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PROLOGUE

God that he be pleased, where our nature is powerless, to give us the help of his grace. And if we would escape the pains of hell and reach eternal life, then must we—while there is still time, while we are in this body and can fulfil all these things by the light of this life—hasten to do now what may profit us for eternity.

Jan. 7
May 8
Sept. 7

Therefore must we establish a school of the Lord's service; in founding which we hope to ordain nothing that is harsh or burdensome. But if, for good reason, for the amendment of evil habit or the preservation of charity, there be some strictness of discipline, do not be at once dismayed and run away from the way of salvation, of which the entrance must needs be narrow. But, as we progress in our monastic life and in faith, our hearts shall be enlarged, and we shall run with unspeakable sweetness of love in the way of God's commandments; so that, never abandoning his rule, but persevering in his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall share by patience in the sufferings of Christ, that we may deserve to be partakers also of his kingdom. Amen.

END OF THE PROLOGUE

CHAPTER I THE RULE THE KINDS OF MONKS

Jan. 8
May 9
Sept. 8

THESE are evidently four kinds of monks. The first are the Cenobites, that is those who live in monasteries, serving under a rule and an abbot.

The second are the Anchorites or Hermits, that is those who not in the first fervour of their conversion, but after long probation in a monastery, having learnt in association with many brethren how to fight against the devil, go out well-armed from the ranks of the community to the solitary combat of the desert. They are able now to live without the help of others, and by their own strength and God's assistance to fight against the temptations of mind and body.

Jan. 9
May 10
Sept. 9

The third kind of monks is that detestable one of the Sarabaites, who not having been tested, as gold in the furnace, by any rule or by the lessons of experience, are as soft and yielding as lead. In their actions they still conform to the standards of the world, so that their tensure marks them as liars before God. They live in twos or threes, or even singly, without a shepherd, in their own sheepfolds and not in the Lord's. Their law is their own good pleasure: whatever they think of or choose to do, that they call holy; what they like not, that they regard as unlawful.

The fourth kind of monks are those called Gyrovagues. These spend their whole lives wandering from province to province, staying three days in one monastery and four in another, ever roaming and never stable, given up to their

own wills and the allurements of gluttony, and worse in all respects than the Sarabaites.

Of the wretched observance of all these folk it is better to be silent than to speak. Therefore, leaving them on one side, let us proceed with God's help to provide for the strong race of the Cenobites.

CHAPTER 2 WHAT KIND OF MAN THE ABBOT SHOULD BE

Jan. 10
May 11
Sept. 10

AN abbot who is worthy to rule a monastery should always remember what he is called and realize in his actions the name of a superior. For he is believed to be the representative of Christ in the monastery, and for that reason is called by a name of his, according to the words of the Apostle: *Ye have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba, Father.*¹ Therefore the abbot ought not to teach, or ordain, or command anything which is against the law of the Lord; on the contrary, his commands and teaching should be infused into the minds of his disciples like the leaven of divine justice. Let the abbot remember always that at the dread judgement of God there will be an examination of both these matters, of his teaching and of the obedience of his disciples. And let the abbot realize that the shepherd will have to answer for any lack of profit which the Father of the family may discover in his sheep. On the other hand, if the shepherd have spent all diligence on an unruly and disobedient flock and devoted his utmost care to

the amending of its vicious ways, then he will be acquitted at the judgement and may say to the Lord with the prophet: *I have not hid thy justice within my heart: I have declared thy truth and thy salvation;*¹ *but they have despised and rejected me.*² And so at the last, for these sheep disobedient to his care, let death itself bring its penalty.

Therefore, when anyone has received the name of abbot, he ought to rule his disciples with a twofold teaching, displaying all goodness and holiness by deeds and by words, but by deeds rather than by words. To intelligent disciples let him expound the Lord's commandments in words; but to those of harder hearts and ruder minds let him show forth the divine precepts by his example. And whatever he has taught his disciples to be contrary to God's law, let him show by his example that it is not to be done, lest while preaching to others he should himself become a castaway, and lest God should some day say to him in his sin: *Why dost thou repeat my commandments by rote, and boast of my covenant with thee? For thou hast hated to amend thy life and hast cast my words behind thee.*³ And again: *Thou sawest the speck of dust in thy brother's eye and didst not see the beam in thy own.*⁴

Let him not make any distinction of persons in the monastery. Let him not love one more than another, unless he find him better in good works and obedience. Let not a free-born monk be put before one that was a slave, unless there be some other reasonable ground for it. But if the abbot, for just reason, think fit so to do, let him fix anyone's order as he will; otherwise let them keep their due places; because, whether slaves or freemen, we are all one in Christ, and have to serve alike in the army of the same Lord. *For there is*

¹ Ps. xxxix. 11. ² Is. l. 2. ³ Ps. xlix. 16, 17. ⁴ Cf. Mat. vii. 3.

Jan. 11
May 12
Sept. 11

Jan. 12
May 13
Sept. 12

*no respect of persons with God.*¹ In this regard only are we distinguished in his sight, if we be found better than others in good works and humility. Therefore let the abbot show an equal love to all, and let the same discipline be imposed on all in accordance with their deserts.

Jan. 13
May 14
Sept. 13

For the abbot in his teaching ought always to observe the rule of the apostle, wherein he says: *Reprove, persuade, rebuke.*² He must adapt himself to circumstances, now using severity and now persuasion, displaying the rigour of a master or the loving kindness of a father. That is to say, that he must sternly rebuke the undisciplined and restless; but the obedient, meek, and patient, these he should exhort to advance in virtue. As for the negligent and rebellious, we warn him to reprimand and punish them. And let him not shut his eyes to the faults of offenders; but as soon as they begin to appear, let him, as he can, cut them out by the roots, mindful of the fate of Heli, the priest of Silo. Those of gentle disposition and good understanding should be punished, for the first and second time, by verbal admonition; but bold, hard, proud, and disobedient characters should be checked at the very beginning of their ill-doing by the rod and corporal punishment, according to the text: *The fool is not corrected with words;*³ and again: *Beat thy son with the rod and thou shalt deliver his soul from death.*⁴

Jan. 14
May 15
Sept. 14

The abbot should always remember what he is and what he is called, and should know that to whom more is committed, from him more is required. Let him realize also how difficult and arduous a task he has undertaken, of ruling souls and adapting himself to many dispositions. One he must

¹ Rom. ii. 11. ² 2 Tim. iv. 2. ³ Prov. xviii. 2; xxix. 19.
⁴ Ibid. xxviii. 14.

humour, another rebuke, another persuade, according to each one's disposition and understanding, and thus adapt and accommodate himself to all in such a way, that he may not only suffer no loss in the sheep committed to him, but may even rejoice in the increase of a good flock.

Jan. 15
May 16
Sept. 15

Above all let him not have greater solicitude for fleeing, earthly, and perishable things, and so overlook or undervalue the salvation of the souls committed to him; but let him always remember that he has undertaken the government of souls and will have to give an account of them. And if he be tempted to complain of lack of means, let him remember the words: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his approval, and all these things shall be yours without the asking.*¹ And again: *Those that fear him never go wanting.*² And let him know that he who has undertaken the government of souls, must prepare himself to render an account of them. And whatever number of brethren he knows he has under his care, let him regard it as certain that he will have to give the Lord an account of all these souls on the Day of Judgement, and certainly of his own soul also. And thus, fearing always the examination which the shepherd will have to face for the sheep entrusted to him, and anxious regarding the account which will have to be given for others, he is made solicitous for his own sake also; and while by his admonitions helping others to amend, he himself is cleansed of his faults.

¹ Mat. vi. 33. ² Ps. cxviii. 10.

5

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

3

OF CALLING THE BRETHREN TO COUNCIL

Jan. 16
May 17
Sept. 16

As often as any important business has to be done in the monastery, let the abbot call together the whole community and himself set forth the matter. And, having heard the advice of the brethren, let him take counsel with himself and then do what he shall judge to be most expedient. Now the reason why we have said that all should be called to council, is that God often reveals what is better to the younger. Let the brethren give their advice with all deference and humility, nor venture to defend their opinions obstinately; but let the decision depend rather on the abbot's judgement, so that when he has decided what is the better course, all may obey. However, just as it is proper for disciples to obey their master, so is it becoming that he on his part should dispose all things with prudence and justice.

Jan. 17
May 18
Sept. 17

In all things, therefore, let all follow the Rule as master, nor let anyone rashly depart from it. Let no one in the monastery follow the will of his own heart; nor let anyone presume to contend impudently with his abbot, or to contend with him at all when outside the monastery. Should he presume to do so, let him undergo the discipline of the Rule. The abbot himself, however, should do all things in the fear of God and observance of the Rule, knowing that he will certainly have to render an account of all his judgements to God, the most just Judge. But if the business to be done in the interests of the monastery be of lesser importance, let him use the advice of the seniors only. It is written: *Do all things with counsel, and thy deeds shall not bring thee repentance.*¹

¹ Ecclesi. xxxii. 24.

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

4

THE TOOLS OF GOOD WORKS

Jan. 18
May 19
Sept. 18

In the first place, to love the Lord God with all one's heart, all one's soul, and all one's strength. Then, one's neighbour as oneself.

Then not to kill.

Not to commit adultery.

Not to steal.

Not to covet.

Not to bear false witness.

To honour all men.

Not to do to another what one would not have done to oneself.

To deny oneself, in order to follow Christ.

To chastise the body.

Not to seek soft living.

To love fasting.

To relieve the poor.

To clothe the naked.

To visit the sick.

To bury the dead.

To help the afflicted.

To console the sorrowing.

To avoid worldly conduct.

To prefer nothing to the love of Christ.

Not to yield to anger.

Not to nurse a grudge.

Not to hold guile in one's heart.

Not to make a feigned peace.

Jan. 19
May 20
Sept. 19

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

HOW THE WORK OF GOD IS TO BE PERFORMED IN THE DAY-TIME

16

Feb. 19
June 20
Oct. 20

THE prophet saith: *Seven times a day have I given praise to thee.*¹ We shall observe this sacred number of seven, if we fulfil the duties of our service in the Hours of Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline; for it was of these Day Hours that he said: *Seven times a day have I given praise to thee.*¹ But of the Night Office the same prophet saith: *At midnight I rose to give praise to thee.*² At these times, therefore, let us render praise to our Creator for the *judgements of his justice*:¹ that is, at Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline; and let us rise in the night to praise him.

CHAPTER

HOW MANY PSALMS ARE TO BE SAID AT THESE HOURS

17

Feb. 20
June 21
Oct. 21

WE have already settled the psalmody of Matins and Lauds; let us now look to the remaining Hours. At Prime let three psalms be said, one by one and not under the same *Gloria*; and before the psalms begin, but after the verse *Deus in adiutorium*, the hymn proper to that Hour. Then, at the end of the three psalms, let there be the lesson, versicle, *Kyrie eleison*, and concluding prayers. The Offices of Terce, Sext, and None are to be performed in the same way: that is, *Deus in adiutorium*, proper hymn, three psalms, lesson, versicle, *Kyrie eleison*, and concluding prayers. If the community be a large one, let the psalms be sung with

¹ Ps. cxviii. 164. ² Ibid. 67.

