

The Earlier Rule  
(The Rule Without a Papal Seal)<sup>a</sup>  
(1209/10-1221)

[This document has its origins in the simple form of life which Francis brought to Pope Innocent III for his approval in 1209 or 1210. During the following years it developed in light of the experiences of the brothers, the teaching of the Church, especially the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, and the teachings of Francis himself. The final stage of its composition occurred at the Chapter of 1221, the last Pentecost Chapter at which all the brothers gathered together.]

[Prologue]

<sup>1</sup>In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>2</sup>This is the life (*vita*)<sup>1</sup> [of the Gospel of Jesus Christ] that Brother Francis petitioned the Lord Pope to grant and confirm for him; and he did grant and confirm it for him and his brothers present and to come.

<sup>3</sup>Brother Francis—and whoever is head of this religion—promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and his successors. <sup>b</sup> <sup>4</sup>Let all the brothers be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors.

[Chapter I: The Brothers must live without anything of their own and in chastity and in obedience]

<sup>1</sup>The rule and life of these brothers is this, namely: “to live in obedience, in chastity, and without anything of their own (*sine proprio*),”<sup>c</sup> and to follow the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>Who says: *If you wish to be perfect, go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven;* <sup>Mt 19:21 Lk 18:22</sup> *and come, follow me.* <sup>Mt 19:21</sup> <sup>3</sup>And: *If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.* <sup>Mt 16:24</sup> <sup>4</sup>Again: *If anyone wishes to come to me and does not hate father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.* <sup>Lk 14:26</sup> <sup>5</sup>And: *Everyone who has left father or mother, brother or sisters, wife or children, houses or lands because of me, will receive a hundredfold and will possess eternal life.* <sup>Mt 19:29 Mk 10:29 Lk 18:30</sup>

[Chapter II: The Reception and the Clothing of the Brothers]<sup>a</sup>

<sup>1</sup>If anyone, wishing by divine inspiration to accept this life, comes to our brothers, let him be received by them with kindness. <sup>b</sup> <sup>2</sup>If he is determined to accept our life (*vitam nostram*), let the brothers be very careful not to become involved in his temporal affairs but present him to their minister as quickly as possible. <sup>3</sup>On his part, let the minister receive him with kindness, encourage him and diligently explain the tenor of our life to him.

<sup>4</sup>When this has been done, let the above-mentioned person—if he wishes and is capable of doing so spiritually without any difficulty—sell all his belongings and be conscientious in giving everything to the poor. <sup>Mt 19:21 Lk 18:22</sup> <sup>5</sup>Let the brothers and the minister of the brothers be careful

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<sup>1</sup> All manuscripts read *vita*; only two manuscripts diverge to read *vita evangelii* and *vita evangelica*.

not to interfere in any way in his temporal affairs, <sup>6</sup>nor to accept money either by themselves or through an intermediary.<sup>c</sup> <sup>7</sup>Nevertheless, if the brothers are in need, they can accept, like other poor people, whatever is needed for the body excepting money.

<sup>8</sup>When he has returned, the minister may give him the clothes of probation for a year, that is, two tunics without a hood, a cord, trousers, and a small cape reaching to the cord. <sup>9</sup>When the year and term of probation has ended, he may be received into obedience. <sup>10</sup>After this it will be unlawful for him to join another Order or to “wander outside obedience” according to the decree of the Lord Pope and the Gospel, for *no one putting his hand to the plow and looking to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.* <sup>Lk 9:62 a</sup>

<sup>11</sup>However, if anyone comes who cannot give away his belongings without difficulty and has the spiritual will to do so, let him leave them behind, and it will suffice for him.

<sup>12</sup>No one may be received contrary to the rite and practice of the Holy Church.

<sup>13</sup>All the other brothers who have already promised obedience may have one tunic with a hood and, if it is necessary, another without a hood and a cord and trousers. <sup>14</sup>Let all the brothers wear poor clothes and, with the blessing of God, they can patch them with sackcloth and other pieces, for the Lord says in the Gospel: *Those who wear expensive clothing and live in luxury and who dress in fine garments are in the houses of kings.* <sup>Lk 7:25 Mt 11:8</sup> <sup>15</sup>Even though they may be called hypocrites, let them nevertheless not cease doing good nor seek expensive clothing in this world, so that they may have a garment in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>Mt 22:11</sup>

### [Chapter III: The Divine Office and Fasting]<sup>b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Lord says: *This kind of devil cannot come out except* <sup>Mk 9:28</sup> through fasting and prayer; <sup>2</sup>and again: *When you fast do not become gloomy like the hypocrites.* <sup>Mt 6:16</sup> <sup>3</sup>For this reason let all the brothers, whether clerical or lay, recite the Divine Office, the praises and prayers, as is required of them.

<sup>4</sup>Let the clerical brothers recite the Office and say it for the living and the dead according to the custom of clerics. <sup>5</sup>Every day let them say the *Have mercy on me, O God* <sup>Ps 51:10 [Vulgate, Ps 50:10]</sup> with the *Our Father*. <sup>Mt 6:9</sup> for the failings and negligence of the brothers; <sup>6</sup>and let them say the *Out of the depths* <sup>Ps 130 [Vulgate Ps 129]</sup> with the *Our Father*. <sup>Mt 6:9</sup> for the deceased brothers. <sup>7</sup>They may have only the books necessary to fulfill their office.

