time she will continue to wear her religious habit. After that, her probation will last for six years, until she makes Solemn Profession.

For her admission to this probation, the procedure is as in n°11.10. After two years of probation, the community votes once more, and then again two years later, and then

finally for admission to Solemn Profession. A candidate for the cloister will spend the last two years of this time among the solemn professed. Perpetual professed of another institute do not make temporary profession.

15 The novitiate of the cloister nuns is not valid for the converse nuns, nor vice versa. If a donate, or a donate novice in her second year, wishes to pass to the state of converse, it is for the Prioress to determine the stages of the formation, so that it lasts at least seven years and a half and that the requirements of Canon Law are observed. A similar procedure is to be followed when a converse novice or temporary professed passes to the state of donate.

16 If a novice is in fault, it is for the novice-mistress or the Prioress to make this known to her. A novice, or junior professed still under the direction of the novice-mistress, does not habitually participate in recreations or walks with the solemn professed. From the beginning of her new life, it is important that the novice learn to regard her sisters in a charitable light, and to live in silence.

17 St Paul wrote to the first Christians: *God will not let you be tested beyond your strength.* You too, novice, do not let yourself be crushed by temptation: it is the lot of Christ's companions in the desert. Mistrust your own strength and put your trust in Jesus; since he has called you, he will bring to perfection the work he has begun.

Chapter 12

Profession

1 Dead to sin and consecrated to God by Baptism, the nun is still more totally dedicated to the Father by religious profession. Freed from the ties of the world, she will be able henceforth to strive more directly towards perfect love. The firm and stable pact which binds her to the Lord makes her share in the mystery of the indissoluble union of Christ and the Church; before the world she bears witness to that new life won for us by Christ's redeeming sacrifice.

2 Before the end of the novitiate, the novice, if she seems suitable, will be presented to the community who, some days later and after serious examination of the matter, will vote on her admission to temporary Profession. It is important that the novice, on her part, make this engagement only after mature consideration and with entire liberty.

3 If accepted by the Prioress, the novice will make a retreat of eight days and then make Profession as described in 32.8-11. From then on, she is a professed nun of the House in which she made this first Profession.

4 The future professed will herself write the formula of her Profession, as follows: *I, sister N., promise ... stability, obedience and conversion of my life, before God and his saints, and the relics of this hermitage, built for the glory of God and in honour of Blessed Mary, ever Virgin and of St John the Baptist, in the presence of Mother N., Prioress.*

In the case of a first temporary Profession, after *of my life* the words *for three years* are inserted; and when this profession is extended, the period of the extension is indicated. In the case of Solemn Profession, after *promise* the word *perpetual* is inserted.

5 It is to be noted that all our hermitages are dedicated in the first place to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to St John the Baptist, our principal heavenly patrons.

The certificate of every Profession must be dated and signed by the professed and by the Prioress who has received her vows, and is kept in the archives of the House.

6 No-one can make either temporary or solemn Profession in the absence of the Prioress. The latter, if legitimately prevented from being present, will delegate another prioress or another nun of the Order to receive the Profession in the name of the Prioress of the House. In that case, the formula of Profession will state: *in the presence of Mother N., delegated by Mother N., Prioress.*

7 Though remaining owner of her possessions during the time of her temporary vows, the novice is to make over their administration to someone of her choice, before her first Profession; at that time she may freely dispose of their use and revenues.

If, for a legitimate reason, a nun in temporary vows wishes to modify these dispositions or act in any way concerning her temporal goods, she must obtain the permission of the Prioress of her House of Profession.

8 The first Profession is made for three years. At the end of this time, and after the vote of the community (11.10), it pertains to the Prioress to admit the junior Professed to renewal of her temporary Profession for two years. In the case of a cloister junior professed, these last two years are to be spent among the solemn professed. A converse junior professed

remains under the guidance of the novice-mistress. (Cf. 9.9)

If she sees fit, or at the request of the junior professed, the Prioress may prolong the time of probation in temporary vows. This may be done after the first three years and before the renewal of the vows for two years, or after five years, before Solemn Profession is made. However, the entire time of probation in temporary vows should never exceed six years.

For a legitimate reason, the General Chapter or the Reverend Father can dispense someone from the usual time of probation as a novice or in temporary vows, providing the norms of Canon Law are observed.

9 The disciple who follows Christ is asked to renounce all things, including self: so before solemn vows, the future professed must part with everything she then possesses. At the same time she may, if she wishes, dispose of future possessions to which she is entitled. No member of the Order is to ask her for anything at all of her possessions, not even with a view to pious works or to making a charitable donation to whomsoever. On the contrary, the junior professed must be left to dispose of everything as she pleases.

10 When the time for Solemn Profession draws near, the future professed will ask for mercy in Chapter, and will request to be received as the most humble servant of all. In the case of a cloister-nun, she will be proposed to the community by two nuns designated by the prioress; a converse nun will be proposed by her novice-mistress and another nun. A few days later, the community will vote on her admission (11.10); the Prioress will be able to receive the candidate when she has obtained the Reverend Father's consent.

11 On the appointed day, the nun pronounces her Profession in the presence of the Prioress, after the Gospel or the *Credo* of the conventual Mass (32.12-13). Thus, the offering of herself, which she intends to unite to that of Christ, will be accepted by God and consecrated by him.

12 Profession made, she who has just been received knows herself henceforth such a stranger to the things of the world that she no longer has power over anything, not even over her own self, without the permission of her Prioress. All those who have decided to live according to a rule must diligently observe obedience. However, we must observe it all the more carefully and fervently, inasmuch as we are engaged in a stricter and more austere way of life. In fact, if unfortunately obedience were lacking, all these efforts would be fruitless. It is for this reason that Samuel said: *Obedience is better than sacrifices, submission better than to offer the fat of rams.*

13 Following the example of Jesus Christ, who came to do the will of his Father, and who, taking the form of a servant, learned obedience through what he suffered, the nun, by her Profession, submits to the Prioress, as God's representative; thus she strives to allow Christ to attain his full stature in her.

14 After solemn Profession or perpetual Donation, the nuns may receive Virginal Consecration, of which the Order has always maintained the tradition – taking into account the norms decreed by the preliminaries of the Carthusian ritual of the Consecration, section IV.

The Houses that desire it may follow the former custom according to which all the cloister nuns receive the Consecration.

15 The Virginal Consecration is a solemn rite by which the virgin is established by the Church in a state of belonging to God. She becomes, as it were first fruits of the Kingdom and a transparent symbol of the great sacrament, whose plenitude is the union of Christ and the Church.

The offering of her virginity which the virgin makes to God during the Consecration calls for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. By the faithfulness and disponibility with which she receives this gift, she will add a new beauty to the mystical Body of Christ; and by means of her union with Him, she will become a more fertile source of life for the world.

The consecrated virgin is concerned with things of the Lord. Her life is hidden with Christ in God. In imitation of Mary, the virginal mother of God, she desires to be truly the servant of the Lord.

Chapter 13

Donation

1 In the House of God there are many dwelling places: just as there are cloister nuns and converse nuns among us, likewise there are donates. They do not take vows, but for the love of Christ they give themselves to the Order by means of a reciprocal commitment. Since they live the monastic life, we call them nuns too. They have left the world and reached the solitude of the Charterhouse in order to consecrate their whole life to the Lord by giving themselves to prayer and work within the protection of the cloister. Quite frequently, in fact, persons of real holiness have chosen to live and die as donates, so as to be numbered among the children of St Bruno and benefit from his spiritual heritage.

2 If the novitiate has been completed in a satisfactory way, the donate novice is admitted by the Prioress to temporary donation, after the vote of the solemn professed and of the perpetual donates. (11.10)

3 On the day of temporary or perpetual Donation (32.16-18), the future donate –having previously made a retreat of at least four days– will pronounce her Donation in the presence of the whole community, before Vespers. The donation is to be written in the following terms : *I, sister N., for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and in order to attain to eternal life with him, and to contribute to the growth of the Church, promise to serve God faithfully as a donate, observing obedience and chastity, and living without personal possessions. I therefore give myself to this House ... by a reciprocal commitment; I am resolved to serve it at all times, in submitting to the discipline of the Order, according to the Statutes.*

When it is question of the first temporary donation, *for three years* is added after the words *I give myself to this House*; in the case of extension of the donation, the period of the extension is expressed ; if it is question of perpetual donation, *forever* is inserted.

4 Although the donate lives without personal possessions, she retains the ownership of her property and the right to dispose of it. Before perpetual Donation, however, no-one may alienate it, and the donate, even if she desired to alienate it, cannot be permitted to do so.

5 Once the donation has been made, the donate is a member of the Order; she is bound henceforth to her House of donation, even if it happened that she were sent to another House of the Order, for a just motive. She cannot be dismissed from the Order, unless she were to fail seriously in one of her obligations, in which case, the Prioress, with the consent of the Council, has the power to annul her Donation. When a contract of Donation is broken, a document giving proof of this breaking off must be signed by both parties, that is, by the Prioress in the name of the community and by the donate.

6 When three years of temporary donation have come to an end, it belongs to the Prioress – after the vote of the community, including the perpetual donates (11.10) – to admit the candidate to the renewal of her donation for two years. However, if she sees fit, or at the request of the junior donate, the Prioress may prolong the time of temporary donation, but not for more than a year.

7 At the end of the time of probation, and following the vote of the community, including

the perpetual donates (11.10), it belongs to the Prioress to admit the donate either to perpetual Donation or to enter the regime whereby her Donation is renewed every three years ; in the latter case, no vote is required for the subsequent renewals. Furthermore, the consent of the Reverend Father is required for admission to perpetual Donation.

8 The donates are nuns having their own customs with regard to the Office and the other observances. These customs may be adapted to the needs of each one, and enable her to live our vocation of union with God in solitude and silence, according to the way best suited to her. The donates are to use this ordered liberty, not as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but in the service of love. Thus they will serve the Lord in a different way from that of the converse nuns, yet without their gift of themselves to God being less real, or less fervent their desire for holiness. Finally, they give the House very useful help, sometimes fulfilling tasks much less easily compatible with the observances of the converse nuns.

9 By means of silent prayer, the donate is to endeavour, above all, to acquire a deep interior life, hidden with Christ in God. Thus she will attain to that inestimable good which is the knowledge of Jesus Christ. For this is eternal life: to know the Father, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent.