Chap. 17

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

antiphons; but if small, let them be sung straightforward.

Let the service of Vespers consist of four psalms with antiphons. After these psalms let a lesson be recited; and then the responsory, hymn, versicle, canticle from the Gospels, *Kyrie eleison*, and the Lord's Prayer to conclude. Let Compline be limited to the saying of three psalms, and these said straightforward without an antiphon. After the psalms let there be the hymn for that Hour, the lesson, versicle, *Kyrie eleison*, and the blessing to conclude.

CHAPTER

IN WHAT ORDER THE PSALMS ARE TO BE SAID

18

FIRST let there be said the verse: *Deus in adiutorium meum intende, Domine ad adjuvandum me festina,*¹ and *Gloria*; then the hymn proper to each Hour. Then at Prime on Sunday, four sections of the hundred and eighteenth psalm; and at each of the remaining hours, that is Terce, Sext, and None, three sections of the same hundred and eighteenth psalm. At Prime on Monday let three psalms be said, namely the first, second, and sixth. And so at Prime every day until Sunday let there be said three psalms taken in their order up to the nineteenth; but let the ninth and seventeenth be each divided into two. Thus it comes about that the Night Office on Sundays will always begin with the twentieth psalm.

Feb. 21
June 22
Oct. 22

¹ Ps. lxxv. 1.

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

Chap. 18

Feb. 22
June 23
Oct. 13

At Terce, Sext, and None on Monday, let the remaining nine sections of the hundred and eighteenth psalm be said, three at each of these Hours. The hundred and eighteenth psalm having been said thus on two days, that is Sunday and Monday, let Terce, Sext, and None of Tuesday each have three psalms, taken in order from the hundred and nineteenth to the hundred and twenty-seventh, i. e. nine psalms. And let these psalms be repeated at these Hours every day until Sunday; but let the arrangement of hymns, lessons, and versicles be kept the same on all days. Thus Prime on Sunday will always begin with the hundred and eighteenth psalm.

Feb. 23
June 24
Oct. 24

Vespers shall be sung every day with four psalms. Let these begin with the hundred and ninth and go on to the hundred and forty-seventh, those being omitted which are set aside for special Hours, namely, the hundred and seventeenth to the hundred and twenty-seventh, the hundred and thirty-third and the hundred and forty-second. All the rest are to be said at Vespers. And since there are three psalms too few, let the longer psalms in the above number be divided, namely, the hundred and thirty-eighth, the hundred and forty-third, and the hundred and forty-fourth. But the hundred and sixteenth psalm, being short, shall be joined to the hundred and fifteenth. The order of the vesper psalms being thus settled, let the rest of the Hour, that is to say, lesson, responsory, hymn, versicle, and canticle, be carried out as we prescribed before. At Compline let the same psalms be repeated every day: that is, the fourth, the nineteenth, and the hundred and thirty-third.

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RULE OF ST BENEDICT

The order of psalms for the Day Hours being thus arranged, let all the remaining psalms be equally distributed among the seven Night Offices, by dividing the longer psalms and assigning twelve psalms to each night. But we strongly recommend, if this arrangement of the psalms be displeasing to anyone, that he arrange them otherwise, as shall seem better to him; provided always that he take care that the psalter with its full hundred and fifty psalms be chanted every week and begun afresh every Sunday at Matins. For those monks show themselves very slothful in their sacred service, who in the course of the week sing less than the psalter and the customary canticles, whereas we read that our holy fathers strenuously fulfilled in a single day what I pray that we Lukewarm monks may perform in a whole week.

(Feb. 24
in L.V.)
June 25
Oct. 25

CHAPTER

19

THE MANNER OF SAYING THE DIVINE OFFICE

WE believe that God is present everywhere and that the eyes of the Lord in every place behold the good and the evil;¹ but let us especially believe this without any doubting when we are performing the Divine Office. Therefore, let us ever remember the words of the prophet: *Serve ye the Lord in fear;*² and again, *Sing ye wisely;*³ and, *In the sight of the angels will I sing to thee.*⁴ Let us then consider how we

Feb. 24
(or 25)
June 26
Oct. 26

¹ Prov. xv. 3. ² Ps. li. 11. ³ Ps. xlv. 8. ⁴ Ps. cxxxvii. 1.

ought to behave ourselves in the presence of God and his angels, and so sing the psalms that mind and voice may be in harmony.

CHAPTER

20

OF REVERENCE
IN PRAYER

Feb. 25 (or 26) June 27 Oct. 27
IF we wish to prefer a petition to men of high station, we do not presume to do it without humility and respect; how much more ought we to supplicate the Lord God of all things with all humility and pure devotion. And let us be sure that we shall not be heard for our much speaking, but for purity of heart and tears of compunction. Our prayer, therefore, ought to be short and pure, unless it chance to be prolonged by the impulse and inspiration of divine grace. In community, however, let prayer be very short, and when the superior has given the signal let all rise together.

CHAPTER

21

THE DEANS OF THE
MONASTERY

Feb. 26 (or 27) June 28 Oct. 28
IF the community be a large one, let there be chosen out of it brethren of good repute and observant life, and let them be appointed deans. They shall take charge of their deaneries in all things, observing the commandments of God and the instructions of their abbot. And let such men be chosen as deans that the abbot may without anxiety share his burdens among them; and let them not be chosen by order, but according to their worthiness of life, learning, and wis-

dom. Should any of these deans become puffed up with pride and be found worthy of censure, let him be corrected once, and a second, and a third time; if he will not amend, then let him be deposed from his office and another, who is worthy of it, put in his place. And we order the same to be done in the case of the prior.

CHAPTER

22

HOW THE
MONKS ARE
TO SLEEP

Feb. 27 (or 28) June 29 Oct. 29
LET them sleep each one in a separate bed. Let their beds be assigned to them in accordance with the date of their conversion, subject to the abbot's dispositions. If it be possible, let them all sleep in one place; but if their numbers do not allow of this, let them sleep by tens or twenties, with seniors to supervise them. There shall be a light burning in the dormitory throughout the night. Let them sleep clothed and girt with girdles or cords, but not with their belts, so that they may not have their knives at their sides while they are sleeping, and be cut by them in their sleep. Being clothed they will thus always be ready, and rising at the signal without any delay may hasten to forestall one another to the Work of God; yet this with all gravity and self-restraint. The younger brethren shall not have their beds by themselves, but shall be mixed with the seniors. When they rise for the Work of God, let them gently encourage one another, on account of the excuses to which the sleepy are addicted.

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

32

THE TOOLS AND PROPERTY OF THE MONASTERY

Mar. 10
July 10
Nov. 9

FOR the care of the monastery's property in tools, clothing, and all other articles, let the abbot appoint brethren on whose life and character he can rely; and let him, as he shall judge fit, commit the various articles to them, to be looked after and to be collected again. Let the abbot keep a list of them, so that when the brethren succeed one another in their offices, he may know what he is giving out and what receiving back. If anyone treat the property of the monastery in a slovenly or careless manner, let him be corrected; if he do not amend, let him undergo the punishment of the Rule.

CHAPTER

33

WHETHER MONKS SHOULD HAVE ANYTHING OF THEIR OWN

Mar. 11
July 11
Nov. 10

THIS vice especially ought to be utterly rooted out of the monastery. Let no one presume to give or receive anything without the abbot's leave, or to have anything as his own, anything whatever, whether book or tablets or pen or whatever it may be: for monks should not have even their bodies and wills at their own disposal. But let them look to the father of the monastery for all that they require, and let it be unlawful to have anything which the abbot has not given or allowed. And, as the Scripture saith, *let all things be common to all, nor let anyone say that anything is his own*¹ or claim it for himself. But if anyone shall be

¹ Cf. Acts iv. 32.

Chap. 33

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

found to indulge in this most wicked vice, let him be admonished once and a second time; if he do not amend, let him undergo punishment.

CHAPTER

34

WHETHER ALL SHOULD RECEIVE NECESSARIES IN LIKE MEASURE

LET us follow the Scripture: *Distribution was made to every man according as he had need.*¹ By this we do not mean that there should be respect of persons (God forbid), but consideration for infirmities. He that needeth less, let him thank God and not be discontented; he that needeth more, let him be humbled for his infirmity and not made proud by the mercy shown to him: so will all the members be at peace. Above all, let not the vice of murmuring show itself in any word or sign, for any reason whatever. But if a brother be found guilty of it, let him undergo strict punishment.

Mar. 12
July 12
Nov. 11

CHAPTER

35

OF THE WEEKLY KITCHENERS

LET the brethren serve one another, and let no one be excused from the kitchen service, unless for sickness or because he is occupied in some business of importance. For this service brings increase of reward and of charity. But let the weak have help provided for them, that they may not perform their office with sadness; and indeed

¹ Acts iv. 35.

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

37

OF OLD MEN AND CHILDREN

Mar. 16
July 16
Nov. 15

ALTHOUGH human nature itself is drawn to pity towards these times of life, that is, towards old men and children, yet let them be provided for also by the authority of the Rule. Let there be constant consideration for their weakness, and on no account let the rigour of the Rule in regard to food be applied to them. Let them, on the contrary, receive compassionate consideration and take their meals before the regular hours.

CHAPTER

38

OF THE WEEKLY READER

Mar. 17
July 17
Nov. 16

AT the meals of the brethren there should not fail to be reading; nor should the reader be anyone who may chance to take up the book; but let there be a reader for the whole week who shall enter upon his office on Sunday. Let this incoming reader, after Mass and Communion, ask all to pray for him that God may preserve him from the spirit of pride. He shall intone three times in the oratory the versicle: *Domine, labia mea aperies, et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam*,¹ which shall each time be repeated after him by the choir. And so, having received his blessing, let him enter upon his reading. And let there be the greatest silence, so that no whisper, and no voice but the reader's, may be heard there. But for the things that they need as they eat and drink, let the brethren so supply them to one another

¹ Ps. l. 17.

Chap. 38

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

39

THE MEASURE OF FOOD

Mar. 18
July 18
Nov. 17

WE believe it to be sufficient for the daily meal, whether that be at the sixth or the ninth hour, that every table should have two cooked dishes, on account of individual infirmities, so that he who perchance cannot eat of the one, may make his meal of the other. Therefore, let two cooked dishes suffice for all the brethren; and if any fruit or young vegetables are available, let a third be added. Let a good pound weight of bread suffice for the day, whether there be one meal only, or both dinner and supper. If they are to have supper, let a third part of the pound be reserved by the cellarer, to be given to them for their supper. But if their work chance to be heavier, the abbot shall have the choice and power, should it be expedient, to increase this allowance. Above all things, however,

gluttony must be avoided, so that a monk never be surprised by a surfeit; for there is nothing so unfitting for a christian as surfeiting, according to our Lord's words: *Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting.*¹ Young boys shall not receive the same amount of food as their elders, but less; and frugality shall be observed in all circumstances. Except the sick who are very weak, let all abstain entirely from the flesh of four-footed animals.

CHAPTER

40

THE MEASURE
OF DRINK

Mar. 19
July 19
Nov. 18

EVERY man hath his proper *gife from God, one after this manner, and another after that.*² It is therefore with some misgiving that we determine how much others should eat or drink. Nevertheless, keeping in view the needs of weaker brethren, we believe that a hemina of wine a day is sufficient for each. But those upon whom God bestows the gift of abstinence, should know that they shall have a special reward.