<sup>8</sup>The lay brothers who know how to read the psalter may have one. <sup>9</sup>Those who do not know how to read, however, may not be permitted to have any book. <sup>10</sup>Let the lay brothers say the *Creed* and twenty-four *Our Fathers* with the *Glory to the Father* for Matins; for Lauds, let them say five; for Prime, the *Creed* and seven *Our Fathers* with the *Glory to the Father*; for each of the hours, Terce, Sext and None, seven; for Vespers, twelve; for Compline, the *Creed* and seven *Our Fathers* with the *Glory to the Father*; for the deceased, seven *Our Fathers* with the *Eternal Rest*; and for the failings and negligence of the brothers three *Our Fathers* each day.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Similarly, let all the brothers fast from the feast of All Saints until the Nativity, and from the Epiphany, when our Lord Jesus Christ began to fast, until Easter. <sup>12</sup>However, at other times, according to this life, let them not be bound to fast except on Fridays. <sup>13</sup>In accordance with the Gospel, it may be lawful for them to eat of all the food that is placed before them. <sup>Lk 10:8</sup>

[Chapter IV: The Ministers and the Other Brothers and How They Are Related]<sup>b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In the name of the Lord!<sup>c</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Let all the brothers who have been designated the ministers and servants of the other brothers assign their brothers in the provinces and places where they may be, and let them frequently visit, admonish and encourage them spiritually. <sup>3</sup>Let all my other brothers diligently obey them in those matters concerning the well-being of their soul and which are not contrary to our life.

<sup>4</sup>Let them behave among themselves according to what the Lord says: *Do to others what you would have them do to you*<sup>Mt 7:12</sup>; <sup>5</sup>and “Do not do to another what you would not have done to you.”<sup>d</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Let the ministers and servants remember what the Lord says: I have *not come to be served, but to serve*<sup>Mt 20:28</sup>; and because the care of the brothers’ souls has been entrusted to them, if anything<sup>e</sup> is lost on account of their fault or bad example, they will have to render an account before the Lord Jesus Christ *on the day of judgment*.<sup>Mt 12:36</sup>

[Chapter V: The Correction of the Brothers at Fault]

<sup>1</sup>Keep watch over your soul, therefore, and those of your brothers, because *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*.<sup>Heb 10:31</sup> <sup>2</sup>If anyone of the ministers commands one of the brothers something contrary to our life or to his soul, he is not bound to obey him because obedience is not something in which a fault or sin is committed.

<sup>3</sup>On the other hand, let all the brothers who are under the ministers and servants consider the deeds of the ministers and servants reasonably and attentively. <sup>4</sup>If they see any of them walking according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit<sup>Rom 8:4</sup> in keeping with the integrity of our life, if he does not improve after a third admonition, let them inform the minister and servant of the whole fraternity at the Chapter of Pentecost regardless of what objection deters them.

<sup>5</sup>Moreover, if, anywhere among the brothers, there is a brother who wishes to live according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit,<sup>Rom 8:4</sup> let the brothers with whom he is living admonish, instruct and correct him humbly and attentively. <sup>6</sup>If, however, after the third admonition he refuses to improve, let them send or report him to their minister and servant as soon as they can; and let the minister and servant deal with him as he considers best before God.<sup>Mt 18:15 Mt 18:16 Mt 18:17</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Let all the brothers, both the ministers and servants as well as the others, be careful not to be disturbed or angered at another’s sin or evil because the devil wishes to destroy many because of another’s fault. <sup>8</sup>But let them spiritually help the one who has sinned as best they can, because *those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do*.<sup>Mt 9:12 Mk 2:17</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Likewise, let all the brothers not have power or control in this instance, especially among themselves; <sup>10</sup>for, as the Lord says in the Gospel: *The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and the great ones make their authority over them felt*,<sup>Mt 20:25</sup> it shall not be so among the brothers. <sup>11</sup>Let whoever wishes to be the greater<sup>Mt 20:26</sup> among them *be their minister and servant*.<sup>Mt 20:26</sup> <sup>12</sup>Let whoever is the greater (*maior*) among them *become the least (minor)*.<sup>Mt 20:27</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Let no brother do or say anything evil to another; <sup>14</sup>on the contrary, *through the charity of the Spirit*,<sup>Lk 22:26</sup> let them serve and obey *one another* voluntarily.

<sup>15</sup>This is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>1 Pt 1:22 1 Pt 2:13 1 Pt 2:14 1 Pt 2:15</sup>

<sup>16</sup>As often as they have turned away from the commands of the Lord<sup>Ps 119:21 [Vulgate, Ps 118:21]</sup> and “wandered outside obedience,”<sup>a</sup> let all the brothers know, as the Prophet says, they are cursed outside obedience as long as they knowingly remain in such a sin. <sup>17</sup>When they have persevered in the Lord’s commands—as they have promised by the Holy Gospel and their life, let them know they have remained in true obedience and are blessed by the Lord.

