

THE RULE OF THE
COMPANIONS
OF CHRIST

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Memorial of Saint John Vianney
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One should hold also in high regard and eagerly promote those associations which, having been recognized by competent ecclesiastical authority, encourage priestly holiness in the ministry by the use of an appropriate and duly approved rule of life and by fraternal aid, intending thus to do service to the whole order of priests.

~ Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 8

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INTRODUCTION: OUR CHARISM

“He went up onto the mountain and summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to proclaim the message.”

~ Mark 3:13-14, NJB

1. God the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ has given us, the Companions of Christ, the charism of being diocesan priests living in fraternity. The precious gift of our fraternal way of life, centered on our mutual intimacy with the Lord, in turn strengthens us for the priestly mission he has entrusted to us.

2. Just as he called his first apostles to live in communion with him and with each other (cf. Jn 15:15, 17:22-24), so Christ calls us to be his companions in our lives together as diocesan priests through our deep fraternal communion with him and with each other. We commit our lives to one another, seeking priestly holiness through docility to the Holy Spirit, sharing together his own way of life according to the evangelical counsels of obedience, celibacy, and poverty.¹ Together we embrace his mission of

1 Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* [PDV] (1992), 27.

evangelization, calling all people to salvation and witnessing to the transforming power of his love by our fraternal charity (cf. Jn 13:35).

3. The Lord desires us to be his companions at every moment of his life, especially at the Cross, so that we may share in the pastoral charity of his heart by being both priests and victims, as he was (cf. Heb 7:26-27).² Having entrusted his mother to the beloved disciple at the foot of the Cross (cf. Jn 19:27), Jesus now lovingly invites us to take Mary as our companion, that she may assist us to stand with our brothers in the crosses of our lives (cf. Lk 9:23), for our own sanctification and the salvation of the whole world.

4. By living this charism through the sharing of our lives with each other, we seek to give concrete expression to the sacramental brotherhood of all priests,³ and contribute to the renewal of the Church and the diocesan priesthood in our day.

2 "For he is the true and eternal Priest, who instituted the pattern of an everlasting sacrifice and was the first to offer himself as the saving Victim, commanding us to make this offering as his memorial." From Preface I of the Most Holy Eucharist in *The Roman Missal*, third typ. ed., trans. International Commission on English in the Liturgy (Chicago: World Library Publications, 2011), 560.

3 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum ordinis* [PO], 8.

I. A FRATERNAL WAY OF LIFE

A. Companions of Christ and of One Another

“When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?’”

~ Luke 24:30-32

5. Our name expresses our identity: a companion is one who “breaks bread with” another.⁴ At the heart of who we are is not only our intimate fellowship with one another, but above all our mutual participation in “the breaking of the bread” (Acts 2:42) as priests who offer the Eucharistic sacrifice. Walking together as brothers, we have recognized Christ’s presence with us and found our hearts burning with love for him as we listen to the Scriptures. Through our daily celebration of the holy sacrifice of the Mass and our communal adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, our eyes are opened as we encounter our Eucharistic Lord. As Companions of Christ, we locate the center of our life and ministry in

⁴ The English word “companion” is derived from the Latin prefix *com-*, “with,” and *panis*, “bread.”

the Eucharist, seeking to grow in the intimate dispositions which it fosters in us: gratitude for heavenly benefits received, fraternal charity as members of the one Body, and especially the spirit of total self-offering, united with the Eucharistic offering of Jesus to his Father for the salvation of the world.

6. We are called first to be with Jesus, and this communion is the source of our mission (cf. Mk 3:14). Our companionship with each other is rooted in our shared companionship with Christ: the more intimate our fellowship with him, the deeper our intimacy with our brothers. In turn, our fraternal relationships and common way of life help each of us to grow more deeply in union with Christ.

B. The Divine Gift of Fraternal Communion

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded his blessing, life for evermore.” ~ Psalm 133

7. When Jesus “called to himself those whom he wanted” to be his companions (Mk 3:13; cf. Jn 15:16), they also became brothers of one another.

In his personal love for each of us, he has also chosen brothers for us. Every Companion of Christ gratefully acknowledges, “The Lord gave me brothers!”⁵ One of God’s most precious gifts to us is the joy of joining our lives to other men whose hearts are set on following the Lord. Indeed, a hallmark of our charism is this joy-filled, life-giving fraternal communion that calls us to holiness in the midst of all our trials.

8. We therefore recognize that the fraternity we share is bestowed upon us from above as a gift of the Most Blessed Trinity. Hence we strive to ensure that our brotherhood truly reflects the Trinitarian life that is its source,⁶ becoming for us “a way of being immersed in the reality of communion”⁷ through the gladness of mutual love and self-giving.

5 St. Francis of Assisi, “Testament,” in *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), 154.

6 As John Paul II once observed: “Jesus calls on the priestly community to be the reflection of and participation in Trinitarian communion. What a sublime ideal!” General Audience (4 August 1993), 4. Cf. *Directory for The Ministry and the Life of Priests* (2013), n. 40.

7 Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Priestly Fraternity of the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo (12 February 2011): “Community life is not first and foremost a strategy with which to respond to these needs. Nor is it, in itself, merely a form of assistance in the face of the human being’s loneliness and weakness. It can indeed be all this but only if fraternal life is conceived of and lived as a way of being immersed in the reality of communion. In fact community life is an expression of Christ’s gift which is the Church, and is prefigured in the apostolic community which

9. What is more, the divine gift of our fraternity is meant to become a blessing that flows out into the world, an oil of gladness that touches and heals our brothers and sisters living in a world wounded by division and isolation. “The precious oil which anoints the head of Aaron does more than simply lend fragrance to his person; it overflows down to ‘the edges’” of his priestly robes, where the names of the children of Israel are inscribed.⁸ We pray that God may draw us more deeply into authentic friendship with him and with each other, so that our fraternal life may in turn foster a spirit of true brotherhood and communion in the world.

brought forth priests. Community life is therefore the expression of a form of assistance that Christ gives to our life by calling us, through the presence of brothers, to an ever-deeper configuration to him. Living with others means accepting the need for one’s own continuous conversion and, especially, discovering the beauty of this journey, the joy of humility, of penance, but also of conversation, of mutual forgiveness and of reciprocal support.”

8 Pope Francis, Homily for the Chrism Mass (28 March 2013).

C. Friendship and Intimacy

“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you ... This I command you, to love one another.” ~ John 15:15-17

10. When a man lives deeply in Christ, he lives deep friendship with others. Obedient to the command of Christ our Master, we commit ourselves to a generous love for each other that is marked by both giving and receiving. A defining characteristic of authentic friendship is the sharing of all things in common: not only our talents and possessions, but even the deepest desires of our hearts—*idem velle et idem nolle*, “willing the same and rejecting the same.”⁹

11. It is this unbounded fraternal charity that allows us to be transparent with one another. We desire a fearless frankness in our relationships, sharing our weaknesses, struggles, and joys with each other. A true friend “is the companion of your soul ... to whom you entrust yourself as to another self, from whom you hide nothing, from whom you fear nothing.”¹⁰ We avoid hiding from

9 Cf. St. Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, trans. Sr. Mary Eugenia Laker (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2008), Bk. I, 40.

10 *Ibid.*, III, 6 (adapting St. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 133).

our brothers and seek openness and accountability in all things, for “he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God” (Jn 3:21).

12. “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 Jn 4:18). The experience of being loved by our brothers in our weakness helps us to taste how deeply we are loved by the Lord, giving us the courage to respond to the high calling of holiness which priesthood demands. Because we are not rejected by our brothers when we fall, we learn even to boast gladly of our weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon us (cf. 2 Cor 12:9). Fraternal intimacy thus becomes for us a school of intimacy with God: our vulnerability with one another helps us to surrender more completely to the Lord, creates a delight and ease in being together, and frees us from a spirit of competition. The fruit of these deep friendships is that we grow in freedom, our own gifts are made to flourish, and we are enabled to make a gift of ourselves to others.¹¹

11 Cf. PDV 44: “Since the charism of celibacy, even when it is genuine and has proved itself, leaves one’s affections and instinctive impulses intact, candidates to the priesthood need an affective maturity which is prudent, able to renounce anything that is a threat to it, vigilant over both body and spirit, and capable of esteem and respect in interpersonal relationships between men and women. A precious help can be given by a suitable education to true friendship, following the image of the bonds of fraternal affection which Christ himself lived on earth (cf. Jn 11:5).”

13. Therefore, we will be servants of one another, actively making the welfare of our brothers our concern (Gal 5:13-14). Through generosity in practical acts of service and financial assistance, we will love one another not only in word or speech but in deed and truth (I Jn 3:7, 18). In this way, we will bear witness to the truth of the Scriptures: “A brother is a better defense than a strong city, and a friend is like the bars of a castle” (Prv 18:19); “Where a lone man may be overcome, two together can resist. A three-ply cord is not easily broken” (Eccl 4:12).

D. Fraternal Correction

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” ~ Matthew 18:15

14. Our love for our brothers is what leads us to call them on to share in Christ’s holiness. As “iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Prv 27:17), so our relationships are strengthened through fraternal correction. We base our common understanding of this practice on the Scriptures, always seeking the truth in charity.¹² If a brother is “overtaken in any trespass,” we seek to

12 See Appendix F: Fraternal Correction and Reconciling Relationships.

“restore him in a spirit of gentleness” by speaking to him directly, all the while looking to ourselves lest we too be tempted in the same way (Gal 6:1).

15. Even as we encourage one another to embrace the high ideals of our life, we do not neglect to extend to our brothers the same patience and mercy the Lord has shown us in our own weakness. When fraternal conflicts arise, we choose first to defer to one another out of reverence for Christ (cf. Eph 5:21), submitting to our brothers and not insisting on our own way (cf. I Cor 13:5). If a brother transgresses in word or deed we can excuse him as a friend, and if we correct his fault we do so without resentment and even lightheartedly.¹³

16. When we sin against one another we are ready and eager to forgive, just as the Lord has forgiven us (cf. Col 3:12-13). Since unresolved hurt and anger can become a way for the enemy to work among us, we are quick to ask forgiveness and quick to offer it, not letting “the sun go down on [our] anger,” so as to “give no opportunity to the devil” (Eph 4:27). When fraternal correction and reconciliation are done with love they prove to be a source of great healing and growth, leading us to deeper interior freedom. Each Companion, therefore, strives to cultivate a true openness to

13 Cf. Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, III, 17.

the correction of his brothers and even a genuine gratitude for it: “Reprove a wise man, and he will love you” (Prv 9:8).

E. Abiding Together in Communion

“Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them ‘What do you seek?’ And they said to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which means teacher), ‘where are you staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day.” ~ John 1:38-39

17. We desire that our fraternities be places of communion, where others can “come and see” the joy and ease of abiding together with the Lord. We gladly open our homes especially to our brother priests, that they too may experience the gift of fraternity. When we are together we aspire to create an environment free from cynicism and negativity, remembering that where two or three are gathered in his name the Lord is in our midst (cf. Mt 18:20).

18. As we strive to “love one another with brotherly affection, [and] outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom 12:10), we take special care with our speech.¹⁴ Controlling the tongue demands constant asceticism, for “if any one

¹⁴ See Appendix E: Speech.

makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also” (Jas 3:2). So as not to grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts, we strive never to let evil talk pass our lips, “but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear” (Eph 4:29-30).

19. In order to safeguard our common life, we will be ready to sacrifice time spent with our families, our personal interests, and even our apostolates. Though Our Lord sent his apostles out on mission, at times he also invited them, “Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest awhile” (Mk 6:31). In the same way, our faithfulness to fraternal life even in the midst of our priestly duties does not detract from our mission, but rather strengthens and sustains us in it. By establishing a culture of communion and personal encounter among ourselves, we also offer a much-needed witness to a world preoccupied with individualism, efficiency, and hyperactivity.¹⁵

15 As Pope Francis once exhorted priests: “Have the courage to go against the tide of this culture of efficiency, this culture of waste. Encountering and welcoming everyone, solidarity—a word that is being hidden by this culture, as if it were a bad word—solidarity and fraternity: these are what make our society truly human. Be servants of communion and of the culture of encounter!” Homily for Holy Mass with the Bishops of the 28th World Youth Day and with Priests, Religious, and Seminarians in the Cathedral of St Sebastian, Rio de Janeiro (27 July 2013).

20. Our fraternal life is a particular expression of the “sacramental bond” that unites all priests through the sacrament of Holy Orders.¹⁶ While we believe in the unique value of our way of life as Companions of Christ, nevertheless we reject all forms of elitism and seek to avoid unnecessarily distinguishing ourselves from our diocesan brothers. Instead, we open our hearts to our brother priests and seminarians, placing ourselves at the service of unity among the whole presbyterate.

F. Essential Elements of Our Common Life

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

~ Acts 2:42

21. As part of our common commitment to a way of life that inspires us to pursue holiness, whenever possible we desire to live together in households with at least three Companions of Christ. The depth of personal relationships necessary to sustain our charism is best fostered by a shared routine of fraternal life that includes daily prayer, meals in common, and the mutual experience of the trials and joys of priestly life.

¹⁶ Cf. PO 8.

Living together offers us opportunities to serve our brothers and counteracts the temptations of pride and entitlement that can accompany an isolated priestly ministry.

22. We recognize that the needs of the diocese may sometimes make it impossible for a brother to live in community. Our fraternal life as diocesan priests is always shaped by obedience to our bishop. Yet, whether or not we live in community, we seek to find creative ways to nourish our fraternity, working together to build a life that helps our charism flourish and strengthens our priesthood.¹⁷ In particular, we commit ourselves to these essential elements of our common life:

a. Prayer: The center of our daily life as priests in the celebration of the Eucharist, which we offer with fitting reverence and obedience to the mind of the Church. When not celebrating Mass in our parishes or institutional

17 "The experience of this common life has been rather positive in many places because it has represented a real form of support for priests: created is a family environment" (*Directory*, n. 39). Cf. Bl. Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Sacertotalis Caelibatus* (1967), 80: "One cannot sufficiently recommend to priests a life lived in common and directed entirely towards their sacred ministry, the practice of having frequent meetings with a fraternal exchange of ideas, counsel, and experience with their brother priests, the movement to form associations which encourage priestly holiness."

assignments, we look for opportunities to concelebrate together on days of rest or during community gatherings as an expression of our sacramental fraternity.

Mindful of the Lord's plea to his first companions, "Could you not watch with me one hour?" (Mt 26:40), we spend an hour every day in Eucharistic adoration, most often in our house chapels where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.¹⁸ Our holy hour ordinarily includes an office from the Liturgy of the Hours, which we also prefer to pray in common whenever possible throughout the day. As we begin our holy hour we express our praise to God in "psalms, hymns and inspired songs" (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16), each as the Spirit enables him (cf. Acts 2:4). Desiring to abide with Christ in love (cf. Jn 15:9), we also set aside ample time for silent contemplation. Our fidelity to this daily holy hour, even when we are apart from the community, animates us and enables us to live as contemplatives in the midst of our active priestly ministry. This foundational time of prayer helps us grow towards that "intimate and unceasing union with the Father through his Son Jesus Christ

18 See Statutes of the Companions of Christ (2017), n. 14.

in the Holy Spirit” which the Church desires of her priests.¹⁹

Our way of life also includes other occasions of prayer and fellowship together:

- i. A monthly gathering of all the brothers for a holy hour with the Blessed Sacrament and a community meal.
- ii. An annual priestly retreat, which we make together as a community unless other arrangements are made with the approval of the Moderator.
- iii. An annual conference, which serves our continued education both as priests and as Companions of Christ.
- iv. Regular meetings with our fraternal groups, in which we readily pray for and over one another to express our fraternal support and seek the Lord’s help in our lives.
- v. Frequent and conscientious use of the sacrament of Penance, which we do not hesitate to request humbly from our brother Companions in the spirit

19 Second Vatican Council, Decree on Priestly Training *Optatam totius* [OT], 8.

of that fraternal vulnerability which characterizes our relationships.

b. Household Life: Jesus shared daily life with his apostles and frequently reclined at table with them. So also, our communal meals as Companions are an invaluable means of building our fraternity and promoting a balanced life. We commit to sharing meals together frequently in our households throughout the week, giving special attention to our community gathering on Saturday evenings to inaugurate the Lord's Day with a celebratory meal and a time of prayer and fellowship.²⁰ During the meal we set aside time to give thanks for the blessings we have received from the Lord throughout the week, and on special occasions we honor our brothers for the ways in which their lives reflect Christ to us.