But if the circumstances of the place, or their work, or the heat of summer require more, let the superior be free to grant it. Yet let him always take care that neither surfeit nor drunkenness supervene. We do, indeed, read that wine is no drink for monks; but since nowadays monks cannot be persuaded of this, let us at least agree upon this, to drink temperately and not to satiety: for *wine maketh even the wise to fall away.*³ But when the circumstances of the place are such that the aforesaid measure cannot be had, but much less or even none at all, then let the monks who dwell there bless

¹ Luke xxi. 34. ² 1 Cor. vii. 7. ³ Eccclus. xix. 2.

God and not murmur. Above all things do we give this admonition, that they abstain from murmuring.

CHAPTER

41

THE HOURS
OF MEALS

FROM the feast of Easter until Pentecost let the brethren dine at the sixth hour and sup in the evening. From Pentecost throughout the summer, unless the monks have work in the fields or the heat of the summer oppress them, let them: fast on Wednesdays and Fridays until the ninth hour; on the other days let them dine at the sixth hour. If they have field work or the summer heat be extreme, this dinner at the sixth hour shall be the daily practice, according to the abbot's discretion. And let him so arrange and ordain all things that souls may be saved and that the brethren may do their work without justifiable murmuring. From September the 14th¹ until the beginning of Lent let them always have their meal at the ninth hour. In Lent until Easter let them have it in the evening. Vespers, however, should be so timed that the brethren may not need lamplight at the meal, but that all may be accomplished by daylight. And at all times let the hour of the late meal or supper be so arranged that everything may be done by daylight.

Mar. 20
July 20
Nov. 19

¹ Which actually is the day after the Ides. See *Kalendar Octobris* (p. 110) and Note 72.

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

46

OF THOSE WHO
OFFEND IN ANY
OTHER MATTERS

Mar. 26
July 26
Nov. 25

IF anyone in the course of his work, of whatever sort and in whatever place, be it while serving or in kitchen, store-room, bakehouse, garden, or anywhere else, shall commit any fault, or break anything, or lose anything, or fall into any transgression whatever, and do not come at once of his own accord to confess his offence to the abbot and community and do penance for it, but it become known through another: let him undergo greater punishment. However, should the matter be a secret sin of the soul, let him tell such a thing to the abbot alone, or to a spiritual father; for they know how to cure both their own wounds and the wounds of others without disclosing and publishing them.

CHAPTER

47

THE SIGNAL FOR
THE WORK
OF GOD

Mar. 27
July 27
Nov. 26

THE indicating of the hour for the Work of God by day and by night shall be the business of the abbot. Let him either do it himself or entrust the duty to such a careful brother that everything may be fulfilled at its proper time. The intoning of psalms and antiphons shall be done by those who are appointed for it, in their order after the abbot. But let no one presume to sing or read, unless he can fulfil the office to the edification of his hearers. Let it be done with humility, gravity, and reverence, and by him whom the abbot has appointed.

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

48

OF THE DAILY
MANUAL
LABOUR

Mar. 28
July 28
Nov. 27

IDLENESS is the enemy of the soul. The brethren, therefore, must be occupied at stated hours in manual labour, and again at other hours in sacred reading. To this end we think that the times for each may be determined in the following manner. From Easter until September the 14th, the brethren shall start work in the morning and from the first hour until about the fourth do the tasks that have to be done. From the fourth hour until about the sixth let them apply themselves to reading. After the sixth hour, having left the table, let them rest on their beds in perfect silence; or if anyone wishes to read by himself, let him read so as not to disturb the others. Let None be said early, at the middle of the eighth hour; and let them again do what work has to be done until Vespers. But if the circumstances of the place or their poverty require them to gather the harvest themselves, let them not be discontented; for then are they truly monks when they live by the labour of their hands, like our fathers and the apostles. Yet let all things be done in moderation on account of the faint-hearted.

From September the 14th to the beginning of Lent, let them apply themselves to reading up to the end of the second hour. Let Terce be said at that point, and from then until None let them all work at the tasks appointed to them. As soon as the first signal for None has been given, let them all abandon their work and hold themselves ready for the sounding of the second signal. After the meal let them apply themselves to their reading or to the study of the psalms. In the days of Lent let them apply themselves to their

Mar. 29
July 29
Nov. 28



reading from the morning until the end of the third hour, and from then until the end of the tenth hour let them perform the work that is assigned to them. In these days of Lent let them each receive a book from the library,¹ which they shall read through consecutively; let these books be given out at the beginning of Lent. But one or two senior monks should certainly be deputed to go round the monastery at the times when the brethren are occupied in reading, to see that there be no slothful brother who spends his time in idleness or gossip and neglects the reading, so that he not only does himself harm but also disturbs others. If there be such a one (which God forbid), let him be corrected once and a second time; if he do not amend, let him undergo the punishment of the Rule, so that the rest may be afraid. And the brethren should not associate with one another at unreasonable hours.

Mar. 30
July 30
Nov. 29

On Sundays likewise all shall apply themselves to reading, except those who are assigned to various duties. But if there be anyone so careless and slothful that he will not or cannot study or read, let him be given some work to perform, so that he may not be idle. Sick or delicate brethren should be assigned a task or craft of such a kind that on the one hand they be not idle, and on the other be not overborne by excessive toil or² driven away from the monastery. The abbot should have consideration for their weakness.

¹ Note 108. ² The out of the Latin text may be equivalent to 4, so that we could put "and" here. Note 38.

Mar. 31
July 31
Nov. 30

THE life of a monk ought at all times to be lenient in its character; but since few have the strength for that, we therefore urge that in these days of Lent the brethren should lead lives of great purity, and should also in this sacred season expiate the negligences of other times. This will be worthily done if we refrain from all sin and apply ourselves to prayer with tears, to reading, to compunction of heart, and to abstinence. In these days, therefore, let us add something beyond the wonted measure of our service, such as private prayers and abstinence in food and drink. Let each one, over and above the measure prescribed for him, offer God something of his own free will in the joy of the Holy Spirit. That is to say, let him stint himself of food, drink, sleep, talk, and jesting, and look forward with the joy of spiritual longing to the holy feast of Easter. Let each one, however, tell his abbot what he is offering, and let it be done with his consent and blessing; because what is done without the permission of the spiritual father shall be ascribed to presumption and vainglory and not reckoned meritorious. Everything, therefore, is to be done with the approval of the abbot.

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

50

OF BRETHREN WHO ARE WORKING FAR FROM THE ORATORY OR JOURNEYING

Apr. 1
Aug. 1
Dec. 1

If any brethren be at work at a great distance, so that they cannot get to the oratory at the proper time, and if the abbot recognize that such is the case, then let them perform the Work of God in the place where they are working, bending their knees in reverence before God. In like manner let those who are sent on a journey not miss the appointed Hours; but let them say them for themselves, as well as they can, and not neglect to pay the due measure of their service.

CHAPTER

51

OF BRETHREN WHO DO NOT GO VERY FAR

Apr. 2
Aug. 2
Dec. 2

If a brother be sent out on some business and be expected to return to the monastery that same day, let him not presume to eat while abroad, even though he be urgently pressed to do so, unless his abbot have so bidden him. If he do otherwise, let him be excommunicated.

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

52

OF THE ORATORY OF THE MONASTERY

Apr. 3
Aug. 3
Dec. 3

Let the oratory be what its name implies, and let nothing else be done or kept there. When the Work of God is finished, let all go out in deep silence, and let reverence for God be observed, so that any brother who may wish to pray privately be not hindered by another's misbehaviour. And at other times also, if anyone wish to pray secretly, let him just go in and pray: not in a loud voice, but with tears and fervour of heart. He, therefore, who does not behave so, shall not be permitted to remain in the oratory when the Work of God is ended, lest he should, as we have said, be a hindrance to another.

CHAPTER

53

OF THE RECEPTION OF GUESTS

Apr. 4
Aug. 4
Dec. 4

Let all guests that come be received like Christ, for he will say: *I was a stranger and ye took me in.*¹ And let fitting honour be shown to all, but especially to churchmen and pilgrims. As soon, therefore, as a guest is announced, let the superior or some brethren meet him with all charitable service. And first of all let them pray together, and then let them unite in the kiss of peace. This kiss of peace shall not be offered until after the prayers have been said, on account of the delusions of the devil. In the greeting of all guests, whether they be arriving or departing, let the greatest humility be shown. Let the head be bowed

¹ Mat. xxv. 35.

13

or the whole body prostrated on the ground, and so let Christ be worshipped in them, for indeed he is received in their persons.

When the guests have been received, let them be led to prayer, and afterwards let the superior, or a monk appointed by him, sit with them. Let the law of God be read before the guest for his edification, and then let all kindness be shown to him. The superior shall break his fast for the sake of a guest, unless it be a special fast day which may not be violated; but the brethren shall observe the customary fasts. Let the abbot give the guests water for their hands; and let both abbot and community wash the feet of all guests. When they have washed them, let them say this verse: *Suscipimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam in medio templi tui.*¹ In the reception of poor men and pilgrims special attention should be shown, because in them is Christ more truly welcomed; for the fear which the rich inspire is enough of itself to secure them honour.

Apr. 5
Aug. 5
Dec. 5

Let there be a separate kitchen for the abbot and guests, so that the brethren may not be disturbed when guests—who are never lacking in a monastery—arrive at irregular hours. There shall be appointed to this kitchen by the year two brethren who can discharge the duty well. Let help be given them according as they need it, so that they may serve without murmuring. And, on the other hand, when they have less to do, let them go out to whatever task is assigned to them. And not only to them, but to all the officials of the monastery, let the same consideration be shown and help given whenever it is needed; and, on the other hand, when they are unoccupied, let them do whatever they are bidden. The guest-house shall be assigned to a brother whose soul

¹ Ps. xlvii. 10.

is full of the fear of God. Let there be a sufficient number of beds ready therein. And let the house of God be administered by prudent men in a prudent manner.

Let no one, without special instructions, associate or converse with guests. If he meet or see them, let him greet them humbly, as we have said, and ask a blessing; then let him pass on, saying that he is not permitted to talk with a guest.

CHAPTER WHETHER A MONK SHOULD 54 RECEIVE LETTERS OR ANYTHING ELSE

ON no account shall a monk be allowed to receive letters, devout tokens, or any small gifts whatsoever, from his parents or other people or his brethren, or to give the same, without the abbot's permission. But if he have been sent anything even by his parents, let him not presume to take it before it has been shown to the abbot. If the abbot allow it to be received, it shall be his to decide to whom it is to be given; and let not the brother, to whom it was sent, be vexed thereat, lest occasion be given to the devil. Should anyone presume to act otherwise, let him undergo the punishment of the Rule.

Apr. 6
Aug. 6
Dec. 6

Apr. 7
Aug. 7
Dec. 7

LET clothing be given to the brethren according to the nature of the locality in which they dwell and its climate; for in cold districts they will need more clothing, and in warm districts less. It is the abbot's business to take thought for this matter. But we believe that in ordinary places the following dress is sufficient for each monk: a tunic, a cowl (thick and woolly in winter, but thin or worn in summer), a belt for work, and for the feet shoes and stockings. And let not the monks complain of the colour or coarseness of any of these things, but be content with what is to be found in the district where they live and can be purchased cheaply.

