

**Rule
of the**



Penitent Brothers

Our Mission and Charism

The Penitent Brother inspired by the example of St. Francis of Paola and professing the evangelical virtues dedicate ourselves unreservedly to the following goals:

1. To fulfill oneself, through a Christian life coherent with the requirements of one's own baptism and in fidelity to the penitential charism proper of the Penitent Brothers. Thus the Penitent builds up a spirituality that expresses God's primacy through greater dedication to prayer and penance, and the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal to show the world the way of conversion and of liberation from sin we know as Metanoia.

2. To revitalize the social reality in which one lives through the testimony of one's own faith and the exercise of a function of being a stimulus and a critique in the light of evangelical values of charity; humility and penance. Many are the social realizations which arose through the centuries thanks to the initiative of the penitent movement: hospitals, schools, rest-homes. Therefore the Penitent Brother and Sister carries out an essential aspect of the penitential charism that is charity towards the brethren with an active commitment. The instruments which the penitent uses to reach such goals are:

a. An intense spiritual life, stressed by the Rule that is founded on the virtues of charity, humility and penance, on a persevering sacramental practice, and on constant prayer. He commits himself to building a sober and moderate style of life, shunning the consumerism and competitive spirit of the world, in which he chooses to live as an alien and pilgrim.

b. The apostolate exercised in places of daily life and in parish communities of which the Penitent is an active member, as a single person or together with a fraternity, in full harmony with other penitent regional communities. Following the welcoming style of the founders and their compassion toward the least ones, the Penitent will concern himself with the poor, the sick, the elderly, the marginalized, and will strive to achieve an integral human-Christian development of all those he reaches in humility and brotherly charity.

The person and message of penance, humility and charity of St. Francis of Paola shall stimulate the penitent to give their constant and valid contribution for the formation of a new civilization in which the promotion of the human person, joint responsibility and fraternal charity can be a living and working reality.

Exhortation

"May our Lord Jesus Christ, who repays most generously, reward your labour. You must flee from evil, and drive away dangers. We and all our brothers, although unworthy, pray constantly to God the Father and to his Son Jesus Christ, as well as to Mary the Virgin Mother, to be with you as you seek the salvation of your souls and your bodies.

Brothers, I most strongly urge you to work for the salvation of your souls with prudence and diligence. Death is certain, and life is short and vanishes like smoke. Therefore you must fix your minds on the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ who so burned with love for us that he came down from heaven to redeem us. For our sakes he suffered all the agonies of body and mind, and did not shrink from any torment. He gave us a perfect example of patience and love. For our part, we too must be patient when things go against us.

Put aside hatred and hostility. See to it that you refrain from harsh words. But if you do speak them, do not be ashamed to apply the remedy from the same lips that inflicted the wounds. In this way you will show each other mercy and not keep alive the memories of past wrongs. Remembering grievances works great damage. It is accompanied by anger, fosters sin, and brings a hatred for justice. It is a rusty arrow spreading poison in the soul. It destroys virtue and is a cancer in the mind. It thwarts prayer and mangles the petitions we make to God. It drives out love and is a nail driven into the soul, an evil that never sleeps, a sin that never fades away, a kind of daily death.

Be lovers of peace, the most precious treasure that anyone can desire. You are already aware that our sins drive God to anger, "so you must repent of them, that God in his mercy may spare you. What men conceal is open to God. Turn to him with a sincere heart. Live in such a way that you bring upon yourselves the blessing of God, and that the peace of God our Father may be with you always."

A reading from the letters of **St Francis of Paola**, Hermit (Letter AD 1486)

Rule of Life

Goal

With the inspiration bestowed, we have established the Rule of the Penitent Brothers and Sisters with a dual purpose:

1. Personal sanctification of the brothers and sisters through a Christian life which fulfilled to perfection the obligations integral to their Baptism and in a manner faithful to the charism of the Penitent Brothers and Sisters;
2. Vital apostolic involvement in the world as a leaven from which to bring about a spiritual renewal in the family, in the workplace and in society.

The Penitent Spirituality

The spirituality proper of the members of the Penitent Brothers and Sisters is one embodied in the life St. Francis of Paola and is expressed in the seven chapters of this Rule.

The Penitent Brothers and Sisters possess a spirituality that embraces the three evangelical virtues of charity, humility and penance.