Each brother contributes to the maintenance of his household through the performance of regular chores. In this way we not only preserve a spirit of simplicity and humility in our priestly living, but also draw closer together as brothers committed to the

20 See Appendix D: The Lord's Day.

common welfare of the community. So as not to be a burden to our brothers, we seek to avoid idleness and never to grow weary of doing what is right, mindful of the apostle's injunction: "If any one will not work, let him not eat" (cf. 2 Thess 3:6-13).

c. Fraternal Groups: Honest fraternal sharing is at the heart of our way of life. Each Companion meets regularly with a small fraternal group for fellowship, accountability, and support.²¹ Here our charism is most concretely expressed as we speak openly about our lives with our brothers, "rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep" (Rom 12:15). As we live in the light and hold one another accountable to the Rule of Life we have freely embraced, our fraternal groups promote a spirit of friendship within our community that guards us from isolation in our priestly lives.

21 See Appendix B: Fraternal Groups.

II. THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

A. The Call to Priestly Perfection through the Evangelical Counsels

“For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.” ~ John 17:19

23. From the first moment of his Incarnation in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lord Jesus Christ was “consecrated and sent into the world” by the Father to reconcile all things to himself (Jn 10:36). Through the Spirit, who anointed him and sent him to preach Good News to the poor (cf. Lk 4:18), Jesus belonged totally and exclusively to the Father, sharing in the infinite holiness of the one who called him, chose him, and sent him forth.²² In response to the consecration and mission he received from the Father, Christ freely chose also to consecrate himself completely to the Father’s will, making a holocaust of himself on behalf of those he came to save. On coming into the world, Christ’s whole being uttered a joyful cry of love and self-surrender: “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me ...

²² Cf. PDV 19.

Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God’” (Heb 10:5, 7).

24. Christ’s boundless pastoral charity—the love of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:11), the devotion of the Bridegroom who makes a gift of himself to his Bride (cf. Eph 5:25)—was the essence of his consecration of himself to the Father’s will.²³ This pastoral charity, Christ’s “complete filial acceptance of the Father’s plan” (cf. Jn 10:30; 14:11), was expressed daily in “his life of virginity, obedience, and poverty.”²⁴ Ultimately, he “brought his pastoral charity to perfection on the Cross with a complete exterior and interior emptying of self,” and thus most fully revealed himself as the obedient Son of the Father, the chaste Bridegroom of the Church, and the poor Servant by whose poverty the many are made rich (cf. 2 Cor 8:9).²⁵

“As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” ~ John 20:21

25. As priests of Jesus Christ, we have been consecrated to God by virtue of our ordination, made thereby “the living instruments of Christ the

23 Cf. PDV 21-23.

24 John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* [VC] (1996), 22.

25 PDV 30.

eternal priest,"²⁶ and entrusted with furthering his own mission of gathering into one the scattered children of God (cf. Jn 11:52). The very gift of our ordination binds each of us to pursue that perfection of personal holiness which has its source in our Head and Master, for the priestly office "requires a greater inward holiness than that which is requisite for the religious state."²⁷ Already in the Old Covenant the Lord demanded holiness of his priests: "They shall be holy to their God ... for they offer the offerings by fire to the Lord, the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy" (Lev 21:6; cf. Ps 132:9). How much more ought we priests of the New Covenant, "configured to Jesus the Good Shepherd" and "called to be the living image of Jesus Christ the Bridegroom of the Church," strive with all our hearts to imitate the Lord's own gift of self in his pastoral charity!²⁸ The call to consecrate ourselves wholeheartedly to the Father in Christ is laid before our eyes and

26 PO 12.

27 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [ST], trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Benziger Brothers, 1947), II-II, q. 184, art. 8. Aquinas later elaborates (ST, Supp., q. 35, art. 1, ad 3): "To fulfill the duties of Holy Orders, common goodness does not suffice; but excelling goodness is required; that they who receive Orders and are thereby higher in rank than the people, may also be higher in holiness." Cf. Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* (1935), 35.

28 PDV 22.

held within our hands in the Eucharistic sacrifice we offer each day at the altar, reminding us of the bishop's solemn charge at our ordination: "Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's Cross."²⁹

26. During his public ministry, Jesus frequently addressed a special invitation to certain of his disciples: "Follow me" (Mt 8:22; Mk 2:14; Lk 9:59; Jn 1:43, etc.). In doing so, he called his first companions not only to believe in him and keep his commandments, but above all to "leave everything behind and closely imitate his own *way of life*."³⁰ Since Jesus freely chose a life of virginity, obedience, and poverty, so also "the priest is called to live these counsels" as a way of dedicating himself to the Father's plan with Christ's own filial love.³¹ Though diocesan priests are not bound by formal vows to the evangelical counsels, yet they remain the surest route to the summit of Christian perfection,³² and the highest expression of a total

29 *Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons*, second typ. ed. (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2003), n. 163.

30 VC 14, emphasis original.

31 Cf. VC 22; PDV 27, 30.

32 The need for the secular clergy to embrace voluntarily the evangelical counsels was made especially clear by Pope St. John XXIII: "Even if churchmen are not commanded to embrace these evangelical counsels

gift of self to God.³³ Therefore, as priests who have been called to follow Jesus in the full radicalism of the Gospel, who are especially commanded by

by virtue of their clerical state, it still remains true that in their efforts to achieve holiness, these counsels offer them and all of the faithful the surest road to the desired goal of Christian perfection. What a great consolation it is to us to realize that at the present time many generous hearted priests are showing that they realize this; even though they belong to the diocesan clergy, they have sought the help and aid of certain pious societies approved by Church authorities in order to find a quicker and easier way to move along the road to perfection. Fully convinced as they are that the 'highest dignity of the priesthood consists in the imitation of Christ', churchmen must pay special attention to this warning of their Divine Master: 'If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' It is recorded that 'the holy parish priest of Ars often thought these words of the Lord over carefully, and determined to apply them to his own actions.' He made the resolution readily, and with the help of God's grace and by constant effort, he kept it to a wonderful extent; his example in the various works of priestly asceticism still points out the safest path to follow, and in the midst of this example, his poverty, chastity and obedience stand forth in a brilliant light" (Encyclical Letter *Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia* [SNP] [1959], 12-13). Other recent magisterial documents have made the same point: e.g. PO 15-17; OT 9; PDV 27-30.

- 33 Aquinas notes (ST, II-II, q. 186) that "the perfection of man consists in adhering wholly to God" (art. 1), and that it is through the observance of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience that one is able to make "a holocaust whereby a man offers himself and his possessions wholly to God" (art. 7). This is because "man has a threefold good, according to the Philosopher (*Ethic.* i, 8). First, the good of external things, which he wholly offers to God by the vow of voluntary poverty; secondly, the good of his own body, and this good he offers to God especially by the vow of continence, whereby he renounces the greatest bodily pleasures. The third is the good of the soul, which man wholly offers to God by the vow of obedience, whereby he offers God his own will by which he makes use of all the powers and habits of the soul." (Ibid.)

him to “be perfect, as [our] heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48), we the Companions of Christ choose to consecrate ourselves to God by freely embracing the evangelical counsels of obedience, chastity, and poverty, committing ourselves to live out these counsels as an expression of our pastoral charity for our brothers and sisters.

B. Obedience

“Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” ~ Philippians 2:5-8

27. In the life of Jesus, as in our lives, it is obedience that is preeminent, since by it man offers to God his most precious possession: his own will.³⁴ Obedience was the principle of all Jesus’ actions, the deepest expression of his love for the Father: “I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me” (Jn 6:38). He proclaimed that obedience was what sustained him at every moment of his

34 For this and other reasons, Aquinas argues that obedience is preeminent among the evangelical counsels. Cf. ST, II-II, q. 186, art. 8.

earthly life: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (Jn 4:34). Through his unconditional surrender to the Father's will, Christ finally embraced the Cross, learning "obedience through what he suffered" (Heb 5:8). Above all else, it was his obedience that reversed the ancient curse of Adam's fall and so became the principal cause of our salvation: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19).

28. As Christ's companions in the priesthood, we eagerly conform our minds and hearts to him by this saving obedience, convinced that "among the virtues that priests must possess for their sacred ministry none is so important as a frame of mind and soul whereby they are always ready to know and do the will of him who sent them and not their own will."³⁵ We gladly mortify our self-will so as to become more humble and docile in the Lord's service, confident that the emptying of ourselves in loving obedience will lead to righteousness and salvation not only for ourselves but also for the souls entrusted to our care (cf. 2 Cor 4:7-12; Rom 6:16). We do not resent obedience as an imposition upon our freedom, but find in it

35 PO 15.

the glorious liberty of the sons of God (cf. Rom 8:21). Taking refuge in holy obedience, we are set free from the folly of building our own kingdom, for “unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Ps 127:1).

29. Our practice of obedience as diocesan priests takes on certain distinctive characteristics:

a. Our obedience is *hierarchical and apostolic*: it “recognizes, loves, and serves the Church in her hierarchical structure.”³⁶ We trust the Church of God implicitly, even when our natural judgment would take a different course from hers, recollecting what a hard task she has and how much she needs our loyal and tender devotion.³⁷ We are sons of the Church, promising always to obey the Supreme Pontiff and the episcopal college, and faithfully adhering to the Magisterium in the full breadth of its teachings. As priests consecrated to the service of a particular local church, we promise filial respect and obedience to our bishop, trusting that, as a successor to the apostles, Christ has granted him the grace of

36 PDV 28.

37 Cf. Bl. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), 518-519.

discernment and responsibility in ecclesial decisions. Finally, having freely joined ourselves to one another as Companions of Christ, we promise to respect and obey our Moderator in his oversight of the community.

In the command of our legitimate superiors we recognize an invitation to surrender our wills to the loving command of Christ, “the Shepherd and Guardian of [our] souls” (I Pet 2:25), knowing that “he who fails in obedience does not deceive the visible bishop, but attempts to cheat the invisible.”³⁸ We honor those who are over us in the Lord and esteem them highly because of their work (cf. I Thes 5:12), striving to obey them promptly, eagerly, and without complaint, not only outwardly but from the heart. We will always be “more ready to approve and praise the orders, recommendations, and way of acting of our superiors than to find fault with them,”³⁹ submitting to them in such a way as

38 St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Magnesians*, 3, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe, Vol. I (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 60.

39 St. Ignatius of Loyola, “Rules for Thinking with the Church,” no. 10 (*Spiritual Exercises*, n. 362), in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. Louis J. Puhl, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1951), 158.

to bring them joy rather than be a burden to them.

b. Our obedience is *fraternal*: we are obedient to our bishop not as isolated individuals but in union with the whole diocesan presbyterate. Together with our brother priests, we aspire to be “fitted as exactly to the bishop as strings are to the harp,” so that in our concord and harmonious love we may be a choir that takes up the song of God in unison.⁴⁰ Such fraternal obedience “demands a marked spirit of asceticism,” calling us to relinquish our personal preferences and set aside all forms of jealousy, envy, and rivalry.⁴¹ We “earnestly compete in obedience to one another,”⁴² not acting “out of selfishness or vainglory” but humbly regarding others as more important than ourselves, “each looking out not for his own interests, but everyone for those of others” (Phil 2:3-4).

40 Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 4, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. I, 51.

41 PDV 28.

42 “Oboedientiam sibi certatim impendant.” St. Benedict of Nursia, *Rule*, 72:6, in *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, ed. Timothy Fry, O.S.B. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1980), 94.

As Companions of Christ, our fraternal obedience takes flesh particularly in our relationships within our community. Our obedience to our brothers inspires us to remain faithful to our Rule of Life, reflect upon it regularly as individuals and as a community, and seek ever-greater conformity to the ideals contained within it. We willingly choose to give our brothers the authority to speak into every aspect of our lives, especially in the privileged intimacy of our fraternal groups. Whenever questions arise regarding how we are to be faithful to the concrete demands of our priestly vocation or our Rule of Life, we will obey the decisions of our fraternal group and our Moderator, whose prudent judgment we will joyfully accept as an expression of the will of Christ for us.

c. Our obedience as diocesan priests is *pastoral*, “lived in an atmosphere of constant readiness to allow oneself to be taken up, as it were ‘consumed,’ by the needs and demands of the flock.”⁴³ As priests “taken from among men, and appointed for men” (Heb 5:1), the wishes and wants of the Bride of Christ—our

43 PDV 28.

Bride—must trace the outlines of our daily lives. We therefore willingly submit ourselves in obedience to the People of God, attending to their spiritual hunger so readily that, as they press upon us to hear the Word of God, we ourselves may have no leisure even to eat (cf. Mk 6:31-44).

C. Chastity

“Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.” ~ Matthew 19:11-12

30. The Church lovingly contemplates in Jesus her Lord the perfect model of the priceless gift of celibate chastity, through which he offered himself to the Father with the freedom of an undivided heart (cf. 1 Cor 7:32-34). The chaste love of Christ was a source of his spiritual fruitfulness for the sake of the Kingdom, moving him to renounce an earthly family in order to generate the spiritual family that is his Church: “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Mt 12:50). Celibacy did not wither his heart but expanded it towards all,

making him generously available to each person to whom the Father sent him: "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose I have come" (Mk 1:38). The celibate love of Jesus was not distant or cold, but rich in tenderness and emotion (cf. Mt 23:37; Jn II:35-36), bearing fruit in a profound intimacy with others: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1).

31. The holocaust of love that Christ offered to the Father in his celibate consecration was expressed above all by means of the total gift of himself that he made to his Bride, the Church, as he ascended the wood of the Cross, his "marriage bed."⁴⁴ There, as the chaste Bridegroom, Jesus "loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her" (Eph 5:25-26), and from his pierced side "the sacraments flowed out,"⁴⁵ bearing fruit for the life of the world (cf. Jn 19:33-34).

44 Quodvultdeus of Carthage, *De Symbolo* I, 6, in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* [CCSL], Vol. 60, ed. R. Braun (Turnhout: Brepol, 1956), 320.

45 St. Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Ps 127 [126], n. 4. In CCCL, Vol. 40, eds. E. Dekkers, O.S.B., and J. Fraipont (Turnhout: Brepols, 1862).

“Peter began to say to him, ‘Behold, we have left everything and followed you.’ Jesus said, ‘Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.’” ~ Mark 10:28-30

32. Joined with Christ as his companions in the priesthood, we choose to be united with him in his total self-gift to the Father by consecrating ourselves to the life of celibate chastity which we first promised at our ordination. Through the gift of celibacy we make Christ our love’s choice, cleave to him and his way of life with an undivided heart, and concern ourselves not with worldly affairs but with those of the Lord (cf. Mt 10:37; I Cor 7:32-24). In the world today, when many consider perfect continence impossible, there is all the more need for the joyful witness of men who have consecrated themselves to God through celibate chastity for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven, living signs of that world to come where the sons of God “neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Lk 20:34-36).⁴⁶

46 Cf. PO 16; PDV 29.

33. Having been configured to Christ the Head and Spouse of the Church through the sacrament of Holy Orders, our celibate consecration serves as a great incentive to pastoral charity and a potent source of spiritual fruitfulness.⁴⁷ As friends of the Bridegroom, we know we are not worthy even to untie the thongs of his sandals (cf. Lk 3:16), for, “He who has the Bride is the Bridegroom” (Jn 3:29). Nevertheless, Christ himself mysteriously invites us to participate in his own spousal relationship with his Bride, the Church. As the Law of Moses required a man to raise up children for his brother (Dt 25:5; cf. Mt 22:24), so we are called to beget spiritual children for Christ, “who are born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn 1:13; cf. 1 Cor 4:15; Gal 4:19). Each day we offer ourselves to the Church in the nuptial embrace of the Mass, speaking to her Christ’s own loving declaration, “This is my Body, which will be given up for you” (Lk 22:19). Our celibate consecration thereby enables us to love the Church in the same total and exclusive manner that she is loved by her Bridegroom: with a heart that is new, generous, and pure; with genuine self-detachment, and

47 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* [LG], 42; PDV 29.

yet also with a “divine jealousy” (cf. 2 Cor II:2; Ex 34:13); with the ardent desire to present her to Christ as a pure Bride adorned to meet her Husband at the last day (cf. Rev 21:2).⁴⁸

34. With zealous care, therefore, we pledge to defend the precious gift of chastity both in ourselves and in the world, making a covenant with our eyes (cf. Job 31:1) to guard our hearts from those attitudes and behaviors that are not consistent with the celibate state of life. We choose to avoid situations, conversations, and entertainments that would threaten the purity of heart that keeps our gaze fixed on God (cf. Mt 5:8). In this spiritual battle we entrust ourselves to prayer, the Church’s sacraments, and ascetical practices, so as to find hope in difficulties, forgiveness in failings, and courage in resuming the celibate ideal.⁴⁹

35. Most of all, it is our fraternal intimacy with our brother Companions that safeguards our intimacy with the Beloved.⁵⁰ Accompanying

48 Cf. PDV 22, 29.

49 PO 16; PDV 29.

50 “Celibacy becomes a very meaningful sign, and above all becomes possible to live, when priests begin to form communities. It is important for priests not to live far off on their own somewhere, in isolation, but to accompany one another in small communities, to support one another and so to experience, and constantly realize afresh, their communion in service to Christ and in renunciation for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven.” Pope Benedict XVI and Peter

one another in the bonds of communion, we draw strength and support from our brothers, encouraging one another and holding one another accountable to our way of life. Because we have confidence in our brothers' unconditional love for us, we are able to speak openly with our fraternal groups, spiritual directors, and confessors about the challenges we face in remaining faithful to our celibate consecration, humbly receiving their counsel.