Let the abbot see to the size of the garments, that they be not too short for their wearers, but of the proper fit. When the brethren receive new clothes, let them always return the old ones at once, that they may be stored in the clothes-room for the poor. For it is sufficient if a monk have two tunics and two cowls, to allow for a change at night and for the washing of these garments; more than that is superfluity and should be curtailed. And let them return their stockings, and anything else that is old, when they receive new ones. Those who are sent on a journey shall receive drawers from the clothes-room, which they shall wash and restore when they return. And let their cowls and tunics be somewhat better than the ones they wear usually. They shall receive them from the clothes-room when they are starting on their journey and restore them when they return.

For bedding, let this suffice: a mattress, a blanket, a coverlet, and a pillow. The beds should be examined frequently by the abbot, lest any private property be concealed in them. If any brother be found to have anything that he has not received from the abbot, let him undergo the strictest punishment. And in order that this evil of private ownership may be rooted out utterly, let the abbot provide all things that are necessary: that is, cowl, tunic, stockings, shoes, belt, knife, pen, needle, handkerchief, and tablets; so that all pretext of need may be taken away. Yet let the abbot always consider those words of the Acts of the Apostles: *Distribution was made to everyone according as he had need.*¹ So too let the abbot consider the weaknesses of the needy, and not the ill-will of the jealous. But in all his decisions let him think upon the retribution of God.

Apr. 8
Aug. 8
Dec. 8

LET the abbot always eat with the guests and pilgrims. But when there are no guests, let him have the power to invite whom he will of the brethren. Yet, for discipline's sake, let one or two seniors always be left with the brethren.

¹ Acts iv. 35.

Apr. 9
Aug. 9
Dec. 9

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

57

THE CRAFTSMEN OF THE MONASTERY

Apr. 10
Aug. 10
Dec. 10

IF there be craftsmen in the monastery, let them practise their crafts with all humility, provided the abbot give permission. But if one of them be puffed up because of his skill in his craft, supposing that he is conferring a benefit on the monastery, let him be removed from his work and not return to it, unless he have humbled himself and the abbot entrust it to him again. If any of the work of the craftsmen is to be sold, let those who have to manage the business take care that they be not guilty of any dishonesty. Let them always remember Ananias and Saphira, and take care lest they, or any others who deal dishonestly with the property of the monastery, should suffer in their souls the death which they endured in their bodies. And, as regards the price, let not the sin of avarice creep in; but let the goods always be sold a little cheaper than they are sold by people of the world, *that in all things God may be glorified.*¹

CHAPTER

58

THE ORDER FOR THE RECEPTION OF BRETHREN

Apr. 11
Aug. 11
Dec. 11

WHEN anyone newly cometh to be a monk, let him not be granted an easy admittance; but, as the apostle saith: *Test the spirits, to see whether they come from God.*² If such a one, therefore, persevere in his knocking, and if it be seen after four or five days that he bears patiently his harsh treatment and the difficulty of admission

¹ 1 Peter iv. 11. ² 1 John iv. 1.

Chap. 58

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

and persists in his petition, then let admittance be granted to him, and let him stay in the guest-house for a few days. After that let him dwell in the novitiate, where the novices work, eat, and sleep. And let a senior be assigned to them who is skilled in winning souls, that he may watch over them with the utmost care. Let him examine whether the novice truly seeks God, and whether he is zealous for the Work of God, for obedience, and for humiliations. Let him be told all the hardships and trials through which we travel to God.

If he promise to persevere in his purpose, then at the end of two months let this Rule be read through to him, and let him be addressed thus: "Behold the law under which you wish to serve; if you can observe it, enter; if you cannot, freely depart." If he still abide, then let him be led back into the aforesaid novitiate and again tested in all patience. After the lapse of six months let the Rule be read to him, so that he may know on what he is entering. And, if he still abide, after four months let the Rule be read to him again. And if, upon mature deliberation, he promise to observe all things and to obey all the commands that are given him, then let him be received into the community. But let him understand that according to the law of the Rule he is no longer free to leave the monastery, or to withdraw his neck from under the yoke of the Rule, which it was open to him, during that prolonged deliberation, either to refuse or to accept.

Now this shall be the manner of his reception. In the oratory, in the presence of all, he shall promise stability, conversion of his life, and obedience; and this before God and his Saints, so that he may know that should he ever do otherwise he will be condemned by him whom he mocks.

Apr. 12
Aug. 12
Dec. 12

He shall embody this promise of his in a petition, drawn up in the names of the Saints whose relics are there and of the abbot who is present. Let him write this document with his own hand; or, if he cannot write, let another do it at his request, and let the novice put his mark to it and place it on the altar with his own hand. When he has placed it there, let the novice himself at once intone this verse: *Suscipe me, Domine, secundum eloquium tuum, et vivam: et ne confundas me ab expectatione mea.*¹ Let the whole community repeat this after him three times, adding at the end of all the *Gloria Patri*. Then let the novice prostrate himself before the feet of each monk, asking them to pray for him; and from that day let him be counted as one of the community. If he possess any property, let him either give it beforehand to the poor, or make a formal donation bestowing it on the monastery. Let him keep back nothing at all for himself, as knowing that thenceforward he will not have the disposition even of his own body. So let him, there and then in the oratory, be stripped of his own clothes which he is wearing and dressed in the clothes of the monastery. But let those clothes, which have been taken off him, be put aside in the clothes-room and kept there. Then, should he ever listen to the persuasions of the devil and decide to leave the monastery (which God forbid), let them take off him the clothes of the monastery and so dismiss him. But his petition, which the abbot took from off the altar, shall not be returned to him, but shall be preserved in the monastery.

¹ Ps. cxviii. 116.

CHAPTER
59

RULE OF ST BENEDICT
THE OFFERING OF THE SONS
OF THE RICH AND
OF THE POOR

IF any man of good station offer his son to God in the monastery and the boy himself be still very young, let his parents draw up the petition which we mentioned above. And then at the Offertory let them wrap the petition and the boy's hand in the altar cloth and so offer him. As regards his property, let them promise in the same document under oath that they will never of themselves, or through an intermediary, or in any way whatever, give him anything or provide him with the opportunity of possessing anything. But if they prefer not to do this and desire to give an alms to the monastery for their advantage, let them draw up a deed of gift of the property which they desire to give to the monastery, reserving the income to themselves if they wish. And in this way let every opening be stopped, so that the boy may have no expectations whereby (which God forbid) he might be deceived and ruined, as we have learnt by experience. And let poorer folk do in like manner. But those who possess nothing at all, shall simply draw up the petition and offer their son at the Offertory in the presence of witnesses.

Apr. 13
Aug. 13
Dec. 13

abbot and a letter of recommendation, because it is written: *Do not thou to another what thou wouldst not have done to thyself.*¹

CHAPTER

62

THE PRIESTS OF
THE MONASTERY

Apr. 17
Aug. 17
Dec. 17

IF any abbot wish to have a priest or a deacon ordained for his monastery, let him choose out one of his subjects who is worthy to exercise the priestly office. But let the one who is ordained beware of elation or pride; and let him not presume to do anything but what is commanded him by the abbot, knowing that he will be all the more subject to the discipline of the monastery. Let him not because of his priesthood forget the obedience and discipline of the Rule, but make ever more and more progress towards God.

Let him always keep the place which is his according to the time of his entry into the monastery, except in his duties at the altar, and unless he have been promoted by the vote of the community and the abbot's decision, on account of the worthiness of his life. Yet let him understand that he must observe the injunctions laid down for deans and priors. Should he presume to act otherwise, let him be judged not a priest but a rebel; and if after frequent admonitions he do not amend, let the bishop's authority be invoked. If he do not amend even then but is manifestly culpable, let him be dismissed from the monastery; provided that his contumacy be such that he refuses to submit and to obey the Rule.

¹ Tob. iv. 16.

CHAPTER

63

THE ORDER OF
THE COMMUNITY

Apr. 18
Aug. 18
Dec. 18

THE brethren shall keep their order in the monastery according to the date of their entry, or according to the merit of their lives and as the abbot shall determine. Yet the abbot must not disturb the flock committed to him, nor by an exercise of arbitrary authority ordain anything unjustly; but let him always consider that he will have to render God an account of all his judgements and deeds. Let the brethren, therefore, receive the kiss of peace, go to Communion, intone the psalms, and stand in choir according to the order which the abbot has determined or which they have of themselves. And on no occasion whatever should age distinguish the brethren and decide their order; for Samuel and Daniel, though young, judged the elders. Therefore, excepting those already mentioned, whom the abbot has by special decision promoted or for definite reasons degraded, all shall take their order according to the time of their entry. Let him, for instance, who came to the monastery at the second hour of the day (whatever be his age or dignity), know that he is junior to him who came at the first hour. Boys, however, are to be kept under discipline at all times and by every one.

The juniors, therefore, shall honour their seniors, and the seniors love their juniors. In addressing one another let them never use the bare name; but let a senior call his junior "Brother", and a junior call his senior "Nonnus", which signifies "Reverend Father". But let the abbot, since he is believed to hold the place of Christ, be called Lord and Abbot, not for any pretensions of his own, but for the honour

Apr. 19
Aug. 19
Dec. 19

and love of Christ. Let the abbot himself be mindful of this, and behave so that he may be worthy of such honour. Whenever the brethren meet one another, let the junior ask the senior for his blessing. When a senior passes by, let a junior rise and make room for him to seat himself; nor let the junior presume to sit down, unless his senior bid him, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled: *Be eager to give one another precedence.*¹ Boys and youths shall keep strictly to their order in the oratory and at table. Everywhere else let them have supervision and discipline, until they come to the age of discretion.

CHAPTER

64

THE APPOINTMENT
OF THE ABBOT

Apr. 20
Aug. 20
Dec. 20

IN the appointment of the abbot let this rule always be observed, that he be made abbot who is chosen unanimously in the fear of God by the whole community, or even by a minority, however small, if its counsel be more wholesome. Let him who is to be appointed be chosen for the merit of his life and his enlightened wisdom, even though he be the last in order of the community. But if (which God forbid) the whole community should agree to choose a person who acquiesces in its vices, and if these somehow come to the knowledge of the local bishop and neighbouring abbots or christians, let them foil this conspiracy of the wicked and set a worthy steward over God's house. Let

¹ Rom. xii. 10.

them be sure that they will receive a good reward, if they do this with a pure intention and out of zeal for God, just as, on the contrary, they will incur sin, if they neglect to intervene.