*[Chapter VI: The Recourse of the Brothers to the Minister; Let No Brother Be Called “Prior”]*

<sup>1</sup>If the brothers, wherever they may be, cannot observe this life, let them have recourse to their minister as soon as they can, making this known to him. <sup>2</sup>Let the minister, on his part, endeavor to provide for them as he would wish to be provided for him were he in a similar position.<sup>Mt 7:12</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Let no one be called “*prior*,” but let everyone in general be called a lesser brother.<sup>Mt 20:27 Mt 23:8 Lk 22:26 b</sup> <sup>4</sup>Let one wash the feet of the other.<sup>Jn 13:14</sup>

*[Chapter VII: The Manner of Serving and Working]*<sup>c</sup>

<sup>1</sup>None of the brothers may be treasurers or overseers in any of those places where they are staying to serve or work (*laborare*) for others. They may not be in charge in the houses in which they serve nor accept any office which would generate scandal or *be harmful to their souls*<sup>Mk 8:36</sup>; <sup>2</sup>Let them, instead, be the lesser ones (*minores*) and be subject to all in the same house.<sup>Lk 22:26 1 Pt 2:13</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Let the brothers who know how to work do so and exercise that trade they have learned, provided it is not contrary to the good of their souls and can be performed honestly. <sup>4</sup>For the prophet says: *You shall eat the fruit of your labors; you are blessed and it shall be well for you.*<sup>Ps 128:2 [Vulgate, Ps 127:2]</sup>

<sup>5</sup>The Apostle says: *Whoever does not wish to work shall not eat.*<sup>2 Thes 3:10 6</sup> and *Let everyone remain* in that trade and office *in which he has been called.*<sup>1 Cor 7:24</sup>

<sup>7</sup>And for their work they can receive whatever is necessary excepting money. <sup>8</sup>And when it is necessary, they may seek alms like other poor people. <sup>9</sup>And it is lawful for them to have the tools and instruments suitable for their trades.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Let all the brothers always strive to exert themselves in doing good works, for it is written: “Always do something good that the devil may find you occupied.”<sup>b</sup> <sup>11</sup>And again: “Idleness is an enemy of the soul.”<sup>c</sup> <sup>12</sup>Servants of God, therefore, must always apply themselves to prayer or some good work.

<sup>13</sup>Wherever the brothers may be, either in hermitages (*in eremis*=“in the woods”/“in the country”) or other places, let them be careful not to make any place their own or contend with anyone for it. <sup>14</sup>Whoever comes to them, friend or foe, thief or robber, let him be received with kindness.

<sup>15</sup>Wherever the brothers may be and in whatever place they meet,<sup>d</sup> they should respect spiritually and attentively one another, and *honor one another without complaining.*<sup>1 Pt 4:9</sup> <sup>16</sup>Let them be careful not to appear outwardly as sad and gloomy hypocrites but show themselves *joyful, cheerful and consistently gracious in the Lord.*<sup>Phil 4:4</sup>

[Chapter VIII: Let the Brothers Not Receive Money]

<sup>1</sup>The Lord teaches in the Gospel: *Watch, beware of all malice and greed.* <sup>Lk 12:15</sup> <sup>2</sup>*Guard yourselves* against the anxieties of this world and the cares of this life. <sup>Lk 21:34</sup> <sup>Mt 13:22</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Let none of the brothers, therefore, wherever he may be or go, carry, receive, or have received in any way coin or money, whether for clothing, books, or payment for some work—indeed, not for any reason, unless for an evident need of the sick brothers; because we should not think of coin or money having any greater usefulness than stones.<sup>a</sup> <sup>4</sup>The devil wants to blind those who desire or consider it better than stones. <sup>Mt 19:27</sup> <sup>5</sup>May we who have left all things, then, be careful of not losing the kingdom of heaven for so little.

<sup>6</sup>If we find coins anywhere, let us pay no more attention to them than to the dust we trample underfoot, for *vanity of vanities and all is vanity.* <sup>Ecc 1:2</sup> <sup>7</sup>If by chance, which God forbid, it happens that some brother is collecting or holding coin or money, unless it is only for the aforesaid needs of the sick, let all the brothers consider him a deceptive brother, an apostate, a thief, a robber, and as the one who held the money bag, unless he has sincerely repented. <sup>Jn 12:6</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Let the brothers in no way receive, arrange to receive, seek, or arrange to seek money [for leper colonies] (*eleemosyna*) or coins for any house or place;<sup>b</sup> and let them not accompany anyone begging money or coins for such places. <sup>9</sup>However, the brothers can perform for those places other services not contrary to our life with the blessing of God. <sup>10</sup>Nevertheless, the brothers can beg alms for a manifest need of the lepers. <sup>11</sup>But let them beware of money. <sup>12</sup>Similarly, let all the brothers be careful of going throughout the world for filthy gain.

[Chapter IX: Begging Alms]

<sup>1</sup>Let all the brothers strive to follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ and let them remember that we should have nothing else in the whole world except, as the Apostle says: *having food and clothing, we are content with these.* <sup>1</sup> <sup>Tm 6:8</sup>

<sup>2</sup>They must rejoice when they live among people considered of little value and looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside.