D. Poverty

“For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich.” ~ 2 Corinthians 8:9

36. The Lord Jesus, having stripped himself of the divine glory that was his with the Father and the Holy Spirit from all eternity, took upon himself the lowliness of our human nature and humbly came among us “as one who serves” (Lk 22:25-27; cf. Jn 13:4-5; Phil 2:6-11). To manifest this divine humiliation, he chose a life of radical material and spiritual poverty, abandoning himself so

completely to the loving providence of his Father that he had “nowhere to lay his head” (Mt 8:20). In the silence of the hidden life he earned his own living by the sweat of his brow (cf. Mt 13:55; Gen 3:19); during his public ministry he associated with the lowly and preached Good News to the poor (cf. Rom 12:16; Lk 4:18); and having come forth naked from his mother’s womb, naked he commended his spirit back to the Father as he died on the Cross (cf. Job 1:21; Lk 23:46).

“And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’”

~ Mark 10:21

37. Jesus continues even today to invite some of his closest followers to share in the same spirit of consecrated poverty by which he lived. In doing so the Lord takes nothing away from us, but rather offers us the joy of saying an unreserved “yes” to the Father’s plan, the freedom of leaving everything behind to follow him more closely in simplicity of heart, and the assurance of finding our treasure with him in heaven. Therefore, knowing that where our treasure is, there also will our heart be (cf. Mt 6:21), “in order to imitate and be in reality more like Christ our Lord, [we] desire and choose

poverty with Christ poor, rather than riches.”⁵¹ Having found the pearl of great price in Christ our Master, we his companions gladly sell all that we have and consecrate ourselves to God through a spirit of evangelical poverty, so as to possess him alone (cf. Mt 13:44-46).⁵²

38. Though “the laborer deserves his wages” (Lk 10:7; cf. 1 Cor 9:14), we willingly forfeit this right lest it become a pretext for laying up treasures for ourselves on earth, and we find ourselves serving unrighteous mammon as master rather than Christ (cf. Mt 6:19, 24).⁵³ While as diocesan priests we are not in the religious state, yet we are called clerics because we are the “lot” (*klēros*) of the Lord. We rejoice that “the measuring lines have fallen for [us] in pleasant places,” for the Lord himself is our allotted “portion and cup” (Ps 16:5; cf. Num 18:20). For this reason, “a cleric who serves the Church of Christ ... should strive to be what he is called ... He who is the lot of the Lord, or has the Lord as his lot, must show himself to be such that he both possesses the Lord and is possessed by the Lord ... If he were to own anything apart from the

51 Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, n. 167.

52 PO 17.

53 Cf. PDV 30.

Lord, the Lord would not be his portion.”⁵⁴ Since we desire to make a complete holocaust of our lives to God, keeping nothing back for ourselves, we refuse to separate any one of the evangelical counsels from the others. We will not offer to God a sacrifice that costs us nothing (cf. 2 Sam 24:24; I Chr 21:24).

39. The poverty that unites us to Christ enables us to embrace his mission, freeing us to go forth and proclaim the Gospel with no bag or sandals or staff for the journey (cf. Mt 10:10). Nevertheless, the pastoral character of our poverty as diocesan priests requires the use and ownership of certain material things. God himself has called us to provide for his family as wise and provident fathers, making us “master of his house and ruler of all his possessions” (Ps 105:21; cf. Gen 39:4). Thus, we treat created goods with a sense of responsibility, moderation, and detachment, making use of them in so far as they help us in the attainment of our end, and ridding ourselves of them when they prove a hindrance.⁵⁵ Our own residences, clothing, and personal possessions will

54 St. Jerome, *Epistle 52, to Nepotian*, 5, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina [PL]*, Vol. 22, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Petit-Montrouge, 1845), 531.

55 Cf. Ignatius of Loyola, “First Principle and Foundation,” *Spiritual Exercises*, n. 23.

be reasonable in style, durable for use, and simple in appearance.⁵⁶ We banish the look of affluence and ostentation in our surroundings so as to give no scandal to the poor. Wherever possible we will live in want of material things, that we may learn the secret of being content in every situation, whether in need or in plenty, having nothing and yet possessing all (cf. Phil 4:12; 2 Cor 6:10). Having food and clothing we shall be content with these (cf. 1 Tim 6:8), and bare, we shall follow the bare Cross.⁵⁷

40. In order to express by concrete means the poverty of life through which we have consecrated ourselves to God, we commit ourselves individually and as a community to the following proposals:

a. We will subsist on our priestly salary alone and will donate any gifts or stipends we receive to whatever advances the cause of Christ on earth. We have received without pay, so also we give without pay (cf. Mt 10:8).

b. We will tithe our income generously to both the Companions of Christ and our parish or institution, lest we be found robbing God

56 Cf. OT 9; *The Code of Canon Law* [CIC] (1983), C. 282; PDV 30.

57 Cf. Jerome, *Epistle* 52, 5.

(cf. Mal 3:6-12). We will give alms richly and spend upon ourselves poorly. It is Christ himself we encounter in the poorest of the poor, and “when we attend to the needs of those in want we give them what is theirs, not ours.”⁵⁸

c. We will purge our excess personal possessions on a regular basis with the assistance and oversight of our fraternal group, each keeping for himself only what is truly necessary for his ministry and the reasonable care of his person.⁵⁹

d. We will ask the permission of the brothers in our fraternal group before making any significant purchases or vacation plans. In any matter relating to poverty that is not otherwise clearly defined by the documents that govern our community, we will obediently abide by the decisions of our fraternal group and our Moderator.

58 St. Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*, 3, 21 (in PL 77:87). Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], second typ. ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), par. 2446.

59 See Appendix C: Annual Renewal of Poverty and Purge of Possessions. Cf. Statutes, n. 75.

e. In imitation of the primitive Church, we will maintain a certain level of common ownership and mutual dependence in the administration of temporal goods (cf. Acts 2:42-47).⁶⁰

60 Cf. PO 17.

III. LIFE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. The Holy Spirit and Our Origins

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” ~ Acts 2:1-4

41. Like the early Church, which was born of the Holy Spirit and the prayer of the gathered disciples (cf. Acts 1:14; Jn 3:5-8), the Companions of Christ emerged from the charismatic renewal of the Church in our day. The earliest Companions of Christ received a powerful transformation in their relationship with the Lord through a shared experience of “baptism in the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5), in which the graces of their Christian initiation were more fully awakened and released. Through this encounter with him who is divine Love and Gift in person,⁶¹ the love of God poured

61 John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* [DeV], 10: “It can be said that in the Holy Spirit the intimate life of the Triune God becomes totally gift, an exchange of mutual love between the divine Persons and that through the Holy Spirit God exists in the mode of gift. It is the Holy Spirit who is the personal expression of this self-giving,

into our hearts and overflowed to one another (cf. Rom 5:5), inspiring us to form a community of brothers to support one another in pursuing holiness, for “he who loves God should love his brother also” (1 Jn 4:13-21). We desire to preserve this common heritage by living out our priestly vocation under a continual Pentecost of the Spirit.

B. The Fullness of Life and Ministry

“When Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’” ~ Matthew 3:16-17

42. God has sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts as proof that we are his adopted sons in Christ (cf. Gal 4:6). When we cry, “Abba! Father!” the Spirit himself “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:15-16). He is that gift of “living water” (Jn 4:14; 7:37-39) who exhorts us inwardly, “Come to the Father!”⁶² Through our common sonship in Christ we confidently

of this being-love. He is Person-Love. He is Person-Gift.” Cf. ST I, qq. 37-38.

62 Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans*, 7, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, 76-77.

approach the Father to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, knowing that God “gives the Spirit without measure” (Jn 3:34; cf. Lk 11:13). At our priestly ordination we received a special seal and outpouring of the Holy Spirit, an anointing with that “holy oil” which enables us to call out to God, “You are my Father!” (Ps 89:20, 26).⁶³ Just as Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit “to preach Good News to the poor” (Lk 4:18), so we trust that the power of the Holy Spirit will rest upon us in our priestly life and ministry.

43. Jesus began his public ministry “in the power of the Spirit” (Lk 4:14ff) and concluded it by breathing the Holy Spirit upon his disciples and commissioning them to continue his mission: “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained” (Jn 20:21-23; cf. 2 Kgs 2:9, 15). In our priestly ministry we desire to be completely docile to the Holy Spirit, fanning into flame the gift of God that we received through the laying on of hands (cf. 2 Tim 1:6). We want the Holy Spirit to breathe in us, move through us, enlighten us, persuade us, attract us, and delight in us, so that he may entirely possess us through love. We

63 Cf. DeV 25.

continually ask him to amaze us and our people with his divine power to act in our lives, so that our ministry may never be reduced to a merely human operation. By receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit, we have become witnesses of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and of the “mighty works of God” wrought in his name (Acts 2:11; cf. Lk 24:46-49, Acts 1:8). We believe that by the Spirit of Jesus “signs and wonders” (Acts 4:30; Rom 15:19) will be performed among the people through our ministry. Christ himself has promised, “Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these” (Jn 14:12; cf. Acts 2-4), and so we are assured that “nothing will be impossible with God” (Lk 1:37).

44. Joy is one of the first fruits of life in the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22-23) and a sure sign of the presence of God within a community of brothers. A sad Companion is a sorry Companion;⁶⁴ therefore we guard against all anxiety, darkness, and gloom, for rejoicing in the Lord is our strength (cf. Neh 8:10). We “rejoice in the Holy

64 St. Teresa of Avila would often remark, “A sad nun is a sorry nun.” Cf. Pope Francis, Message to the Bishop of Avila on the Occasion of the Opening of the Teresian Jubilee Year (15 October 2014): “Teresa of Jesus asks her sisters to ‘go cheerfully about whatever services you are ordered to do’ (*The Way of Perfection*, 18, 5). True holiness is a joy, for ‘a sad saint is a sorry saint’.”

Spirit” along with Jesus as we tell of the mighty works he does through our ministry, yet we rejoice not in the works themselves but in the knowledge that our names are written in heaven (Lk 10:17-24; cf. Mt 11:25-27).⁶⁵ Thus we are able to rejoice even when we must suffer “for the sake of the name” (Acts 5:41), because it is then that the Spirit of God’s glory has come to rest upon us (cf. 1 Pet 4:12-14). Whether in distress or in triumph the Spirit remains our “oil of gladness” (Ps 45:7), since we trust that every suffering we endure is for our own sanctification and the redemption of the world (cf. Rom 8:28). As our joy in the Holy Spirit witnesses to Christ’s resurrection and the hope of the world to come (cf. 1 Cor 15:55), we echo Our Lady’s joyful *Magnificat* in humble forgetfulness of self: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior!” (cf. Lk 1:46-55)

65 Cf. DeV 20.

C. Prayer in the Holy Spirit

“Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his exceeding greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with timbrel and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Alleluia!”

~ Psalm 150

45. Expressive vocal praise has a special place in our spirituality as Companions of Christ. Filled with awe in prayer at the majesty of God, we cannot help but cry aloud with the angels: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!” (Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8) His love is “better than wine” (Sgs 1:2): drinking in the “sober intoxication” of the Spirit,⁶⁶ we address one another in “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” singing and making melody to the Lord (Eph 5:18-19). As we are overcome with gratitude for the Lord’s mighty deeds, we must break into song for him who has saved us (cf. Ex 15:1-2; Ps 98:1-4). When we come together to pray as brothers, and even when we are alone,

66 St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 17, 19. Cf. *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem*, in P. Schaff and H. Wace (eds.), *S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Gregory Nazianzen*, trans. R. W. Church & E. H. Gifford, Vol. 7 (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894), 128.

we are at ease in worshipping God through songs of praise, spontaneous prayers, the raising of our hands, the gift of tongues, and the sound of melodious instruments, crying out in the Spirit: "Clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!" (Ps 47:1) Praying aloud in each other's presence brings us closer together as brothers, for our vulnerability in sharing our prayer fosters a deeper spiritual intimacy with one another, strengthening us in turn to stand before the Lord in total openness of heart.

46. It is good to praise and thank the Lord in every circumstance and every trial, whether in joy or sorrow (cf. 1 Thess 5:16-18; Phil 4:4-7). Indeed, we offer to God an especially pleasing "sacrifice of praise" (Heb 13:15) when we extol him from the midst of spiritual dryness, for "one 'Blessed be God' in times of adversity is worth more than a thousand acts of gratitude in times of prosperity."⁶⁷ In moments of darkness, the Spirit teaches us to exhort our hearts, "Why are you cast down, my soul? Why groan within me? Hope in God, I shall praise him still, my savior and my God" (Ps 43:5). The prayer of praise likewise

67 St. John of Avila, Letter 41. Quoted by St. Alphonsus Ligouri in *Uniformity with God's Will*, trans. Thomas W Tobin, C.Ss.R (Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1977), 8.

adds to the experience of gladness and joy (cf. Ps 116:17), expanding our hearts to receive more of God's love and enabling us to take new strength for the times of desolation to come.⁶⁸

47. Since there always remains a rich unity and complementarity between expressive praise and contemplative silence, we treasure both forms of prayer as one symphonic movement of body and soul toward union with God. United with the angels and saints in heaven, our vocal praise of the Lord naturally leads us to a time of silent contemplation of his majesty (cf. Rev 8:1). As we listen to the gentle whisper of the Father's voice (cf. 1 Kgs 19:12) and quietly gaze upon the glorious face of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 3:16-18; Sgs 2:9), the Holy Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words (cf. Rom 8:26-27). Contemplation, in turn, often moves us again to joyful praise, like the holy ones in heaven who cast down their crowns before the throne and cry out in adoration (cf. Rev 4:9-11; 5:8-14). Vocal praise and contemplation, then, form one pulse of the heart, and we ensure that each takes its proper place in our daily prayer as Companions of Christ.

68 Ignatius of Loyola, "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits," 10 (*Spiritual Exercises*, n. 323).

48. We especially experience the healing presence of Jesus among us as a community of brothers when we pray over one another by the laying on of hands, for he has promised: "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them" (Mt 18:20). As we do so, we wait upon the Lord to give us a word, image, sense, or prophecy that he wants us to communicate to our brothers. We ask prayer from one another frequently and eagerly, since we have tasted the peace, strength, faith, healing, and fraternal intimacy that it brings. Such prayer with our brothers helps us grow in familiarity with the interior movements of the Holy Spirit, enabling us more easily to sense and act upon his movements in our priestly ministry to the People of God.

D. Charismatic Gifts

"There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." ~ I Corinthians 12:4-7

49. God is one, yet exists as a Trinitarian communion of persons. In the same way, there is one Spirit of the Father and the Son who is "given to each one who receives him as if he were

the possession of that person alone”;⁶⁹ yet that same Spirit is in turn the “giver of all gifts,”⁷⁰ the source neither of discord nor uniformity, but harmony itself.⁷¹ The Lord Jesus, “ascending on high ... gave gifts to men” (Eph 4:1-14; cf. Ps 68:18) through the bestowal of his Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost. These charismatic spiritual gifts are freely given to the members of his Body, not according to their merits or for their own justification, but for the good of their brothers and sisters.⁷² Though we as Companions have already been graced with the sacred office of the priesthood, we also earnestly desire to receive and exercise every charismatic gift the Holy Spirit wishes to bestow upon us for the building up of the Church (cf. I Cor 14:1-5). By cultivating a

69 St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980), 43.

70 “Dator munerum.” From the Sequence of Pentecost, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*.

71 Cf. Pope Francis, Homily for the Solemnity of Pentecost (19 May 2013): “The Holy Spirit would appear to create disorder in the Church, since he brings the diversity of charisms and gifts; yet all this, by his working, is a great source of wealth, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, which does not mean uniformity, but which leads everything back to *harmony*. In the Church, it is the Holy Spirit who creates harmony. One of Fathers of the Church has an expression which I love: the Holy Spirit himself is harmony—‘*Ipse harmonia est*’. He is indeed harmony. Only the Spirit can awaken diversity, plurality and multiplicity, while at the same time building unity.”

72 Cf. ST, I-II, q. 111, art. 1.

profound docility to the movements of the Spirit we are able to discover and nurture our personal charisms, and our priestly ministry is thereby greatly blessed. Therefore we intentionally foster opportunities to pray with one another to receive the gifts, to be strengthened in them, and to put them into practice.

