Crusaders
with the Red Star

Rule



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Rule of Our Holy Father Augustine

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01 Above all, dearest brothers, love God and then your neighbor, for these commandments are given to us before all others.

02 And you are to keep them in the monastery.

The Purpose and Foundation of Common Life

03 Be of one mind and one heart in God, for this is why you have come together: to dwell in the house in unity of mind.

04 Call nothing your own, but hold everything in common. Let your superior distribute food and clothing to each of you, not equally to all, since you are not all equally healthy and strong, but rather to each according to his need. For so we read in the Acts of the Apostles: “They had everything in common, and it was distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:32 and 35).

05 Those who had some property in the world should not consider it unjust that their property serves all once they have entered the monastery.

06 Those who were poor in the world should not seek in the monastery what they could not have even in the world. Yet let them be given everything they need in their frailty, even if their poverty in the world was so great that they lacked even the barest necessities. They should not consider themselves fortunate because they receive food and clothing that they could not have had in the world.

07 Nor should they grow proud because they can live in the company of those they would not have dared to approach outside. Rather, let their hearts turn to God and not long for worldly vanity. Otherwise it could happen that monasteries would benefit only the rich and not the poor, for the rich would be humbled in them while the poor would grow proud.

08 On the other hand, those who were someone in the world must not despise their brothers who lived in poverty before they came to the monastery. They should take more pride in the company of their poor brothers than in the high standing of their wealthy parents. Nor should they boast if they have contributed something of their property to the monastery. Otherwise their generosity to the monastery could make them prouder than the enjoyment of it in the world would have done. For every other sin is committed through evil deeds, but pride makes even good deeds bad. What use is it for someone to give his property to the poor and become poor himself, if his wretched soul is prouder for having despised riches than it was when it possessed them?

09 Live, therefore, all of you in harmony and love, and honor in one another God, who dwells in you.

Prayer

10 Pray fervently at the hours and times appointed for it.

11 In the oratory do nothing except what it is intended for and from which it takes its name. Otherwise those who wish to pray in their free time, outside the appointed hours, would be disturbed by other brothers who think they must do something else there.

12 When you praise God with psalms and hymns, keep in your heart what you say with your lips.

13 And sing only what is intended to be sung. What you do not read is to be sung, do not sing.

Moderation and Self-Denial

14 Tame your body by restraint in food and drink, as far as your health permits. If someone cannot fast, let him at least take nothing outside the time of the common meal, unless he is ill.

15 At table listen quietly and without quarreling to what is customarily read to you, until you rise from the table, so that you receive not only bodily food but also spiritual food, the word of God.

16 If those who are more delicate because of their former way of life receive different food, let the brothers who are stronger because of a different way of life not envy them or regard it as an injustice. Nor should they consider them more fortunate for receiving something they themselves do not receive. Rather, let them rejoice that they can do what their weaker brothers cannot.

17 And if those who came to the monastery from better circumstances receive better food, clothing, bedding and blankets than their stronger and therefore more fortunate brothers, let these stronger ones remember how much their weaker brothers have already given up from their worldly life, even if they have not yet reached the perfection of their stronger brothers. Therefore let not all desire what a few weaker ones receive in addition, not as an honor but out of forbearance. Otherwise the foolish situation would arise that while the rich in the monastery strove for perfection, the poor would grow soft.

18 The sick, of course, should receive lighter food, so that they do not get worse. After an illness, however, care for them in such a way that they recover quickly, even if they came from the humblest circumstances in the world, for their illness has done to them what their former way of life did to the rich. But when they have regained their former strength, let them return to the more modest, that is, the happier way of life, in which a servant of God excels the more, the less he needs. When they have recovered their former health, let

them no longer desire the better food they needed in their illness, but rather consider themselves richer for needing less. For it is better to need less than to have more.

Preserving Chastity and Fraternal Correction

19 Let your conduct be unobtrusive, and do not seek to please by your clothing, but by your way of life.

20 When you go anywhere, always go together, and stay together when you reach your destination.

21 Let there be nothing in your walk, bearing or whole demeanor that attracts attention, but let everything be appropriate to your holy state.

22 If you happen to catch sight of a woman, do not let your gaze linger on her. You are not, of course, forbidden to see women when you go out, but it is sinful to desire them or to wish that they should desire you. For desire for women shows itself not only by touch and expressions of affection but also by a look. Do not say that your heart is pure if your eyes are impure, for an impure look betrays an impure heart. And if hearts reveal impure desire through a mutual look, even though the lips are silent, and bodily desire turns into mutual delight, purity of heart is already lost, even if the bodies have not yet been defiled by impurity.