The spirituality of the Penitent Brothers and Sisters is taken from the spirituality of St. Francis of Paola and the Order of Minims, established in the fifteenth century. Our objectives are:

- a. The primacy of God in the lives of the members achieved through greater dedication to prayer and penance. These practices reveal to the world the way of conversion to God and of attaining freedom from the bonds of sin. They give witness to the priority of the spiritual over the temporal, and rest on the choice of a life style which is evangelically simple, sober and austere.
- b. Humility of mind, heart and life.
- c. Charity toward all brothers and sisters actively in their care.

Interior Life

To assure that members of the Penitent Brothers and Sisters succeed in sustaining their fervor and strengthen their commitment in the pursuit of perfection and evangelical witness, they shall:

- a) Receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist frequently, and attend Mass devoutly.
- b) Be dedicated to prayer and meditate on the primary goals of life in order to be able to offer daily their work and suffering to God.
- c) Practice the virtues of penance, humility, and charity as the most effective means to curb the weaknesses of the flesh and check vices and strong desires.
- d) Whereas our single brothers and sisters based upon circumstances and change of their family life and/or by specific design, have the option to vow perpetual celibacy, to better serve the Kingdom of God.

Apostolate and Ministry

The penitent brothers and sisters will perform an apostolate in harmony with his or her spirituality. The Penitent must always show preferential care for those considered lesser in the eyes of man; the poor, the sick, the aged, the neglected. In humility and fraternal love they must strive for the completeness of oneself in the likeness of Christ influencing those he or she serves.

Prayer Life

The Penitent Brother and Sister should engage in a social and spiritual apostolate which is compatible with the prayer life and other pious practices at the heart of their religious commitment. The Penitent Brother and Sister must always strive to grow in God's grace. Their prayer must be:

1. Expressive of the spirit of the Beatitudes which consecrate the penitent's daily activities and apostolic work.
2. Mental prayer, nourished with appropriate readings and followed by meditation.
3. Daily recitation of classic prayers such as: the Creed; Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be (at least three times) or, whenever possible, the Liturgy of the Hours will be said. Consideration is to be given to each penitent allowing for the use of the Divine Office. It is understood that each brother or sister may modify the style of divine office based on one's life circumstance.

These prayers are to be offered on behalf of the Church, the Pope, and the people of God of both the living and the dead.

The Rule of the Penitent Brothers

Contents

Chapter 1
**Commandments of God,
Precepts of the Church**

Chapter 2
**Daily Prayers and Devotions
for the Dead**

Chapter 3
The Sacraments

Chapter 4
Despising the World

Chapter 5
**Works of Mercy
and Penance**

Chapter 6
Exterior Marks of this Order

Chapter 7
Leaders of this Order

CHAPTER 1

FAITHFUL OBSERVANCE OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS AND THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH.

1. Love of God.

It is absolutely necessary to observe the divine Law in order to attain eternal life, and obtain everlasting reward. Therefore all of you men and women who belong to the Penitent Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis and consecrate yourselves to the service of the king of heaven with the help and under the directions of this Rule, and hope through it to enter eternal life, must above all observe carefully the precepts of God and of the Church. You must honor with the greatest reverence one God in three Persons. You must love Him above all things with all your heart and with all your strength; you must revere Him faithfully, and entrust to Him your heart.

2. Respect for the Name of the Lord.

You will never take the name of God in vain. On the contrary, you will avoid any kind of cursing in your speech and in your actions, and you will ensure that your children and your dependents will likewise avoid such things. In case you hear some brother or sister of this Congregation cursing, you will kindly correct him/her remembering what our Lord said: "Let your speech be yes, when you mean yes, and no, when you mean no"; because he who acquires the habit of cursing will find it very hard to avoid evil.

3. Do not hurt anybody, and sanctify the Feast.

You will avoid carefully slander or any other offense. You will keep holy Sunday and other Holidays of obligation in a proper manner. On such days devote yourselves to God with holy works and other pious practices, that is, meditation, prayer, spiritual reading, Mass, Divine Office, etc.

4. Duties of Subjects and Superiors.

Besides, you will humbly honor your father and mother, be they according to the spirit or to the flesh. In the same way you will extend fraternal respect and charity to those in positions of authority and Clergy. Avoid what kills your fellow man. Instruct wisely your dependents and those around you that they can do well. In your heart there will be no room for hatred, hurt feeling or rage. You will speak well even of those who might speak evil of you; and you will pray for those who persecute you.

You will avoid most carefully theft, robbery, usury; any illegal contract, and any kind of avarice and greed. Finally, if you possess the goods of another, try to give them back as soon as possible, for you cannot be forgiven without restitution.