50. Charismatic gifts differ in type, power, and visibility; profound humility and gratitude should accompany their exercise. Banishing envy and loving unity, we remember that a gift possessed by one is possessed by all.⁷³ Even as we earnestly desire the greatest gifts, we do not neglect the “more excellent way” of charity (I Cor 12:31ff), for, “Above all the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ gives to his friends is that of conquering oneself and willingly enduring sufferings, insults, humiliations, and hardships for the love of Christ.”⁷⁴ Love binds every true

73 Cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XV, 19, 34: “Perhaps you don’t have any of these gifts that are listed; but if you have love, that is not a small gift. If, in fact, you love unity, everything that is possessed by someone else is possessed by you as well! Banish envy and all that is mine will be yours, and if I banish envy, all you possess is mine! Envy separates, love unites.” Quoted in Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M. Cap., *Sober Intoxication of the Spirit: Filled with the Fullness of God*, trans. Marsha Daigle-Williamson (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 66-67.

74 *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis*, 8, in Marion Habig (ed.), *St. Francis of Assisi: Omnibus of Sources*, third ed. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 1320.

charism together “in perfect harmony” (Col 3:14), and as our fraternal charity increases so will the Spirit increase the diversity and intensity of his gifts among us.

51. Just as we delight in receiving the charismatic gifts in our own lives, so also we strive to identify and foster them in the souls under our care. The Holy Spirit continually distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank—whether these charisms be remarkable or simple, exceptional or widely diffused—and so “they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are fitting and useful for the needs of the Church.”⁷⁵ This exercise of our kingly office becomes a tremendous source of renewal in our parishes and ministries, serving to reaffirm that the charisms remain a normative part of the Christian life (cf. J1 2:28-29; I Pet 4:10-11). Thus, we “test all things and hold fast to what is good,” discerning every gift in charity by the light of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church, while taking care never to “quench the Spirit” or “despise prophecy” (I Thess 5:19-21).

75 LG 12.

E. Zeal for the Word

“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I gain understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” ~ Psalm 119:103-105

52. As Companions of Christ, the Word made flesh, our life is animated by the revealed Word of God in the Sacred Scriptures. In our daily prayer and priestly ministry Christ draws near to us and walks with us, setting our hearts on fire as he opens the Scriptures for us (cf. Lk 24:13-35). Our supernatural hunger for this daily bread is a work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 6:34-35; Lk 11:1-13), and as we read the Word it is he who speaks to us (cf. 2 Tim 3:16).⁷⁶ Like the apostles at Pentecost, our immersion in the life of the Spirit illumines our minds to begin to comprehend “what is the breadth and length and height and depth” (Eph 3:18) of the mystery of Christ contained in the Scriptures.

53. We desire our priestly ministry to be saturated by the Sacred Scriptures. In our combat against the evil one we arm ourselves with “the

⁷⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei verbum*, 11.

sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17), the Word of God that is “living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb 4:12). We meditate on the Scriptures day and night so that it becomes etched in our hearts and ready on our tongues (cf. Ps 1:1-2; Jos 1:8), until we can truly say with the prophet, “When I found your words, I devoured them; they became my joy and the happiness of my heart” (Jer 15:16). With this imperishable seed planted in our hearts, we go forth as Christ’s companions in his work of “bringing many sons to glory” (Heb 2:10), generating children of God who are brought to birth “through the living and abiding Word of God” (1 Pet 1:23).

IV. COMPANIONS AT THE CROSS

A. Suffering in Christ

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

~ Galatians 2:20

54. Suffering marked the entire earthly life of Jesus, beginning with the stark reality of his birth in Bethlehem and culminating in his passion and death on the Cross (cf. Heb 2:10, 5:8; 1 Pet 2:21). Suffering was at the core of his mission and identity: it was the cup that he had come to drink, and the baptism with which he longed to be baptized (cf. Lk 12:50; Mk 10:38-39). He himself declared on several occasions that it was necessary for him to “suffer many things” and so enter into his glory (Lk 9:22; cf. 17:25, 24:26). Out of love for his Father, Christ suffered willingly, laying down his life of his own accord that he might take it up again (cf. Jn 10:17-18): “For the joy that was set before him, he endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2).

55. Yet Christ did not come to suffer alone, but desired that his disciples would embrace the Cross with him: “Whoever wishes to come after

me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 16:24-25; cf. Jn 12:26). The call to be a Companion of Christ is above all a call to compassion, to "suffer with" him so as to be glorified with him (cf. Rom 8:17). Because we "seek him whom [our] soul loves" (Sgs 3:2), we desire to stay with him in his suffering and will not flee and leave him alone in his messianic hour (cf. Mt 26:56; Jn 16:32). In his agony on the Cross, Christ "looked for compassion, but there was none, for comforters, but found no one" (Ps 69:21); our desire even now is to "be the one" to comfort and console him as his companions at Calvary.⁷⁷ Our vocation is nothing other than to be friends of the Crucified, and "it is proper to friends 'to desire the same things, and to grieve and rejoice at the same'."⁷⁸ Therefore, we make it our aim to "disdain what Christ disdained on the Cross and desire what he desired"—clinging

77 St. Teresa of Calcutta, *Instructions to the M.C. Sisters* (24 February 1989); cf. Brian Kolodiejchuk, M.C., *Come, Be My Light* (New York: Image, 2007), 260-1: "Be the one ... Try to be the one to share with Him, to comfort Him, to console Him. So let us ask Our Lady to help us understand." Cf. Offertory Antiphon for the Feast of the Sacred Heart, in *Graduale Romanum* (Tournai: Desclée and Co., 1974), 386.

78 ST, I-II, q. 28, art. 2; cf. Aristotle, *Ethic.* ix, 3 and *Rhet.* ii, 4.

neither to riches, nor to honors, nor to power, nor to pleasure—so that the passion of Christ may completely suffice to fashion our lives.⁷⁹

56. We delight in associating ourselves with Jesus in his sufferings precisely because the deepest desire of our hearts is to be intimately united to him. For this reason, even though our frail humanity may recoil from the Cross, still when it comes to us we lovingly receive it, for “we never find crosses, nails, or thorns in the midst of which, if we look closely, we do not find Jesus Christ.”⁸⁰ It is most often in the night of suffering that our Beloved comes to us, and so we respond as he knocks at the door of our hearts and calls out to us: “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night” (Sgs 5:2).⁸¹

79 Thomas Aquinas, *Collatio 6 super Credo in Deum*, from the Office of Readings for the Memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas (January 28).

80 “Various Thoughts and Feelings of the Fathers in New France,” *Jesuit Relation of 1635*. In François Roustang, S.J., *Jesuit Missionaries to North America* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 101.

81 Cf. St. Ambrose, *Exposition of Ps. 118* (Nn. 12.13-14: CSEL 62, 258-259), from the Office of Readings for Thursday of the Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time: “When does God the Word most often knock at your door?—When his head is covered with the dew of night. He visits in love those in trouble and temptation, to save them from being overwhelmed by their trials. His head is covered with dew or moisture when those who are his body are in distress. That is the time when you must keep watch so that when the bridegroom comes he may not find himself shut out, and take his departure. If you were to sleep, if your heart were

Recognizing that “it is quite impossible to reach the thicket of the riches and wisdom of God except by first entering ... the thicket of the Cross,” we devote all our care and concern to winning for ourselves pains and afflictions, so that through them we may obtain the unfathomable treasure of divine grace.⁸²

57. Among the ways we manifest our willingness to suffer with Christ, we regularly meditate on our Lord’s sufferings to deepen our love for him. We also jealously guard our daily prayer and celebration of the sacraments, not allowing busyness or laziness to replace our time with the Lord. We joyfully fulfill the demands holy obedience places upon us in our

not wide awake, he would not knock but go away; but if your heart is watchful, he knocks and asks you to open the door to him.”

82 St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, 36-37, from the Office of Readings for the Memorial of St. John of the Cross (December 14). Cf. St. Rose of Lima, *Ad medicum Castillo*, in L. Getino (ed.), *La Patrona de America* (Madrid, 1928), 54-55, from the Office of Readings for the Memorial of St. Rose of Lima (August 23): “Let all men know that grace comes after tribulation. Let them know that without the burden of afflictions it is impossible to reach the height of grace. Let them know that the gifts of grace increase as the struggles increase. Let men take care not to stray and be deceived. This is the only true stairway to paradise, and without the Cross they can find no road to climb to heaven ... If only mortals would learn how great it is to possess divine grace, how beautiful, how noble, how precious. How many riches it hides within itself, how many joys and delights! Without doubt they would devote all their care and concern to winning for themselves pains and afflictions. All men throughout the world would seek trouble, infirmities and torments, instead of good fortune, in order to attain the unfathomable treasure of grace.”

priestly call and diocesan assignments, even when our parish, institution, or living arrangements may be challenging. As we suffer the passion of the diocesan priesthood in our day, at times we may feel lonely, overburdened, and rejected. Yet in those moments we choose to remain steadfast in relationship with God and with one another, “knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of [our] brotherhood throughout the world” (1 Pet 5:9). We voluntarily impose regular ascetical practices upon ourselves in order to build up our capacity to suffer and strengthen the disciplines of the evangelical counsels. Every Friday as a community we fast and do penance in reparation for our own sins and the sins of all priests, offering up our sufferings for the conversion and sanctification of our brothers in the priesthood. Most importantly, we graciously accept the many interior and exterior trials that are not of our choosing but which are sent to us from the loving hands of Divine Providence: bodily weakness, moral and spiritual suffering, and even death itself.

B. Suffering with Our Brothers

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” ~ 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

58. As we suffer with Christ on Calvary we find that our brothers are also present at the foot of the Cross (cf. Jn 19:25-26) and it is there that we constantly discover them anew, sensing the Lord’s invitation, “Behold your brothers!” As companions of one another we never leave our brothers alone, but draw near to them to console them in their suffering.⁸³ Suffering with one another strengthens the bonds of companionship, for “if one member suffers, all suffer together” (I Cor 12:26). A Companion is always a brother—“although he be accused unjustly, though he be injured, though he be cast in the flames, though he be crucified”⁸⁴—still, “a friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Prv 17:17). Our relationships are marked by a deep commitment to help each other carry the

83 The English word “console” is derived from the Latin prefix *con-*, “with,” and the verb *solor*, “to comfort, solace, soothe.”

84 Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Bk. I, 24, 59.

crosses of our life, as Simon of Cyrene helped Our Lord (cf. Mt 27:32). We seek to support each other in the griefs and sorrows of life, just as the two disheartened disciples on the road to Emmaus were given new courage when the Lord drew near and walked with them (cf. Lk 24:21). We are ready to make sacrifices of our time and energy to stand with our brothers in their sufferings (cf. Job 2:13), striving always “to bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). In our own trials and weaknesses, we do not foolishly try to stand on our own strength, but seek the aid and support of our brothers: “Woe to the solitary, because when he falls, he has no one to lift him up” (Eccl 4:10).

59. At times, our brothers themselves can be a source of suffering for us, whether due to their brokenness or ours (cf. Col 2:1; 2 Tim 2:10). Indeed, the sins and failings of our brothers can often be the heaviest cross to bear, moving us to lament, “If this had been done by an enemy I could bear his taunts. If a rival had risen against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, my own companion, my intimate friend! How close was the friendship between us. We talked together in harmony in the house of God” (Ps 55:13-15). In particular, we carry in our hearts the deep grief caused by our brothers who have drawn back

and no longer walk with us in the priesthood (cf. Jn 6:66). Even still, we do not run from the many mortifications of fraternal life but rather welcome them. We prefer the crosses of community life to the easy security of independent living, knowing that as we suffer on account of our brothers the death of our self-will gives way to new life. For, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24).

C. Suffering for the Life of the World

“My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials ... Accept whatever is brought upon you, and in changes that humble you be patient. For gold is tested in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.”

~ Sirach 2:1, 4-5

60. Our call to offer sacrifice for the salvation of the world is also a call to be the victims who suffer, for every priest must become, like Our Lord, “a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief” (Is 53:3). Often our greatest suffering is borne on behalf of our spiritual children, for whom we are continually in labor until Christ is formed in them (cf. Gal 4:19). Venturing into the world to minister as diocesan priests, we know that very often we are sent out “as sheep in the midst

of wolves" (Mt 10:16). Yet the suffering of our brothers and sisters who lie broken and bloodied along the pathways of the world moves our hearts to pity (cf. Lk 10:25-37), causing us to cry out, "Yes, my God ... if all their cruel afflictions shall fall upon me, I offer myself with all my heart to suffer them alone!"⁸⁵ As we go out full of tears, carrying seed for the sowing, we know that through the grace of God we will come back full of song, carrying our sheaves (cf. Ps 126:6).

61. The Lord Jesus, who was himself "despised and rejected by men" (Is 53:3), told his disciples as he sent them into the world, "You will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Mt 10:22) and assured them, "If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first" (Jn 15:18; cf. Jn 16:2; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 3:12-14). With confidence, therefore, we boldly speak the truth in love, "in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2), heedless of the shame

85 St. Jean de Brébeuf, "Graces, Visions, Illustrations, and Comments Excerpted from the Writings of Jean de Brébeuf," in Roustang, *Jesuit Missionaries*, 175. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris* [SD] (1984), 30: "How essential it is, for the eternal life of every individual, to 'stop,' as the Good Samaritan did, at the suffering of one's neighbor, to have 'compassion' for that suffering, and to give some help. In the messianic program of Christ, which is at the same time the program of the Kingdom of God, suffering is present in the world in order to release love, in order to give birth to works of love towards neighbor, in order to transform the whole of human civilization into a 'civilization of love.' In this love the salvific meaning of suffering is completely accomplished and reaches its definitive dimension."

or ridicule it may elicit (cf. 2 Tim 1:8). The Gospel we preach is not devoid of the Cross: “We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23-24). We strive always to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (cf. Mt 5:44), heeding the apostle’s solemn charge: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good” (Rom 12:20-21).

62. Taught by the example of our Master, we believe that the suffering we endure on behalf of our people is itself the very means by which God desires to bring about their salvation.⁸⁶ In the words of St. John Vianney, patron of all priests, we earnestly beg: “My God, grant me the

86 Cf. SNP 71: “Following in the footsteps of the great apostles of all ages, [St. John Vianney] knew that the best and most effective way for him to contribute to the salvation of those who would be entrusted to his care was through the Cross. It was for them that he put up with all sorts of calumnies, prejudices and opposition, without complaint; for them that he willingly endured the sharp discomforts and annoyances of mind and body that were forced upon him by his daily administration of the sacrament of Penance for thirty years with almost no interruption; for them that this athlete of Christ fought off the powers of hell; for them, last of all, that he brought his body into subjection through voluntary mortification.”

conversion of my parish; I am willing to suffer all my life whatever it may please you to lay upon me; yes, even for a hundred years am I prepared to endure the sharpest pains, only let my people be converted.”⁸⁷ By making of ourselves an offering for sin and being crushed by the *mysterium iniquitatis* at work in the world, we know that our sufferings will justify many (cf. Is 53:5, 10-11; 2 Thess 2:7). Therefore, we rejoice in our sufferings for the sake of others, because in our flesh we complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, the Church (cf. Col 1:24). Holding the treasure of grace in the earthen vessels of our frail humanity, we constantly give ourselves up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in the world (cf. 2 Cor 4:7-12).

87 Cf. Francis Trochu, *The Curé D’Ars*, trans. Ernest Graf (Rockville, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1977), 125.

V. EVANGELIZATION

A. The Call to Preach the Gospel

“Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age.’” ~ Matthew 28:18-20

63. Christ Our Master was himself the first and greatest evangelizer, the “faithful witness” of the Gospel of God (Rev 1:5, 3:14).⁸⁸ Proceeding eternally from the Father’s heart, Christ came into this world in the power of the Spirit with an urgent mission: “I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God ... for I was sent for this purpose” (Lk 4:43). Throughout his life Jesus preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins and proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God (cf. Mk 1:14-15; Mt 4:17). He announced salvation to the poor (cf. Lk 4:18) and promised his followers the gift of eternal life (cf. Jn 4:14). Such was the power of his witness that those who heard him “were astonished by the gracious words

88 Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* [EN] (1975), 7; St. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* [RM] (1990), 42.

that came from his lips” (Lk 4:22), and even his enemies recognized, “No man ever spoke like this man!” (Jn 7:46)

64. Yet Christ himself—not merely his words and actions—is the “Good News” of God (cf. Mk 1:1),⁸⁹ for he declared: “This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3). The message of salvation Our Lord proclaimed is nothing other than the person of the messenger, the truth that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” and that whoever believes in him has eternal life in his name (Jn 21:31; cf. 3:15-16). Thus, to be a disciple of Jesus “is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person,”⁹⁰ a true *metanoia* that brings about a profound transformation of the whole of life.

“They told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.” ~ Luke 24:35

65. Those first disciples on the road to Emmaus, who felt their hearts burning within them when they met the Risen Lord, “set out at once” to share the Good News with their brethren (Lk 24:33).

89 Cf. RM 13.

90 Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* [DCE] (2005), 1.