Let the abbot when appointed consider always what an office he has undertaken and to whom he must render an account of his stewardship; and let him know that it is his duty rather to profit his brethren than to preside over them. It behoves him, therefore, to be learned in the divine law, so that he may have a treasure of knowledge whence he may bring forth things new and old; and to be chaste, sober, and merciful. Let him always set *mercy above judgement*¹ so that he himself may obtain mercy. Let him hate ill-doing but love the brethren. In administering correction, let him act with prudent moderation, lest being too zealous in removing the rust he break the vessel. Let him always distrust his own frailty and remember that the bruised reed is not to be broken. By this we do not mean that he should allow evils to grow, but that, as we have said above, he should eradicate them prudently and with charity, in the way which may seem best in each case. And let him study rather to be loved than feared. Let him not be turbulent or anxious, overbearing or obstinate, jealous or too suspicious, for otherwise he will never be at rest. Let him be prudent and considerate in all his commands; and whether the work which he enjoins concern God or the world, let him always be discreet and moderate, bearing in mind the discretion of holy Jacob, who said: *If I cause my flocks to be overdriven, they will all perish in one day.*² So, imitating these and other examples of discretion, the mother of the virtues, let him so temper all things that the strong may still have something to long after, and

¹ Cf. James ii. 13. ² Gen. xxxiii. 13.

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the weak may not draw back in alarm. And, especially, let him keep this present Rule in all things; so that having ministered faithfully he may hear from the Lord what the good servant heard who gave his fellow-servants wheat in due season: *Amen, I say unto you, he will set him over all his goods.*¹

CHAPTER

65

THE PRIOR OF THE MONASTERY

Apr. 22
Aug. 22
Dec. 22

IT frequently happens that the appointment of a prior gives rise to serious scandals in monasteries. For there are men puffed up by an evil spirit of pride who regard themselves as equal to the abbot, and arrogating to themselves tyrannical power foster troubles and dissensions in the community. This happens especially in those places where the prior is appointed by the same bishop and the same abbots as the abbot himself. But it is very clear that this is a foolish procedure. For it gives the prior matter for pride from the very beginning of his appointment, since his thoughts will suggest to him that he is not subject to the abbot: "For," he will say to himself, "you were appointed by the same people that appointed the abbot." Hence arise envies, quarrels, detractions, rivalries, dissensions, and disorders. For, while the abbot and prior are at variance, it must needs be that their souls are endangered by this dissension. And their subjects also, currying favour with this side or that, run headlong to perdition. The responsibility for this dangerous state of affairs rests ultimately on those whose action caused such disorder.

¹ Mat. xxiv. 47.

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

Therefore, we have judged it expedient, for the preservation of peace and of charity, that the abbot should have the appointment to all offices in his monastery. If it be possible, let all the affairs of the monastery be administered by deans under the control of the abbot, as we have already arranged. The business being thus shared by many, no individual will become proud. But if the circumstances of the place require it, or the community reasonably and humbly ask for it, and the abbot judge that it is expedient, let him himself appoint as his prior whomsoever he may choose, with the advice of God-fearing brethren. Let the prior respectfully perform what is enjoined him by his abbot, and do nothing contrary to the abbot's will or regulations; for the more he is set above the rest, the more scrupulously should he observe the precepts of the Rule. If it should be found that the prior has serious faults, or that he is deceived by pride and behaves arrogantly, or if he should be proved to be a despiser of the holy Rule, he shall be verbally admonished up to four times; if he do not amend, let the punishment of the Rule be applied to him. But if he do not amend even then, let him be deposed from the office of prior and another who is worthy be appointed in his place. But if afterwards he be not quiet and obedient in the community, let him even be expelled from the monastery. Yet let the abbot bear in mind that he must give God an account of all his judgements, lest perchance his mind be inflamed by the fire of envy or jealousy.

Apr. 23
Aug. 23
Dec. 23

RULE OF ST BENEDICT

CHAPTER

66

THE PORTERS OF THE MONASTERY

Apr. 24
Aug. 24
Dec. 24

At the gate of the monastery let there be placed a wise old man, who understands how to give and receive a message, and whose years will keep him from leaving his post. This porter should have a room near the gate, so that those who come may always find someone to answer them. As soon as anyone knocks, or a poor man hails him, let him answer *Deo gratias* or *Benedic*. Then let him attend to them promptly, with all the gentleness of the fear of God and with fervent charity. If the porter need help, let him have one of the younger brethren.

The monastery should, if possible, be so arranged that all necessary things, such as water, mill, garden, and various crafts may be within the enclosure, so that the monks may not be compelled to wander outside it, for that is not at all expedient for their souls.

We desire that this Rule be read aloud often in the community, so that no brother may excuse himself on the ground of ignorance.

CHAPTER

67

OF BRETHREN WHO ARE SENT ON A JOURNEY

Apr. 25
Aug. 25
Dec. 25

Let brethren who are to be sent on a journey commend themselves to the prayers of all the brethren and of the abbot; and always at the last prayer of the Work of God let there be a commemoration of all absent brethren. When brethren return from a journey, let them on the day they return, at the end of each canonical Hour of the Work

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RULE OF ST BENEDICT

of God, lie prostrate on the floor of the oratory and ask the prayers of all on account of any faults that may have surprised them on the road, by the seeing or hearing of something evil, or by idle talk. Nor let anyone presume to tell another what he has seen or heard outside the monastery, because this causes very great harm. But if anyone presume to do so, let him undergo the punishment of the Rule. And let him be punished likewise who shall presume to leave the enclosure of the monastery, or to go anywhere, or to do anything however trifling, without the permission of the abbot.

CHAPTER

68

IF A BROTHER BE COMMANDED TO DO IMPOSSIBLE THINGS

Apr. 26
Aug. 26
Dec. 26

If it happen that something hard or impossible be laid upon any brother, let him receive the command of his superior with all docility and obedience. But if he see that the weight of the burden altogether exceeds the measure of his strength, let him explain the reasons of his incapacity to his superior calmly and in due season, without pride, obstinacy, or contentiousness. If after his representations the superior still persist in his decision and command, let the subject know that it is expedient for him, and let him obey out of love, trusting in the assistance of God.

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dence. Let them bear with the greatest patience one another's infirmities, whether of body or character. Let them vie in paying obedience one to another. Let them follow what seems good for himself, but rather what is good for another. Let them practise fraternal charity with a pure love. Let them fear God. Let them love their abbot with a sincere and humble affection. Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ. And may he bring us all alike to life everlasting.

heavenly country, fulfil first of all by the help of Christ this little Rule for beginners. And then at length, under God's protection, shalt thou attain those aforesaid loftier heights of wisdom and virtue.

THE END

CHAPTER
73
OBSERVANCE OF JUSTICE
IS NOT ESTABLISHED
IN THIS RULE

May 1
Aug. 31
Dec. 31

THIS Rule has been written in order that, by practising it in monasteries, we may show that we have attained some degree of virtue and the rudiments of monastic observance. But, for him who would hasten to the perfection of the monastic life, there are the teachings of the perfect-Fathers, by observing which a man is led to the summit of perfection. For what page or what utterance of the divinely-inspired books of the Old and the New Testament is not a most unerring rule of human life? Or what book of the holy Catholic Fathers is not manifestly devoted to teaching us the straight road to our Creator? Then the Conferences of Cassian and his Institutes, and the Lives of the Fathers, as also the Rule of our holy father Basil: what else are they but tools of virtue for good-living and obedient monks? But we, slothful, ill-living, and negligent people must blush for shame. Whoever, therefore, thou art that hastenest to thy

¹ Rom. xii. 10.

4 The radiation of Cluny and Lotharingian monasteries, 909-1100



The Exordium Parvum

LETTER OF THE FIRST CISTERCIANS TO ALL THEIR SUCCESSORS

We Cistercians, the original founders of this monastery, make known to our successors through this present writing how canonically, by what authority, and by which persons, as well as what period of time, their monastery and manner of living had its beginning. We publish the sincere truth of this matter that they may the more tenaciously love the place as well as the observance of the holy Rule therein, which we ourselves with the grace of God have only just begun; that they may pray for us who have sustained indefatigably the burden and the heat of the day; and that they may labor unto death on the strait and narrow way prescribed by the Rule, so that after they have put down the burden of flesh they may repose happily in eternal rest. Amen.

I. *The Beginning of the Monastery of Cîteaux*

In the year 1098 of the Incarnation of our Lord, Robert of blessed memory, the first abbot of the monastery of Molesme which was founded in the diocese of Langres, and certain brethren of the same monastery appeared before the venerable Hugh, then legate of the Apostolic See and archbishop of the church of Lyons, and promised to place their lives under the custody of the holy Rule of Father Benedict. For the unhindered realisation of this intent, therefore, they begged him insistently to lend them the strength of his own support and of his apostolic authority. The legate, joyfully espousing their wish, laid down the foundations of their beginning with the following letter.

II. *Letter of the Legate Hugh*

Hugh, Archbishop of Lyons and legate of the Apostolic See to Robert, Abbot of Molesme, and to the brethren who together with him desire to serve God according to the Rule of Saint Benedict. Let it be known to all who rejoice in the progress of holy Mother Church that you and certain of your sons, brothers of the monastery of molesme, have stood in Our presence at Lyons and stated your wish to adhere henceforth more strictly and more perfectly to the Rule of blessed Benedict, which so far you have observed poorly and neglectfully in that monastery. But, since it is obvious that in view of many obstacles this could not be accomplished in the aforementioned place, We, providing for the welfare of both parties, those departing and those remaining, have concluded that it will be expedient for you to retire to another place, which the Divine Munificence will point out to you, and there to serve the Lord in a more salutary and peaceful manner. To you, therefore, who had at that time presented yourselves – Abbot Robert and brothers Alberic, Odo, John, Stephen, Letald, and Peter – as well as to all others whom you shall decide to add to your company according to the Rule and by common consultation, after deliberation We gave the order that you persevere in this holy endeavour. We confirm it forever by the authority of the Apostolic See through the impression of Our seal.

III. *Departure of the Cistercian Monks from Molesme and Their Arrival at Cîteaux, and the Monastery They Founded There*

Afterwards, with the support of such great authority, the aforementioned abbot and his monks returned to Molesme and from that religious community selected like-minded associates who were devoted to the Rule, so that those who had spoken before the legate in Lyons and those who were selected from the community numbered twenty-one monks. Knit together in such a band, they eagerly set out for the solitude that was called Cîteaux. This place, situated in the diocese of Chalons, was inhabited only by wild beasts, since it was at that time unusual for men to enter there because of the density of the woods and thorny thickets. Arriving at this place the men of God found it all the more suitable for the religious life which they had already formulated in their minds and for which they had come here, the more despicable and inaccessible they realised it to be for seculars. After they had cut down and removed the dense woods and the thorny thickets, they began to construct a monastery there with the approval of the bishop of Chalon and with the consent of the territorial lord. For, inspired by the grace of God, these men, while still living in Molesme, often spoke to each other, lamented and were saddened by the transgression of the rule of Saint Benedict, the Father of Monks. They realised that they themselves and the other monks had promised by a solemn vow to observe this Rule, yet they had by no means kept it; and therefore they had knowingly committed the sin of perjury. For this reason they came into this solitude with the authority of the legate of the Apostolic See, as we mentioned, to fulfill their vows through the keeping of the holy Rule. Then pleased with their holy fervour and having been requested in a letter by the aforementioned legate of the holy Roman Church, Lord Odo, the duke of Burgundy, with his means completed the wooden monastery which they had begun and provided them there for a long time with every necessity and generously supported them with land as well as livestock.