CHAPTER 2

DAILY PRAYERS AND DEVOTIONS FOR THE DEAD

1. Divine Office.

Faithful in the observance of the evangelic doctrine, seek first of all the kingdom of God and His justice. Therefore, you will sing in His honor, with reverent attention, songs of praise for all the benefits you received.

Penitent Brothers and Sisters both Cleric and Lay:

Firstly, all of you Penitent Brothers and Sisters who belong to this community and those who are honored with Holy Orders will recite the Divine Office according to the rite of the Roman Church or the church to which you belong for some benefice, and do it the best way you can. In any case you are not supposed to renounce your benefice, for the profession of this Rule does not forbid you to keep it.

2. Prayers for the dead of the community and other faithful departed.

When some brother or sister of this community passes away, all of you who live in the town or country where the burial takes place will gather together at least once in a week to pray for his or her soul unless you are rightly dispensed.

If you are priests, you will celebrate one Mass for the deceased; deacons or sub-deacons will recite the Divine Office with nine lessons. All other Penitent Brothers and Sisters will pray the Office for the Dead for one week for the deceased member.

3. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Holy Trinity.

The Rosary is to be said daily in praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On other occasions including special feasts, the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows O Mary should be said in honor and praise of the holy and blessed upon whom our foundation rests. This way you will obtain graces from heaven and gain the many indulgences attached to this devotion. A brother or sister may also use the shorter version, the chaplet of the Seven Sorrows when time constraints do not allow the brother or sister sufficient time to say the entire rosary.

CHAPTER 3

SACRAMENTS

1. Confession and Communion.

Since our dear, amiable and wonderful Jesus Christ likes very much the flowers of virtues, for this reason I humbly exhort you all, brothers and sisters of this community, to cleanse and beautify your consciences through sacramental confession. You should receive holy Communion at least four times a year, i.e., Easter time (Holy Thursday or Easter Sunday), at Christmas, Pentecost and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

2. Attending Mass.

Besides, you will attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass respectfully, so that, strengthened by the healthy power of the sorrowful Passion of Christ which is renewed in the Sacrifice of the Altar, you may keep yourselves steadfast in the practice of God's commandments. We exhort you once more to pray fervently during Mass, so that the precious death of Jesus Christ may be your life, His pains your medicine, His sufferings your eternal rest.

CHAPTER 4

DESPISING THE WORLD

1. Detachment of earthly things.

Try to observe in a special way the salutary teaching of the beloved disciple, who told us not to love the world, or whatever is in the world, because he who loves the things of this world will become a foe of God. In the same way I, for Christ's sake, exhort all of you who wish to follow this Rule to avoid any worldly show, not to exercise dishonest practices, not to carry dangerous weapons, unless necessary to defend the Church, the faith and justice.

2. Avoiding banquets and worldly vanities.

Also you will avoid, as much as possible, wedding receptions and all kinds of banquets, unless they are family gatherings. You will despise with prudence vanities, honors, and vain applauses and pomp of this world, which passes away with its richness and its fleeting glories. Most of all, you will flee public games, forbidden and scandalous shows, so that you can later on receive with joy the palm of eternal glory and the kingdom of that beauty, which will never wither, from the hand of the Lord. All these are in exchange for fleeting worldly glory and corruptible goods. Truly happy are those who prefer virtuous life to long life, and who try to keep clear their conscience, rather than to build up their bank balance.

CHAPTER 5

WORKS OF MERCY AND PENANCE

1. *Fast, abstinence, and prayers on Fridays.*

Following the doctrine of the apostle Paul, mortify your earthly body, because if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if, according to the spirit, you mortify the senses of the flesh, you will live. And so, you, who serve Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Rule, strive, to dominate your flesh, for Christ's sake. For this reason you will abstain from meat from the day after St. Lucy's feast to Christmas; the same holds for three days preceding each of the prescribed annual Communion, and also for all Wednesdays of the year. Besides, you will fast from the day after St. Lucy's (December 14th whereas her feast is December 13th) to Christmas, and on all Fridays of the year. Besides, every Friday you will say five Our Fathers and five Hail Mary's in memory of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. *Dispensation from fasting and abstinence.*

Nevertheless, speaking of fast, pregnant women, nursing mothers, travelers, as well as aged people, the weak and those who work hard are mercifully dispensed, but with permission granted by their superiors. The superior of a community has authority to substitute the fast with works of piety, or some devotions, or prayers, as they see fit, according to the physical disposition of each one.

3. *Works of mercy.*

Besides, according to your means, you will do works of mercy towards the poor, the orphans, widows and invalids. Observe the ecclesiastic fast with joy.