<sup>3</sup>When it is necessary, they may go for alms. <sup>4</sup>Let them not be ashamed and remember, moreover, that our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Son of the all powerful living God,* <sup>Jn 11:27</sup> *set His face like flint* <sup>Is 50:7</sup> and was not ashamed. <sup>5</sup>He was poor and a stranger and lived on alms—He, the Blessed Virgin, and His disciples. <sup>6</sup>When people revile them and refuse to give them alms, let them thank God for this because they will receive great honor before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ for such insults. <sup>7</sup>Let them realize that a reproach is imputed not to those who suffer it but to those who caused it. <sup>8</sup>Alms are a legacy (*hereditas*) and a justice due to the poor that our Lord Jesus Christ acquired for us. <sup>9</sup>The brothers who work at acquiring them will receive a great reward and enable those who give them to gain and acquire one; for all that people leave behind in the world will perish, but they will have a reward from the Lord for the charity and almsgiving they have done.

<sup>10</sup>Let each one confidently make known his need to another that the other might discover what is needed and minister to him. <sup>11</sup>Let each one love and care for his brother as a mother loves and cares for her son in those matters in which God has given him the grace. <sup>1</sup> <sup>Thes 2:7</sup> <sup>12</sup>*Let the one who does not eat not judge the one who does.* <sup>Rom 14:3</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Whenever a need arises, all the brothers, wherever they may be, are permitted to consume whatever food people can eat, as the Lord says of David who ate *the loaves of offering that only the priests could lawfully eat.* <sup>Mt 12:4</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Let them remember what the Lord says: *Be careful that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that the day catches you by surprise;* <sup>Lk 21:34</sup> <sup>Lk 21:35</sup> <sup>15</sup>*for that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth like a trap.* <sup>Lk</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Similarly, in time of an obvious need, all the brothers may do as the Lord has given them the grace to satisfy their needs, because necessity has no law. <sup>a</sup>

### [Chapter X: The Sick Brothers]<sup>b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>If any of the brothers falls sick, wherever he may be, let the other brothers not leave him behind unless one of the brothers, or even several of them, if necessary, is designated to serve him as “they would want to be served themselves.” <sup>c</sup> <sup>2</sup>In case of the greatest need, however, they can entrust him to someone who should do what needs to be done for his sickness.

<sup>3</sup>I beg the sick brother to thank God for everything and to desire to be whatever the Lord wills, whether sick or well, because God teaches all those He *has destined for eternal life* <sup>Acts 13:48</sup> “by the torments of punishments,” sicknesses, “and the spirit of sorrow,” as the Lord says: *Those whom I love, I correct and chastise.* <sup>Rv 3:19 a</sup>

<sup>4</sup>If anyone is disturbed or angry at either God or his brothers, or perhaps anxiously and forcefully seeks medicine with too much of a desire to free the flesh that is soon to die and is an enemy of the soul: this comes to him from the Evil One and is carnal. He does not seem to be one of the brothers because he loves his body more than his soul.

### [Chapter XI: The Brothers Should Not Revile or Detract, But Should Love One Another]

<sup>1</sup>Let all the brothers be careful not to slander (*calumniari*) or engage in disputes; <sup>2</sup>let them strive, instead, to keep silence whenever God gives them the grace. <sup>2</sup> <sup>Tm 2:14</sup> <sup>3</sup>Let them not quarrel among themselves or with others but strive to respond humbly, saying: *I am a useless servant.* <sup>Lk</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Let them not become angry because *whoever is angry with his brother is liable to judgment; whoever says to his brother “fool” shall be answerable to the Council; whoever says “fool” will be liable to fiery Gehenna.* <sup>Mt 5:22</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Let them love one another, as the Lord says: *This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.* <sup>Jn 15:12</sup> <sup>6</sup>Let them express the love they have for one another by their deeds, <sup>Jas</sup>

<sup>2:18</sup> as the Apostle says: *Let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and truth.* <sup>1</sup> <sup>Jn 3:18</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Let them revile no one. <sup>Ti 3:2</sup> <sup>8</sup>Let them not grumble or detract from others, for it is

written: *Gossips and detractors are detestable to God.* <sup>Rom 1:29</sup> <sup>Rom 1:30</sup> <sup>9</sup>Let them be *modest by showing graciousness toward everyone.* <sup>Ti 3:2</sup> <sup>10</sup>Let them not judge or condemn. <sup>Mt 7:1</sup> <sup>11</sup>As the

Lord says, let them not consider the least sins of others; <sup>Mt 7:3</sup> <sup>Lk 6:41</sup> <sup>12</sup>instead, let them reflect more upon their own sins *in the bitterness of their soul.* <sup>Is 38:15</sup> <sup>13</sup>Let them struggle to enter through

*the narrow gate,* <sup>Lk 13:24</sup> for the Lord says: *The gate is narrow and the road that leads to life constricted; those who find it are few.* <sup>Mt 7:14</sup>

[Chapter XII: Impure Glances and Frequent Association with Women]