So also, as Companions of Christ our personal encounter with Jesus impels us to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). Having discovered the joy of the Gospel, like the first Apostles “we cannot but speak” to all we meet of that “which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life” (Acts 4:20; I Jn 1:1).

66. *Caritas Christi urget nos!* (2 Cor 5:14) It grieves us greatly that in our own day the Lord is not more known, that not all have been converted to him, that sin has not been driven from every heart.⁹¹ For we are convinced that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the one necessary, unique, and irreplaceable Word that God has spoken to each man for his eternal salvation; thus “it merits having the apostle consecrate to it all his time and all his energies, and to sacrifice for it, if necessary, his own life.”⁹² We humbly acknowledge that it is God who chose to reveal his Son to us, and who set us apart before we were born to be consecrated

91 Cf. Jean de Brébeuf, *Spiritual Diaries*, from the Office of Readings for the Memorial of the North American Martyrs (October 19): “My God, it grieves me greatly that you are not known, that in this savage wilderness all have not been converted to you, that sin has not been driven from it.”

92 EN 5.

to “the priestly service of the Gospel of God” (Rom 15:16; cf. 1:1, Gal 1:15). Therefore, the task of evangelization gives us no cause to boast, for an obligation has been placed upon us: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16)

67. No one gives what he does not have. “We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day,”⁹³ and we cannot be authentic evangelizers until we can truly say to others, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Thus we strive constantly to amend our own lives in accord with the doctrine of Christ our Master, lest after preaching to others we ourselves should be lost (cf. 1 Cor 9:27). As we preach the Gospel we confess that we are not its absolute masters, able to dispose of it as we wish,⁹⁴ “for what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor 4:5). Abasing ourselves in the sight of all, we not only proclaim that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, but that we ourselves are foremost among them (cf. 1 Tim 1:15). Our work of evangelization is therefore a matter of urgency for our own salvation even before that of others, for as we

93 RM 47.

94 Cf. EN 15.

hand on with complete fidelity what we ourselves have received, our own “faith is strengthened when it is given away.”⁹⁵

“Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee ... and he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.”

~ Luke 4:14-15

68. The Holy Spirit is the “principal agent of mission” in the Church,⁹⁶ and makes those who receive him witnesses and prophets (cf. Acts 1:8; 2:17-18). We rely utterly upon him not only to inspire but also to direct our efforts to spread the Good News, and we desire to remain ever docile to his voice, as were the first missionary disciples (cf. Acts 8:29, 10:19, 11:12, 13:2-4, 15:28, 16:6-7, 20:22-23, 21:11). Without him, even the best individual or institutional attempts at evangelization will have no effect; with him, even our spontaneous testimony to Jesus is endowed with a wisdom the world cannot refute (cf. Mk 13:11; Lk 21:15).

69. Filled with the Spirit as we daily encounter him in prayer, we are strengthened to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel with boldness (*parrhesia*),

⁹⁵ RM 2.

⁹⁶ RM 30; cf. EN 75.

even in the face of great opposition (cf. Acts 4:13, 29-31; 1 Th 2:2; Eph 6:18-20). We make our own the prophetic words spoken by St. John Paul II in our land: “Do not be afraid to go out on the streets and into public places, like the first Apostles who preached Christ and the Good News of salvation in the squares of cities, towns, and villages. This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel (cf. Rom 1:16). It is the time to preach it from the rooftops (cf. Mt 10:27)!”⁹⁷

B. The Means of Spreading the Gospel

“He called to him the twelve, and began to send them out two by two.” ~ Mark 6:7

70. Our Lord chose to spread his Kingdom on earth by inviting certain of his disciples to pass several years in his intimate company before sending them out to preach in his name (cf. Mk 3:13-14; Acts 1:21-22). Following his example, we as Companions of Christ strive to evangelize by means of personal encounter and the common life.⁹⁸ While never neglecting the pressing need

97 John Paul II, Homily for the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 8th World Youth Day in Denver, CO (15 August 1993).

98 Cf. EN 66.

to proclaim the Good News to the multitudes, nevertheless our own encounter with the Lord has convinced us that the most effective means of transmitting the Gospel is to make it incarnate for others through intimate personal contact:⁹⁹ “The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but ... by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us.”¹⁰⁰

71. “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, the first and most indispensable means of evangelization today is our individual and collective witness of life. Sharing the Good News of Jesus with others involves not so much the teaching of certain abstract truths, but the invitation to “come and see” the Christian “Way” of living (Jn 1:39; Acts 9:2).¹⁰² The men and women of this age still plead with us, “We wish to see Jesus” (Jn 12:21), asking us not only to

99 Cf. EN 46.

100 John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), 92-3.

101 EN 41.

102 Cf. RM 42.

“speak” of Christ but in some sense to “show” him to them.¹⁰³ Even in a culture where the appeal of reasoned arguments has been all but extinguished, our evangelical poverty offers an unspoken sermon on the value of trust in God; our joyful celibacy on the life of heaven; and our humble obedience on the beauty of childlike dependence. Then, once the desire for God has been re-awakened in others and questions arise in their hearts, we remain always prepared with our lips to give the reason for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt 3:15).¹⁰⁴

C. The Fraternal Dimension of Evangelization

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” ~ John 13:35

72. One of the most powerful evangelistic tools we possess as diocesan priests living in fraternity is the “radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion” that we offer to the world.¹⁰⁵ When the Lord first sent out his disciples “two by two” to preach the Good News (Mk 6:7; Lk 10:1), it was not only that they might benefit from the

103 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* [NMI] (2001), 16.

104 Cf. EN 21.

105 Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* [EG] (2013), 99.

mutual help and encouragement which would safeguard them from the dangers of loneliness and isolation,¹⁰⁶ but above all to make plain to them “that he who has not charity towards his neighbor ought in no way to take upon himself the office of preaching.”¹⁰⁷ Jesus never desired that the intimate communion of his disciples should remain closed in upon itself; rather, it acquired its full value only when it became a witness to charity that evoked the admiration of the whole world and led it to conversion.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, this was his most earnest prayer to the Father at the Last Supper: “That they may all be one ... in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:21).

73. In the same way, our life of fraternity and prayer as Companions of Christ serves first of all to strengthen our evangelistic witness, even as it also helps to alleviate the physical, emotional, and spiritual burdens that accompany our apostolic labors. For, “besides the advantage which comes to the apostolate and its activities, the common life of priests offers to all, to fellow priests and

106 Cf. PO 8.

107 Gregory the Great, *Hom. In Evan.*, 17. In Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected out of the Works of the Fathers*, ed. J. H. Newman, Vol. 2 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1842), 109.

108 Cf. EN 15.

lay faithful alike, a shining example of charity and unity.”¹⁰⁹ As we live in imitation of the early Church, loving one another “with glad and generous hearts” and living in Christ with “one heart and soul” (Acts 2:46; 4:32), our fraternal life serves as an eloquent witness to the loving communion of the Most Holy Trinity.¹¹⁰ This witness is most effective when we serve together in parishes or other ministries, so that our unity in fraternal charity may inspire the world today to say of us what was said of the Christians in ancient times: “See how they love one another!”¹¹¹

74. Our communion with Christ and with one another serves to animate our works of evangelization, as the Lord promised, “He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit” (Jn 15:5). Meanwhile, the central purpose of mission is nothing other than to draw all people into the communion we share with the Lord, “to gather into one the scattered children of God” (Jn 11:52). We proclaim the Gospel to others so that they too “may have fellowship [*koinonia*] with

¹⁰⁹ PDV 81.

¹¹⁰ Cf. VC 21.

¹¹¹ Cf. Tertullian, *Apology*, 39, in A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe (eds.), *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, trans. S. Thelwall, Vol. 3 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 46.

us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:3).¹¹² "Communion begets communion": the gift of fraternal love that we have received from Jesus is diffusive of itself, destined to be shared by all, "to the point that *communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion.*"¹¹³

D. The New Evangelization in Parish Life

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

~ Acts 2:42

75. While diocesan priests often serve a wide variety of missions and assignments, nevertheless our heart's deepest desire is to have the joy of being the spiritual father at the head of the parish family, giving a shepherd's care to the little flock that God entrusts to us (cf. 1 Pt 5:1-3; Lk 12:32). The parish is not an outdated institution to be discarded lightly; rather, as "the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters," when renewed in Christ it becomes a privileged setting

¹¹² Cf. RM 26.

¹¹³ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* [CL] (1988), 32, emphasis original.

for evangelization.¹¹⁴ Rejecting a pastoral ministry that would limit itself to mere administration or institutional maintenance, we strive as parish priests to form a community of disciples that is “permanently in a state of mission,” at once evangelized and evangelizing.¹¹⁵ As we commit all of the parish’s energies to a “New Evangelization,” what gives a profound unity to the countless tasks that claim our attention every day—what informs our interactions with every person and motivates all of our activities and plans—is a single pressing aim: to proclaim the Gospel of God to every creature (cf. Mk 16:15).¹¹⁶

76. Implementing the New Evangelization in parish life is not a matter of creating new programs or initiatives, since “the program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever.”¹¹⁷ Our program is holiness, fostering the personal conversion of each and every soul entrusted to our care.¹¹⁸ While the unique needs of each community will require pastoral adaptations, our approach to

114 CL 26; cf. EG 28.

115 EG 25.

116 Cf. RM, 3; EN 68.

117 NMI 29.

118 NMI 31.

evangelization in parish life will always be marked by certain characteristics, taken from the model given us by Jesus himself:

a. Discipleship: All true evangelization begins with personal encounter. Our first priority in the parish is to form missionary disciples who themselves become trained evangelizers.¹¹⁹ While making ourselves radically available to all, we take particular care to invest ourselves personally in parish leaders, sharing with them not only the Gospel of God but even our very lives (cf. 1 Th 2:8). Since no one is a true disciple of Christ until he too becomes a witness to the Kingdom,¹²⁰ we send out our parish leaders to teach others also (cf. 2 Tim 2:2), being willing even to accompany them into the “byways” of their local neighborhoods as they go door to door to invite all to the wedding feast (cf. Mt 22:9).

b. Fraternal Groups: Having experienced the indispensable value of fraternal groups in our own lives as priests, we promote the formation of small groups among the lay faithful to share

119 Cf. EG 28.

120 Cf. EN 24.

their faith with one another. Such groups are uniquely able to provide the support and accountability vital to an authentic Christian life, serving as a kind of school of humility, vulnerability, and genuine friendship. They help to foster a “spirituality of communion” within the parish family, enabling each member to constantly encounter his brothers and sisters anew, and so encounter the Lord “in the midst of them” whenever they gather in his name (Mt 18:20).¹²¹

c. The Primacy of the Spiritual Life: The faithful expect their priests to be experts in the spiritual life, “specialists in promoting the encounter between man and God.”¹²² Our parishes should be genuine schools of prayer “where the meeting with Christ is expressed ... in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly ‘falls in love’.”¹²³ We accomplish this by celebrating Holy Mass and the other sacraments with

¹²¹ Cf. NMI 43.

¹²² Benedict XVI, Address at a Meeting with Clergy in Warsaw Cathedral (25 May 2006).

¹²³ NMI 33.

reverence, obedience, and ardent charity: “Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy.”¹²⁴ We also promote Eucharistic Adoration in our parishes so as to enable our flock to drink from the wellspring that is Christ, discovering the *unum necessarium* that can never be taken from them (Lk 10:42). Finally, we are generous with our time as spiritual directors, sharing the fruits of our own contemplation with those who ask, “Teach us to pray!” (Lk 11:1).

d. Evangelistic Preaching: “Faith comes from what is heard,” but, “How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher” (Rom 10:17, 14)? Even the finest witness of a Christian life remains incomplete without the verbal proclamation of the Lord Jesus, and in the parish there is no greater opportunity for proclaiming the Good News than the Sunday homily. We strive to preach anointed homilies that are fed by our own study and prayer, centered on Christ crucified, and delivered from the heart (cf. Mt 12:34; 2 Cor 6:11). We do not speak with lofty words or worldly

wisdom, but “by the open declaration of the truth we commend ourselves to each person’s conscience,” preaching the Word of God with persistence both “in season and out of season” (2 Cor 4:2; 2 Tim 4:2).

e. Fostering Vocations: As spiritual fathers in the parish family, we desire to beget “true children in the faith” (cf. 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2) by actively promoting vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. We frequently lead our people in prayer to beg the Lord to send out laborers into his harvest (cf. Mt 9:38), open our rectories and houses of formation to inquirers, and generously participate in the work of seminary formation. By cultivating an attitude of discernment and docility of heart among our young people (cf. 1 Sam 3:2-10), we pray that many hearts may be inspired to respond to the Lord: “Here I am! Send me” (Is 6:8).

f. Shared Ministry: We seek opportunities to labor together in the vineyard of the Lord and so be “co-workers in the truth” (3 Jn 1:8), after the example of the first disciples who “beckoned to their companions in the other boat to come and help them” bring in the catch (Lk 5:7).

Even when we are not assigned together, we look for ways to assist our fellow Companions in the celebration of the sacraments, the preaching of parish missions, and the sharing of resources. In this way we protect one another from the dangers of self-centeredness and individualism in pastoral ministry, refresh and strengthen those brothers who are over-burdened, and offer to the faithful the priceless witness of fraternal unity.

VI. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY: COMPANION OF CHRIST AND OUR COMPANION

A. Our Devotion to Mary

77. The Blessed Virgin Mary was the original companion of Christ, the one true *Socia Christi*. As Mary was the constant companion of her Son and the one most closely associated with him in his life, death, and resurrection, we find in her the greatest model and highest inspiration of our own vocation to be the Companions of Christ. Yet also, since we have been sacramentally configured to Christ the High Priest through our ordination, we sense the Blessed Virgin's mysterious desire to be our companion, the indispensable helpmate and associate of our priestly life. Thus, even as we seek to imitate Our Lady as the perfect companion of Christ, we also humbly receive her as our own companion.

78. Our unique relationship with Mary finds its clearest expression on Calvary. There, where Our Lord offered himself to the Father "once for all" (Heb 10:10) as both Priest and Victim, we first of all stand beside Our Lady in the person of the beloved disciple, contemplating with her and in her the Cross of her Son, and learning from her how to associate ourselves with Jesus in his act of

perfect self-giving for the salvation of the world. Yet it is also in the mystery of the Cross that Mary draws near to us in our priestly identity as *alter Christi*, desiring to be our companion by sharing with us her compassionate love for her Son. In this way, our intimate union with Our Blessed Lady is realized through both our personal and sacramental union with her Son in his priesthood.

B. Mary as the Companion of Christ the Priest

“And Mary said: Behold, the handmaid of the Lord: let it be done to me according to your word.” ~ Luke 1:38

79. Our Blessed Lady’s companionship with her divine Son in his priestly identity and mission began already at the first moment of his Incarnation in her immaculate womb. For it was from her that the Eternal Word took his flesh, and so was consecrated a priest *in aeternum*, the one mediator between God and man.¹²⁵ In conceiving Christ the Priest, Mary was not merely a passive instrument of God; instead, he willed from all eternity that she should freely cooperate in the work of salvation through faith and obedience.¹²⁶

125 Pierre Paul Philippe, O.P., *The Virgin Mary and the Priesthood*, trans. Laurence J. Spiteri (New York: Alba House, 1993), 13.

126 Cf. LG 56: “Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see her as used by God

Therefore, at the moment Our Lady received Gabriel's joyful greeting, all of heaven and earth held its breath, as it were, prostrate at her feet to hear her reply; even the Lord of the universe chose to wait upon her word. Moved by a fullness of his grace, Mary opened her heart to him in the obscurity of faith, opened her lips in loving consent, and opened her womb to conceive her Creator in the flesh.¹²⁷

"Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord!" ~ Luke 1:45

80. In surrendering herself completely to the Lord's invitation, this humble handmaid became "the faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit,"¹²⁸ and thus ensured that already at the first moment of its existence the priesthood of Jesus Christ should become incarnate through a free and unconditional gift of self on the part of a human creature. Indeed, it was Mary's heroic act of faith—even more than the marvelous fact of her

not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience."

127 Cf. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on the Blessed Virgin Mary*, trans. a priest of New Melleray Abbey (Devon: Augustine Publishing Co., 1984), 70-72.