In case you would like to embrace the Lenten fast forever, I wish you to be able to practice it worthily with God's blessing. But in this matter I want you to feel completely and absolutely free.

CHAPTER 6

EXTERIOR MARKS OF THIS COMMUNITY

1. *Dress, cincture.*

Your dress should be according to the state and condition of each one. It should be completely or partly similar that established by the founders of the Penitent Brothers and Sisters. Besides, all the brothers and sisters of this community will receive devoutly from the Minister Servant of Penitent Brothers and Sisters, or their appointed delegates, the habit of the Penitent Brother or Sister and the Novitiate Cross. After a convenient period of time of no less than one year but not exceeding two, and agreeing to live the rule of the penitent, the novice will make simple profession into the hands of the Ministers Servant or their appointed delegate.

2. *Profession and suspension.*

Meanwhile from your early youth train, for Christ's sake, in the practice of this Rule and this way of life, and wear the above mentioned symbol received from the hands of the Minister Servant or his delegates. The minimum age a candidate will be allowed to enter into the community is 18. This is based on the candidate being interiorly and spiritually mature. The maximum period allowed for simple profession will be a period to last no longer than five years. Whereas, perpetual profession can not occur until the penitent has reached the age of 25 years.

If some of the members, male or female, of this community engage in less than honest or forbidden activities, or acquire the habit of blasphemy, they have to be charitably admonished three times by a brother or sister in the presence of a witness. But if they, after this triple admonition according to the law, do not change nor amend their ways, they will be deprived of the symbol and graces and all other privileges of this community, by the Ministers Servant of the Penitent Brothers and Sisters, after consulting with their local regional minister.

3. *Duties of the punished and their rehabilitation.*

Those so punished will not hold themselves dispensed from practicing the present Rule; they instead will take it like a just punishment, knowing and judging themselves to be unworthy of the marks of the community, and of the graces and of the privileges mentioned above.

If later on they show sincere repentance, upon their humble request they may be given back the symbols and marks taken away and be accepted again in this community, in order to practice salutary penance, and start again a praiseworthy and holy life in this fraternity.

CHAPTER 7

LEADERS OF THE COMMUNITY

1. Election and Removal from office.

The Ministers Servant will appoint a brother or a sister as Regional Minister to each of their respective communities within their established geographical jurisdiction. The Regional Minister may be removed for cause, by the Minister Servant.

When the Ministers Servant or their delegates visits a regional community, the brothers or sisters are to assemble at a convenient time to receive the blessing, best wishes, and exhortation to continue their practicing the divine commandments and persevere in doing good.

2. Peace for rebels and fraternal charity.

The Ministers Servant of the brothers and sisters will settle quarrels and disagreements, which might arise in a community. In doing so, will remind them that true peace is in union with the gospel mandate to love one another.

Love deeply one another and do not be ashamed to call each other brother and sister. Therefore, visit and console each other for God's sake when in tribulation, in need, and in sickness.

3. Conclusion: Perseverance and reading of the Rule.

Brothers and sisters, this is what we propose you observe, as a means of salvation and leading certainly too eternal life. If you are faithful in observing this Rule, the Lord also will be faithful in his rewards.

But since it is possible to break the Rule, because of ignorance or forgetfulness, we recommend that you to read it at least once a month or when possible. Reading it often will solidify you spiritually and serves as your guide in performing your spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Finally, through its observance, you will receive the grace to persevere in this life and lastly the eternal glory from the Lord with everlasting blessing.



The Community Prayer

Almighty, eternal, and just God...

Grant us in our misery, the grace to do for You alone, what we know You want us to do, and always to desire what pleases You.

Thus, inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened, and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, may we be able to follow in the footsteps of Your beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Any by Your grace alone, may we make our way to You, Most High, Who lives and rules in perfect Trinity and simple unity, and are glorified God all- powerful, forever and ever

Amen

The Constitution of the Penitent Brothers

Goal:

The Penitent Brothers are a Secular/Religious Association of Christ's Faithful comprised of Roman Catholic men, both single and married, who are committed to "The Rule of the Penitent Brothers" whose basis is "The Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis of Paola" approved by Rome in 1501. We live independently, are self-supporting and are striving for spiritual perfection by following the Gospel life as exemplified by St. Francis of Paola.

We promise obedience to the "Rule of the Penitent Brothers" as delineated by this Constitution. We promise to honor, revere, respect and obey our Holy Father the Pope, his local Ordinaries, pastors and priest administrators, while living in the spirit of charity, humility and penance in the world.