<sup>1</sup>Wherever they may be or may go, let all the brothers avoid evil glances and association with women. <sup>2</sup>No one may counsel them, travel alone with them or eat out of the same dish with them. <sup>3</sup>When giving penance or some spiritual advice, let priests speak with them in a becoming way. <sup>4</sup>Absolutely no woman may be received to obedience by any brother, but after spiritual advice has been given to her, let her do penance wherever she wants. <sup>5</sup>Let us all keep close watch over ourselves and keep all our limbs clean, for the Lord says: *Whoever looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart;* <sup>Mt 5:28</sup> <sup>6</sup>and the Apostle: *Do you not know that your members are a temple of the Holy Spirit?* <sup>1 Cor 6:19</sup> Therefore, whoever violates God's temple, God will destroy. <sup>1 Cor 3:17</sup>

[Chapter XIII: Avoiding Fornication]

<sup>1</sup>If, at the instigation of the devil, any brother commits fornication, let him be deprived of the habit he has lost by his wickedness, put it aside completely, and be altogether expelled from our Order. <sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup>Afterwards he may do penance. <sup>b</sup> <sup>1 Cor 5:4</sup> <sup>1 Cor 5:5</sup>

[Chapter XIV: How the Brothers Should Go Through the World]

<sup>1</sup>When the brothers go through the world, let them take *nothing* for the journey, *neither knapsack, nor purse, nor bread, nor money, nor walking stick.* <sup>Lk 9:3</sup> <sup>Lk 10:4</sup> <sup>2</sup>Whatever house they enter, let them first say: Peace to this house. <sup>3</sup>They may eat and drink *what is placed before them* <sup>Mt 10:10</sup> for as long as they stay *in that house.* <sup>Lk 10:5</sup> <sup>4</sup>Let them not resist anyone evil, but whoever strikes them on one cheek, let them offer him the other as well. <sup>Lk 10:7</sup> <sup>5</sup>Whoever takes their cloak, let them not withhold their tunic. <sup>Mt 5:39</sup> <sup>Lk 6:29</sup> <sup>Lk 6:29</sup> <sup>6</sup>Let them give to all who ask of them and whoever takes what is theirs, let them not seek to take it back. <sup>Lk 6:30</sup>

[Chapter XV: The Brothers May Not Ride Horses]

<sup>1</sup>I command all my brothers, both cleric and lay, that when they go through the world or dwell in places they in no way keep any animal either with them, in the care of another, or in any other way. <sup>2</sup>Let it not be lawful for them to ride horseback unless they are compelled by sickness or a great need. <sup>c</sup>

[Chapter XVI: Those Going Among the Saracens and Other Nonbelievers]<sup>a</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Lord says: *Behold I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves.* <sup>Mt 10:16</sup> <sup>2</sup>Therefore, be prudent as serpents and simple as doves. <sup>Mt 10:16</sup> <sup>3</sup>Let any brother, then, who desires by divine inspiration to go among the Saracens and other nonbelievers, go with the permission of his minister and servant. <sup>b</sup> <sup>4</sup>If he sees they are fit to be sent, the minister may give them permission and not oppose them, for he will be bound to render an accounting to the Lord if he has proceeded without discernment in this and other matters. <sup>5</sup>As for the brothers who go, they can live spiritually among the Saracens and nonbelievers in two ways. <sup>6</sup>One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake <sup>Ti 3:2</sup> <sup>2 Tm 2:14</sup> and to acknowledge that "they are Christians." <sup>1 Pt 2:13</sup> <sup>7</sup> [Cf.

Quran 5:82] The other way is to announce the Word of God, when they see it pleases the Lord, in order that [unbelievers] may believe in almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Creator of all, the Son, the Redeemer and Savior, and be baptized and become Christians because *no one can enter the kingdom of God without being reborn of water and the Holy Spirit.*<sup>Jn 3:5</sup>

<sup>8</sup>They can say to them and the others these and other things which please God because the Lord says in the Gospel: *Whoever acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father.*<sup>Mt 10:32</sup> <sup>9</sup>*Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father.*<sup>Lk 9:26</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Wherever they may be, let all my brothers remember that they have given themselves and abandoned their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>11</sup>For love of Him, they must make themselves vulnerable (*debent se exponere*) to their enemies, both visible and invisible, because the Lord says: *Whoever loses his life because of me will save it in eternal life.*<sup>Lk 9:24 Mt 25:46 c12</sup> *Blessed are they who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*<sup>Mt 5:10</sup> <sup>13</sup>*If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.*<sup>Jn 15:20</sup> <sup>14</sup>*If they persecute you in one town, flee to another.*<sup>Mt 10:23 Mt 5:11</sup> <sup>15</sup>*Blessed are you when people hate you,*<sup>Lk 6:22</sup> *speak evil of you, persecute, expel, and abuse you,*<sup>Mt 5:11</sup> *denounce your name as evil and utter every kind of slander against you because of me.*<sup>Lk 6:22 Mt 5:11</sup> <sup>16</sup>*Rejoice and be glad on that day because your reward is great in heaven.*<sup>Lk 6:23 Mt 5:12</sup>