Livre 3

The Community

Chapitre 14

The daily celebration of the Liturgy

1 After having described the life of the nun while listening to God in cell or at work, now, with God's help, we are going to speak of the community. In fact, the grace of the Holy Spirit gathers solitaries together to form a communion in love, as an image of the Church, which is one, though spread throughout the world.

2 Our Father St Bruno, in entering the desert with six companions, followed in the footsteps of those monks of old, wholly dedicated to silence and poverty of spirit. However, it was the particular grace of our first fathers to introduce a daily liturgy into this life – a liturgy which, while maintaining the austerity of the eremetical vocation, would unite it, expressively, to the hymn of praise which Christ the High Priest entrusted to his Church. We have kept this particular liturgy, as harmonising with our solitary contemplative life.

3 As in the synaxis of the monks of the first centuries, the most important moments in our liturgy are the night vigils – to which is joined morning praise – the conventual Eucharistic celebration and evening praise. For these Offices we come together in Church.

4 When we assemble for the Holy Eucharist, the unity of the Carthusian family is accomplished in Christ, present in prayer.

5 The prayer of the night is that in which we keep a holy and persevering watch, awaiting the return of the Master, so as to open to him as soon as he knocks. Evening praise is celebrated at the moment when the decline of the day invites the soul to a spiritual sabbath.

6 The other canonical Hours of the liturgy are usually recited in cell. On Sundays and solemnities, Terce, Sext and None are sung in choir.

7 Liberty of spirit is a mark of the solitary life. The liturgy celebrated in the secret of the cell reflects this, and thus harmonises more deeply with the aspirations of the heart, without ever ceasing to be an act of our community life. At the sound of the bell, all pray at the same time, so that the whole monastery becomes a single act of praise to the glory of God (see also 41.17).

8 When the nuns celebrate the Divine Office, they are the voice and heart of the Church. Through them, in Christ, the Church presents adoration and praise to the Father, and also supplication and humble petition for pardon. Assuredly, the nuns fulfil this important function by their whole life, but in a more explicit and official way in the liturgy.

9 The nun unceasingly meditates the Holy Scriptures, until they become part of her being. When it is the Church herself who distributes them to us during the liturgy, we receive them as the bread of Christ.

10 To a great extent, the conventual liturgy is sung. Our particular Gregorian chant is part of the Order's heritage, which we have kept from the very beginning. We know that these melodies favour interiority and spiritual sobriety.

11 The divine Office of the cloister nuns is that described in our liturgical books. The converse nuns' participation in the sacred liturgy may take place in different ways (44.11), all being nonetheless the public prayer of the Church.

12 Besides the Divine Office, our Fathers have transmitted the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary to us. Ordinarily each one of its Hours precedes the corresponding Hour of the Divine Office. By this prayer we celebrate the eternal newness of the mystery in which Mary engenders Christ spiritually in our hearts.

13 The Lord has called us to represent the whole of creation before his face. It is therefore our duty to intercede for all: for our brothers and sisters, our families, our benefactors and for all the living and dead.

14 The liturgy of reconciliation is a perpetual Paschal mystery of the Lord. We celebrate it frequently, as sinners seeking the Lord's face, in order to be renewed each time by Him. In fact, the quality of our life of prayer is closely linked to a personal, conscious and assiduous use of the Sacrament of Penance.

15 Since our vocation is to remain unceasingly awake to God's presence, our whole life tends to transform itself into a continual liturgy. This becomes more explicit at certain moments: when we offer the official prayer of the Church, or when we follow the movement of our heart. This diversity is not a source of division, for it is always the same Lord who exercises his priesthood in us, praying to the Father in the one Spirit.

Chapter 15

Life in common

1 As we live the solitary life in cell or in the obediences, the fire of divine love can enkindle and then enlarge our hearts, and this love, which is the bond of perfection, unites us as members of one body. We express this love for one another during conventual reunions, in saying and showing our joy to be with our sisters and in willingly forgetting ourselves for them.

2 The Sacred Liturgy is the noblest part of community life, on account of the quality of communion which it establishes between us. When we take part in it together each day, it gives us life through Christ's Blood and maintains our hearts united in God's presence.

3 The Chapter House is a place particularly worthy of our esteem. Each one of us has been received there as the most humble servant of all; there too, in the presence of her sisters, each one acknowledges her faults committed since that time; we also listen to spiritual reading there, and discuss matters pertaining to the common good.

4 On certain solemnities, all the community meets to hear a sermon. After None on Sundays and solemnities – except Christmas, Easter and Pentecost and the solemnities that fall on weekdays in Lent – we go to the Chapter House to hear a reading from the Gospels or the Statutes. We publicly acknowledge our faults there every second week – or once a month, if that enables us to do so with greater sincerity. Each one may freely confess faults committed against her sisters, against the Statutes or against the principal obligations of our life in God's service. And since solitude of heart can be protected only by the wall of silence, those who have broken silence must always acknowledge it and receive the public penance that is customary. After the accusation, the Prioress may give admonitions, if that is opportune. In accordance with the custom of the Houses, the converse nuns and donates may acknowledge their faults at a different moment, or elsewhere.

5 If some matter has to be discussed, or if the Prioress wishes to have the advice of the community, the nuns will assemble in Chapter, at the Prioress' request.

6 We take dinner together in the refectory on Sundays and solemnities, on which days community meetings are more frequent and more place is given to the comforting joy that family life brings. The refectory, which we enter after having celebrated an Office in Church, brings to mind the Supper which Christ made into a sacred mystery. The tables are blessed by the hebdomadary nun, and while we receive food for the body, our souls are nourished by spiritual reading.

7 Recreations and walks take place according to the needs of the community and under the control of the General Chapter or of the Reverend Father. They never take place on Christmas Day, Easter Sunday or Whit Sunday, the last three days of Holy Week, nor on days of abstinence or of burial.

The cloister nuns, the converse nuns and the members of the novitiates have their own organisation of recreations and walks. According to the judgement of the Prioress, these fraternal meetings may take place in common, or separately. All the nuns will have it at heart to participate in them, and no-one will abstain from them without the Prioress'

permission, which will be granted only for very serious reasons.

8 Since the purpose of the recreation is to develop a spirit of communion, all will endeavour to sincerely take part in them, without remaining apart. We do not speak elsewhere than at the place where the others are, unless it is to say just a few words. In these fraternal meetings, let us remember the counsel of the Apostle: *Rejoice, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of peace and love will be with you.*

Board games are out of keeping with our vocation.

9 As Saint Bruno has said, when the mind, too fragile, is tired by the austerity of the rule and application to spiritual things, it can often be refreshed and renewed by the desert's charm or the beauty of the countryside. That is why we have a walk on fixed days. This walk may take place within or without the enclosure, though always in a way that will procure sufficient relaxation.

10 In accordance with an old custom of our Order, a longer walk is granted once a year. On that day it is permitted to go beyond the limits fixed by the General Chapter. We may take some food, but we observe Carthusian frugality, and we eat at a distance from strangers. The Prioress may grant a second annual walk of this kind, but during which we do not eat.

11 Our walks should be such as to further fraternal union and the spiritual progress of our souls. In order that each one, in turn, may be able to talk with the others, all go at the same time, by the same way, unless it seems indicated, for a just reason, to make two groups, or three. Should it be necessary to go through some village of the surrounding area, we will merely pass through it, and in a very reserved way; nor may we ever enter the houses of seculars. We are not to enter into conversation with strangers, nor to give them any gift. We do not eat or drink anything during the walk, except spring water found on the way.

12 The purpose of our conversations is to maintain mutual affection, and to help us to live in solitude. Let us avoid, then, verbiage, shouting or unseemly laughter. Let our conversations be religious, not frivolous or worldly; and let us hold in horror the least kind of detraction or murmuring. If it happens that we are not in agreement with a Sister, let us know how to listen to her, making an effort to understand her point of view, so that in all things the bonds of mutual love will grow stronger.

Chapter 16

The Prioress

1 Following the example of Christ, the Prioress is among her sisters she who serves. She guides them according to the spirit of the Gospel and the tradition of the Order, which she herself has received. She strives to be useful to all by her words and by her life. Particularly, she will be an example of contemplative peace, of stability, solitude and fidelity to the observances of our vocation.

2 In all places, the seat of the Prioress, and her clothes, are not distinguished by any mark of dignity or luxury; she does not wear anything indicating that she is the Prioress.

The election of a Prioress

3 Every House of the Order, where there are at least six professed qualified to vote, may elect its Prioress. The election must take place within forty days; once this time has expired, the Reverend Father or the General Chapter will appoint a new Prioress.

All the solemnly professed living in the House have active voting rights for the election, according to the norm given in chapter 34, n^o2.

4 First of all, the community decides by a secret vote (according to Canon Law 119, 2^o) whether it wishes to elect. If it does not wish to, the General Chapter or the Reverend Father will provide for the need of the House. If it wishes to proceed with the election, the future Prioress must obtain more than half of the votes actually cast. If, after four ballots, no-one is elected, the Reverend Father will provide for the need of the House (34.1,14 et 15).

5 Two monks, appointed by the General Chapter or the Reverend Father, proceed to confirm the election, as explained in chapter 34 of the Statutes. This chapter also contains the practical norms for the election.

6 A nun who has not yet lived in the Order for five years after solemn profession cannot be elected, nor she who is impeded by one of the particular impediments expressed in chapter 34, n^o7.

A Prioress cannot leave her office unless she receives mercy.

The Prioress at the service of her sisters

7 The Prioress should show a maternal solicitude towards all. She will visit them from time to time in their cells and obediences. If someone comes to see her, she will receive her with love, and will always give a willing hearing to each. She should be such that her nuns, especially in time of trial, can have recourse to her, as to a loving mother, and, if they so wish, freely and spontaneously open their souls to her. She will not yield to human views, but she will strive, with her nuns, to listen to the Spirit in a common seeking of God's will, of which she has received the mission of being the interpreter for her sisters.

8 The Prioress must not allow a relaxation of regular discipline, with a view to being loved: that would destroy God's house instead of building it up. On the contrary, let her govern her nuns as children of God, seeking to develop an attitude of voluntary and loving submission in them, which will make them more totally conformed, in their solitude, to the

obedient Christ.