The Penitent Spirituality:

As Penitent Brothers, we commit ourselves to daily personal prayer and meditation. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us develop an interior life in union with God's will. We set aside a considerable amount of time for prayer each day, remembering that prayer is our highest priority. It is in charity and humility that we place God above all. We are to love our Brothers and our neighbors as ourselves, for this is the Love of God. In penance we strive for our conversion. We bring our heart closer to God and away from sin.

Interior Life:

Be mindful that in every thought, word and deed we are Penitent Brothers, living the Gospel of Jesus with the simple humble love exemplified by St. Francis of Paola. Mindful also that we are bearers of peace, which must be built-up unceasingly, we seek our ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the Divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Yearning for Divine intimacy, let all the Brothers offer themselves... heart, mind, body and soul to their Heavenly Father, the One True God.

Our married Brothers maintain a life of conjugal chastity, enriching their marriage vow as they give themselves totally to Jesus through the loving embrace of their matrimonial spouse. If a married Brother becomes widowed or if his marriage is annulled, he then lives a chaste life as a single Brother but is free to re-marry in accordance with the Marriage Precept of the Catholic Church if he is again so-called by God to the Sacrament of Matrimony.

A single Brother once accepted as a Postulant lives a chaste life. At Life Profession, the single Brother has the "option" to vow Perpetual Celibacy, to better serve the Kingdom of God. If the single Brother chooses to make this vow, he may not marry. If he chooses not to make this vow, then he is free to marry in accordance with the Marriage Precept of the Catholic Church if he is so-called by God to the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Apostolate and Ministry:

As Penitents our commitment to conversion of the heart (Metanoia) compels us to live the Gospel Life in constant union with Jesus as we radiate His love by our very being. Each Brother is urged to develop his own individual apostolate, while offering his prayerful support to the apostolate of his fellow Brothers. The apostolate that is developed by each Brother should be in complete harmony with his prayer life.

Prayer Life:

As a Penitent, one must foster a solid Prayer Life in order to grow spiritually in one's faith. Prayer brings us closer to God who is our Father and Creator. As Penitents, our prayer and ministry echo the words and spirit of the Beatitudes. A Brother must put aside time for Spiritual Reading in order to renew himself. Each Brother is to pray the Liturgy of the Hours every day, thus allowing us to be one in prayer with the Church.

To build Spirituality as a Community, we gather for Community Retreats twice each year. Barring any health concerns or other emergencies, each Brother must attend at least one Community Retreat per year. We also gather for one day every four years for a General Assembly.

Chapter 1:

1) Love of God

As Penitent Brothers, we must always uphold God as Our Heavenly Father. We look to God for our guidance and protection. God must be put above everything in our lives.

We show our love for God in many ways. We love Him by putting our faith, trust, and hope in Him, by talking to Him in prayer, by longing to commune with Him and adore Him in the Eucharist, and through our reverence and fear of Him. We love Him by being unafraid to give our personal witness to Him, and by our desire to please Him, to serve Him, and to be charitable to our neighbors. We love Him by listening to His Word and by joyfully spreading the Gospel to others. We love the Lord through our obedience to His Divine Law, the Ten Commandment, and to the natural moral law.

We love God as a community of the faithful in His Church and by observing the Precepts of the Church that provide us with guidance on such things as attendance of Mass, the confession of our sins, receiving Holy Communion, observing days of fasting and abstinence, our obligation to support the Church, and on following the marriage laws. The Rule of The Penitent Brothers and this Constitution further delineate how the Brothers are to observe the Precepts of the Church.

2) Respect for the Name of the Lord:

One must respect the name of Our God. The Penitent Brother is to never slander or use God's name in vain. God is to be respected at all times as our Father and Creator. We show respect for the Name of the Lord when we speak of God to others using reverent words and through peaceful actions and mannerisms. Through prayer and penance, we hope to develop patience, prudence, and peaceful dispositions that will help us to better control ourselves so as to live in harmony with others and to focus more on God and less on the transitory matters of this world.

3) Do Not Hurt Anybody, and Sanctify the Feast:

The Penitent Brother must love and embrace all of God's children. We follow the teachings of Jesus to "love one another as I have loved you"; to "love your neighbor as yourself"; and to "do to others as you would have them do to you".

Sundays and Holy Days are to be kept sacred. The Brothers are obligated to attend Mass on such days and a Brother begins each Sunday and Holy Day by praying the Divine Office.

4) Duties of Subjects and Superiors:

The Brothers must respect all those in authority whether they be our parents, clergy, fellow religious and/or our superiors. We must strive to lead a Holy Life. To achieve this we are to refrain from anything that would harm any person or any possession of others.