IV. *How That Place Rose to an Abbey*

At the same time, the abbot who had come here, upon the command of the aforementioned legate, received from the bishop of the diocese the shepherd's staff and the care of the monks; he also caused the brethren who had come with him to undertake their stability in that place in accordance with the Rule. This is how that monastery rose to an abbey canonically and with apostolic authority.

V. *How Those from Molesme Harried the Pope in the Matter of Abbot Robert's Return*

Shortly afterwards, some monks of Molesme, charged by their abbot, lord Godfrey, who succeeded Robert, went to Rome to the lord Pope Urban. They demanded that the oft-mentioned Robert be restored to his former place. Moved by their importuning, the Pope ordered his legate, the venerable Hugh, to see to it that, if it could be done, the abbot should return and the monks who loved the solitude be left in peace.

VI. *Letter of the Pope Regarding the Return of the Abbot*

Bishop Urban, Servant of the Servants of God, to his venerable brother and fellow bishop Hugh, vicar of the Apostolic See: greeting and apostolic blessing. We have heard in council the great outcry of the brethren of Molesme who vehemently demanded the return of their abbot. Indeed, they have said that on account of that abbot's absence regular life in their monastery had been subverted and that they had become hateful to their lords and neighbours. Now at length, having been prevailed upon by Our brethren, We command Your grace by indicating that it would please Us, to see to it that, if it can be done, the abbot be restored from the solitude to the monastery. But if you cannot accomplish this, let it be your concern that those who love the solitude may live in peace and those who are in the monastery observe the regular discipline.

After the legate had read this apostolic letter, he summoned a number of men of authority and piety and decided the following about the matter.

VII. *The Legate's decision in the Whole Matter Concerning the Monks of Molesme and Citeaux*

Hugh, Servant of the church of Lyons to his most beloved brother Robert, bishop of Langres: greeting. We have considered it necessary to let Your Fraternity know what we have decided in the meeting recently held at Port-d'Anselles regarding the matter of the monastery of Molesme. Several monks from Molesme appeared before Us in that place with Your letter; they described to us the desolation and the ruin of their place, which the removal of the abbot Robert had brought upon them, and forcefully implored that he be given back to them as father. For, they had no hope that peace and quiet could return to the monastery of Molesme or that the full vigour of the monastic discipline could be restored to its pristine state in any other way. Present before us was also Brother Godfrey, whom You have installed as abbot of that monastery, who stated that he would gladly yield his place to the same Robert as his father if We should decide to send him back to the community of Molesme. After having considered Your request and that of the monks of Molesme and having reread the letter of the lord Pope addressed to Us in this matter, which entrusted the whole matter to Our disposition and judgement, We, upon the advice of many religious men, bishops as well as others, who were with Us in council, have at length decided to acquiesce in Your wish and theirs and return Robert to the monastery of Molesme. This shall be done in such a way that, before his return, he shall go to Chalon and surrender the staff and the care of the abbey into the hands of Our brother the bishop of Chalon, to whom he had sworn obedience as abbots customarily do. Also, he shall free and absolve the monks of the New Monastery, who made their profession and obedience to him as their abbot, from that profession and obedience. Thereupon he shall be released by that bishop from the profession of obedience he has made to him and to the diocese of Chalon.

We have also given permission to return with him to Molesme to all those brethren of the new Monastery who will follow him when he leaves it, provided that henceforth neither side will attempt to lure or receive anyone to its side, except in the manner which blessed Benedict prescribed for the admission of monks of a known monastery. After he has done all this We release him to Your Grace, so that You may restore him as the abbot of Molesme; in such a way, however, that, if with his usual inconstancy he should again leave that same monastery, no one shall be put in his

place during the lifetime of the above named abbot Godfrey, without Our and Your, as well as Godfrey's, assent. We ordain by apostolic authority that all these provisions have the force of law.

With regard to the aforementioned abbot Robert's chapel [instruments] and the other things which he took with him upon his departure from the monastery of Molesme and with which he went to the bishop of Chalon and to the New Monastery; We have ordered that everything shall remain unharmed with the brethren of the New Monastery, with the exception of a certain breviary which they may keep with the approval of the monks of Molesme, until the feast of saint John the Baptist, so that they may copy it.

Present at this decision were the bishops Norgaud of Autun, Walter of Chalon, Beraud [Herardus] of Mâcon, Pons of Belley and the abbots Peter of Tournus, Jarente of Dijon, Gaucerand of Ainay, as well as Peter, chamberlain of the lord Pope, and many other honourable men of good character.

That abbot approved and executed all this, releasing the Cistercians from the obedience that they had promised him either at that place or in Molesme. Likewise, the lord bishop Walter of Chalon released the abbot from the care of that monastery. And so he returned with a few monks who did not find the solitude to their liking.

This is how through apostolic favour the two abbeys remained in peace and complete freedom. As a shield for his defence the returning abbot took along the following letter to his bishop.

VIII. *Commendation of Abbot Robert*

Walter, servant of the church of Chalon to his most beloved brother and fellow bishop Robert, bishop of Langres: greeting. Be it known to You that according to the decision of the lord archbishop Hugh, We have released brother Robert, to whom We had entrusted that abbey in Our diocese that is called New Monastery, from the solemn profession made to the diocese of Chalon as well as from the obedience he promised to Us. He himself as well has released and freed those monks who have decided to remain in the aforesaid New Monastery from the obedience and the profession they had vowed to him. I enjoin you, therefore, not to fear to accept him and to treat him as a man in good standing.

IX. *About the Election of Alberic, the First Abbot of the Monastery of Cîteaux*

Deprived of its shepherd, the community of Cîteaux assembled and through a regular election elevated a certain brother by the name of Alberic to be its abbot. He was well versed in both divine and human letters, and a lover of the Rule and the brethren. For a long time he had held the office of prior in the monastery of Molesme as well as here, and he had laboured much and long for the brethren to move from Molesme to this place, for which endeavour he had had to suffer many insults, prison and beatings.

X. *About the Roman Privilege*

After much resistance the aforementioned Alberic accepted the pastoral care. As a man of admirable forethought, he began to weigh what storms of tribulations might at one time or another shake and disturb the house entrusted to his care. Taking precaution for the future, with the consent of the brethren he sent two monks, John

and Ilbodus, to Rome. Through them he petitioned the lord Pope Paschall that, under the wings of apostolic protection, his monastery might forever remain peaceful and safe from the pressure of any ecclesiastical or lay person. The two brethren just named, supported by the sealed letters of the aforementioned archbishop Hugh, of John and Benedict, cardinals of the Roman church, as well as of bishop Walter of Chalon, went safely to Rome and returned before Pope Paschal had faltered in the captivity of the emperor. They brought back his apostolic privilege composed entirely according to the wishes of the abbot and his associates. We have thought it appropriate to hand down these letters as well as the Roman privilege in this little work, so that our successors might realise with how much deliberation and authority their monastery has been founded.

XI. *Letter of the Cardinals John and Benedict*

To our lord and father, Pope Paschal, to whom always and everywhere the greatest praise is due, John and Benedict, with total submission. Since it is Your office to provide for the needs of all churches and to give a helping hand to the just wishes of petitioners, and since the Christian religion must grow by leaning on the support of Your justice, we beg Your Holiness most insistently to lend a merciful hearing to the carriers of this letter who, upon our advice, have been sent to your Paternity by certain religious brethren. In truth, they ask that the decree which they received from Your predecessor, our lord Pope Urban of blessed memory, in regard to the peace and stability of their monastic life and which, in accordance with the same decree, the archbishop of Lyons, then legate, and some of his fellow-bishops and abbots, had established between them and the abbey of Molesme, from which they had seceded in consideration of the religious life, may through the privilege of your authority forever remain undisturbed. Indeed, we ourselves have seen and vouch for the evidence of their truly religious life.

XII. *Letter of Hugh of Lyons*

To his most reverend father and lord, Pope Paschal, Hugh, servant of the church of Lyons, with total submission. The brethren bearing the present letter, journeying to the Highness of Your Paternity have passed through Our lands. Since they live in Our province, namely in the diocese of Chalon, they asked Our unworthy self for a letter of recommendation to Your Highness. You should know, then, that they come from a place that is called New Monastery. They migrated to that place, after seceding from the community of Molesme with their abbot, in order to lead a stricter and more consecrated life according to the Rule of Blessed Benedict which they had resolved to keep by abandoning the usages of certain monasteries maintaining that in their weakness they were unfit to bear such a burden. For that reason the brethren of Molesme and certain other monks of their neighbourhood do not cease to attack and disturb them, thinking that in the eyes of the world they themselves are valued less and looked upon with contempt, if such exceptional and new kinds of monks are seen living in their midst. Therefore, We humbly and trustfully ask You, Beloved Father, that You receive with Your usual kindness these brothers who, after the Lord, place all their trust in You and therefore seek refuge in Your apostolic authority; also, that You free them and their place from such molestation and disturbance, and corroborate this through a privilege of Your

authority. For they are the poor of Christ: they have no defence through riches or power against their enemies, but place all their hope in God's mercy and yours.

XIII. *Letter of the Bishop of Chalon*

To his venerable Father, Pope Paschal, Walter, bishop of Chalon: greeting and due submission. As Your Holiness ardently desires the advancement of the faithful in the true religion, so must they not lack the shelter of Your protection and the encouragement of Your consolation? We therefore, humbly beg that You approve what has been done in accordance with Your predecessor's order and the decision and rescript of the Archbishop of Lyons, then legate of the Apostolic See, as well as other bishops and abbots who had been witnesses and participants in this decision, with regard to certain brethren. Longing for a stricter life they have, upon the advice of saintly men, departed from the monastery of Molesme; Divine Mercy has placed them in Our diocese; their envoys, the bearers of this letter stand before You. We also beg You to deign to corroborate with a privilege of Your authority that that place might remain a free abbey in perpetuity, saving however, the canonical reverence due Our person and Our successors. Also the abbot whom We have installed in that place and the other brethren ask Your Kindness most insistently for this confirmation to secure their peace.

XIV. *The Roman Privilege*

Bishop Paschal, Servant of the Servants of God, to the venerable Alberic, abbot of New Monastery, situated in the episcopate of Chalon, and to all his legitimate successors in perpetuity. An aspiration that is obviously aimed at a religious purpose and the welfare of souls is to be fulfilled by the will of God without delay. Therefore, sons most beloved in the Lord, We accede to Your petition without any difficulty, because We applaud your religious fervour with paternal affection. We decree, therefore, that the place which You have chosen in order to live in monastic tranquillity, shall be secure and free from the annoyance of all men; also, that the abbey shall exist there forever and be particularly sheltered under the protection of the Apostolic See, saving the canonical reverence due to the diocese of Chalon. By the words of this present decree We, therefore, forbid anyone whomsoever to change Your way of life or to receive monks of Your monastery; which is called New Monastery, without the recommendation demanded by the Rule, or to disturb Your community through any kind of guile or violence. The settlement of the controversy between you and the monastery of Molesme - which Our brother, the bishop of Lyons, then vicar of the Apostolic See, made together with the bishops of his province and other religious men, at the command of our predecessor, Urban the Second of Apostolic memory - We confirm as eminently reasonable. You, sons most beloved and most dear in Christ, must, therefore, remember that one part of You has left the broad roads of the world; yet another part, the paths not straight enough of a monastery too relaxed. In order that You may be considered more and more deserving of this grace, You must work to keep always in Your hearts the fear and love of God so that to the degree that you are free from the noises and pleasures of the world, by so much the more You should strive to please God with all the powers of Your mind and soul. Indeed, should any archbishop or bishop, emperor or king, prince or duke, count or viscount, judge or any other clerical or lay person whosoever knowingly dare to counteract this Our constitution, and upon two or three warnings not make amends

for his wrongdoing through an adequate satisfaction, let him be deprived of the powers and honours of his dignity and let him know that he is liable to divine judgement because of the wrong he has done; and let him be excluded from the most holy Body and Blood of our God and our Lord, Jesus Christ, and undergo severe sentence at the Last Judgement. But may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ rest upon all those who respect the rights of this monastery so that they may receive the fruit of their good deed here on earth and find the reward of eternal peace before the stern Judge.