9 The nuns, for their part, will love and respect their Prioress in Christ, always showing an attitude of deference and humble obedience towards her. Let will have confidence in her who has received the charge of their souls in the Lord; and since we must believe that she takes the place of Christ for us, they will cast all cares into her hands. Far from being wise in their own eyes and from relying on their own judgement, let them turn their hearts to the truth and give heed to their mother's counsels.

10 The Prioress will be vigilant that young cloister nuns, when they first come to live among the solemnly professed, converse nuns who have just made their final Profession, and donates who have just left the guidance of the novice-mistress, are not left to themselves and to the whim of their own wills; for experience has shown that these are decisive years for a vocation and all the future depends on them. In simple talks with them in private, she will know how to help these nuns as a mother, and even as a sister. Finally, she will be careful, as far as possible, not to appoint anyone to an office too soon, especially not to that of Cellaress.

11 The Prioress will be attentive that the nuns receive a solid formation, suited to their spiritual needs. This formation should be doctrinal, spiritual, biblical and liturgical. She will be watchful, too that, in reading our Statutes, each one may know how to find the spirit that should permeate all her life.

12 As books are the permanent food of our souls, the Prioress will willingly procure them for her nuns. The nourishment that is suitable for them is, above all, Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church and proven monastic authors. The Prioress will supply them also with other books of sound quality, carefully chosen, and suited to the needs of each. In solitude, we do not read in order to be informed of the latest opinions, but so as to nourish our faith in peace, and foster prayer. If necessary, the Prioress may prohibit a book to her nuns.

13 The Prioress will be especially solicitous and attentive towards the sick, and towards those who suffer temptations or other afflictions, since she knows by experience how much our solitude can sometimes be full of trials.

14 The Prioress should show a real love towards those who are exclaustrated, and also towards those who may have left the Order of their own accord; she should help them, as far as she can, to understand God's will and to follow it. Though always ready to receive them lovingly herself, she will not allow them to enter into contact with all the nuns indifferently.

15 The Prioress is to supervise the economic administration of the House, showing solicitude and foresight in everything. She will manage these temporal affairs with discernment before God, according to her conscience and the principles of the Order, taking care to avoid all unjustified expenditure. However, the care and anxieties of these things should not weigh down on her to such an extent as to make her less attentive to spiritual matters; she will endeavour to appoint Officers to the various obediences to whom she may entrust them with complete security.

16 The Prioress, being superior of a monastery *sui juris* in the sense defined by our Statutes, is a canonical Major Superior. It is for her to appoint all her Officers, after mature reflection, or to remove or change them, without the Visitors being able to hinder her, except during a Visitation. Before entrusting an obedience to someone, she should consult others, especially those who have well known the nun whom she proposes to designate.

She should willingly allow the latter to express her opinion before the decision is taken.

17 Let her who is entrusted with an office accept it with simplicity, knowing that a refusal would offend, not only obedience, but perhaps also charity towards the Prioress, often overburdened with cares. Recognising a sign of God's will in the latter's decision, she will assume the charge committed to her care, and will collaborate with the Prioress to the best of her ability, conscious of thus cooperating in the building up of Christ's Body according to God's plan.

18 Before dealing with an important matter concerning the obedience of an Officer, the Prioress will listen to her point of view and will endeavour to take the decision by mutual agreement. The Officers will always accept her decisions with filial deference. On her part, she will have the affection of a mother, enabling her thus to know them and their difficulties, to help them, to uphold their authority before all and, if necessary, charitably correct them. She will avoid appearing concerned only with good exterior order; rather, being herself docile to the Spirit, she will show the love of Christ to them all, for the peace and concord of the House depend to a large extent on the communion existing between the Officers and the Prioress and of their being of one mind.

19 A permission refused by the Prioress may not be granted by the Sub-Prioress or the Cellaress, unless an urgent necessity has subsequently arisen; so she who asks it must mention the Prioress' refusal, even without being questioned. Likewise, she who would wish to ask the Prioress a permission already refused by the Sub-Prioress or the Cellaress, should make known her refusal.

20 The Prioress does not deal personally with affairs which another can attend to. Her duty is to reside in the House among her sisters, and she may go out only if a real necessity obliges her to do so. From the beginning of Advent until the first day after the Epiphany, and from Quinquagesima until after the octave of Easter, she is to be stricter with herself in this matter, and limit her relations with the outside world even more.

21 When old age or illness prevent a Prioress from watching over her flock and from giving it the example of regular observance, she will humbly acknowledge it, and without waiting for the General Chapter, will ask the Reverend Father for mercy. We exhort the Definitors not to maintain Prioresses in office who are weighed down by infirmities or old age.

22 The office of the Prioress requires no small degree of self-denial: let her apply to herself these words of Guigo: *God has appointed you to be the servant of your sons. Do not seek then to make them do what pleases you, but what profits them. Your duty is to adapt yourself to their needs, not to bend them to your will, for they have been entrusted to you, that you may place yourself, not above them, but in their service.*

Chapter 17

The way of taking counsel

1 Holy Scripture tells us that *the wise man listens to advice*. The Prioress will consider it her duty then, to consult the community or her counsellors, if this seems useful for the common good, so as to seek the will of God together with her nuns. This seems specially opportune in matters involving the responsibility or the interests of the community.

2 When the Superior seeks counsel, she avoids allowing her own feeling about the matter to be seen, so that each one may freely express her own. In matters that require the consent of the community, the norms given above (11.10) are to be followed. In other discussions, the Prioress will follow the opinion she judges to be best, without regard to persons. For, whenever counsel must be sought, no law obliges it to be followed. However, if the matter lends to it, the Prioress may explain her decision to the nuns, so that they may more easily be in communion with her way of thinking.

3 Unless deprived of it by Canon Law, all solemnly professed nuns, including guests who have spent a year in the House, have a vote in Chapter. However, the Sub-Prioress, the Cellaress and the novice-mistress have this vote from the beginning of their office. Those without a vote may, nevertheless, take part in the discussions, if the Prioress considers this to be opportune. The question of who may vote in the election of a Prioress is dealt with elsewhere (34.2). For an admission to the novitiate of converse or donate and for the admission to both donations, the perpetual donates, including guests who have lived in the House for a full year, also have a vote. The word **community**, when it is a question of voting, is to be understood according to these norms. In new Houses, all solemn professed sent there – until there are six solemn professed in the community, of this House or of another – have a vote in Chapter immediately on arrival.

In elections, the majority is assessed according to the number of votes actually cast; in other votes, the majority is assessed according to the number of those actually present.

4 The Prioress has a Council besides, comprising the Sub-Prioress, the Cellaress and at least two other nuns, one of whom is chosen by the Prioress and the other elected by the community. The appointment and election of the members of this Council must be renewed at least every four years. This is the Prioress' Council, according to the meaning of the Code; in certain circumstances, and with the consent of its members, the Prioress may add other nuns to it, who are specially competent. This Council meets at least four times a year, in order to discuss all that concerns the common good, in the light of the Gospel.

5 The secret of the Council and that of Chapter must be kept inviolably, for it may happen that they gravely bind in conscience, especially when persons are involved in these matters.

6 In discussions and giving counsel, this rule, which is most wise and useful, must be strictly observed: each one will faithfully expound her way of thinking, though without preventing the others to freely express themselves; no-one is to defend her opinion, or that of another, with sharpness, lest the benefit of counsel give way to discord. If this unfortunately were to happen, the one responsible for the scandal could be excluded by the Prioress from the deliberations. On the contrary, once a decision has been taken, all will rally to it sincerely, so that there may be but one heart and one soul.

Chapter 18

The Sub-Prioress and the Antiquior

- 1** From among her nuns, the Prioress is to choose a Sub-Prioress, in whom she may have full confidence, and who is capable of helping her by her counsels. At all times, but especially when the Prioress is absent, the Sub-Prioress should be able to enlighten the others by her example and her words, and keep them all in a faithful observance and holy peace. She should have maternal solicitude for each one, but most particularly for those who are suffering illness, temptation or trial.
- 2** The Sub-Prioress represents the Prioress, and is the second person in the House. Thus her place in all community assemblies is that of the most senior, at the Prioress' right.
- 3** The Sub-Prioress receives from the Prioress the appropriate powers for fulfilling her function. However, she may not enter the obediences; she should always remember that her duties are chiefly with the cloister nuns, though she may not enter their cells. Likewise, she is not to interfere with the running of the novitiate.
- 4** When the Prioress is absent or detained, the Sub-Prioress takes her place, and she meets the needs of the nuns according to the spirit and intentions of the Prioress. In return, the nuns show her due respect.
- 5** In the absence of both the Prioress and the Sub-Prioress, it is the Antiquior who presides at all community assemblies, and who entirely fulfils the role assigned to the Sub-Prioress in the absence of the Prioress. The Antiquior, appointed by the Prioress, is not necessarily the senior by profession. She should be one to whom the Prioress and the nuns can usefully ask advice, and to whom these words of Job may be applied: *Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.*

Chapter 19

The Cellaress

1 The Prioress entrusts the converse nuns to the Cellaress, among the solemnly professed. Following the example of Martha, the Cellaress has many worries and troubles, but this should not make her completely abandon the peace and silence of the cell, and still less, take a dislike for them. On the contrary, inasmuch as the affairs of the House permit, she will constantly return to the cell as to a secure and tranquil haven, where, by reading, prayer and meditation, she will be able to calm the interior tumult caused by material cares, and store up some helpful thoughts within herself, which she may gently and prudently impart to the sisters entrusted to her.

2 In the Houses where there are several Cellaresses, what the Statutes say of one applies to each; each Cellaress, with regard to persons and things, carries out her functions in the obedience entrusted to her, under the Prioress' personal direction.

3 The Cellaress carefully carries out the administration which has been entrusted to her; she has recourse to the Prioress' directives for each business matter or expenditure. Without the Prioress' permission, she is not to take the liberty of undertaking anything important or of making any important decision, neither purchase, sale, loan or gift. For the affairs of the House, she may send and receive letters and small gifts.

4 For the supplies which the Order usually grants us, we may have recourse, not to the Prioress, but to the Cellaress. The nuns are not to enter her cell, however, for this, nor are they to speak with her, except in the place designated by the Prioress, according to the custom of the House. Whenever possible, one should preferably contact her in writing. The Cellaress will apply herself, like a humble servant, to provide what is requested without undue delay. Let her always be found with a cheerful attitude towards all. The nuns, in return, will abstain from all annoying insistence in their requests, and will show themselves grateful to her who spends time and effort for the good of her sisters. If the Cellaress refuses something relating to everyday needs, we can have recourse to the Prioress, and we must always do so for exceptional requests.