128 Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* [RMat] (1987), 26.

virginal conception—that inspired the praise of her kinswoman Elizabeth. “Mary is more blessed in receiving the faith of Christ than in conceiving the flesh of Christ,” and so “it was for her a greater thing to have been Christ’s disciple than to have been his mother.”¹²⁹

81. At the Annunciation Mary thus becomes a model for our imitation, for although we cannot share in her divine maternity, we are indeed called to imitate her faith. In his loving Providence, the Father does not desire that we who have been ordained to share in the priesthood of his Son should merely be passive instruments of his grace. Rather, we must allow his priesthood to take flesh in us—as it did in Mary—through our free and unconditional “yes” in faith to the divine plan for our life and ministry. As Christ takes flesh in our hands each day when we speak the words of institution, we are invited with Mary to renew our act of self-surrender: “Let it be done to me according to your word!” In this way, the personal *fiat* of each Companion of Christ will serve to echo throughout the ages that “first *fiat* of the New Covenant”¹³⁰ spoken by Our Lady, which

129 Augustine, *De Virginitate*, 3 (PL 40:397-398); *Sermo* 25, 7-8 (PL 46:937-938).

130 RMat 1.

was itself but the herald of the full and definitive “*fiat*” offered by her Son to the Father’s perfect will (cf. Lk 22:42).¹³¹

“*Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.*”

~ Luke 2:19, 51

82. The mystery of Mary’s identity as the *Socia Christi* only deepened as she accompanied him throughout his life. “From the house of Nazareth to the place of Calvary,” Jesus, the Suffering Servant, made Mary “his constant companion,” and granted her the privilege of “always sharing his lot.”¹³² She knew the poverty of his birth in a humble stable, the harsh necessity of his flight into Egypt, and the anxious days of searching for him in Jerusalem—until at length the Lord revealed her at Cana to be the “Woman” whom he would ask to share his messianic “hour” on the Cross (cf. Jn 2:4; Gen 3:15).

131 Cf. John Paul II, Letter to Priests (25 March 1998): “The priest is called to match the *fiat* of Mary at all times, allowing himself to be led by the Spirit as she was ... Accompanied by Mary, the priest will be able to renew his consecration day after day.”

132 Pope St. Pius X, Encyclical Letter *Ad Diem Illum* [ADI] (1904), 15; Ven. Pope Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* [MD] (1950), 38.

83. With Mary, we too desire to walk with Jesus as his companions in our daily ministry, intimately associating ourselves with him in his proclamation of the Kingdom and his salvific work in souls. We do not hesitate to exhaust ourselves with Christ when he is tired (cf. Jn 4:6, Mk 4:38), to suffer dishonor with him when he is dishonored (cf. Mk 3:21-22, Jn 8:48)—in short, to experience whatever he experienced on earth.¹³³ We long to hear him speak to us those words that fittingly apply to his mother also: “It is you who have stood by me in my trials” (Lk 22:28).

“Standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother ... and the disciple whom he loved.” ~ John 19:25-26

84. Most of all it was at Golgotha that Mary, like her Son, passed through “her hour *par excellence*.”¹³⁴ Just as Jesus mounted the wood of the Cross as the innocent victim for our redemption, so also Mary “suffered in the very depths of her soul with his most bitter sufferings ... and in her heart died with him, stabbed by the sword of sorrow,” as

133 Cf. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, n. 167.

134 Bl. Columba Marmion, *Christ the Ideal of the Priest*, trans. Matthew Dillon (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 345.

Simeon had foretold (cf. Lk 2:35).¹³⁵ For “only by passing through her heart could the sword enter the flesh of her Son,” so that while “he died in body through a love greater than anyone had known, she died in spirit through a love unlike any other since his.”¹³⁶

85. The mystery of Mary’s companionship with Christ on the Cross surpassed even the bonds of her maternal affection for him and took on a certain spousal character. Though at Calvary Mary was indeed always a mother, watching and praying close to the Cross of her Son, yet she was also revealed there precisely as “‘*Socia*,’ that is, as collaborator in his salvific work, ‘under him and with him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption’.”¹³⁷ Mary’s association with Jesus in his salvific work did not consist principally in offering with him his redemptive sacrifice, but above all in her complementary role as the New Eve at the side of the New Adam, “as a witness to [his] passion by her presence, and

135 Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Jucunda Semper* (1894).

136 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermo in dom. infra oct. Assumptionis*, 14-15: *Opera Omnia*, Edit. Cisterc. 5 (1968), 273-274; from the Office of Readings for the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15).

137 John Paul II, Wednesday General Audience (23 March 1983); cf. LG 56.

as a sharer in it by her compassion.”¹³⁸ For “the Blessed Virgin Mary was not chosen by the Lord to be a ‘minister,’ but as ‘spouse’ and ‘help’,” in accord with the words of Genesis: “It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helpmate fit for him” (Gen 2:18).¹³⁹ By espousing all the sentiments of her Son’s priestly heart, Mary’s heart became for him, like the bride in the Song of Songs, “a spring of living waters,” “a closed garden,” “a sealed fountain” (Sgs 4:12-15), offering to Jesus the consoling presence of at least one creature who understood him perfectly during his agony on the Cross. Thus, Our Lord

138 SD 25. On the patristic origins of Mary’s title as the “New Eve,” cf. LG 56; CCC 411, 489, 726, 2618, 2853; Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, 1993), 159-62; and Mark Miravalle (ed.), *Mariology: A Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians and Consecrated Persons* (Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 2007), 350ff.

139 Pseudo-Albert the Great, *Mariale, sive quaestiones super Evangelium*, ‘*Missus est Angelus Gabriel*’, q. 42, art. 5. Hence, he continues, “the Blessed Virgin is not a ‘vicar’, but a ‘helpmate’ [*coadjutrix*] and ‘companion’ [*socia*], participating in the Kingdom as she had participated in the Passion, when all the disciples and ‘ministers’ had fled and she alone remained beneath the Cross: the wounds which Christ received in His body, Mary felt in her heart.” This is one of the earliest references in the Catholic theological tradition to Mary specifically as “*socia*,” or companion of Christ. Magisterial uses of this little known Marian title became more frequent in the twentieth century: cf. ADI 15; MD 14, 40; LG 61; John Paul II, Wednesday General Audience (23 March 1983), and Homily for the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows (15 September 1984). A balanced exploration of the theological import and limits of this term can be found in Philippe, *Virgin Mary*, 54, 57, 98, 100-1.

could say of Mary that during the Crucifixion, “her heart was in my heart,” as a bride’s heart is in that of her bridegroom.¹⁴⁰

86. Our priestly vocation does not consist merely in being the instruments through which the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus is ceaselessly offered to the Father; rather, as Companions of Christ we feel the deeper need of becoming personally conformed to him in mind and heart, just as Mary was.¹⁴¹ As we stand beside Our Lady at the foot of the Cross and contemplate her loving union with Jesus in his Passion, we find in her the perfect icon of our particular charism. Under Mary’s tutelage we begin to make all our Master’s dispositions and priestly activity our own, sharing with him the same thoughts and plans, the same sentiments he has for his Father and for all of humanity. In the crosses of our priesthood, at every moment in which we find ourselves with Our Lord on Golgotha, we look to Our Lady and cry out:

140 St. Bridget of Sweden, *Revelations*, 3, quoted in Philippe, *Virgin Mary*, 99. Cf. ST, I-II, q. 28, art. 2: “In the love of friendship, the lover is in the beloved ... so that it seems as though he felt the good or suffered the evil in the person of his friend.”

141 Cf. Philippe, *Virgin Mary*, 75.

*Iuxta crucem tecum stare**te libenter sociare**in planctu desidero*

To stand beside the
 Cross with you
 and gladly be your
 companion
 in weeping, this I
 desire!¹⁴²

“When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.”

~ John 19:26-27

87. The spousal love that united the hearts of Jesus and Mary on Calvary bore immense fruit for the redemption of the world. In his words to her, “Woman, behold your son” (Jn. 19:26), we can hear the invitation, “Woman, who suffer with me, be fruitful with me, be the mother of my children.”¹⁴³ Like the beloved disciple, we as priests marvel that Our Lord and Master should have entrusted his mother particularly to us as her sons, and that among the first fruits she merited through her union with Jesus as he died on the

¹⁴² Sequence for the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*.

¹⁴³ Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, “Sermon on the Compassion of Our Lady,” quoted in Garrigou-Lagrange, *Mother of the Saviour*, 190.

Cross was our own priestly vocation.¹⁴⁴ In humble gratitude for so precious a bequest, we too choose to take her “into our own,” granting her a place of honor in every one of our households and chapels, introducing her into every aspect of our interior life, and welcoming her into the midst of our human brokenness.¹⁴⁵

88. As we “behold [our] mother,” who so tenderly “cares for the brethren of her Son,”¹⁴⁶ our common status as sons of Mary serves to strengthen our fraternal bonds as Companions of Christ and moves us to care for one another. Our mother Mary teaches us how to discover

144 Cf. Philippe, *Virgin Mary*, 18-20: “Mary became the mother of every one of us while she stood at the foot of the Cross ... At that moment the Virgin Mary, with Christ and in Christ, merited all the graces of our vocation and our life as priests ... This is due to the fact that she stood united with her son on Calvary ... She loves all priests and looks after every one of us as if we were the only person in the world ... It is she who, along with Christ, has petitioned that we be priests.”

145 Cf. RMat 45: “Entrusting himself as a son to Mary, the Christian, like the apostle John, welcomes ‘into his own [home]’ the mother of Christ and introduces her to every aspect of his interior life, that is to say into his human and Christian ‘I’: ‘he took her into his own home’.” Cf. Marmion, *Ideal*, 336: “He pronounces these words: ‘Woman, behold thy son’ (Jn 19:26). These last words of Jesus are for Mary a testament of incomprehensible value. We may see in St. John all the faithful souls to whom Mary became a mother, but we must not forget the fact that he had been ordained priest the evening before. On this account, he represents especially all priests. We like to think that at the hour of His death, at that moment of supreme solemnity, Jesus turned to us; in the person of the apostle whom He loved, He entrusted us to His mother.”

146 LG 62.

one another constantly anew, receiving each brother generously into our lives with the same unconditional love with which she welcomed John into her heart.

C. Mary as Our Companion

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” ~ Luke 1:31

89. Because of our resemblance to Christ in the sacramental character we share as priests, Our Lady “sees her divine Son in us and cannot reject us; it would be to reject Jesus himself.”¹⁴⁷ Therefore, we humbly recognize that just as Mary teaches us how to become companions of Christ, so also she earnestly desires to become our own companion, to see and love in us what she sees and loves in her Son.

90. Mary’s intimate association with us begins already from our time in seminary, that “seedbed” in which we are mysteriously formed by the Holy Spirit into the image of her Son within her womb, close to her maternal heart.¹⁴⁸ As our priestly

¹⁴⁷ Marmion, *Ideal*, 331.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. LG 63: “The Son whom she brought forth is He whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, (Rom. 8:29) namely the faithful, in whose birth and formation she cooperates with a maternal love.”

vocation is brought to birth at ordination, it is Our Lady's look of love, her graceful smile, that awakens us to the knowledge that we are "sons in the Son," beloved of the Father.¹⁴⁹ Throughout our priestly lives we seek to abide with Christ in the warmth of our Blessed Mother's loving gaze, setting our souls in silence and peace, "as a child has rest in its mother's arms" (Ps 131:2).

"Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, Son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife.'" ~ Matthew 1:20

91. Having been sacramentally configured to the person of Jesus Christ the Bridegroom of the Church, we as priests sense that Our Lady's desire to be our companion reaches even to the spousal dimension.¹⁵⁰ Recognizing our own unworthiness

149 Cf. John Cihak, "The Blessed Virgin Mary's Role in the Celibate Priest's Spousal and Paternal Love," *Ignatius Insight* (July, 2009).

150 To speak of our spousal relationship with Mary as priests is to employ metaphorical rather than literal language, and naturally requires a certain prudent reserve. Nevertheless, "we must not be so nervous in approaching [these realities] to the point that we begin to fear them ... We recognize in Mary herself the most beloved spouse of the Lord ... Such terms, borrowed from the language of marriage and friendship, are chosen solely to help us sense, through human analogies, the divine transcendence of that love which unites us to God and neighbor" (Philippe, *Virgin Mary*, 78-80). Throughout the centuries many saints have not shied away from referring to Our Lady in spousal terms, including most notably St. John Eudes in his *Contrat d'Alliance*.

to enter into such an intimate relationship with one so exalted and holy as Mary, we may at times, like Joseph, be hesitant to “unveil” this mystery, seeking to “send her away quietly” (Mt 1:19).¹⁵¹ Yet, by remaining faithful to the message of the angel, Joseph took Mary into his home and made her consecration his own, receiving from her his identity as chaste husband and defender of the Holy Family. So too, as spiritual fathers we cleave to Mary—rejoicing in what she rejoices in, and willing what she wills¹⁵²—and so receive from her a deepening of our own identity as chaste spouse and defender of God’s family. Our spousal devotion to Our Lady is thus not an emotional escape from our celibate consecration but rather a strengthening of it, for in choosing to give ourselves to Mary we are, by that very fact, given all the more completely to God with her and in her.¹⁵³ By entrusting our hearts to her we find an unfailing prize, since she brings us good all the days of our life (cf. Prv

151 Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons*, 30. It was the nearly unanimous consent of the Fathers that Joseph’s attitude to his betrothed was one of reverential fear rather than suspicion, as amply demonstrated by Thomas Aquinas (*Commentary on Matthew*, I, no. 117). Cf. Marie-Dominique Philippe, O.P., *The Mystery of Joseph* (Bethesda, MD: Zaccheus Press, 2010), 169, n. 117.

152 Cf. ST, II-II, q. 25, art. 6, obj. 4.

153 Cf. Philippe, *Mystery of Joseph*, 60.

31:11-12). In turn, her tender gaze of trust and affirmation brings out the best in us as spiritual leaders, just as it did in Joseph.

“When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’” ~ John 2:3-5

92. As we enter into the priestly ministry of Jesus, proclaiming to the world the Good News of the Kingdom, we rejoice to have Mary at our side as our constant companion. Not only do we experience the consolation of her presence with us in our apostolic labors, but we also rely on her feminine heart to point out to us the needs of our spiritual children. As we trust her guidance at every moment in our ministry and yield obediently to her word, the Lord once more changes water into wine, marvelously transforming our poor human resources into a divine abundance of pastoral fruits, whether they be visible to us or not.

“So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew ‘Golgotha’. There they crucified him ... He said, ‘It is finished’; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

~ John 19:17-18, 30

93. Our priestly offering, like that of our Lord, is fully consummated only on the wood of the Cross.¹⁵⁴ As we enter into the sufferings of Calvary each day of our life and ministry, always carrying about in our bodies the death of Jesus (2 Cor 4:10), it is precisely then that Mary draws nearest to us to be our companion. There, at the Tree of Life, we are given in Mary a New Eve in place of the old, since “it is not good for man to be alone” (Gen 2:18). That which Adam once made a reproach against God we now proclaim with joy and gratitude: “The woman whom you gave me to be my companion, she gave me of the tree and I ate” (Gen 3:12). For Mary offers us at the Cross not the poisoned fruit that leads to death, but the

154 In the words of St. Cyril of Alexandria, commenting on Sgs 3:11: “The day of the marriage he calls the day of the passion, in which he betrothes the Church in his blood.” (*In Cantica Cantorum Commentarii Reliquiae*, in J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca*, Vol. 69 [Paris: Petit-Montrouge, 1864], 1288.)

very flesh of her Son, the Bread that endures to eternal life (cf. Jn 6:27).¹⁵⁵

94. We experience this truth most forcefully each day when we offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Going up to the altar of God (cf. Ps 43:4), as beloved sons of Mary we beseech her motherly love: "As you stood by your most dear Son while he hung on the Cross, so in your kindness may you be pleased to stand by me, a poor sinner, and all priests who today are offering the sacrifice here and throughout the entire holy Church, so that with your gracious help we may offer a worthy and acceptable oblation in the sight of the most high and undivided Trinity."¹⁵⁶ In order to unite ourselves more intimately to the Victim of Calvary, to imitate what we celebrate, "we need to have near us the one who through heroic faith carried to its zenith her union with her Son, precisely then on Golgotha."¹⁵⁷ Indeed, "every Mass puts us into an intimate communion with [Mary], the mother whose sacrifice 'is made present once again'," in the sacrifice of her Son.¹⁵⁸

155 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons*, 16-17.

156 Cf. Preparation for Mass, "Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary," in *The Roman Missal*, 1439.

157 John Paul II, Letter to Priests (25 March 1988).

158 John Paul II, Wednesday General Audience (5 June 1983).

“When he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring ... he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.” ~ Isaiah 53:10-11

95. As Our Lord expired on the Cross, the blood and water that flowed from his pierced side became fountains of new life for his Bride, the Church (cf. Jn 19:34). Mary, too, suffered at his side as the New Eve, laboring with and in him to bring forth spiritual children, and so become the “mother of all the living” (Gen 3:20). In her, Jesus’ words to his apostles were fulfilled in a special way: “You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world” (Jn 16:20-21).

96. We do not endure the Cross of Christ in vain as priests, but for the precious gifts of apostolic fruitfulness and spiritual fatherhood. We gladly accept the challenges and sufferings of priestly ministry so as to beget spiritual children who will be our joy and crown (cf. Phil 4:1). In this labor we know that we have the help of the Blessed Virgin. In her face we look to glimpse the beauty of our Bride, the Church, when it has become obscured for us in the griefs of our daily ministry.