23 Therefore let anyone who likes to look at women and seeks their gaze not think that no one sees him. He is observed by someone he would never have suspected. But even if no one catches him and no human being sees him, how will he stand before the One who sees everything and from whom nothing is hidden? Or does he suppose that God does not see him because God is as much more patient as he is wiser? Let a man who has consecrated himself to God fear displeasing him, and he will not sinfully desire to please a woman. Let him remember that God sees everything, and he will not sinfully desire to look at a woman. Holy Scripture recommends the fear of God in this matter when it says: “The Lord abhors the one whose gaze is sinful” (Prov 27:20).

24 So when you are in church or anywhere else where there are women, guard one another's chastity, and God, who dwells in you, will in this way protect you through your own efforts.

25 If you notice in any of you this concupiscence of the eyes of which I have spoken, admonish him at once, so that the fault may be corrected at its beginning, before it progresses.

26 But if after your admonition, immediately or at any later time, he commits the same offense, anyone who notices it is obliged to report it to the superior, for such a brother is sick and needs treatment. First, however, alert one or two other brothers, so that he may be convicted by the mouth of two or three witnesses and punished with due severity. Do not think that you act maliciously when you report such a thing. You would not be without guilt if by your silence you let your brothers fall into ruin, though you could have corrected

them by your admonition. If your brother had a wound on his body and hid it for fear of surgery, would it not be cruel to keep silent and merciful to report it? All the more must this be reported, so that the infection may not spread in his heart.

27 But if he refuses to amend despite your admonition, it is your duty to report it to the superior even before you alert other brothers who are to convict him if he denies it. Perhaps the superior can admonish him in private without the others learning of it. But if he denies it, bring in further witnesses without his knowledge, so that in the presence of all he may be not merely accused by one but convicted by two or three witnesses. If he is convicted, he must accept the appointed punishment according to the will of the superior or the priest who has the authority to decide the matter. If he resists it, let him be expelled from your community, even if he does not leave of his own accord. This too is done not out of cruelty but out of mercy, so that he may not corrupt many others by his fault.

28 What I have said about undisciplined eyes, observe faithfully and conscientiously whenever you see any sin and must prevent it, report it, convict it and punish it, with love for the person and hatred for the sin.

29 But if someone has gone so far as to receive letters or gifts secretly from some woman, forgive him and pray for him if he confesses everything of his own accord. If, however, he is caught and convicted, let him be punished more severely according to the judgment of the priest or superior.

Temporal Goods and Their Care

30 Keep your clothes in a common place under the care of one or two brothers, or as many as are needed, to shake them out and protect them from moths. And as you eat from one table, so also clothe yourselves from one storeroom. As far as possible, do not concern yourselves with what clothing you receive according to the season, or whether each receives what he stored there or what someone else wore, so long as each has what he needs. But if quarrels and resentment arise among you because of this, if someone complains that he has received worse clothing than he wore before, or takes it as an injustice that he is dressed worse than another brother, let this show you how much you still lack in the inner garment of the soul, that is, in the grace of God, when you quarrel over the garment of the body. But even if this weakness is tolerated and each of you receives what he stored, at least store it in a common wardrobe and under common supervision.*

31 This is so that no one works for himself alone, but that you work for the common good more diligently and joyfully than if each worked for himself. For it is written of love that it “does not seek its own interests” (1 Cor 13:5), and it puts the common good before one's own, not one's own before the common good. The greater your care for the common good rather than your own, the greater you will know your spiritual progress to be, and over all your temporal needs will shine the love that never ends.

32 If, then, someone gives clothing or other necessary things to his sons or relatives in the monastery, they must not accept them in secret. Rather, the superior may give them as common property to the one who needs them most. But if someone accepts something in secret, let him be condemned as a thief.

33 Wash your clothes as the superior determines, either yourselves or in laundries, so that excessive concern for clean clothing does not stain the soul within.

34 Do not refuse the body a bath either, if health requires it. On the doctor's advice let this be done without objection, and even if the patient perhaps does not want it, let him do at the superior's command what is necessary for his health. But if someone wishes it himself and it would not be good for him, his request is not to be granted. For sometimes harmful things seem useful to us because we take pleasure in them.*

35 If one of God's servants is ill, believe him without hesitation when he says what hurts him. But if it is not certain that he can be healed by what pleases him, ask the doctor.

36 Whenever it is necessary to go to the baths or anywhere else, let at least two or three go. And let no one go with whomever he himself wishes, but with the one the superior assigns to him.