<sup>17</sup>*I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of them*<sup>Lk 12:4</sup> <sup>18</sup>*and do not fear those who kill the body and afterwards have nothing more to do.*<sup>Mt 10:28 Lk 12:4</sup> <sup>19</sup>*See that you are not alarmed.*<sup>Mt 24:6</sup> <sup>20</sup>*For by your patience, you will possess your souls;*<sup>Mt 10:22 Mt 24:13</sup> <sup>21</sup>*whoever perseveres to the end will be saved.*<sup>Mt 10:22 Mt 24:13</sup>

### [Chapter XVII: Preachers]

<sup>1</sup>Let no brother preach contrary to the rite and practice of the Church or without the permission of his minister. <sup>2</sup>Let the minister be careful of granting it without discernment to anyone. <sup>3</sup>Let all the brothers, however, preach by their deeds (or: “their work,” *operibus praedicient*). <sup>4</sup>No minister or preacher may make a ministry of the brothers or the office of preaching his own, but, when he is told, let him set it aside without objection.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>5</sup>In the love that is God,<sup>1 Jn 4:16</sup> therefore, I beg all my brothers—those who preach, pray, or work (*laboratores*), cleric or lay—to strive to humble themselves in everything,<sup>6</sup> not to boast (*gloriar*) or delight in themselves or inwardly exalt themselves because of the good words and deeds or, for that matter, because of any good that God sometimes says or does or works in and through them, in keeping with what the Lord says: *Do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you.*<sup>Lk 10:20</sup> <sup>7</sup>We may know with certainty that nothing belongs to us except our vices and sins.<sup>2</sup> <sup>8</sup>We must rejoice, instead, when we fall *into various trials*<sup>Jas 1:2</sup> and, in this world, suffer every kind of anguish or distress of soul and body for the sake of eternal life. [cf. “Admonitions” 5]

<sup>9</sup>Therefore, let all the brothers, beware of all pride and vainglory. <sup>10</sup>Let us guard ourselves from the wisdom of this world and the prudence of the flesh. <sup>11</sup>Because the spirit of the flesh very much desires and strives to have the words but cares little for the activity; it does not seek a religion and holiness in an interior spirit,<sup>12</sup> but wants and desires to have a religion and a holiness outwardly apparent to people. <sup>13</sup>They are the ones of whom the Lord says: *Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.*<sup>Mt 6:2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> All else is God’s.

<sup>14</sup>The Spirit of the Lord, however, wants the flesh to be mortified and looked down upon, considered of little worth and rejected. <sup>15</sup>It strives for humility and patience, the pure, simple and true peace of the spirit. <sup>16</sup>Above all, it desires the divine fear, the divine wisdom and the divine love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

<sup>17</sup>Let us render all good to the Lord (*omnia bona Deo reddamus/bona Deo reddere*), God

Almighty and Most High,  
acknowledge that every good is His,  
and thank Him,  
“from Whom all good comes,  
for everything.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>18</sup>May He,  
the Almighty and Most High,  
the only true God,  
have, be given, and receive  
all honor and respect,  
all praise and blessing,  
all thanks and glory,  
to Whom all good belongs,  
He Who alone is good. <sup>Lk 18:19</sup>

<sup>19</sup>When we see or hear evil spoken or done  
or God blasphemed,  
let us speak well and do well  
and praise God  
*Who is blessed forever.* <sup>Rom 12:21 Rom 1:25 b</sup>

[**note:** all manuscripts here read “Amen,” which means that the earlier version of the Rule ended here]

[*Chapter XVIII: How the Ministers Should Meet One Another*]<sup>c</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Once a year on the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel, each minister can come together with his brothers wherever they wish to treat of those things that pertain to God.

<sup>2</sup>All the ministers who are in regions overseas and beyond the Alps may come to the Chapter of Pentecost in the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula once every three years, and the other ministers once a year, unless it has been decreed otherwise by the minister and servant of the entire fraternity.

[*Chapter XIX: That the Brothers Live as Catholics*]<sup>a</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Let all the brothers be, live, and speak as Catholics.

<sup>2</sup>If someone has strayed in word or in deed from Catholic faith and life and has not amended his ways, let him be expelled from our brotherhood.

<sup>3</sup>Let us consider all clerics and religious as our masters in all that pertains to the salvation of our soul and does not deviate from our religion, and let us respect their order, office, and administration in the Lord.

[Chapter XX: Penance and the Reception  
of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ]<sup>b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Let all my blessed brothers, both clerics and lay, confess their sins to priests of our religion.<sup>c</sup> <sup>2</sup>If they cannot, let them confess to other discerning and Catholic priests, knowing with certainty that, when they have received penance and absolution from any Catholic priest, they are without doubt absolved from their sins, provided they have humbly and faithfully fulfilled the penance imposed on them.