5 The atmosphere of prayer in the House depends to a great extent on the way in which practical life is organised. With regard to the cloister nuns, the Cellaress' office consists of enabling them to live in the peace of contemplation. She does not speak to them or enter their cells without permission. She may, however, exchange a few words with them at the cell door. But she must be very careful not to spread worldly news in the House.

6 For the converse nuns, the Cellaress is, in the first place, an example – for actions are more persuasive than words – and they will willingly imitate the Cellaress if she herself imitates Christ. It is chiefly in the domain of work that she carries out her function: she is concerned with the obediences, and is attentive not to overburden her sisters. So that they may dispose of sufficient time for recollection in cell, their daily work period should not normally exceed seven hours. With regard to the converse nuns' health, the Cellaress will be attentive and full of charity.

7 Each nun is responsible for her obedience; her legitimate authority, in the duties entrusted to her, will be supported by the Cellaress. The latter is to be consulted, and her

decisions are to be carried out; however, as far as possible, she will allow the nuns the necessary liberty of action so as to enable them the better to fulfil their tasks. If she wishes to change something in their obediences, she will not do so without giving them a hearing or, at least, not without informing them.

8 The Cellaress – as also the other officers of the House – will be careful not to take advantage of her office in allowing herself dispensations or unnecessary things which she would be unwilling to grant to others.

9 When the prioral office is vacant, the Cellaress will look after the prioress' cell, as well as all that is in it, though leaving all untouched.

10 The Prioress entrusts the Cellaress – or another person who is competent – with the care of keeping the chronicle of the House.

11 When the Cellaress relinquishes her office, she will leave all worry and all that is superfluous behind her, so as to follow Christ alone into the desert.

Chapter 20

Work

1 In the particular line of their vocation, the nuns are subject to the divine law of work, and they flee idleness, which the ancient monks called the enemy of the soul. They joyfully and humbly accept all the tasks required for the necessities of a life that is poor and solitary, being attentive, nevertheless, to turn all things to the service of divine contemplation, to which their lives are wholly dedicated.

Activities of the cloister nuns

2 For the cloister nuns, besides manual work of different kinds, the matter of their service comprises all the duties arising from their state of life, particularly divine worship and sacred studies.

In cell, to avoid wasting their life dedicated to God, the nuns apply themselves to suitable studies, with zeal and discretion, not for satisfying an itching for learning or for publishing books, but because wisely ordered reading gives greater strength to the soul and provides a support for contemplation. It is a mistake to believe that one can easily attain to intimate union with God, whilst having neglected study of the word of God, or having later abandoned it. So let us seek the pith of meaning rather than the froth of words and let us scrutinize the divine mysteries with that thirst of knowledge which springs from love and in return inflames it.

3 By means of manual work, the nun practises humility, and brings her whole body under control, so as to better attain interior stability.

4 During the time provided for this, she applies herself to work that is genuinely useful; it is not fitting that we waste the precious time given to us for glorifying God on vain or superfluous occupations. However, the benefit of reading and prayer is by no means excluded from this part of the day.

5 Usually, the cloister nun remains in cell for the work that is entrusted to her. However, if the Prioress considers that there is sufficient reason to make her leave the cell, she will not refuse to bring her aid for what is required of her. As soon as this obligation has ceased, she is to return to the silence of the cell, to which she has been especially called.

6 At all times, the Prioress may impose a task or service on a nun, for the common good. The latter accepts this willingly, with that joy which comes from love, since on the day of her Profession she asked to be received as the most humble servant of all. Each one may determine the authenticity of her solitary life by the prompt, peaceful and joyful way in which she adheres to God's will and to that of her Prioress, and by the true and effective love that she shows to others. However, the work entrusted to a cloister nun should always allow her sufficient liberty of spirit, and should not give rise to anxiety concerning profit or of meeting a deadline. The solitary is to be given the means of always keeping her heart watchful at all times, she whose attention is fixed more on the goal than on the work

7 The nun remains free to organise her work time in cell, in God's presence, according to her conscience and her aptitudes.

While being available for the needs of the community and in agreement with the Prioress, she is attentive to remain faithful to the particular grace of her vocation of prayer. Each

one will safeguard her solitude and her inner freedom, while fully respecting her sisters' choices in this domain, without concerning herself with their activities.

The converse nuns and their obediences

8 The converse nuns work during the hours arranged for this. While providing for the needs of the House by this work accomplished in union with Jesus, the carpenter's son, they make the whole of creation contribute towards the praise of God's glory, and glorify the Father in associating their entire person in the work of redemption. In the sweat and fatigue of work they find, in reality, a small part of the cross of Christ, whereby, through the light of the resurrection, they become sharers in the new heavens and the new earth.

9 Ancient monastic tradition regards work as a very efficacious means of progressing towards perfect charity, by the practice of the virtues. By ensuring a happy equilibrium between the soul and the body, work helps the converse nun to profit more from solitude.

10 The converse nuns work in the obediences. However, they may have a certain time for work in cell each day.

11 For the running of the obediences and for all they use, the converse nuns conform to the arrangements of the Prioress and the Cellaress, making use of their natural aptitudes and the gifts of grace in the accomplishment of the tasks committed to them. Thus obedience enlarges their liberty of children of God, and by this willing submission, they contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ in accordance with the divine plan.

12 The Cellaress, as well as the sisters in charge of an obedience, organises the work so that, at the appointed hours, the nuns may return to the silence of the cell and to prayer. If an unforeseen need were to arise at these moments, it will be entrusted preferably to the care of a nun who does not have to go to the night Office.

13 In that which concerns work, authority will be exercised in a spirit of service by those at the head of obediences with regard to their assistants, the Cellaress with regard to the converse nuns and by the Prioress towards all. They will know how to discern the aptitudes of each one, and make them yield a profit. Thus, to the sisters who depend on them, they will manifest the love with which God loves them. They will willingly consult them or give them a hearing, maintaining, however, the right to decide and to order what is to be done. In this way, all will take part in the joint task in obeying with initiative and love.

14 No-one may enter an obedience without permission, and she who is responsible for an obedience may not bring anyone into it without necessity; when this no longer exists, the visitor must leave, avoiding all unnecessary conversation. Likewise, to allow the nuns to live their vocation better, their work will be distributed in such a way that each one, as far as possible, works alone, even if there are several nuns in the same obedience.

15 The head of an obedience may not give or receive anything without permission; neither does she do any work for the nuns other than that which is due to them according to the Statutes. Should an emergency arise in the absence of the Cellaress, the head of the obedience will act as the Cellaress would have done, and afterwards she will explain to her what she did.

16 The cook and her assistant may take their meals in their obedience. No-one else may eat or drink in the kitchen, unless exceptionally and with the Prioress' permission.

17 Obediences, such as the kitchen and the pantry, which are in close contact, will be organised so that charity and harmony reign between them, and so that breaches of silence

may be avoided. Everything should show how good and pleasant it is for sisters to live together.

Work and prayer

18 The entire purpose of the nun's life is to unite her to Christ, so that she may abide in his love. In the solitude of the cell as at work in the obediences, she will seek, with all her heart and aided by the grace of her vocation, to keep her mind and heart turned towards God.

19 Interior recollection during work will lead a nun to contemplation. For this purpose, having recourse to brief ejaculatory prayers has always been recommended to us; we may also interrupt the work a little for a brief time of prayer. Sometimes even, the very weight of our work acts as an anchor to the ebb and flow of our thoughts, enabling them calm, and enabling our heart to remain fixed on God for a long time, without any mental strain.

20 The desire to do everything for God, and not for personal satisfaction, makes us love regular observance. Thus the nuns will follow the timetable with great fidelity. No matter where they are, when the bell summons them to an Office at Church, they will leave everything and go there without delay.

21 Our work takes its value not only from the solitary prayer that accompanies it; it is also a service that unites us to Christ who came, not to be served, but to serve. To save their sisters as much work as possible, the nuns strive to be independent concerning their own needs. They willingly help one another, when there is need for this and it is asked of them, happy to bear one another's burdens.

22 In union with Christ Jesus who, though he was rich, became poor for us, the nuns always work in a spirit of poverty. They avoid all waste and take care of machines, furniture and of objects of cell. They are careful not to lose tools, and do not keep for their own use those things that belong to an obedience.

23 May our activity always spring from the source within us, in the image of Christ, who constantly acted in union with the Father, in such a way that the Father dwelling in him did the works. Thus we shall follow Jesus in his humble and hidden life of Nazareth, whether praying to the Father in secret or obediently working in his presence.

Chapter 21

The sick

1 Illness or old age invite us to a new act of confidence in our heavenly Father who, by means of these trials, transforms us more in the likeness of Christ. Thus we share in the work of the redemption in a particular way, and through this our union with the entire Mystical Body of Christ becomes more intimate.

2 The Prioress especially should show compassion and kindness towards the sick, the aged and those who are suffering from some trial. The same solicitude is recommended to all those who take care of the sick. As far as the resources of the House permit, all that is necessary or helpful will be charitably provided for them; and in all matters, however personal, in which they cannot take care of themselves, they will be helped humbly by others, who will consider themselves fortunate to have received this office. Since nervous illnesses are particularly burdensome in solitude, all possible means will be sought in order to sustain those who may suffer from them, helping them to understand that they can give glory to God, if, forgetful of self, they trustingly surrender themselves to the will of him who is their Father.

3 However, as St Benedict said, the sick are to be reminded to be very careful not to distress those who take care of them, by asking superfluous, or even impossible, things, or perhaps by grumbling. Neither must the nurse, under pretext of compassion, harm her patients by an exaggerated benevolence. Being mindful of the vocation they have embraced will make them realise that the difference which exists between them and lay people should be as great in illness as in health. May God forbid that illness become an occasion of self-centredness, and that it be in vain that God has visited them.

4 It is for the sick, then, to meditate on the sufferings of Christ, and for those who look after them, his works of mercy. The former will find more strength in their trial, and the latter will be more willing to give them assistance. If all remember that it is for the love of Christ that the sick are assisted and that the others assist them, there will be neither pride on one hand, nor neglect on the other; from the same Lord each one will await the reward for having accomplished her duty, one by suffering and the other by compassion.

