

INNOCENT, BISHOP, SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD, TO THE BELOVED DAUGHTERS IN CHRIST THE ABBESS CLARE AND THE OTHER SISTERS OF THE MONASTERY OF SAN DAMIANO IN ASSISI: OUR BEST WISHES AND APOSTOLIC BLESSING.

The Apostolic See is accustomed to accede to the pious requests and to be favorably disposed to grant the praiseworthy desires of its petitioners. Thus, we have before Us your humble request that We confirm by [our] Apostolic authority the form of life which Blessed Francis gave you and which you have freely accepted. According to [this form of life] you are to live together in unity of mind and heart and in the profession of highest poverty. Our venerable Brother, the Bishop of Ostia and Velletri, has seen fit to approve this way of life, as the Bishop's own letters on this matter define more fully, and We have taken care to strengthen it with our Apostolic protection. Attentive, therefore, to your devout prayers, We approve and ratify what the Bishop has done in this matter and confirm it by Apostolic authority and support it by this document" (*Francis and Claire, The Complete Works*, p.209).

CHAPTER THREE: THE DIVINE OFFICE AND FASTING, CONFESSION AND COMMUNION

"The sisters who can read shall celebrate the Divine Office according to the custom of the Friars Minor. They may have breviaries for this, but they should read it without singing. Those who, for some reasonable cause, occasionally are not able to recite their hours by reading them, may, like the other sisters, say the Our Fathers. Those who do not know how to read shall say twenty-four Our Fathers for Matins; five for Lauds; seven for each of the hours of Prime, Terce, Sext, and None; twelve, however, for Vespers; seven for Compline. Let them also say for the dead seven Our Fathers with the Requiem aeternam at Vespers; twelve for Matins, because the sisters who can read are obliged to recite the Office of the Dead."

CHAPTER FIVE: SILENCE, THE PARLOR, AND THE GRILLE

"Let the sisters keep silence from the hour of Compline until Terce, except those who are serving outside the monastery. Let them also continually keep silence in the church, the dormitory, and the refectory, only while they are eating. They may speak discreetly at all times, however, in the infirmary for the recreation and service of the sick. Nevertheless, they can communicate always and everywhere, briefly and in a low tone of voice, whatever is necessary.

The sisters may not speak in the parlor or at the grille without the permission of the Abbess or her Vicarress. Let those who have permission not dare to speak in the parlor unless they are in the presence and hearing of two sisters. Let them not presume to go to the grille, moreover, unless there are at least three sisters present [who have been] appointed by the Abbess or her Vicarress from the eight discreets who were elected by all the sisters for the council of the Abbess. Let the Abbess and her Vicarress be themselves bound to observe this form of speaking. [Let the sisters speak] very rarely at the grille and, by all means, never at the door."

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE SISTERS SHALL NOT ACQUIRE ANYTHING AS THEIR OWN; BEGGING ALMS; THE SICK SISTERS

"Let no sister be permitted to send letters or to receive or give away anything outside the monastery without the permission of the Abbess. Let it not be permitted to have anything that the Abbess has not given or allowed. Should anything be sent to a sister by her relatives or others, let the Abbess give it to the sister. If she needs it, the sister may use it; otherwise, let her in all charity give it to a sister who does need it. If, however, money is sent to her, the Abbess, with the advice of the discreets, may provide for the needs of the sister."

CHAPTER TEN: THE ADMONITION AND CORRECTION OF THE SISTERS

"Let those who do not know how to read not be eager to learn. Let them rather devote themselves to what they should desire to have above all else: the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, and to have humility, patience in difficulty and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, blame, and accuse us, for the Lord says: Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs' is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:10). But whoever perseveres to the end will be saved (Matthew 10:22)."

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE CUSTODY OF THE ENCLOSURE

"Let the portress be mature in her manner of acting, discerning, and of a suitable age. Let her remain in an open cell without a door during the day. Let a suitable companion be assigned to her who may take her place in everything whenever necessary.

Let the door be well secured by two different iron locks, with bars and bolts, so that, especially at night, it may be locked with two keys, one of which the portress may have, the other the Abbess. Let it never be left without a guard and securely locked with one key.

Let them most diligently take care to see that the door is never left open, except when this can hardly be conveniently avoided. Let it never be opened to anyone who wishes to enter, except to those who have been given permission by the Supreme Pontiff or our Lord Cardinal. The sisters may not allow anyone to enter the monastery before sunrise or to remain within after sunset, unless a manifest, reasonable, and unavoidable cause demands otherwise."