<sup>3</sup>If they have not been able to find a priest, however, let them confess to their brother, as the Apostle James says: *Confess your sins to one another.*<sup>Jas 5:16</sup> <sup>4</sup>Nevertheless, because of this, let them not fail to have

recourse to a priest because the power of binding and loosing is granted only to priests.<sup>Mt 18:18</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Contrite and having confessed in this way, let them receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with great humility and respect remembering what the Lord says: *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life*<sup>Jn 6:54</sup> <sup>6</sup>and *Do this in memory of me.*<sup>Lk 22:19</sup>

[Chapter XXI: The Praise and Exhortation  
That All the Brothers Can Make]<sup>a</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Whenever it pleases them, all my brothers can announce this or similar exhortation and praise among all peoples with the blessing of God:

<sup>2</sup>Fear and honor,  
praise and bless,

*give thanks* and adore

the Lord God Almighty in Trinity and in Unity,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

the Creator of all.

<sup>3</sup>Do penance,<sup>Mt 3:2</sup>

performing worthy fruits of penance<sup>Lk 3:8</sup>

because we shall soon die.

<sup>4</sup>*Give and it will be given to you.*<sup>Lk 6:38</sup>

<sup>5</sup>*Forgive and you shall be forgiven.*<sup>Mt 6:14</sup>

<sup>6</sup>*If you do not forgive people their sins,*  
the Lord will not forgive you yours<sup>Mk 11:25</sup>.

*Confess all your sins.*<sup>Jas 5:16</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are those who die in penance,  
for they shall be in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>8</sup>Woe to those who do not die in penance,  
for they shall be *children of the devil*<sup>1 Jn 3:10</sup>

whose works they do<sup>Jn 8:41</sup>

and they shall go *into everlasting fire.*<sup>Mt 25:41</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Beware of and abstain from every evil  
and persevere in good till the end.

[Chapter XXII: An Admonition to the Brothers]<sup>a</sup>

<sup>1</sup>All my brothers: let us pay attention to what the Lord says: *Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you* <sup>Mt 5:44</sup> <sup>2</sup>for our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose footprints we must follow, <sup>1 Pt 2:21</sup> <sup>Mt 26:50</sup> called His betrayer a friend and willingly offered Himself to His executioners. <sup>Jn 10:18</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Our friends, therefore, are all those who unjustly inflict upon us distress and anguish, shame and injury, sorrow and punishment, martyrdom and death. <sup>4</sup>We must love them greatly for we shall possess eternal life because of what they bring us.

<sup>5</sup>And let us hate our body with its vices and sins, because by living according to the flesh, <sup>Rom 8:4</sup> the devil wishes to take away from us the love of Jesus Christ and eternal life and to lose himself in hell with everyone else. <sup>6</sup>Because, by our own fault, we are disgusting, miserable and opposed to good, yet prompt and inclined to evil, for, as the Lord says in the Gospel: <sup>7</sup>*From the heart proceed and come evil thoughts,* <sup>Mt 15:19</sup> *adultery, fornication, murder, theft, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, false witness, blasphemy, foolishness.* <sup>Mk 7:22</sup> <sup>8</sup>*All these evils come from within,* <sup>Mt 15:19</sup> <sup>Mk 7:23</sup> *from a person's heart, and these are what defile a person.* <sup>Mk 7:23</sup> <sup>Mt 15:20</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Now that we have left the world (*dimisimus mundum*=“we let the world go”), however, we have nothing else to do but to follow the will of the Lord and to please Him. <sup>10</sup>Let us be careful that we are not earth along the wayside, or that which is rocky or full of thorns, in keeping with what the Lord says in the Gospel: <sup>11</sup>*The word of God is a seed.* <sup>Lk 8:11</sup>

<sup>12</sup>What *fell along the wayside and was trampled under foot,* <sup>Lk 8:5</sup> *however, are those who hear the word* <sup>Lk 8:12</sup> and do not understand it. <sup>13</sup>*The devil comes* <sup>Mt 13:19</sup> *immediately* <sup>Lk 8:12</sup> *and snatches* <sup>Mk 4:15</sup> *what was planted in their hearts* <sup>Mt 13:19</sup> *and takes the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved.* <sup>Mk 4:15</sup> <sup>Lk 8:12</sup>

<sup>14</sup>What *fell on rocky ground, however, are those who, as soon as they hear the word, receive it at once with joy.* <sup>Mt 13:20</sup> <sup>15</sup>*But when tribulation and persecution come because of the word,* <sup>Mk 4:16</sup> *they immediately fall away.* <sup>Mt 13:21</sup> These have no roots in them; they last only for a time, because *they believe only for a time* <sup>Mk 4:17</sup> *and fall away in time of trial.* <sup>Lk 8:13</sup>