5 As befits Christ's poor, we content ourselves with the services of the usual doctor of the House, or if necessary, those of a specialist of the vicinity. If a nun has need of consulting a specialist in addition to our customary doctor, the Prioress may allow her to go to one of the near towns designated by the Visitors with the approval of the General Chapter or the Reverend Father; however, she must return the same day. If the specialist judges immediate admission to hospital to be necessary, without there being time to ask the Reverend Father's permission, the latter will be informed afterwards. When the doctor visits a sick nun, she usually remains alone during the consultation; she may, however, ask for the Prioress, or another nun, to be present.

6 As far as possible, our sick nuns, dedicated as they are to a life of solitude, receive the necessary care in their cells. If it happens that certain doctors, unwisely advise going outside or prescribe treatments contrary to our purpose of life, we are not to take their counsels into consideration; it is we alone who will have to account for our vows before God. Let us be careful too not to make an abuse of medicines, to the detriment of our quest of spiritual perfection, and even of our health, and of the budget of the House.

7 In all these circumstances, let us commit ourselves to the will of God with docility, and do not let us forget that the trial of illness prepares us for the joys of eternity. May we say then with the psalmist, *I rejoiced when they said to me: we shall go to the house of the Lord.*

Chapter 22

Poverty

1 The nun has chosen to follow Christ in his poverty, that by his poverty she may be enriched. Without earthly support, she counts on God, and her treasure is in heaven, where also the desire of her heart calls her. She recognises that she owns nothing; so all that is committed to her use, she will readily and most willingly put back into the hands of the Prioress, when the latter so desires.

2 Those who are solemnly professed have nothing but what the Order simply grants them the use. They have also renounced the right of asking, receiving, giving or transferring ownership without permission. Even amongst ourselves, we must have a permission for exchanging or receiving anything whatever.

3 Those in temporary vows and donates retain ownership of their property and the power of acquiring more; but they do not keep anything personal with them, as also is the case for novices. The novice-mistress will especially instil a love of poverty in her novices, and detachment from temporal goods and comforts.

4 According to the words of Guigo, if a relative or a friend sends a garment or some other gift to a monk, it is to be given, not to him, but rather to someone else, lest it seem to belong to him. Thus, no-one will allow herself to claim the right of use of books or anything else which the Order may have received thanks to her, nor to claim any other privilege concerning these things. On the contrary, let her receive such a use with gratitude, if it be granted to her, convinced that these things do not belong to her. However, a nun is never to have money freely at her disposal, nor to keep any in her possession.

5 Since the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head, let us strictly observe poverty and simplicity in our cells. May we be constantly careful to eliminate all that is superfluous or recherché, having willingly recourse, in this, to the Prioress' advice.

6 Whoever takes another's place in an obedience may not change anything in it without permission. In their own cells and obediences, the nuns will not change or install anything without having first submitted it to the Prioress and obtained her permission.

7 The Prioress will provide all the nuns with what is really necessary in the way of clothing. We do not receive more than four habits and four cowls, including those used for the weekly walk. All the nuns wear a white habit and cowl.

8 In our clothes, let us avoid all that is elegant or superfluous, which would be contrary to simplicity and poverty. In this matter, our Fathers had no other concern than to protect themselves from the cold and to cover themselves properly; according to their opinion, rough cloth and coarse objects of common use were perfectly suitable for Carthusian monks. Let us keep this spirit, while taking care that our clothes and cells are clean and well kept.

Except in the case of illness or on a journey, our bedding should be in conformity with monastic austerity.

9 Somewhat costly instruments are permitted only to those who really have need of them, according to the judgement of the Prioress. The use of musical instruments is out of

keeping with our vocation. For learning our chant, however, instruments which guide the voice or record it, may be allowed. But radio or television sets are entirely excluded from our Houses.

10 The diversity of local conditions is so great that what is necessary in one place may often be superfluous elsewhere, and it is hardly possible to establish a law which is legitimate everywhere and for all. Rather, we exhort the Prioresses to provide willingly and readily for all the real needs of their nuns, in the measure that the resources of the House permit. May they be moved by Christ's love; in doing so, they will not leave themselves open to reproach in this matter, above all, that of having caused their nuns to err by ownership because they themselves have been too parsimonious. In fact, the more willingly poverty is embraced, the more pleasing it will be to the Lord. For what is praiseworthy is to deprive oneself of the facilities of life, and not the fact of being deprived of them.

Chapter 23

The administration of temporal goods

1 The temporal goods entrusted to the Prioress are not her own nor those of any human owner; they belong to Christ who is poor, and it is to him that she will have to account for all. It is for the Prioress then to guide her Officers and their assistants in the economic administration of the House, and to carry on a prudent management of it, before God and according to her conscience, the principles of the Order and the prescriptions of the Statutes. She will be careful to avoid all unjustified expenditure.

2 When a Prioress comes into Office, the Cellaress will present her with a statement of the principal assets of the House, both movable and real. This document, countersigned by the Prioress and the members of her Council, is to be kept in the archives.

3 The necessary money for current expenses is kept by either the Prioress or the Cellaress. However, documents concerning matters of importance must be signed jointly by the Prioress and the Cellaress.

4 At the beginning of the year, or at some other time, according to the custom of the House, the Prioress asks the Cellaress to present the accounts of the past year, before the Council. Then, together with the Prioress, all will examine whether the poverty taught by the Statutes is really observed in the House. Once a year, the Prioress will account for her temporal administration to the Reverend Father.

5 For the support of their monasteries, our first Fathers decided not to count on gifts received occasionally, but to have a stable annual income, if such pleases God. For they did not consider that charges that are certain should be taken on while depending on resources that are uncertain – which expenses we would not be able to pay neither able to free ourselves from them without great peril. Moreover, the idea of wandering the world in quest of alms inspired them with horror.

6 We believe, however, that with God's help, modest resources will be sufficient for us, if the original inspiration of our life continues to live among us, in seeking what is humble, poor and simple in our clothing, our food and in all that we use; and finally, if we make daily progress in detachment from the world and in love for God, for whom we should do everything and endure every trial. Most certainly these words of our Lord apply to us: *Do not worry about to-morrow: your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. Seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness.*

7 The Cellaress will carefully see to it that no trade is done at the entrance of the House. Where this trade exists, it is to be done away with completely, if that may be done without causing scandal or serious disturbance.

8 We have the duty of strictly observing justice and civil law towards seculars who work for us, even if they do so without pay. We should take care, however, not to augment the number of these lay helpers, since their presence sometimes harms the monastic spirit of the brothers.

9 Without the consent of her Council, the Prioress is not to give or lend money – as a single sum or several times in smaller sums – superior than the amount determined by the General Chapter. She will also avoid making excessive gifts, which would risk to infringe

justice and disturb peace, and put a financial burden on the House.

10 No one is to transfer property comprised in the patrimony of the monastery, unless the House were to greatly benefit from it, and in this case, the norms of Canon Law are to be observed. If it is question of property exceeding the sum fixed by the General Chapter, no action may be taken without the consent of the Prioress' Council – expressed by secret vote- and that of the Visitors and of the Reverend Father. The same formalities are required for borrowing money which, either as a single sum or as a total of smaller sums, exceeds the amount fixed by the General Chapter. Finally, for all expenditure that is not for food, clothes or other current needs, the Council of the House is to be consulted.

11 When a House of the Order is without a Prioress, due to the latter's retirement or death, no property whatever, real or movable, may be transferred, if the matter can await the presence of the new Prioress without loss to the House.

12 A gift given to a solemn professed nun belongs to the House where she is living, even if that is not her House of Profession; however, an inheritance is always to be given to the latter. The fruit of any work carried out by a nun is to go to the House where it was done. All that comes to a professed or a donate as pension or insurance is acquired by the House where she is residing; this House will also pay the contributions for this. All possible doubts relating to these matters will be submitted to the General Chapter or to the Reverend Father.

13 Prioresses and Cellaresses will do all they can to avoid legal disputes and lawsuits; for this would be unsuitable for the servants of Him who said, *If someone takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.*

14 Each House has the right to possess what is necessary to enable the community to live in accordance with our vocation. However, all form of luxury, inordinate gain or accumulation of wealth must be very carefully avoided; it is only thus that we will bear witness to true poverty. It is not sufficient that the nuns be dependent on their superiors in the use of temporal things; like Christ, they must be truly poor, having their treasure in heaven. We must avoid, not only what is sumptuous, but also excessive concern for what is convenient, so that everything in our Houses may reflect the simplicity of our vocation.

15 For this reason, no car, machine or tool is to be purchased before mature consideration of the matter has been made, and their necessity or usefulness proved; the latter merits to be taken into consideration chiefly if such equipment is to help ensure the solitude of the nuns or lessen their work.

16 Our buildings are to be sufficient and suitable for our way of life, but should always be simple. Our Houses, in fact, are not monuments erected for art or vain glory, but should bear witness to evangelical poverty.

17 The construction of any elaborate or superfluous building is absolutely forbidden. As for those that are useful, no Prioress may presume to undertake their construction without the consent of the community or, at least, of her Council. The written permission of the Visitors is necessary as well, who will prudently examined the matter, and ascertain that the House has no debts. For construction expenses exceeding the amount indicated by the General Chapter, the Reverend Father's permission is also required. This is to be understood, not only for new buildings, but also for repairs entailing a notable change of structure.

18 No new foundation may be begun without the consent of the General Chapter, which

will give its directives. In accordance with the tradition of our Fathers, new foundations should be made in isolated places, far from the noise of traffic. It is the Definitors who decide whether to found and build a new House, though not without having previously consulted the Assembly. The procedure is the same for the suppression of a House of the Order; the Definitory will likewise provide for the assignment of the goods of this House.

The Prioresses will take care, as far as possible, that no buildings liable to attract outside visitors be erected or restored on the property of the monastery or on lands adjacent to it.

19 Finally, in the name of Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, who gave himself in holocaust on the cross for love of us, we earnestly entreat all the Prioresses – and each one of them – to devote themselves wholeheartedly to giving abundant alms, inasmuch as the resources of their House permit. Let us consider that any sum of money that is wasted or thoughtlessly retained is, as it were, a theft committed to the detriment of the poor and of the needs of the Church. Let us keep then to the goods of this world the destination common to them, and let us take the early Christians as an example for us. No one among them claimed anything as his own, everything was held in common.