So also, we delight to see her face in the persons of the poor, the suffering, and the troublesome, “as a mother is seen in her children.”¹⁵⁹

“All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren ... When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.” ~ Acts 1:14, 2:1

97. Our Blessed Mother, who stands with us on Calvary as our companion and help, always carries us through the darkness of the Cross to the dawn of the resurrection. Even as the first apostles gathered in expectation around Mary in the Upper Room, we feel her maternal presence among us whenever we come together for prayer. She who first received the Holy Spirit in an “eminent fullness” at the Annunciation now prays with us and for us—like a mother praying for her son on the eve of his ordination—so that we may share in her “fullness of prayer” by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁰ It is Mary who teaches us how to be

159 St. John Eudes, *Contrat d'Alliance*, in Philippe, *Virgin Mary*, 79.

160 John Paul II, Wednesday General Audience (2 October 1983): “Mary, who on the day of the Annunciation had received ‘the Holy Spirit in an eminent fullness,’ prayed with them [the apostles]. This special fullness of the Holy Spirit also determined in her a particular ‘fullness of prayer.’ Through the means of this singular fullness Mary prays ‘for

open to the Spirit and docile to his movements. Through her hands pass the spiritual gifts that are given to each of us for the benefit of all.¹⁶¹ In her company we feel ourselves brothers all the more as the Spirit of her Son rushes upon us.

“A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery ... And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth.” ~ Revelation 12:1-2, 4

98. At the close of her earthly life, Mary, who had been the faithful companion of Christ from the Annunciation to the Ascension, at last accompanied her Son into heaven, in fulfillment of his promise: “Where I am, there shall my servant be also” (Jn 12:26). Having received from the Most Holy Trinity the “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim 4:8), she now reigns as Queen of heaven and

us’—and prays ‘with us.’” In Philippe, *Virgin Mary*, 20.

161 Cf. St. Bernardine of Siena (*Sermo in Nativitate*, 8): “The Mother of God obtained the right to be called Queen of Mercy. And because such is the mother of the Son of God from Whom proceeds the Holy Spirit, all the gifts, virtues and graces of the same Spirit are distributed through her hands to whom she wishes, as she wishes, and as much as she wishes.” (In Philippe, *Virgin Mary*, 105)

earth. Sensing her maternal longing to see Christ formed in the world, our hearts are set on fire with apostolic zeal. In the anguish of the Woman of the Apocalypse we as priests hear the plea of our Bride, the Church, "Give me children or I shall die!" (Gen. 30:1).¹⁶² Thus, with the help of Our Lady, Star of the New Evangelization,¹⁶³ we seek to spread the Gospel tirelessly in our ministry, raising up spiritual children in our day for Our Lord and Master.

99. This apostolic work always provokes a spiritual battle, "for we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). Yet, even as the evil one pursues the Woman and seeks to make war on her children and ours (cf.

162 Such was the insight that St. Charles Borromeo once shared with his priests: "O what pain, O what wailing of Holy Church! She cries out with prayers in the presence of God, and in your presence through my mouth, pronounces divine words to you. It seems that I am hearing her saying to her betrothed, the Lord Jesus Christ, what Rachel had formerly said to her husband Jacob, 'Give me children or I shall die' (Gen. 30:1). I am truly desirous of the one to be born. Indeed I dread this sterility; so unless you come to Christ and give to me many sons, I am precisely at this very moment about to die." (Address to Diocesan Synod, April 20, 1584; *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, trans. Gerard O'Connor, Pars II, 347.)

163 Cf. NMI 58.

Rev 12:3), Our Lady herself leads us into battle, “fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army in battle array” (Sgs 6:10). With her help we endeavor to crush the serpent’s head—in our own hearts no less than in the world—even as he strikes at our heel (cf. Gen 3:15).

100. When we have become exhausted in our daily ministry and our hearts seek some rest and consolation, we choose to seek it in the heart of Mary, in the “cool breath of the Immaculate and the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon” (cf. Sgs 2:1).¹⁶⁴ When we are wearied by the conflict with evil,

¹⁶⁴ John Henry Newman, *Discourses to Mixed Congregations* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), 375-6: “O my dear children, young men and young women, what need have you of the intercession of the Virgin-mother, of her help, of her pattern, in this respect! What shall bring you forward in the narrow way, if you live in the world, but the thought and the patronage of Mary! What shall seal your senses, what shall tranquilize your heart, when sights and sounds of danger are around you, but Mary? What shall give you patience and endurance, when you are wearied out with the length of the conflict with evil, with the unceasing necessity of precautions, with the irksomeness of observing them, with the tediousness of their repetition, with the strain upon your mind, with your forlorn and cheerless condition, but a loving communion with her?—She will comfort you in your discouragements, solace you in your fatigue, raise you after your falls, reward you for your successes. She will show you her Son, your God and your all.—When your spirit within you is excited, or relaxed, or depressed, when it loses its balance, when it is restless and wayward, when it is sick of what it has, and hankers after what it has not, when your eye is solicited with evil, and your mortal frame trembles under the shadow of the Tempter, what will bring you to yourselves, to peace and to health, but the cool breath of the Immaculate and the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon?”

discouraged by failures, assailed by temptations, and burdened by the knowledge of our own sin and weakness—it is then that we “look to the star, and call upon Mary.”¹⁶⁵ For we know that it is she who will grant us patience and endurance in the heat of battle, peace and tranquility in the face of opposition, and comfort in our discouragements. When we fall, it is she who desires nothing more than to lift us up by her prayers and restore us to friendship with her Son. Therefore, we place the whole of our priestly consecration as Companions of Christ under her care, freely consecrating ourselves to her, utterly and without reserve, as we pray:

165 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons*, 37-38: “When the storms of temptation burst upon thee, when thou seest thyself driven upon the rocks of tribulation, look up at the star, call upon Mary. When buffeted by the billows of pride, or ambition, or hatred, or jealousy, look up at the star, call upon Mary. Should anger, or avarice, or carnal desires violently assail the little vessel of thy soul, look up at the star, call upon Mary ... In dangers, in doubts, in difficulties, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let not her name depart from thy lips, never suffer it to leave thy heart. And that thou mayest more surely obtain the assistance of her prayer, neglect not to walk in her footsteps. With her for guide, thou shalt never go astray; whilst invoking her, thou shalt never lose heart; so long as she is in thy mind, thou art safe from deception; whilst she holds thy hand, thou canst not fall; under her protection, thou hast nothing to fear; if she walks before thee, thou shalt not grow weary; if she shows thee favor, thou shalt reach the goal.”

*O Most Blessed Virgin Mary,
Companion of Christ and my Companion,
At the Tree of Life you showed yourself
A helpmate fit for Jesus, sharing completely
In his obedient immolation to the Father
For the salvation of the world.*

*Called as I am to be with him,
And to be conformed to the mystery
Of his perfect self-giving,
I humbly accept your desire to be for me
All that you are for your Son:
Mother and Queen, Sister and Spouse.*

*Trusting in your care for me,
I commit to you all my desires and plans,
Knowing that only through your virginal faith
Will they bear fruit that will last.*

*As I am brought to share in the Cross of my Lord,
To participate in his priesthood and victimhood,
Stripped of all I possess,
May I receive as my only wealth the infinite riches
Of your sorrowful and immaculate heart.*

*With you at my side,
I am confident that no suffering can pierce my heart
Unless it first pierce your compassionate soul.*

*Therefore, in union with Christ,
And together with my brothers,
I lay the sacrifice of my life on the altar of your heart,
There to be consumed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,
That it may rise as a fragrant offering to my God and Father,
To whom be glory and praise forever and ever.
Amen.*

APPENDIX A: **THE IDEALS OF THE COMPANIONS OF CHRIST**

In order to help explain our vision of diocesan priesthood, we have here set out under eight headings the ideals of our way of life.

The logic of these eight ideals is as follows: the first two (priestly consecration and holiness) are the general thrust of our lives broadly stated; they give the context for the rest. The next four deal with what we see as central to our charism: living the evangelical counsels in priestly fraternity. The last two involve mission, emphasizing especially evangelization and catechesis; hence, zeal for souls and training of mind.

Taken together, these ideals serve to paint the portrait of a Companion of Christ who authentically lives out our charism in all its fullness.

A strong sense of priestly consecration

- » He delights in being a priest and has confidence in his priestly vocation.
- » He loves his Master, Jesus Christ, and identifies himself entirely with Christ's cause.

- » He offers the Eucharist daily and counts it the central act of his day.
- » He is faithful in praying the Divine Office.
- » He consistently carries himself as a priest in all aspects of life.
- » He contributes to the building of a vital priestly culture.

A desire to grow in holiness

- » He loves prayer and is steady in his daily holy hour.
- » He longs for righteousness and makes regular use of the sacrament of reconciliation.
- » He lives a life of penance and mortification in reparation for his sins and those of all priests.
- » He understands that his personal holiness is the most important aspect of his service as a priest.
- » He delights in friendship with the Blessed Mother and all the saints and attempts to imitate their lives.
- » He meets regularly with his spiritual director and fraternal group in order to advance in holiness.

A readiness to obey

- » He has a humble and obedient spirit, free from grumbling and complaining.

- » He willingly embraces obedience as a means of freeing himself from self-will in favor of God's will, and seeks rather than avoids occasions of practicing it.
- » He is easily obedient to his bishop, to the Moderator of the Companions of Christ, and to the head of his fraternal household, in keeping with their proper authority.
- » He aims to obey in such a way as to bring joy rather than be a burden to those over him.

A chaste heart and life

- » He desires the virtue of chastity as a way of setting his heart free to see God and to love others with greater strength.
- » He lives chastely and looks for opportunities to grow in the strength of purity.
- » He is careful and prudent in his relations with women.
- » He avoids situations, entertainments, and conversations that would damage the gift of his chastity.
- » He lives in the light with his brothers as he pursues chastity of mind, heart, and body.

An orientation to evangelical poverty

- » He loves Christ poor and desires to share in the poverty of his Master.

- » He longs to be dependent on God alone, and to look for security in nothing else.
- » He delights in simplicity and avoids the appearance of affluence and ostentation.
- » He does not allow his possessions to pile up or to rule him, and he readily gives away whatever he does not need.
- » He is generous towards others, rich in almsgiving, and slow to spend money on himself.
- » He willingly honors God by tithing his income.
- » He submits his financial arrangements and decisions to the scrutiny of his brothers.

A delight in and commitment to priestly fraternity

- » He loves his brothers and counts their good ahead of his own.
- » He lives well with his brothers and contributes to the common life.
- » He is eager to serve his brothers and he looks for opportunities to do so in great and small matters.
- » He fosters friendships with his brothers in the Companions of Christ and with other priests.
- » He understands our common life as a crucial element of our vocation, and is easily faithful

to common commitments and to the rhythm of life together.

- » He eagerly encourages other men to discern and respond to the Lord's call to a vocation in the Companions of Christ or another priestly or consecrated vocation.

A zeal for the good of souls

- » He sees the harvest ready and the laborers few, and he longs to labor with Christ for the good of others.
- » He has a genuine love for those under his care and he holds them steadily in prayer.
- » He is ready for any good work that will advance the Kingdom of God.
- » His life bears the freedom, balance, and consistency of character that enable him to serve well and long, and to endure hardship for the sake of the Gospel.
- » He serves joyfully and without complaining.
- » He is dedicated to evangelizing the modern world and to building up the Church, and willingly supports others in the Church so dedicated.
- » He practices fasting and penance for his spiritual life and for the people he serves.

A mind well-trained and penetrated by the truth of the Gospel

- » He has a converted mind and understands the spiritual battle for the life of the mind in our day.
- » He loves the Magisterium of the Church and is loyal to her teaching in season and out of season.
- » He attempts to make his own the riches of the Catholic theological and spiritual tradition.
- » He makes the study of God's Word and of Catholic truth a regular part of his life, and is ready for any study that will help him serve the needs of today's Church.
- » He is eager to teach, train, and catechize others for the sake of the Kingdom.

APPENDIX B: FRATERNAL GROUPS

The fraternal group is a central part of the life of the Companions of Christ, since it is a privileged forum for the exercise of fraternal charity within our community. In order to maintain fraternal groups that are healthy and fruitful, the following guidelines take the theological and spiritual principles given in the Rule and attempt to apply them to the concrete practice of fraternal groups:

Purpose

- » The purpose of the fraternal group is for each member to grow in holiness through the experience of being loved by a group of brothers who know him best over the course of his life.
- » The fraternal group is a means of *support, affirmation, challenge, and accountability*.

Membership

- » Fraternal groups are assigned by the Moderator of the Companions of Christ, in consultation with the Moderator's Council.
- » In order that the members of the group may share both a common vision of diocesan priesthood and a common commitment

to certain concrete proposals for living, membership in the fraternal group is generally limited to the Companions of Christ, unless the Moderator gives permission for another priest or seminarian to join a group.

- » Fraternal groups are to be made up of no less than three and no more than five members.

Meetings

- » Fraternal groups meet every other week, usually for no more than two hours.
- » Meetings should formally begin and end with prayer, preferably with an opportunity for each brother to offer a spontaneous vocal prayer of his own.
- » As time permits, each member of the group is to be given the opportunity to share his life thoroughly and openly with his brothers.
- » Whenever it is needed or desired, the members of the group freely pray for and over one another to receive spiritual healing, strengthening, and renewal.
- » On a semi-annual basis, each fraternal group is to meet for an extended time of prayer and fellowship so as to help one another make a more complete review of life, especially in light of the Rule and the charism of the Companions of Christ.

Fraternal Sharing

- » In order to make the best use of the time allowed for sharing during the meeting of the fraternal group, each man should prepare himself ahead of time by prayer and reflection.
- » Sharing about one's life in fraternal group is not the same as simply "catching up" or "shooting the breeze," though this can be an important preliminary.
- » Each member is to share his life honestly and completely with his brothers, while keeping in mind the various levels intimacy involved in different relationships: (a) the deepest core is with God; (b) then with a spiritual director or perhaps a spiritual friend; (c) then with the fraternal group.
- » Various aspects of life that are shared in fraternal group include:
 - 1) Things that *need* to be shared (baseline transparency):
 - Whatever affects one's vocation: attractions, relationships, etc.
 - Areas of sin: indicating the type of struggle, especially with chastity.
 - Personal difficulties: anything from family, ministry, emotions, etc.
 - Major blessings and graces.

- 2) Things that *should* be shared:
 - Prayer life: trends, fidelity, spiritual movements, etc.
 - Relationships: joys and challenges. (*N.B.*: One may only mention a fellow group member if he has *already* spoken with him personally. The fraternal group is not a forum for public conflict resolution.)
 - Responsibilities: pastoral work, studies, chores, discipline of life, etc.

- 3) Things that *could* be shared:
 - Things one is grateful for, interested in, bothered by, etc.
 - General updates on new developments in one's life: priestly assignment, health, finances, recreation, etc.

Accountability to our Way of Life

- » Each member must request and receive the permission of his brothers in fraternal group before making any vacation plans or other significant purchases (*i.e.* over the amount decided by the Companions of Christ).
- » The members of the group should likewise regularly discuss their fidelity to other common commitments as agreed upon by the Companions of Christ (*e.g.* daily

prayer, attendance at community gatherings, penitential practices, etc.).

- » The decisions of the fraternal group regarding purchases or other common commitments may be appealed to the Moderator of the Companions of Christ, whose decision is final.
- » On occasion, the members of the group should reflect together upon a chosen aspect of the Rule or one of the ideals of the Companions of Christ, each man manifesting to his brothers about his life with regard to the chosen topic.

Supporting Fellow Members of the Fraternal Group

- » The most important and effective means of helping a brother in fraternal group is simply to *listen* to him.
- » Openness and accountability are the primary goals of the fraternal group; temptations to give spiritual direction or attempts to solve another member's problems are to be avoided.
- » Members are encouraged to pray for one other and ask if there is anything that can be done to help.
- » There is no need to apologize for holding brothers accountable to our way of life; it

- is understood that all the members of the fraternal group have committed to it together.
- » With rare exceptions, the confidentiality of what is discussed in fraternal group is to be strictly maintained. What is said in fraternal group stays in fraternal group.

APPENDIX C:
ANNUAL RENEWAL OF POVERTY
AND PURGE OF POSSESSIONS

“Start with nothing and add only what you truly need.”