<sup>16</sup>What *fell among thorns, however, are those* <sup>Lk 8:14</sup> *who hear the word of God* <sup>Mk 4:18</sup> <sup>Mt 13:22</sup> *and the anxiety* <sup>Mk 4:19</sup> *and worries of this world,* <sup>Mt 13:22</sup> *the lure of riches, and other inordinate desires intrude and choke the word and they remain without fruit.* <sup>Mk 4:19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>But what was sown <sup>Mt 13:23</sup> *in good soil* <sup>Lk 8:15</sup> *are those who hear the word with a good and excellent heart,* <sup>Mt 18:23</sup> *understand* <sup>Mt 13:23</sup> *and preserve it and bear fruit in patience.* <sup>Lk 8:15</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Therefore, as the Lord says, brothers, let us let *the dead bury their own dead.* <sup>Mt 8:22</sup> <sup>19</sup>And let us beware of the malice and craftiness of Satan, who does not want anyone to turn his mind and heart to God. <sup>20</sup>And prowling around he wants to ensnare a person's heart under the guise of some reward or assistance, <sup>1 Pt 5:8</sup> to choke out the word and precepts of the Lord from our memory, and, desiring a person's heart, <sup>Mk 4:19</sup> [he wants] to blind it through worldly affairs and concerns and to live there, as the Lord says: <sup>21</sup>*When an unclean spirit goes out of a person, it roams through arid and waterless regions seeking rest,* <sup>Mt 12:43</sup> <sup>Lk 11:24</sup> <sup>22</sup>*and not finding any, it says: "I will return to my home from which I came."* <sup>Lk 11:24</sup> <sup>23</sup>*And coming upon it, it finds it empty, swept, clean and tidied.* <sup>Mt 12:44</sup> <sup>24</sup>*And it goes off and brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself, who move in and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first.* <sup>Lk 11:26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Therefore, all my brothers, let us be very much on our guard that, under the guise of some reward or assistance, we do not lose or take our mind away from God. <sup>1 Jn 4:16</sup> <sup>26</sup>But, in the holy

love which is God, I beg all my brothers, both the ministers and the others, after overcoming every impediment and putting aside every care and anxiety, to serve, love, honor and adore the Lord God with a clean heart and a pure mind in whatever way they are best able to do so, for that is what He wants above all else.

<sup>27</sup>Let us always make a home and a dwelling place there for Him Who is the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, <sup>Jn 14:23</sup> Who says: *Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man* <sup>Lk 21:36 Mk 11:25</sup> <sup>28</sup>When you stand to pray say: *Our Father in heaven.* <sup>Lk 11:2 Mt 6:9</sup> <sup>29</sup>And let us adore Him with a pure heart, *because it is necessary to pray always and not lose heart;* <sup>Lk 18:1</sup> <sup>30</sup>*for the Father seeks such people who adore Him.* <sup>Jn 4:23</sup> <sup>31</sup>*God is Spirit and those who adore Him must adore Him in Spirit and truth.* <sup>Jn 4:24</sup> <sup>32</sup>Let us have recourse to Him as *to the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls,* <sup>1 Pt 2:25</sup> Who says: *“I am the Good Shepherd Who feeds My sheep and I lay down My life for my sheep.”* <sup>Jn 10:14 Jn 10:15</sup>

<sup>33</sup>*All of you are brothers.* <sup>34</sup>*Do not call anyone on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven.* <sup>35</sup>*Do not call yourselves teachers; you have but one Teacher in heaven.* <sup>36</sup>*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.* <sup>Mt 23:8 Mt 23:9 Mt 23:10</sup> <sup>37</sup>*Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* <sup>Jn 15:7</sup> <sup>38</sup>*Behold I am with you until the end of the world.* <sup>Mt 18:20</sup> <sup>39</sup>*The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.* <sup>Mt 28:20 Jn 6:63</sup> <sup>40</sup>*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* <sup>Jn 14:6</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Let us, therefore, hold onto the words, the life, the teaching and the Holy Gospel of Him Who humbled Himself to beg His Father for us and to make His name known saying: *Father, glorify Your name* <sup>Jn 12:28</sup> *and glorify Your Son that Your Son may glorify You.* <sup>Jn 17:1</sup>

<sup>42</sup>*Father, I have made Your name known to those whom You have given me. The words You gave to me I have given to them, and they have accepted them and truly have known that I came from You and they have believed that You sent me.* <sup>Jn 17:6</sup> <sup>43</sup>*I pray for them, not for the world,* <sup>44</sup>*but for those You have given me, because they are Yours and everything of mine is Yours.* <sup>45</sup>*Holy Father, keep in Your name those You have given me that they may be one as We are.* <sup>Jn 17:8 Jn 17:9 Jn 17:10</sup> <sup>46</sup>*I say this while in the world that they may have joy completely.* <sup>47</sup>*I gave them Your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world as I do not belong to the world.* <sup>48</sup>*I do not ask you to take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one.* <sup>Jn 17:11</sup> <sup>49</sup>*Glorify them in truth.* <sup>50</sup>*Your word is truth.* <sup>Jn 17:13 Jn 17:14 Jn 17:15</sup>

<sup>51</sup>*As You sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world.* <sup>52</sup>*And I sanctify myself for them that they also may be sanctified in truth.* <sup>Jn 17:17</sup> <sup>53</sup>*I ask not only for them but also for those who will believe in me through them,* <sup>Jn 17:18</sup> *that they may be brought to perfection as one, and the world may know that You have sent me and loved them as You loved me.* <sup>Jn 17:19 Jn 17:20</sup> <sup>54</sup>*I shall make known to them Your name, that the love with which You loved me may be in them and I in them.* <sup>Jn 17:23</sup> <sup>55</sup>*Father, I wish that those whom You have given me may be where I am that they may see Your glory* <sup>Jn 17:26</sup> *in Your kingdom.* <sup>Jn 17:24 Mt 20:21</sup>

[Chapters XXIII and XXIV have been skipped]