Chapter 24

Stability

1 A nun does not give herself to God as a perfect oblation unless she perseveres in intention all her life; this is what she freely promises to do by solemn profession. This being an irrevocable commitment, before making it she will first sit down and ask herself if she is really resolved to give herself to God for ever.

By Profession, the nun is incorporated into the community, as the family which God gives her; she must settle in it permanently, in mind and body.

2 Let each one then, once she has dedicated her life to God in the state of cloister nun or converse nun, remain faithful to the vocation she has received, and strive to grow in perfection in it, for the greater sanctity of the Church and the greater glory of the one and indivisible Trinity.

3 A professed nun who asks to be transferred to another House, must obtain the consent of the Prioresses of both Houses and that of the Chapter of the House receiving her. Besides this, she must obtain the permission of the General Chapter or of the Reverend Father.

Only grave reasons may permit the General Chapter or the Reverend Father to transfer a nun from one House to another. Beforehand, the persons concerned will be consulted, as far as possible. But no Prioress, nor any other nun, should ever incite nuns of her House, or of another House, to instability. Moreover, if a community has admitted a difficult person to Profession, it seems only fair that the community itself should then tolerate her presence.

4 The nuns will not easily persuade themselves that they have valid reasons for asking their superiors to transfer them to another House. Many have been deceived by the mirage of a new environment and by the attraction of change; and a nun should not attach so much importance to climate, to food, to peoples' character, or to other particularities of this kind.

5 When a nun has been assigned to another House, she will go there without delay and by direct route and without any notable detour. She takes with her only her clothes and what is necessary for the journey, and does not arrange for anything to be sent to her new residence.

6 She will be received with great affection by the community she comes to, and the Prioress will treat her as one who has made Profession in the House. On her part, she will show due respect to the Prioress and the other Officers of the House, and will conform to the customs in use there. She will be careful not to speak rashly of the defects of persons or of abuses that she may have known in other Houses, and no one will question her about such matters. Henceforth, she will regard the community, whom divine Providence has assigned to her, as her family, and the House as her anchorage in harbour.

7 As we know, contemplation is greatly furthered by patience and perseverance in the circumstances willed by God. It is not possible for a man to fix his attention on the same object if beforehand he has not perseveringly kept his body in a specific place; and the mind must irrevocably keep itself to its purpose, if it wishes to approach Him in whom there is neither change nor a shadow of variation.

Chapter 25

The Vicar and the Coadjutor

1 The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are ordered one to another: for both of them participate, each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ.

In the celebration of the Eucharist, centre and summit of our life, the priests who serve the community, that is, the Vicar and the Coadjutor, invested with a sacred power and acting in the person of Christ, realize his sacrifice among us. The nuns, by virtue of their royal priesthood join in the offering of the same sacrifice, in which their whole life is summed up and offered to the Father.

The Vicar and the Coadjutor are also, for us, ministers of the other sacraments, notably that of the penitential liturgy, which places the seal of the Lord on our daily labour of conversion. Finally, they bear witness the Word of God.

2 Their role towards the nuns is solely spiritual and liturgical. They fulfil all the priestly functions.

3 The Vicar and the Coadjutor are chaplains of the nuns' monasteries. They are appointed by the General Chapter of the monks or by the Reverend Father, and remain subject to the authority of the Order.

A monk may not be appointed as Vicar before having spent five years in the Order after his solemn profession. The Vicar's appointment lasts until the next General Chapter; however, his term of office may be renewed, but he may not remain in the office of Vicar in the same house more than ten consecutive years.

4 A nun, even a novice, may legitimately and validly confess to any priest approved by a diocesan bishop.

If a nun desires a special confessor, this will be granted, as far as possible. We will remember however that the solitude to which we are committed sometimes leads to a certain poverty even in this domain.

Each community is to have an exterior confessor, who will be preferably a member of the Order. The nuns are not obliged to go to him.

5 The Vicar and the Coadjutor will each have his particular confessional, fitted with a grill. The confessionals must be in an easily accessible and sufficiently discreet place.

Confessions and spiritual direction may not habitually take place in the parlour or in the Chapter.

6 The Vicar and the Coadjutor will direct their penitents according to the spirit of our Order, of which they themselves will be imbued, but they may not impose themselves on them as spiritual directors.

The confessors may never impose nor permit corporal penances on the nuns.

7 While having affection for them in Christ, the confessor will keep his relationship with the nuns on a purely supernatural level. He will take care that conversations are not prolonged and deal only with subjects which are beneficial for their souls.

8 In order to accomplish his ministry as well as possible, the confessor will carefully pay attention to the differences which the female psychology entails. If he neglects to inform

himself and to keep a watch on himself in this matter, he risks to commit errors of judgement and to give unsuitable advice.

9 For the peace and spiritual benefit of communities, it is very important not to confuse what concerns the conscience with exterior matters. The Vicar and the Coadjutor must not meddle with the interior or exterior government of the community, nor intervene in the administration of the House.

10 If the prioress happens to ask advice of the Vicar, he will not seek to impose his will. On the contrary, he will prudently keep an attitude of reserve. The Prioress, for her part, will maintain her independence of judgement and decision, specially where admission or rejection of candidates is concerned. The confessors will avoid giving their opinion concerning the nuns, since usually it is only by confession and spiritual direction that they know them.

11 The relationship of the Vicar and the Coadjutor with the Prioress and the officials should always be frank and straightforward. A lasting disagreement would not fail to be noticed and to have disastrous consequences. The fathers must endeavour to be always artisans of peace and union among all.

12 The Vicar is the direct superior of the Coadjutor and the brothers; they depend on him concerning the observance and owe him obedience. However, ordering the work of the brothers belongs to the Prioress or the Cellaress.

13 The Vicar will be kind and understanding towards the Coadjutor and the brothers, and will ensure them the conditions of an authentic Carthusian life. Though not living in the atmosphere of the cloister, they will all strive to live their vocation of silence and solitude as much as possible.

14 The Vicar, while being pleasant, must maintain a necessary discretion towards the nuns' relatives, as also towards other visitors.

No woman is to be admitted into the monks' cells.

As for confession and spiritual direction of persons outside our Order, the Fathers observe the rigour of the Statutes.

15 The members of the Vicariate lead their Carthusian life in particular and delicate conditions. They will take it to heart to give an example of harmony and serenity. If difficulties arise, they will be wisely reserved about them and bear them with love, remembering that their attitude will always have a pastoral repercussion on the community.

16 As collaborators of Christ, our only Lord and Master, and following his example, the Vicar and the Coadjutor will strive to be the servants of their sisters. The community, for its part, will be attentive to make their Carthusian life easier. The more they are faithful to this essential vocation, the more their presence will be beneficial.

Book 4

The Order

Chapter 26

The Government of the nuns

1 In order to perpetuate the Carthusian ideal and ensure its stability, the first Priors of the Order decided by common consent to hold a General Chapter at the Grande Chartreuse. They all placed their Houses under the authority of this Chapter, with power to keep them on the straight path, or bring them back to it; they likewise promised obedience to it, each in his own name and in that of his community. Thus was strengthened for ever the bond of charity uniting the Houses and all the members of the Order, resolute to joyfully advance together on the path that leads to God.

2 At the Holy See's request, the General Chapter of the Order in 1973 decided that the nuns would hold their own General Chapter, presided by the Reverend Father, whose task it is, as General Minister, to maintain unity in the Order. Since then, while desiring to remain wholly united to the Carthusian family, the nuns independently take the decisions which concern them.

3 The General Chapter takes place every two years. Those who must go to it are the Prioresses and the Visitors of the nuns. A Prioress prevented from going delegates a solemnly professed nun. Should a House be without a Prioress, the Reverend Father may ask a solemnly professed nun of that House to come to the Chapter. Nuns thus present have all the rights and functions of a Prioress. Also the nuns chosen by the General Council go to the Chapter.

4 The Assembly uniting the Reverend Father, the Prioresses, the Visitors of the nuns, the three nuns chosen by the General Council (27.2) and the other nuns possibly members of the Definitory (27.3), is called the General Assembly. It is presided by the Reverend Father. It has the power of taking all the decisions, apart from those which are the responsibility of the Definitory. Only the nuns vote. The Reverend Father may invalidate a vote if it were to risk the unity of the Order and its basic observances. The Visitors are present as advisers. However, when the majority of two thirds of the votes is required, all the members of the General Assembly take part in the vote.

The nuns who are members of the Assembly also take votes of a consultative nature on the matters which the Definitors submit to it. In this case, the nuns who are members of the Definitory do not vote.

5 The Definitory, presided by the Reverend Father, is composed of him, of the Visitor of the nuns and of four members elected as it will be said elsewhere (27.3 and the Regulations of the Assembly). None of the members elected may be Definitor during two successive Chapters. The Definitory decides that which concerns persons and Houses.

At each General Chapter, the Mother Prioresses, in accordance with the obedience due to the General Chapter and promised by them all, ask for mercy ; thus the Definitory may deliberate on maintaining them in office or deposing them from it. According to our tradition, the Prioress discharges her office as long as the General Chapter judges her fit to exercise it for the good of the community.

6 In a general way, that which concerns the particular Visitor of the nuns or their Vicars is a matter for the General Chapter of the monks. However, it does not take any decision without the Mother Prioresses having first been consulted by the Reverend Father or the

Definitory of the monks. For this, the Prioresses must go to the Grande Chartreuse at an opportune moment.

7 The Definitory may not introduce an observance into the Statutes, nor abrogate one which is there, nor may it impose new liturgical texts. But it may make ordinances or admonitions in order to determine how to apply the Statutes in certain particular circumstances; and concerning this, it may request a consultative vote of the other nuns, members of the Assembly.

8 In all other affairs, the Definitory proposes the matters that are to be discussed by the General Assembly, and the latter decides them by vote. If the Definitory judges it fitting, it may ask the Assembly to reconsider a question and then vote on it a second and last time.

9 All ordinances carried by the Assembly or the Definitory, unless confirmed by the General Assembly of the following Chapter, no longer have force of law.

10 No decision contrary to the provisions of the present Statutes and relaxing the traditional austerity of the Order, may be taken, or put into application before having been approved, during two successive Chapters, by a majority of at least two thirds of the suffrages expressed.

11 Any ordinance which would cause a substantial change in any point of our observance, though not affecting the rigour of the Order, may be promulgated only with the majority of at least two thirds of the suffrages expressed. Its confirmation, at the following General Chapter, is to be made with the same majority.