Quotes for Reflection:

“Members promise to keep for themselves only what is necessary for service and for the reasonable care of their persons. Each member will make decisions about what he owns in consultation with the brothers in his fraternity ... The residences, clothing, and personal property of members will be reasonable in style, durable for use, and simple in appearance. They wish to put aside the appearance of vanity and to banish ostentation in their surroundings.” (Statutes of the Companions of Christ [2017], nos. 75 and 79)

“Priests, moreover, are invited to embrace voluntary poverty by which they are more manifestly conformed to Christ and become eager in the sacred ministry. For Christ, though he was rich, became poor on account of us, that by his need we might become rich (cf. 2 Cor 8:9). And by their example the apostles witnessed that a free gift of God is to be freely given (cf. Acts 8:18-25), with the knowledge of how to sustain both

abundance and need (cf. Phil 4:12). A certain common use of goods, similar to the common possession of goods in the history of the primitive Church (cf. Acts 2:42-47), furnishes an excellent means of pastoral charity. By living this form of life, priests can laudably reduce to practice that spirit of poverty commended by Christ.

Led by the Spirit of the Lord, who anointed the Savior and sent him to evangelize the poor (cf. Lk 4:18), priests, therefore, and also bishops, should avoid everything which in any way could turn the poor away. Before the other followers of Christ, let priests set aside every appearance of vanity in their possessions. Let them arrange their homes so that they might not appear unapproachable to anyone, lest anyone, even the most humble, fear to visit them.” (Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 17)

“Priests ... should consider the poor and the weakest as people entrusted in a special way to them, and they should be capable of witnessing to poverty with a simple and austere lifestyle, having learned the generous renunciation of superfluous things (*Optatam Totius*, 9; cf. *Code of Canon Law*, C. 282).’

... Nor should the prophetic significance of priestly poverty be forgotten, so urgently needed in affluent and consumeristic societies: 'A truly poor priest is indeed a specific sign of separation from, disavowal of, and non-submission to the tyranny of a contemporary world which puts all its trust in money and in material security'." (St. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, 30; cf. Synod Proposition 10)

Steps for the Annual Renewal of Poverty and Purge of Possessions:

The day for the annual poverty renewal is scheduled by each household on an annual basis.¹⁶⁶

In advance of the day, the brothers are to read paragraphs 36-40 of the Rule of the Companions of Christ, as well as the instructions given in this appendix.

Brothers personally reflect on how they are living their promise to be poor. This could be done in morning holy hour by asking themselves the following questions:

166 Brothers who do not live in a household with other Companions of Christ will, *mutatis mutandis*, make their annual renewal of poverty and purge of possessions in consultation with their fraternal group.

- » What are the ways that I try to express poverty through dependence upon God?
- » Are there activities, possessions, or relationships to which I have become overly attached, allowing them to take up room in my life and my heart which properly should be given to Christ alone?
- » Have I kept more money than I need?
- » Have I purchased or received things this year that I do not need?
- » Is my room “simple and austere”?
- » Is there anything I have that I do not need?
- » Is there anything I have not used for more than six months that I can purge?
- » What is one thing I could give away so as to be poorer?

In the morning, the brothers gather in the chapel and read aloud the relevant sections on poverty from the Rule and Statutes of the Companions of Christ. The household leader offers a prayer, asking the Lord Jesus to fill their hearts with his own love of holy poverty.

During the day, each brother will go through his own possessions and spend at least half an hour purging what is not necessary. If he has a question or is unsure about any item, he will set it out for consultation with the brothers.

Then all the brothers of the house will go to each man's room and inspect his possessions. If necessary, he will ask for consultation on certain possessions about which he is unsure. The brothers are also encouraged to ask him why he has decided to keep or purge any particular item. Furthermore, the household leader is free to tell the brother to keep or purge any possession he sees fit. If the brother feels the item is necessary, he may appeal first to his fraternal group and ultimately to the Moderator of the Companions of Christ, whose decision is final.

The brothers are also to spend some time going through the common areas of the household to inspect its furnishings and possessions:

- » Is our house “simple and austere?”
- » Is there anything that has the appearance of vanity or ostentation?
- » Would the poor feel comfortable in our house?
- » Is there anything in the house that we do not need?
- » Are there things that we do not use that we can purge?
- » What is one thing we could give away so as to be poorer?

Each brother is then encouraged to present items from the house to be purged. If there is a brother who thinks the item is necessary to keep, the household leader will decide what is to be done with it. Once again, any brother may appeal his decision to the Moderator, whose decision is final.

**APPENDIX D:
THE LORD'S DAY**

*An order for the celebration of the Lord's Day meal and fellowship,
according to the practice of the Companions of Christ:*

1. Each week on the vigil of the Lord's Day the brothers gather in the evening in their various households. If a Lord's Day meal has been scheduled and a brother must to be absent for whatever reason, he is to ask the prior permission of the leader of the household to do so.
2. The brothers will share meal preparation and table-setting duties on a rotating basis.
3. On occasion, guests will be invited to the Lord's Day celebration. It is especially encouraged to invite brother priests and seminarians to share in priestly fellowship with the brothers. Guests are to be received as Christ himself, with all due reverence and hospitality.
4. The evening begins with some appetizers and light refreshments. When the leader signals, the brothers and their guests go to the chapel to pray Vespers. Given the solemnity of the Sunday liturgy, it is most appropriate to chant the office.

5. The brothers and their guests then go to their places at the dinner table. The leader of the household or, in his absence, the most senior Companion, sits at the head of the table to serve his brothers by leading the conversation.
6. After singing a hymn, all present join in the communal prayer and blessing for the inauguration of the Lord's Day:

Assistant: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Group: All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that has been made.

Assistant: In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Group: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (Jn 1:1-5).

Assistant: Heavenly Father, in honor of your Son, Light of the World and Author of Life, we are about to kindle the light for the Lord's Day. On this

day you raised your Son, Jesus, from the dead and began the new creation. May our celebration of his resurrection this day be filled with your peace and heavenly blessing. Be gracious to us and cause your Holy Spirit to dwell more richly in us.

Father of Mercy, continue your loving kindness toward us. Make us worthy to walk in the way of your Son, loyal to your teaching and unwavering in love and service. Keep far from us all anxiety, darkness, and gloom; and grant that peace, light, and joy ever abide among us.

Group: For in you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

The candle is lit, and the following blessing is recited over it:

Assistant: Blessed are you, Lord our God, who created light on the first day and raised your Son, the Light of the World, to begin the new creation.

Blessed are you, Lord our God,
King of the Universe, who give us
joy to kindle the light for the Lord's
Day.

Group: Amen.

*For a short form of the ceremony, the following set of
exhortations and responses may be omitted:*

Leader: Let us trust in the Lord and in his
saving help.

Group: The Lord is my light and my
salvation.

Leader: Let us receive his life and rejoice in
his presence.

Group: He is the true light that enlightens
every man.

Leader: Let us keep his commandments and
walk in his ways.

Group: His Word is a lamp to my feet and a
light for my path.

Leader: Let us proclaim his goodness and show forth his glory.

Group: We are the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

Leader: Brothers (and sisters), this is the Lord's Day.

Group: Let us welcome it in joy and peace.

Leader: Today we set aside the concerns of the week that we may honor the Lord and celebrate his resurrection. Today we cease from our work in order to worship God and remember the eternal life to which he has called us.

Group: The Lord himself is with us, to refresh and strengthen us.

Leader: Let us welcome God among us and give him glory.

Group: Let us love one another in Christ.

Leader: May the Holy Spirit be with us, to deepen our devotion to the Lord

and increase our zeal for the way of life he has given us.

Group: Amen.

All: Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

After the meal, the following prayer is recited:

All: We give Thee thanks for all Thy benefits, Almighty God, who live and reign forever. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

7. After the prayer is completed the meal is served. The brothers will wait to begin eating until all have received their food and the leader of the table gives the signal.
8. In honor of the joy of the resurrection, the food served for the Lord's Day meal is to be of a higher quality than usual. Wine or beer may be served, though these may be omitted

during Lent. Care is to be taken, however, that the meal is not so lavish as to scandalize the guests or undermine the spirit of evangelical poverty.

9. As far as possible, all seated at the table take part in a single, unified conversation. In this, the brothers will take care to follow the guidance of the leader of the table. They will show due deference to more senior Companions and encourage the guests to share in the conversation. The brothers will avoid dominating the conversation, interruptions, and superficial or worldly topics that are not suited to a priestly gathering.
10. When the meal is drawing to a close, the leader of the table invites any guests present to share their vocation story with the brothers. If any brother is celebrating a birthday or other special occasion (such as an ordination), the other brothers briefly honor him for his virtues, good deeds, or other ways his life reflects Christ to them.
11. At the leader's signal, all rise and pray the prayer after the meal. The leader, together with the guests and those who prepared the

meal, retire to the living room to continue their fellowship. If desired, some desert may be served at this time. The rest of the brothers assist in the washing of dishes and other cleanup duties.

12. At the leader's signal, all present return to the chapel to pray Compline. After the Marian antiphon is chanted, it is most appropriate to dim the lights as each of the brothers commends his heart to the care and protection of the Blessed Mother. All depart in silence.

APPENDIX E: SPEECH

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” ~ Proverbs 18:21

The tongue is a powerful instrument, able both to impart *life* and deal *death* to others. By it we choose which of these “two ways” we will follow as a community of brothers.

The power to impart life:

- » “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence” (Prv 10:11).

- » “Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad” (Prv 12:25).

The power to deal death:

- » “You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire” (Mt 5:21-22).

- » “There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Prv 12:18).

Our speech both expresses and directs our souls, not only revealing but also shaping our interior life:

- » “For we all make many mistakes, and if any one makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. If we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Look at the ships also; though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind, but no human being can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From

the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and brackish? Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh" (Jas 3:2-12).

- » "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Lk 6:43-45).

Christianity involves a conversion of heart that gives rise to a distinctive way of life, a new atmosphere that has a particular flavor and tone:

- » "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better

than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil 2:1-4).

It is readily apparent what a man or a community of brothers truly loves simply by noting the character of their speech.

As Companions of Christ, we commit ourselves both individually and as a community to build such an environment of virtuous, Christ-like speech.

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor." ~ Romans 12:9-10

As brothers of one another, we desire that our fraternal love be genuine, that is, *expressed* actively in our speech. For what we speak of often is all the more deeply rooted in our hearts; what we speak of seldom is quickly lost. This ideal we pursue together by:

Employing Positive Speech

- » Speech that is *edifying*, that builds our brothers up in love:
 - “Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear” (Eph 4:29).
 - “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and builds itself up in love” (Eph 4:15-16).
- » Speech that is *sincere*, that authentically reveals our hearts to our brothers with complete trust, that neither fears their condemnation nor curries their favor:
 - “For our appeal does not spring from error or uncleanness, nor is it made with guile; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never used either words of flattery, as you know, or a cloak for

greed, as God is witness; nor did we seek glory from men” (I Thess 2:3-6).

- » Speech that is *meaningful*, that is not superficial but dwells on the noblest things of the spirit—truth, goodness, and beauty:
 - “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil 4:8).

- » Speech that is *encouraging*, that strengthens our brothers when they falter:
 - “[The LORD] encourages those whose endurance is failing” (Sir 17:24).
 - “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing ... And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all” (I Thess 5:11, 14).

- » Speech that is *affectionate*, that is not sentimental but does not fear to show love:
 - “It is right for me to feel thus about you all, because I hold you in my heart ... For God is

my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:7-8).

○ “Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved” (Phil 4:1).

» Speech that is *thankful*, that expresses our gratitude openly to our brothers:

○ “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess 5:18).

○ “Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving” (Eph 5:4).

» Speech that is *honoring*, that praises our brothers not for their talent but for their virtue:

○ “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Cor 12:26).

○ “A poor man is honored for his knowledge, while a rich man is honored for his wealth” (Sir 10:30).

Avoiding Negative Speech

» Speech that is *bitter*, that knows only how to criticize and complain:

- “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph 4:30-31).
- “Do all things without grumbling or questioning” (Phil 2:14).
- » Speech that is *rude*, that dominates conversation and is garrulous, boastful, and self-referential:
 - “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal ... Love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful” (I Cor 13:1, 4-5).
- » Speech that is *slandorous*, that dwells on the faults of others and assaults their good name through gossip:
 - “A perverse man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends” (Prv 16:28).
 - “He who goes about gossiping reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who speaks foolishly” (Prv 20:19).

- » Speech that is *sarcastic*, that is cynical, withering, and insincere:
 - “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, ‘I am only joking!’” (Prv 26:18-19).

APPENDIX F:
FRATERNAL CORRECTION
AND RECONCILING RELATIONSHIPS

As Companions of Christ, our common life fosters and depends upon the formation of authentic friendships in Christ. For this reason, as we seek to build intentional relationships with one another, we strive to be ever attentive to the need to reconcile with one another whenever any fault or failure threatens to damage or destroy our friendships. Two sinful attitudes, in particular, serve to do the most harm to our fraternal unity:

- » An unwillingness to acknowledge our own faults and humbly *ask forgiveness* of our brothers.
- » An unwillingness *to forgive* our brothers or bear patiently with their weaknesses.

To be true friends of one another, we must be willing not only to “look again” (*respectare*) at our brothers; we must also be willing to “look again” at ourselves! Reconciling relationships—through the experience of failure, repentance, correction, and forgiveness—is essential to real growth in friendship and harmony in our community.

“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

~Matthew 18:3-4

Humility

Before ever we presume to correct the faults of our brothers, we must first be willing to humble ourselves before our brothers. In practice, this means:

- » Acknowledging our own sins and failures, and even counting them as more grievous than those of our brother:
 - “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Mt 7:3-5).

- » Repenting early and often:
 - “If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to

your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5:23-24).

- Freely acknowledging our faults and asking forgiveness of our brothers even before they correct us is a sure way to strengthen relationships.
- Remaining silent about our faults serves to build up walls between us and our brothers, and sows dishonesty and mistrust in our relationships.

» Being open to correction:

- “Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but he who heeds reproof is honored” (Prv 13:18).

» When our brother comes to correct us, we ought to reflect:

- What is my attitude when I receive a correction?
- Am I the kind of brother who is easy to correct?
- Why do I sometimes resist correction?

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence

of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” ~ Matthew 18:15-17

Fraternal Correction and Reconciliation

When we seem to notice some fault or failure in our brother, the Lord gives us a model for how to proceed:

- » Prayer and Reflection: Before approaching our brother we should ask ourselves:
 - Am I perhaps the one at fault? Did I provoke my brother? If so, then I am the one who needs to repent.
 - Am I being over-sensitive? Is this not just a misunderstanding? If so, then I ought to forbear it.
 - Is this something that simply annoys me? If so, then I ought to forbear it. My brother's idiosyncrasies are a gift to me, a charism that offers me the opportunity to love and grow in holiness.
 - Is this just a bad habit rather than a moral failing? If so, if I am his superior I will seek an occasion to speak with him; if I am simply his fellow brother in the community, then I ought to forbear it. Extreme patience is required: bad habits do not change quickly.

- Will my brother not be receptive to my correction? Is he too fragile at the moment to receive it well? Is this perhaps not the right time? If so, then I ought to forbear it for the moment: “There is a reproof which is not timely; and there is a man who keeps silent but is wise” (Sir 20:1).

- » Proper Correction: If after prayerful reflection we discern a serious moral fault in our brother, in order to help him grow in holiness and heal the relationship, we should not fear to correct him in fraternal charity in the following manner:
 - *Speak quickly*: So as not to miss a moment of grace or risk allowing a rift to form in the relationship, try to address the brother’s failure as soon as possible: “Do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph 4:26).
 - *Speak directly*: Do not gossip about the brother, complain about him to others, or make sideways comments about his offense. Always go first to speak with him directly and personally.
 - If it seems the brother would be irreparably harmed by the correction, or if it seems he will not be able to receive the correction from us for whatever reason, it is

permissible to speak to his superior, or even to forbear it.

- *Speak concisely and concretely:* Do not scold the brother or exaggerate his offense. Generalized criticism is selfish, serving only to aggravate our brother and make it more difficult for him to receive the correction well.
- *Refrain from judging motives:* We can never fully know our brother's heart or his reasons for acting as he did. We should stick to the facts of what happened and how it affected us.
- *Speak out of love:* We must always examine our motives for desiring to correct a brother: Am I doing this out of love for him, or to satisfy my own fallen desire for vengeance? If it is the latter, we should refrain from the correction; if it is the former, we may save not only him but ourselves: "My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and some one brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (Jas 5:19-20; cf. Ez 3:18-21).

“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.’” ~ Matthew 18:21-22

Forgiveness

We aspire to be a community of brothers marked by a spirit of forgiveness. We do this by:

- » Being quick to ask for forgiveness when we know we have sinned. In this, it is important to say and hear the humble request, “Will you forgive me?” rather than the mere declaration, “I am sorry.”
- » Being quick to offer genuine forgiveness when it is asked of us. This means not holding a brother in our debt, not dwelling on past hurts, and never willfully retreating from the relationship.
- » Choosing to affirm our brothers for their strengths. When our brother sins against us, we strive to remember his virtues, increase his esteem in the eyes of others, and see and love in him what the Lord sees and loves in him.

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