XV. *The Institutes of the Cistercian Monks who Departed from Molesme*

Thereupon the abbot and his brethren, mindful of their vows, unanimously resolved to establish and keep the Rule of Blessed Benedict in that place. They rejected what was contrary to the Rule, namely full mantles and furs; as well as shirts of fine linen, cowls and breeches, combs and blankets, mattresses, a wide variety of dishes in the refectory as well as fat and everything else which was against the purity of the Rule. Making thus the rectitude of the Rule the foremost concern of their life, they followed or conformed to the pathway of the Rule in ecclesiastical as well as in other observances. In this way, having put off the old man, they rejoiced in putting on the new.

And since they could not find either in the Rule or in the life of Saint Benedict that this teacher had possessed churches or altars, offerings or burial dues, tithes of other people, or ovens or mills or manors or serfs, and that women had ever entered his monastery or been buried there, with the exception of his sister, they renounced all these things saying: Where the blessed father Benedict teaches that the monk must avoid worldly affairs, there he distinctly explains that these things must not have any place in the actions or in the hearts of the monks who must live up to the etymology of their name by fleeing all these things. They also said that the holy Fathers, who were the instruments of the Holy Spirit and whose decision it is sacrilege to transgress, divided tithes into four distinct parts: namely, one part for the bishop; the second for the parish priest; the third for guests who come to the church, or else for widows and orphans or for the poor who have nothing else to live on; the fourth for the repair of churches. And since in this list they did not find mention of the monk who possesses his own lands whence he gains his livelihood by his own labour and by keeping animals, they rejected this as an unjust usurpation of the rights of others. Thus having rejected the riches of this world, the new soldiers of Christ, poor with the poor Christ, began to consult with one another as to the question of the way by which, and with what work or occupation, they should provide in this life for themselves as well as for guests who would come, rich and poor alike, whom according to the Rule they should receive as Christ.

Thereupon they decided to admit, with the permission of their bishop, bearded lay brothers and to treat them in life and death as their equals, excepting only the status as monks; and to admit also hired workers. For they realised that without the help of these men they would be unable to observe fully the precepts of the Rule by day and by night. They also decided to accept landed properties which lay removed from the dwellings of men, as well as vineyards and meadows and woods and also streams, in order to install mills-but only for their own use-and for fishing, and horses and various cattle useful to the requirements of men. And while they established granges for the practice of agriculture in a number of places, they decreed that the aforementioned lay brothers, and not the monks, should manage those houses,

because according to the Rule the dwelling place of monks ought to be within their cloister. Since those holy men knew that blessed Benedict had built his monasteries not in towns or around fortified places or in villages, but in places removed from the traffic of men, they promised to imitate him. And since he placed twelve monks and a father abbot in new monasteries, they decided to proceed in the same manner.

XVI. *About Their Sorrow*

It caused some sorrow to the aforementioned abbot and man of God and to those with him that in those days only seldom did anyone come there in order to follow after them. For the holy men longed to hand down to their successors for the future benefit of many this treasure of virtues that had come from heaven. Yet almost all those who saw or learned about the unusual and almost unheard-of rigour of their life, instead of approaching them, hastened to avoid them in both spirit and body, nor did they cease from doubting in the ability of the monks to persevere. But the mercy of God, which inspired His own chosen ones to form this spiritual army, did not cease to swell and to complete their ranks, to the profit of many, as the following will show.

XVII. *About the Death of the First Abbot and the Election of the Second and Their Institutes and Their Happiness*

The man of the Lord, Alberic, however, after he had practiced fruitfully regular discipline in the school of Christ for nine and a half years, went home to the Lord, full of glory in his faith and virtues, and therefore deservedly to be rewarded by God with eternal life. His successor was a certain brother by the name of Stephen, an English man by nationality, who had also come to that place from Molesme, a lover of the Rule and of the place. During his time, the brethren and this abbot prohibited the duke of that land or any other lord from keeping his court at any time in that monastery as they used in times past to do on the occasion of great feasts. Furthermore, lest anything remain in the house of God-where it was their wish to serve God devoutly day and night-that savoured of pride or superfluity or that would ever corrupt poverty, the safeguard of virtues, which they had chosen of their own free will, they resolved to keep no crosses of gold or silver but only painted wooden ones; no candelabra, but only one of iron; no thuribles, but only of copper and iron; no chasubles, but of fustian or linen, without a pallium of gold or silver; no albs or amices but of linen, similarly without a pallium of gold or silver. They gave up entirely the use of all pallia and copes as well as of dalmatics and tunics. But they retained the use of chalices of silver or, where possible, of gold-plate, but not ones of pure gold; and the communion reed of silver or, where possible, of gold-plate; stoles as well as maniples of silk only, without gold or silver. Moreover they explicitly ordered that altar cloths be made of plain linen and without ornamentation and that the cruets be without gold or silver.

In those days the monastery increased in its possession of lands, vineyards, meadows and granges; but it did not decrease in religious fervour. Therefore in those days God visited that place and showed forth His deepest mercy to the brethren who implored Him, who cried out to Him, and who wept before Him, who day and night groaned long and deep, who drew near the brink of despair because they had almost no successors. For now the grace of God sent to that monastery so many literate and noble clerics and laymen who were as powerful as they were distinguished in the world that at one time thirty men eagerly entered the cells of novices, and by fighting

bravely and strongly against their own vices and the temptations of evil spirits, they completed their course. Through the example of these men who were old and young, men of every age group in diverse parts of the world were encouraged, since they saw through these that what they feared impossible in the observance of the Rule was, indeed, possible. They started to flock together there in order to place their proud necks under the sweet yoke of Christ, to love fervently the rigorous and burdensome precepts of the Rule, and they began to make that community wonderfully happy and strong.

XVIII. *About the Abbeys*

From that time forward they established abbeys in various dioceses, which under the Lord's rich and powerful blessing so prospered from day to day that within eight years among those who had gone forth from Cîteaux itself and those who in turn sprang forth from them, twelve new foundations were to be counted.

Exordium Cistercii, Summa Cartae Caritatis et Capitula

EXORDIUM CISTERCII

I. *Departure of the Cistercian Monks from Molesme*

In the diocese of Langres there lay, as is well known, a monastery by the name of Molesme: it was of great renown and outstanding in religious fervour. Within a short time of its foundation God in his goodness enriched it with the gift of his graces, raised it to honour with the presence of distinguished men, and caused it to be as great in possessions as it was resplendent in virtues. But, because possessions and virtues are not usually steady companions, several members of that holy community, men truly wise and filled with higher aspirations, decided to pursue heavenly studies rather than to be entangled in earthly affairs. Accordingly, these lovers of virtue soon came to think about that poverty which is fruitful to man. They realised that, although the life in that place was a godly and upright life, they observed the rule they had vowed to keep in a way short of their desire and intention. They spoke amongst themselves and asked one another how they were to fulfil the verse: "I will fulfil my vows to you, vows which I made with my own lips" [Ps. 65:13]. What more needs to be said? After common deliberation, together with the father of that monastery, Robert of blessed memory, twenty-one monks went out to try to carry out jointly what they had conceived with one spirit. Eventually, after many labours and extreme difficulties, which all who wish to devote their life to Christ, must endure, they reached their goal. They came to Cîteaux, which was then a place of horror, a vast wilderness. Realising that the asperity of the place accorded well with the strict design they had already conceived [in their minds], the soldiers of Christ found the place, almost as though divinely prepared, to be as alluring as their design had been dear.

II. *Beginnings of the Monastery of Cîteaux*

Thus in the year 1098 of the Incarnation of our Lord, supported with the counsel and strengthened with the authority of the venerable Hugh, archbishop of the church of Lyons, and at that time legate of the Apostolic See, and of the God-fearing man, Walter, bishop of Chalon, and of Odo, the illustrious duke of Burgundy, these men began to transform the solitude they had found into an abbey; abbot Robert received the care of the monks and the shepherd's staff from the bishop of the diocese; and under him the monks vowed stability in that place. But, after a short time it happened that abbot Robert was reclaimed by the monks of Molesme, and was returned to Molesme on the order of Pope Urban II and with the permission and consent of Walter, bishop of Chalon. He was replaced by Alberic, a religious and holy man. For the sake of peace this wise agreement was made between the monasteries and confirmed by the pope: henceforth neither of them would [permanently] accept the other's monk without a proper recommendation. Through the solicitude and industry of its new father and with God's generous assistance, the New Monastery thereafter advanced in holiness, excelled in fame, and witnessed the increase of its temporal goods. The man of god, Alberic, who successfully ran his race for nine years [Phil. 2:16], obtained the crown of eternity in the tenth year. He was succeeded by the lord Stephen, an Englishman by nationality, an ardent lover of and staunch champion of religious life, poverty, and regular discipline. In his days the words of Scripture came true: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just and His ears hear their prayer"

[Ps. 33:16]. The little flock voiced its one and only complaint: that it was small in number. As I said, the "poor of Christ" came to fear and to dread almost to the point of despair one thing alone: that they might not be able to leave behind heirs to their poverty. For their neighbours applauded their holy life but abhorred its austerity and thus kept from imitating the men whose fervour they approved. Yet God, who can easily make great things from small ones and many things from a few, beyond all expectation, so aroused the hearts of many to the imitation of these monks that in the cell where the novices are tested, thirty had come to live under the same discipline: clerics as well as laymen, even nobles and men of power in the eyes of the world. Upon this so sudden and happy heavenly visitation the barren one which had no offspring began, not without reason, to rejoice; "Once forsaken, she now came to have many sons" [Is. 54:1]. And God did not cease to multiply His people, and to increase their joy, so that within about twelve years the happy mother came to see twenty abbots, drawn from her own sons as well as from the sons of her sons, like olive branches around her table. Indeed she did not think it out of order to follow the example of the holy father Benedict whose rule she embraced. Hence, as soon as the new plantation began to produce offshoots, blessed father Stephen in his watchful wisdom produced a document of admirable discretion; it served as a trimming knife that was to cut off the outgrowth of division that, if unchecked, could suffocate the fruit of mutual peace. Very appropriately, he wished the document to be called a charter of Charity, for, clearly, its whole content so breathed love that almost nothing else is seen to be treated there than this: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another" [Rom. 13:8]. This charter, arranged by the same father and confirmed by the aforementioned twenty abbots, was also approved by apostolic authority. It contains in greater detail those things that we have said: here, however, we shall restrict ourselves to a brief summary.