12 At the General Chapter, the Reverend Father and two nuns elected at this moment are entrusted to examine together if new ordinances go against the rigour of the Order or if they make a substantial change in some point of observance. They have authority, as well, to resolve all the doubts, de facto or de jure, which might arise with regard to the General Chapter then in session, about the interpretation of the present chapter of the Statutes, of chapter 27 on the celebration of the General Chapter, or of the Regulations of the Assembly or the Definitory.

13 The norms, which in chapter 25 of the Statutes of the nuns concern the members of the Vicariate, may not be changed without previous approval of the General Chapter of the monks.

14 The Reverend Father, that is, the Prior of the Grande Chartreuse, is the General Minister of the Order. He is elected by the community of the Grande Chartreuse, but this election has force of law only if it has been accepted by the Priors, the Prioresses and the Rectors of the Order, assembled at the Grande Chartreuse for this purpose. This takes place as follows.

15 After the election, the Confirming Officers inform all the Priors, the Prioresses and the Rectors of the Order, in order that they assemble at the Grande Chartreuse, for accepting or rejecting the one elected. In the case of rejection, the community of the Grande Chartreuse may, if it wishes, proceed to a second election. If the college of Priors, Prioresses and Rectors rejects the one elected a second time, or if the community of the Grande Chartreuse has renounced a second election, this college proposes three other monks, from whom the community of Chartreuse will choose the Reverend Father. The one elected is regarded as accepted by the College.

Whoever has been elected and accepted as Reverend Father may not refuse the office.

16 During the year, the Prior of the Grande Chartreuse is to exercise the authority of the General Chapter every time that the good of the Order requires it and the matter cannot await the next Chapter.

For such matters, the Reverend Father is assisted by a Council, called the **General Council**, consisting of the members of the Definitory of the preceding Chapter. In certain cases, with their consent, the Reverend Father may add another member of the Order to them. The members of the General Council reside in their Houses, and the Reverend Father consults them in the way he judges best. If necessary, and each time that the consent of the Council is required by law, its members are summoned to the Grande Chartreuse.

17 The authority of the Reverend Father may not be entrusted to anyone else, except by an unanimous agreement of the Definitors and of the Reverend Father himself. No monk of the Grande Chartreuse, unless made responsible for this by the Reverend Father or the General Chapter, is to intervene in the affairs of the Order, in whatever way that might be, nor in those of particular persons or Houses, even if he had received letters concerning these affairs.

18 For all who exercise authority in the Order, the mind of the Church and its laws will always be the supreme norm, in their way of understanding the traditions of the Order. The Prioresses, who have a right to expect a prompt obedience from their nuns, will themselves give them the example which is fitting, in humbly submitting to the decisions of the General Chapter or of the Reverend Father and abstaining from criticising them.

In order to further full communion of our Order with the Supreme Pontiff, every six years the Reverend Father will send a brief outline of the Order's situation and life to the Apostolic See.

Chapter 27

The Celebration of the General Chapter

1 The General Chapter of the nuns of the Carthusian Order is held after the feast of St Bruno and according to the procedure approved by the Chapter itself; it is to take place every other year at the Grande Chartreuse, birthplace of the Order and source of our vocation.

2 Some time before the General Chapter, and in accordance with her community, each Prioress makes out a list of three solemnly professed nuns of the House, susceptible of being chosen to participate in the Chapter; at least one of these will be a cloister nun, and one, at least, a converse nun. The General Council chooses, from among all the nuns thus designated by the Prioresses, the three nuns who are to be members of the General Assembly (26.4); among these there must always be at least one cloister nun and at least one converse nun. The General Council also chooses the secretary for the next Chapter.

The General Procurator, who is the representative of the Order to the Holy See, may come to the Chapter if his presence is necessary.

3 On the first day of the Chapter, Mass of the Holy Spirit is celebrated by the Reverend Father. Afterwards all assemble and the Reverend Father begins the customary prayers. The nuns, members of the Assembly, then choose the four members of the Definitory (26.5), one of the **Visitors of the provinces** and three nuns, of whom, one, at least, is a Prioress, and one, at least, not a prioress.

4 The Prioresses then ask for mercy and discharge from their office. Those who are absent are obliged to do so by letter.

5 If it should happen that the Reverend Father were seriously prevented from being able to participate in the Chapter, his role would be fulfilled by the principal Visitor.

If the Reverend Father, or a Visitor who has visited a House of the nuns during the two preceding years, receives mercy at the Chapter of the monks preceding that of the nuns, he will nevertheless be consulted by the latter on matters in which he can provide information.

6 The Definitors, and other persons who are called to consult with the Definitory, will have regard to God alone as judge before their eyes; irrespective of persons, they will render justice to each, according to the Order's law and Statutes.

No Definitor, nor any person called to the Definitory for affairs, may ever allow himself to reveal what has been said or proposed therein under the seal of secrecy, nor to make known the decisions which have been taken, before the Carta has been entirely drawn up and read in public. Even when the Chapter has ended, the Definitors and whoever has been called to the Definitory are forbidden to reveal to anyone what would be harmful or illicit to make public. Should anyone break this rule, he or she is to be severely punished, and even removed from office.

7 First the Definitors draw up an agenda and make it public so that each one may be informed beforehand of the matters he will have to judge.

Some months before the General Chapter, the Reverend Father will have received the opinions and suggestions of the Prioresses, and after deliberation of the General Council, will have fixed the principal matters to be discussed at the coming Chapter; then he will

have made them known to all who will take part in the General Assembly.

Any nun of the Order may send to the General Chapter or to the Reverend Father whatever information which seems to her to be useful, for her personal situation or that of her House.

8 The Definitors are informed of the way in which each Prioress governs her House, so that they may judge thereon. When a Visitor is involved, he leaves the Definitory. The same rule is followed for the nuns who are members of the Definitory.

9 If certain questions submitted to the General Chapter are particularly difficult, the study of them will be confided to certain members of the Order, judged specially apt for this. However the decision is reserved to the General Chapter.

10 On the last day of the Chapter, when the Definitory has finished its work and the Carta has been drawn up, all assemble, and the secretary of the Chapter reads the Carta. If any Prioress present has not yet promised obedience in her name and in that of the House of which she is Prioress, she will do so at this moment. Then the Reverend Father gives an exhortation on subjects treated in the Carta or on what may be good for the well-being of the Order.

11 Finally, the Reverend Father and everyone else prostrate and together accuse themselves of faults committed, and the Reverend Father, having arisen, imposes a penance on all.

12 The Sub-Prioress reads the entire Carta of the General Chapter to the community on the day it has been received; she rereads its ordinances on the feasts of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Presentation of the Lord.

Chapter 28

The Canonical Visitation

1 Full of concern that the Houses of the Order remain in peace, in charity and in a faithful observance, the General Chapter of the monks decided to send them Visitors every two years. These have the task of showing the Order 's solicitude towards each House, and they dispose of the necessary powers for resolving problems that may arise.

2 The monks' General Chapter appoints a special Visitor for the Houses of the nuns. The principal **Visitor of the province** in which the House is situated accompanies him as Co-visitor.

3 The Visit takes place as described elsewhere (chap.35).

Desiring the Visit to be a time propitious to God's grace, the community will receive the Visitors or the Commissioners in a spirit of faith, invested as they are with the authority of the General Chapter or of the Reverend Father. Each of us will endeavour to help them in the accomplishment of their task. Hence, the Visitors and the nuns will do all in their power to establish a climate of mutual confidence.

4 The first duty of the Visitors is to give each one a fraternal welcome and listen to her with the greatest attention; after which they will endeavour to help her to give the best of herself to God and to her community.

5 They will carry out their office as brothers, to whom the tempted and the afflicted may open their minds freely without fear of any breach of confidence. And in a matter of such importance, they must avoid precipitation, and proceed with calm.

6 Each one should feel at ease with the Visitors for explaining any problems which call for a solution or advice, concerning her personal life or that of the community. Constructive suggestions, seeming useful for the common good, may be made as well.

7 Before speaking of others, we should recollect ourselves in prayer. Our docility to the Holy Spirit will help us to practice truthfulness in love. He who is truly at peace does not suspect anyone; it is often better to keep silence than to dwell on matters that cannot be proved, or trivialities.

8 The Visitors talk with each nun privately. They also meet the community as such, notably during the opening and closing sessions of the Visit (cf. chap. 35).

In order that, by God's grace, their Visit may bear lasting fruit, they will do all they can so that the community itself takes in hand its own spiritual renewal.

9 The Visitors will inquire about the life of the community, of the progress made since the last Visit or of difficulties encountered. They will encourage the community to question itself on its fidelity to the spirit and the letter of regular observance, as expounded in the Statutes. They will also examine the accounts of the House, and the way in which evangelical poverty is observed. They will indicate remedies for the deficiencies they may find. Together with the nuns, and first of all with the Prioress, they will carefully seek the means to be considered for helping the community to respond ever more faithfully to its vocation.

10 Before leaving the community, the Visitors will commit to writing in the Carta the guidelines they have given or the decisions they have made. They will draw up the Carta in terms that are simple, and suitable for the community, so that it may be put into practice peacefully.

If necessary, the Visitors will bring to mind certain points already noted in the Carta of the preceding Visitation, concerned as they are for the continuation of the community's progress. It will often be advisable that the Visitors first inform the Prioress of the measures they have the intention of taking, and listen to her observations. In fact, it is important that the Visitors understand the pastoral intentions according to which the Prioress guides her nuns, so as to promote their efficacy.

11 Before making a decision concerning someone, or giving someone an admonition, the Visitors will take care to give him a hearing. If they judge it useful to make recommendations to a nun, they will explain to her by word of mouth, so that the spirit of their intervention may be well understood. Finally, they will not leave the House before being certain that the community has grasped the intentions and instructions of the Carta.

12 She who has received an admonition from the Visitors will not seek to know who has implicated her in the matter, but will endeavour to be convinced that all has been dictated by love, and in turn will receive everything in a spirit of charity and humility. Acknowledging her faults, she will amend her ways and do better in the future. If she knows that a certain person has made a statement against her, she must never be disagreeable towards her in words or in acts. The Prioress in particular will be careful not to make any reprisal towards anyone, or to show any bitterness. Rather, she will give others an example of humility and renewal of self.