37 Entrust to someone the care of the sick, of those recovering, and of brothers otherwise unwell, even if they perhaps have no fever. Let him request from the common stores whatever he thinks is needed.

38 Those who care for food, clothing and books should also serve their brothers without grumbling.

39 Ask for books always at the appointed hour. Whoever comes at another time shall not receive them.

40 Those in charge of clothing and footwear should give them without hesitation to anyone who needs them.

Asking Pardon and Forgiveness

41 Have no quarrels among you at all, or at least end them as quickly as possible. Otherwise anger grows into hatred, makes a beam out of a splinter and a murderer out of a man. For it is written: “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer” (1 Jn 3:15).

42 Whoever has hurt another with an insult or an evil word, or has even accused him of a crime, should try to put right as quickly as possible what he has done. Let the one offended forgive without hesitation. If they have offended each other, let them forgive one another for the sake of your prayers, and you should pray the more sincerely the more often you pray. Surely he is better who is more often carried away by anger but immediately asks forgiveness of the one he has wronged than he who is less prone to anger but is reluctant to ask pardon. But whoever never wants to ask forgiveness, or does

not ask sincerely, is in the monastery in vain, even if he is not dismissed. Therefore guard against harsh words. But if they have slipped from your lips and wounded your brother, do not hesitate to reconcile him again with a kind word.

43 If, however, you must sometimes be strict for the sake of order and discipline, and you feel that you have gone a little too far, you need not ask your subordinates for pardon, lest by excessive humility you lose the respect due to you among them. Ask forgiveness instead from the Lord of all creation, who knows how much you love your subordinates, even if you have rebuked them too harshly. Your love, however, must not be carnal but spiritual.

Authority and Obedience

44 Obey the superior as your father and show him honor, so that God may not be offended in him; still more willingly obey the priest who cares for you all.

45 But to see that all this is conscientiously observed, that nothing neglected is overlooked and that it is corrected, is chiefly the concern of the superior. The superior refers to the priest, who has greater authority among you, all matters that are too serious or exceed his power.

46 Let the superior find his joy not in commanding you by his power, but in serving you out of love. By his position in the monastery he stands above you, but in the fear of God let him bow at your feet. Let him be an example of good works to all, admonish the discontented, comfort the fainthearted, take up the cause of the weak and be patient with all. Let him love discipline and inspire fear. Let him desire your love more than your fear, though both are needed. Let him always be mindful that he will one day have to answer to God for you.

47 Therefore not only obey him willingly, but also have compassion on him, for the higher he stands above you, the greater the danger in which he lives.

Observance of the Rule

48 May God grant that you love spiritual beauty and observe all this out of love, and that like Christ you give off a sweet fragrance by your good life, not as bondsmen under the law but as free people living in the grace of God.

49 So that you may see yourselves in this little book as in a mirror and forget nothing, have it read aloud every week. If you find that you are observing everything written in it, thank God, from whom all good comes. But if any of you finds that he still has shortcomings, let him regret them and guard against them in the future. Let him pray that God may forgive him and not lead him into temptation.

Notes and Explanations

On 23 ff. Although the whole of Chapter IV naturally remains in force, its wording may give an inexperienced reader the impression that the main activity of the members of the Order is constantly spying on their brothers' faults and informing on them. This is of course not the case. The point is not to search for faults and sins in others but above all to keep watch over oneself. Where a brother has fallen into sins that are entirely evident and beyond doubt, one cannot of course remain idle; such a member must surely be reproved and urged to amend. The form of such reproof must always correspond to section 28 of the Rule: “with love for the person and hatred for the sin”.

On 30. The Rule of St. Augustine originated at the close of antiquity, when standards of hygiene were understandably somewhat different from those of today. It is therefore not customary in our Order to have a common wardrobe where clothing is stored anonymously and from which it is again distributed anonymously to the members of the community. The garments that form part of the Order's habit are made to measure for each member, so that everyone has clothing that fits him well. Clothing other than the habit is obtained by the members of the Order themselves as needed. Moreover, the Constitutions of the Order leave freedom in the wearing of the religious habit (Constitutions, no. 12: “Let the members wear the religious habit wherever it is appropriate and according to their own judgment.”).

On 34. As with section 30, the customs of antiquity are set aside here in practical life, and each member of the Order is naturally free to observe, as needed, the rules of hygiene appropriate to the beginning of the 21st century.

On 44. The Rule of St. Augustine assumes a different leadership structure from that of our Order. Our Order is a priestly order, and therefore the superior is always also a priest.