Chapter 2:

1) Divine Office

As Penitents, we strive to uphold the importance of our Prayer Life. It is through our prayer that we give Praise, Glory and Honor to Our Heavenly Father. Each Brother is to begin each day by reciting the Community Prayer, followed by the recitation of the Divine Office, consisting of Morning, Evening and Night Prayer from either the Four Volume, Single Volume, or the Shorter Christian Prayer. Each Brother is obliged to do this in the best way he can in accordance with his life circumstances.

2) Prayers for the Dead of the Community and Other Faithful Departed:

As a Community of Brothers, we also share in the sorrow of each Brother. In the case of the death of a Brother, the Community as a whole will gather for the Vigil Service and funeral of the deceased Brother. We unite also in prayer for 7 (seven) days while praying the Office of the Dead. If a loved one of a Brother passes, we should strive to be present for the funeral out of respect and support of the Brother. As a Community, we shall pray the Office of the Dead for 3 (three) days. Due to some circumstances, a Brother may not be able to attend the funeral of another Brother or his loved ones, but he must be united in prayer with the Community.

3) Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Holy Trinity:

All Brothers honor Mary as the Mother of all Mothers. It is for her love that she gave birth to Our Lord and Savior.

In honor of Mary, each Brother is to pray the Rosary daily. On Fridays, and on days dedicated to Mary by the Church, each Brother is to pray the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows to be one with Mary as she suffers her agony for her Divine Son.

Chapter 3:

Sacraments:

1-2: The Penitent Brother is encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Penance monthly. It is through asking for God's forgiveness that our souls can be washed clean, and we are brought closer to God. As Brothers, we relive the Sacrifice of Christ. Each Brother is to receive the Body of Christ as often as possible. We encourage the attendance of mass daily and are obliged to attend mass on Sundays and all Holy Days of Obligation.

Chapter 4: – Dispensing the World

1) As Brothers, we live simple, peaceful lives in harmony with all of God's creation; we avoid attachment to material things; we generously share what we have with others according to our means and conscience; and we avoid prideful and vain displays or behavior. We focus our lives on the Kingdom of God and not on this world. We avoid anything that could bring harm to our Spiritual Growth.

We support Holy Mother Church by giving of our time and our talent, as well as our financial treasure, in accordance with our means and conscience in obedience to the Precepts of the Catholic Church.

2) As Brothers, we must always strive to "witness" to all of God's children. We are to avoid attending functions that could harm our Spiritual Growth. Families are a blessing from God and as such, we up-hold the importance of family. Each Brother is to refrain from any scandalous conduct and places that would bring harm to him, his family, or his fellow Brothers.

Chapter 5: – Works of Mercy and Penance

1-2: As Penitents, we always remember on every Friday that this is the day Our Lord died to save us. To bring us closer to share in the Passion of Christ, each Brother is to fast on Fridays.

Baring any health concerns, we are to eat only one full meal on Fridays. In addition to the full meal, two small meals may be eaten but they cannot equal the full meal when combined. When determining the constitution of a full meal, each Brother must prayerfully contemplate the Passion of our Lord, and must always keep in mind and heart the true meaning and spirit of penance and mortification.

In addition to abstaining from meat on Wednesdays, we also willingly abstain from eating any meat on Fridays as encouraged by the Roman Catholic Church.

Each Brother is to also observe a three-day period of abstinence preceding each of the four prescribed annual Communion, at Easter time (Holy Thursday or Easter Sunday), at Christmas, Pentecost, and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The three-day period of abstinence is not required prior to Holy Communion at any other times of the year.

Each Brother is also to fast and abstain from meat from the day after St. Lucy's feast (December 14th) until Christmas.

3) Each Brother is to perform works of mercy (ex. helping our neighbors, working at a soup kitchen, etc.). The Corporal and Spiritual Acts of Mercy are excellent examples for us to follow in love and service to others. These works of mercy help us to remember Christ's Sacrifice on the cross.

Chapter 6 Formation:

Upon entrance into our Community, each Brother is received by the Minister Servant or his delegate. Our formation process into our Community consists of the following stages:

Inquirer: 6months
Postulancy: 1 year
Novitiate: 1 year (another year may be added if deemed necessary with the consultation of the Regional Minister, Minister Servant and Novice)
Temporary Promises: 3 years (renewed yearly)
Life Promises: Life

If a single man is accepted into our Community, at Postulancy he lives a chaste life. At Life Profession the single Brother promises to live the life of Charity, Humility, and Penance and will have the "option" to vow Perpetual Celibacy. If a single Brother vows Perpetual Celibacy, he may not marry.