13 For very serious reasons, the Visitors may depose the Prioress, though not without having first consulted the Reverend Father, if possible. Any officer deposed by them may not be reinstated in the same obedience without the permission of the General Chapter or of the Reverend Father.

14 It is part of the Visitors' task to see that their directives are applied after the Visit. For this, they retain the same authority as during the Visit on all points, except that they may not depose officers. However, they will abstain from going to the Houses depending on them, without an urgent reason for doing so.

15 The Visitors have a responsibility also in the carrying out of the directives of the General Chapter in the Houses they visit. They even dispose of the authority of the General Chapter in all urgent cases for which it would not be possible to consult the Reverend Father.

16 The Visitors make their decisions together. If, however, one of them is prevented from being present, the other may decide, after having consulted his colleague, if possible.

17 The Visitors will visit the Vicariate with great solicitude. They will encourage its members to be faithful to their vocation of solitude, fraternal life and evangelical poverty, in the particular conditions in which they live.

18 The progress of our Houses depends a great deal on the Visitations being efficacious. It is important then that the Visitors fulfil their task with attention and dedication, never allowing themselves to be satisfied with a purely formal and external execution of it. Considering only the good of souls, they will spare neither time nor effort, so that peace and the love of Christ may grow in all hearts by means of their Visit.

Chapter 29

Conversion of life

1 Since the holy vocation which our Fathers have handed down to us is a commitment leading us on a sublime path, all the greater is the risk for us to fall away from it, less perhaps by manifest transgressions, than by the natural slope of habit. Since God gives his grace to the humble, let us, above all, have recourse to him, and strive vigorously and unceasingly, so that this vineyard of the Lord may not degenerate.

2 Maintaining our life in accordance with the purpose of our vocation depends more on the fidelity of each one than on an accumulation of laws, an adaptation of customs, or even on the influence of the Prioresses. It is not enough to obey them, nor to keep the letter of the Statutes with exactness, if we do not also allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit, so as to savour the things of the Spirit and live by him. From the beginning of her new form of life, the nun is placed in solitude and left to make her own decisions. Now no longer a child, but an adult, let her not allow herself then to be tossed about by every wind ; rather, may she discern what pleases God and spontaneously conform to it; thus, with sober wisdom, she will be carrying out the liberty of the children of God, of which she is responsible before the Lord. Let no-one, however, be wise in her own estimation ; for she who neglects to open her heart to an enlightened guide risks, for lack of discretion, to go less quickly than she should, or to exhaust herself in going too fast, or to drag along and then fall quite asleep.

3 How could we fulfil our function in the People of God as living sacrifices acceptable to God, if we were to separate ourselves from the Son of God, who is Life itself and the most perfect Sacrifice? It is that which would happen if we were to give way to relaxation of discipline, immortification, distractions of the mind, useless talking, vain cares and futile occupations; or if, in cell, we were to be held captive by miserable anxieties arising from love of self.

In simplicity of heart and in purity of mind, let us strive to fix our thoughts and affections on God. May each one, forgetful of herself and of what she has left behind, press on towards the goal, towards the prize of the heavenly vocation to which God calls her in Christ Jesus.

4 But she who does not love her sister whom she sees, how will she love God whom she does not see? Without mutual respect, fraternal conversation between persons does not exist; so we who live in God's house should first and foremost bear witness to the love that comes from Him. Let us lovingly welcome the sisters who share our life; however different their character and their way of thinking may be from our own, let us truly endeavour to understand them with our heart and mind. In fact, hostilities, conflicts and the like generally arise from the fact that one does not have consideration for others.

5 Let us shun what might harm the blessing of peace; above all, let us avoid speaking ill of any of our sisters. If a disagreement were to arise in the House among the nuns, or between them and the Prioress, we should humbly and patiently attempt all the possible means of resolving the conflict in a spirit of charity, before having recourse to the Visitors, to the Reverend Father or to the General Chapter; for it is better that the monastic family itself provides for the preservation of its peace by the united efforts of all. In such circumstances the Prioress will have a fraternal attitude, and not one that is dominating; if she is at fault, she will acknowledge it and correct herself.

6 The Prioresses have an essential part to play in the decline or the spiritual progress of the Houses of the Order; let them strive to do good by their example, being the first to put into practice what they teach. They should never say anything that Christ would have refused to be responsible for. They will be wholly dedicated to prayer, to silence and to the life of the cell; thus they will merit the confidence of their sisters, and will have a true communion of love with them. With kindly attention they will watch over the life in the cell and the dispositions of their nuns, so as to be able to remedy their temptations from the beginning: for if these were to gain strength, the remedy would risk to come too late.

7 Especially nowadays we must be careful not to model ourselves on a spirit that is worldly. Immoderate seeking of the comforts of life or too much eagerness to benefit from them are altogether opposed to our state of life, especially when one bears in mind that one new thing calls for another. The resources granted us by Divine Providence are not destined to obtain for us the pleasures of life. The path that leads to God is easy since, in order to go forward, one must not load oneself, but on the contrary, unload oneself. So let us put down our burden so well, that after having left everything and having renounced ourselves, we may share in the life of our first Fathers.

Chapter 30

The function of our Order in the Church

- 1** What benefit and what divine joy the solitude and silence of the desert bring to those who love them, only those know who have experienced them; but we have not chosen this excellent part in order to be the only ones to benefit from it. In embracing a hidden life we do not desert the family of our fellow men; on the contrary, devoting ourselves to God alone is a duty we are to fulfil in the Church, where visible things are ordered to invisible things, action to contemplation.
- 2** Union with God, if it is real, does not shut us in on ourselves, but on the contrary opens out our minds and hearts, until they embrace the whole world and the mystery of Christ's Redemption. Separated from all, we are united to all, and thus it is in the name of all that we stand before the living God. Striving thus towards God, as directly and continually as the human condition permits, associates us in a special way to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we are accustomed to call the unequalled Mother of the Carthusians.
- 3** Being, by our Profession, solely turned towards Him who is, we bear witness, before a world too absorbed by earthly realities, that apart from Him there is no God. Our life shows that the good things from heaven are already present here below; it prefigures the resurrection and anticipates, in a manner, the final renewal of the world.
- 4** Finally, by penance we take part in Christ's work of Redemption. He saved the human race, burdened and enslaved by sin, by his prayer to the Father, above all, and by his immolation. In striving to share in this deepest aspect of Redemption and despite our abstention from visible activity, we carry out an apostolate in an outstanding way.
- 5** Therefore, in praise of God, for which the hermit Order of Carthusians was specially founded, let us offer the Lord unceasing worship, in the peace of the cell and at work; sanctified thus in truth, we shall be those true worshippers whom the Father seeks.

Chapter 31

The Statutes themselves

1 Let us be attentive, in these Statutes, to the teaching of our Fathers, renewed and adapted to our times; let us not cease to meditate it. Let us not forsake it and it will keep us; let us love it and it will guard us. There we shall find the form and the sacrament, as it were, of the holiness to which God destines each one of us. It is the Spirit, however, who gives life, and exhorts us to go beyond the mere letter, for the purpose of these Statutes is to make us walk, guided by the Gospel, on the road that leads to God, and to make us discover the vastness of love.

2 Neither the Reverend Father, nor anyone else, may add anything to or remove anything from the customs expressed in the Statutes or our liturgical rules, unless the General Chapter decides it. Moreover, the Constitutions, that is books 1-4 of the Statutes, may be altered only with the consent of the Apostolic See.

If a doubt of interpretation were to arise, the General Chapter or the Reverend Father could and should be consulted, at least if the matter were of an importance such as requires an authorised reply; and everyone must conform to this response, given to ensure the maintenance of regular discipline. However, the final and authentic interpretation of the Constitutions pertains to the Holy See.

Besides this, no edition of our Statutes or of our liturgical books may be made, in any language whatever, without the permission and approval of the General Chapter or of the Reverend Father.

3 Points not specified in the Statutes are left to the decision of the Prioresses, provided that what they decide is not contrary to the Statutes. But we do not wish on this occasion, nor on any other, that Prioresses thoughtlessly change the customs of Houses, when these are good and religious. However, customs of Houses may never prevail against the Statutes.

4 And in order that what the Statutes teach is never lost from the memory, they are to be read each year to the assembled nuns. If, during this reading, it is noticed that a point is not sufficiently observed, all will carefully examine how this may and should be put right. If it is the Prioress who is at fault, the Sub-Prioress, or one of the more senior and judicious nuns, may and should respectfully ask her in private to amend. It is thus that one should proceed whenever the Prioress may have need of an admonition. If others than the Prioress are at fault, the latter will be informed, so that she may help them to mend their ways. If this does not suffice, and if the matter is of some importance, the Visitors should intervene, or even, in case of necessity, the Reverend Father or the General Chapter.

5 *If your brother has committed a sin, says the Lord, go and point out his fault when the two of you are alone.* However, deep humility and a great deal of tact are necessary for this; the correction would be even harmful if it did not come from pure and disinterested love. In return, each of us, in a spirit of humility, should desire to be corrected. Nonetheless, it will generally be wiser to leave the care of admonishing to the Prioress, the Sub-Prioress or the Cellaress, who will carry this out according to their judgement and conscience.

6 It is the Prioress' duty to watch over the fruitful observance of the Statutes in her House. She will be so penetrated by their inmost marrow, that she may know how to preserve the spirit of the observance in all things, remembering that she is at the service of

the Statutes, not for the downfall of her sisters, but to help them.

7 The nuns will have an attitude of obedience towards the Statutes, as responsible persons, not serving in appearance only, as pleasing men, but in simplicity of heart, fearing God. They must know that a dispensation obtained without a just motive is null. They will also meekly receive and put into practice the instructions and admonitions of their seniors, especially those of the Prioress who represents God for them. If, by human weakness, they happen to err, they will not be stubborn in refusing to amend, lest they give the devil a foothold, but rather, by the difficult way of obedience, they will return to God, from whom our first father separated in following the easy way of disobedience.

8 At the sight of all the benefits reserved by God for those whom he calls to the desert, let us rejoice with our Father Saint Bruno, for we have received the grace to attain the tranquillity of a hidden harbour, where we are invited to savour something of the incomparable splendour of the Supreme Good. Let us rejoice then in our happy destiny, and in God's great generosity towards us. Let us constantly give thanks to God the Father, who has made us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. Amen.