The Married Brother must have the support of his spouse. During his formation the Married Brother strives to live the life of Charity, Penance and Humility. He promises these virtues at Life Profession. The Married Brother must maintain conjugal chastity throughout his married life.

1) Norms of Dress:

Postulant Brothers: Black pants, white shirt, and plain wooden cross. At this time the Postulant will receive the Rule and Constitution of the Community.

Novice Brothers: Holy Habit (without any hood), black belt, plain wooden cross.

Temporary Promises: Brothers will receive the Community's wooden cross with the Head of Christ.

Life Promises: Brothers will receive the Community's Corpus Cross.

Wearing of the Holy Habit: Brothers may wear the Holy Habit for ministry, Community gatherings, retreats, or when deemed necessary.

When performing Liturgical Functions, a Brother may wear the alb or his Holy Habit with the prescribed surplice.

2) Profession and Suspension

that, at this minimum age, an Inquirer has reached a sufficient level of interior and spiritual maturity and has had enough practical life experience to enable him to prayerfully discern and make decisions on the path he will choose to follow through life.

Life Promises may occur only after ALL the stages of Formation are completed. A Brother must be at least 30 years of age at Life Promises. A married Brother must have the approval of his spouse.

Acceptance Into Our Life:

Before an Inquirer is received as a Postulant, he must complete an Application Form and give consent to a Criminal Background Check.

All relevant documents pertaining to the applicant's baptism, confirmation, and marriage must be submitted at the time of application.

Psychological Testing must be completed before entrance into Postulancy. This must be done at the expense of the individual applicant and a signed statement must be provided that gives the Vocational Director permission to view the results.

Suspension from the Community – if a Brother has caused any harm to a fellow Brother or to the Community, he will be called to meet with the Minister Servant and his Council. The Minister Servant and his Council will decide if suspension is deemed necessary. In some situations, the actions of the Brother may warrant dismissal from the Community.

If the Brother is suspended or dismissed, he must forgo any duties within the Community, and must forgo wearing the Holy Habit or any other form of witness that identifies him as a part of the Community of Penitent Brothers.

Financial:

Since the Penitent Brothers are a non-profit, self-supporting association, each member currently contributes \$30.00 per month to the Community as a whole. Contributions begin at the Postulancy stage of formation. Any member who finds these contributions burdensome may speak privately with his Regional Minister about possible reduction or release from this requirement.

If additional money is needed to conduct the business of the Community, to support other ministries, or to help fill special needs in the greater Community, the Treasurer or Regional Ministers may solicit donations from the members after first communicating their use. Any goods owned by the Community as acquired from donations or purchases belong to the Community and all within it, provided they are so intended and identified.

All members are responsible for their own expenses for the Community Retreats and for General Assembly gatherings.

Each individual member is responsible for his own expenses pertaining to his Holy Habit and black belt. If a member leaves or is dismissed from the Community, the Holy Habit, black belt, and the Community's Corpus Cross must be returned to the Community and the member will be reimbursed for his expenses for such.

Chapter 7: Leaders of the Community

1) As Brothers, we gather for General Assembly every 4 (four) years. At that time, election of Offices and any changes to the Constitution will take place.

Minister Servant – Must be a Life Professed Brother. The term of the Minister Servant is 4 (four) years. The Minister Servant may be elected to serve a second consecutive four-year term of office. Upon the absence of a minimum of four years from office, the Brother may again submit his name for re-election.

Vicar Minister Servants- Consists of the two Founders. They serve this Office until death or incapacitation. At that time, a Life Professed Brother will be voted in to serve in this Office for a period of 4 (four) years. The Vicar Minister Servant may be elected to serve a second consecutive four-year term.

Upon the absence of a minimum of four years from office, the Brother may again submit his name for re-election. In the event that one of the two Founders is elected to serve as the Minister Servant, then a Life Professed Brother will be voted in as an interim Vicar Minister Servant to serve only for the duration of time that the Founder serves as the Minister Servant of the Community. When the Founder has completed his term of office as the Minister Servant, he will again return to the Office of Vicar Minister Servant.

Spiritual Advisor: Can be a priest, deacon, or religious who accepts the role after first being selected and invited by the Regional Community.

***Regional Minister** – Appointed by the Minister Servant. Must be a Temporary or Life Professed Brother. The Minister Servant has the authority to remove the Regional Minister for cause after due consultation with his Council. If at that time there is not a Temporary or Life Professed Brother in the Regional Community, the Minister Servant or a Vicar Minister Servant will fill in until a Regional Minister is appointed.

***Vocational Director** – Appointed by the Minister Servant. Must be a Temporary or Life Professed Brother.

***Secretary** – Appointed by the Minister Servant. Must be a Temporary or Life Professed Brother.

***Treasurer** – Appointed by the Minister Servant. Must be a Temporary or Life Professed Brother.

* The Minister Servant has the authority to change Office appointments at any time. A Brother who serves in an appointed Office can be re-appointed to the same Office indefinitely by the Minister Servant with mutual agreement of the Brother.

Duties:

Minister Servant: Conducts the daily business of the Community along with his Council. The Council is an Advisory to the Minister Servant. The Minister Servant is responsible for appointing the Offices as specified in this Constitution. The Minister Servant is also responsible for Regional Visitations. The Minister Servant is responsible to receive, or to delegate responsibility to receive, all Brothers during the various Stages of Formation.

Vicar Minister Servants: Assist with the daily business of the Community. The Vicar Minister Servants are also the Advisory Council to the Minister Servant. A Vicar Minister Servant may receive the Brothers during the various Stages of Formation if so delegated by the Minister Servant.

Spiritual Advisor: Provides Spiritual Direction to the Regional Community when requested; helps to guide the Regional Community in matters of discipline and correction.

Regional Ministers: Organize and conduct all meetings and business within their Regional Communities; are responsible for the formation of each Brother in their Regional Communities; are responsible for keeping records and for communications amongst the members of their Regional Communities and between the larger Penitent Brothers Community; represent the vote of their Regional Communities to the Minister Servant on all voting matters. A Regional Minister may receive the Brothers during the various Stages of Formation if so delegated by the Minister Servant.

Vocational Director: Helps foster the Inquirers through their discernment process. The Vocation Director is responsible for receiving all documents from any Inquirer that seeks admission to the Community. The Vocation Director sends a report to the Minister Servant on all applicants.

Secretary – Maintains all records of the Community gatherings and meetings.

Treasurer – Maintains the income and expenses of the Community. The Treasurer keeps financial records and submits a financial report to the Minister Servant and his Council every 6 months. A Financial Report is submitted to the Community as a whole once a year.

Voting:

Any proposed changes to the Constitution or other voting matters, as well as any other items submitted for general discussion and resolution by the overall Community at the General Assembly, are first submitted to a Screening Committee that is responsible to review, organize, and communicate the matters to the Minister Servant and to the Regional Ministers. The communication is to take place at a time sufficiently in advance of the date of the General Assembly to allow preliminary discussion of the matters within each Regional Community. The Screening Committee is also responsible for creation of the agenda for the discussion and/or vote on the matters at the General Assembly. The Screening Committee is composed of the two Vicar Minister Servants and two professed Brothers who are appointed by the Minister Servant.

Votes on all matters pertaining to the overall Community consist of 1 (one) vote from each Regional Community, 1 (one) vote each from the two Vicar Minister Servants, and 1 (one) vote from the Minister Servant.

For clarification, the Vicar Minister Servants, by virtue of their founding, and the Minister Servant are each allowed 2 (two) votes if they are simultaneously holding the office of Regional Minister in addition to their office of Vicar Minister Servant or Minister Servant; one vote from their Regional Community and one vote from the Office in which they serve. However, if a Vicar Minister Servant or the Minister Servant is the only member of his own Regional Community, he is allowed just 1 (one) vote.

A simple majority vote is required to pass any voting agenda item.

Establishment of a New Regional Community:

If two or more Promised Brothers live in close proximity to each other, and if they are located a relatively long distance away from the nearest Regional Community, then the formation of a new Regional Community may be proposed and formally established if approved by the Minister Servant and his Council.

It is recommended that any new Regional Community be named after either an individual parish, a Saint, or in honor of The Blessed Virgin Mary.

2) The Minister Servant must up-hold the Peace of the Community. Visitation to the various Regions will be done at the discretion of the Minister Servant. A report will be submitted to the Regional Minister upon completion of the Visitation.

The Minister Servant must also up-hold peace between one Brother and another. If needed, private consultation may take place.

3) As Penitent Brothers, we strive to follow our Rule and Constitution to help foster our Spiritual Growth and our growth as a Community in total. Each Brother is asked to read the Rule and Constitution frequently to guide each individual on his journey. Live your life as a witness to God's Faithful. Always remain faithful to our Holy Father the Pope, his Local Ordinaries, and the local clergy. Remain always faithful to the Magisterium of Holy Mother Church. Always embrace each Brother in Love.