SUMMA CARTAE CARITATIS

III. *General Statute Between Abbeys*

According to the tenor of the Charter, it was established among all abbeys of the Cistercian Order that: Mother-abbeyes may not exact any temporal goods from their daughter-abbeyes. A Father-Abbot visiting the monastery of an abbot-son, shall not bless that one's novice as monk, nor shall he admit an outsider for permanent stay, nor lastly, decree or ordain anything in that place against the local abbot's will, except in what relates to the care of souls. If he finds anything contrary to the Rule or to the Order in that place, he may charitably correct it, with the counsel of the local abbot. But, if by chance, the local abbot is absent, he shall correct whatever he finds amiss. The abbot-son yields his place to the Father-Abbot not only in the chapter room, but everywhere else in the monastery. However, the Father-Abbot shall eat with the brethren in the refectory, for the sake of discipline, except in the absence of the local abbot. All other visiting abbots of the Order shall do likewise. But if several abbots come and the local abbot is absent, their senior shall eat in the guesthouse. Further, every abbot shall visit the abbeys founded by his monastery with paternal solicitude at least once a year. Whenever an abbot-son visits his mother abbey, he shall be given due reverence as befits an abbot. He shall occupy the place of the abbot in everything pertaining to the Order, but only in the absence of the abbot of the mother abbey. For, when that one is present, the abbot-son shall yield to him in all things, as to a father.

Hence he shall not eat with the guests when the Father-Abbot is at home, but in the refectory with the brethren.

IV. *The Annual Chapter of Abbots*

The abbey of Citeaux, the mother of all, wisely reserved to itself the prerogative that every abbot must visit it once a year at the same time, to meet one another, to tend to the affairs of the Order, to strengthen the peace and to preserve charity. At Citeaux all shall reverently and humbly obey the lord Abbot of Citeaux and that holy assembly when dealing with the correction of wrongs, and if they are accused, they shall seek pardon. Only abbots shall make accusations. The assembly also made this wise provision: should it come to pass that the extreme poverty of any one of the abbots become known to the assembly all shall provide for this brother's relief according to the dictates of charity and [each] in the measure allowed by his own situation. Only two reasons shall justify [an abbot's] absence from the annual chapter: illness of the body, or the blessing of a novice. An abbot, to whom one of these applies, shall send his prior as his representative. But if anyone shall ever presume to stay at home for any other reason, at the next chapter he shall seek pardon for his fault and offer satisfaction according to the judgement of the abbots. And this shall be held to a lesser fault.

V. *On the Faults of Abbots*

Should an abbot be found to scorn the Rule or the Order, or to be careless and negligent in the care entrusted to him, straightaway he shall be warned by his Father-Abbot, in person or through his prior or by letter, up to four times. If he refuses to correct his ways, then, through the same Father-Abbot the wrongdoing shall be made known to the bishop and to the clergy of the diocese of the transgressor. If, perchance, the wrongdoing persists uncorrected because of their disinterest, the Father-Abbot shall summon at least two of his co-abbots and, all going to the place in question, they shall depose the incorrigible man from his office and urge the brethren to elect at an early date another who will be worthy. If they defy the visiting abbots, that is, if the abbot is unwilling to resign his office and the monks are unwilling to elect another abbot, they shall be excommunicated by the visiting abbots. Should any of these evil doers eventually regain his senses and, having pity on his soul, refuse to accept its death sentence, seek refuge in the monastery from which his own was founded, he shall be received as a son and monk of the community until he is restored to his own monastery whenever it was reformed. Further the abbot of Citeaux, since he is the head of all and has no abbot over himself, shall see to it that those measures, which have been decreed against other transgressors, shall be applied to himself as well. By common agreement this charge has been entrusted to the abbots of La Ferte, Pontigny and Clairvaux so that they, acting in the name of all and in behalf of all, shall zealously apply to him everything in the sequence stated above. But there is this exception: If he resigns [his office], the three abbots shall not themselves provide a new abbot nor shall they excommunicate him if he proves defiant. Instead the prior of Citeaux shall send three or more messengers to the abbots of Citeaux's direct filiation and summon as many abbots as are able to assemble within fifteen days. Then, upon the removal of the accused, they shall cause the monks to elect, in their presence, a new abbot. If the monks refuse to listen, the assembled abbots shall excommunicate both the monks and the accused abbot. If any of the monks, regaining his senses and

anxious to save his soul, should at length seek refuge in one of the above mentioned abbeys-La Ferte, Pontigny or Clairvaux-he shall be received as a brother and a member of the house until he is returned to his own monastery, once it is reconciled through the mercy of God. In the meantime, however, the yearly chapter of abbots shall not be held at Citeaux but in a place designated by the three abbots mentioned above. Let it also be known that as long as the community of Citeaux is without an abbot, his place shall be held by the abbot of La Ferte. The election of the abbot of Citeaux shall always be done in the manner and sequence described above. In other monasteries, however, upon the death of the abbot, the Father-Abbot of the deceased shall be summoned so that in his presence and with his advice, the brethren may hold a regular election. Whomever they elect from any Cistercian monastery they shall receive without objection. But Cistercians may not choose their abbots from other orders or release their own monks to these orders for the same purpose.

VI. *What Shall be the Law Between Abbeys not Bound by Filiation*

Between abbeys that are not of each other's filiation this shall be the law: Every abbot shall yield his place to a visiting abbot throughout his monastery, to fulfil the Scriptures: "They give one another precedence with honour" [Rom. 12:10]. If two or more arrive, the senior of the guests will take the higher place. All shall eat in the refectory, except the local abbot. Wherever else they meet, they shall enjoy seniority according to the antiquity of their abbeys, so that the abbot of an older abbey shall take precedence. There is one exception: if one is vested in alb, then, preceding everyone else, he shall preside in everything, even if he is the junior of all. Also, after they take their places, they shall bow to each other.

VII. *No One Shall Receive a Lay-Brother Wishing to go to Another Monastery*

None of us shall dissuade any man who wishes to enter any other one of our abbeys, nor entice anyone to our own abbey; but rather each of us shall retain that one who chooses of his own accord, after a change of mind, to remain. If after arriving at the place of his choice he should regret his decision before the completion of the period of probation, he shall be free to leave if he so desires. But if he leaves after his admission, he shall not be accepted anywhere without the consent of that monastery.

VIII. *On Fugitive Monks and Lay-Brothers*

If a monk, or lay brother, secretly flees from one of our monasteries and comes to another, let him be persuaded to return. If he refuses, he shall not be permitted to stay in that place for more than one night. If he is a monk, he shall be deprived of his habit, if he is wearing it, unless there is evidence that he had been a monk before he entered our Order.

IX. *The Founding of New Abbeys*

It has been decreed that all our monasteries must be dedicated to the Queen of Heaven and Earth. No monastery shall be constructed within cities, castles and manors. No abbot shall be sent to a new place without at least twelve monks and the following books: a psalter, a book of hymns, a book of collects, an antiphonary, a gradual, the Rule, a missal; and without the prior construction of such places as an

oratory, a refectory, a dormitory, a guest-house, and a gate-keeper's cell, so that the monks, may immediately serve God and live in religious discipline. No living quarters; only animal shelters, shall be constructed outside the gate of the monastery. Also, to preserve an indissoluble and lasting unity among our abbeys it has been established: first, that the Rule of blessed Father Benedict shall be interpreted and kept in one and the same way; secondly, that there shall be found the same liturgical books, the same food, the same clothing, and lastly, the same customs and usages in everything.

X. *Which books must not be Dissimilar*

The missal, Gospel book, book of epistles, book of collects, gradual, antiphonary, book of hymns, psalter, lectionary, Rule and calendar of saints shall be used everywhere in one and the same way.

XI. *On Clothing*

Clothing shall be simple and inexpensive, without underclothes, as the Rule prescribes. But this must also be observed: the outer cowls shall not be flocked with pile on the outside; and the day-shoes shall be made of cowhide.

XII. *On Food*

In addition to what the Rule prescribes about the pound of bread, the measure of drink, and the number of dishes, this must also be observed: the bread must be coarse, that is, prepared with a sieve. Where wheat is scarce, however, rye may be used. This rule shall not apply to the sick; they, and also the guests for whom it has been prescribed, shall be served wastel-bread. To those who are bled, there shall be given a pound of white bread, once, during the bleeding.

XIII. *No One May Eat Meat or [Food prepared with] Lard in the Monastery*

In the monastery cooked dishes must always and everywhere be prepared without meat or lard; an exception is made [only] for the brethren who are seriously ill and for our hired workers.

XIV. *Days When We Eat Lenten Food*

Except for those who are ill, we fast during Lent, before Christmas [Advent], in the Septuagesima season, on all Fridays, and on the four Ember days in September. Also on the vigils of Saint John the Baptist, Saints Peter and Paul, Saint Lawrence, the Assumption of Saint Mary, the apostles Matthew, Simon and Jude, All Saints, and the apostle Andrew. Nothing shall be bought for a guest, unless he is ill.

XV. *Where the Monks' Food Is to Come From*

Food for the monks of our Order ought to come from manual labour, agriculture, and the raising of animals. Hence we may possess, for our own use, streams, woodlands, vineyards, meadows, lands far removed from the dwellings of seculars, and animals, except those which tend to foster curiosity and to show

themselves off rather than serve a useful purpose, such as deer, cranes, and other animals of this kind. To raise, feed, and take care of animals we may keep granges, either in the neighbourhood or at a greater distance. These are to be supervised and managed by the lay brothers.

XVI. *No Monk May Live Outside the Monastic Enclosure*

A monk whose proper home, according to the Rule, ought to be the monastery, may go to a grange as often as he is sent, but on no account may he live there for any long period of time.

XVII. *Women May Not Live in Our Houses*

At any time whatsoever-be it a time for cultivating or preserving food, or a time for washing particular objects of the monastery when this is necessary, or lastly, a time of any need whatsoever-it is absolutely forbidden for our lay brothers and us to live under the same roof with women.

XVIII. *Women Shall Not Enter Within the Monastery Gate*

Women shall not be received as guests within the courtyard of our granges, nor shall they enter within the gate of the monastery.

XIX. *There Should Be No Association with Laymen for Feeding cattle, Cultivating Land, Giving or Receiving Shares in Crops and the Like*

In raising our animals and cultivating our lands we are not allowed to have joint dealings with laymen, such as giving or receiving shares or profits.

XX. *These Affairs Are to be Managed by Lay-Brothers*

As has been said, these affairs are to be managed by lay brothers or by hired workers. As we do with monks, we take under our care lay brothers with the licence of the bishops, who are members of our family and helpers in our work. We hold them to be our brothers and, equally with our monks, sharers of our goods both spiritual and temporal.

XXI. *On the Probation of Lay-Brothers*

We impose a probation period of one year on those who come to us as new arrivals. At the end of that year, in chapter assembled we receive the profession of him who wishes to remain and who deserves to be retained.

XXII. *A Lay-Brother May not Become a Monk*

Once he has taken his vows, a lay brother shall not become a monk even if he greatly desires it; but he shall remain in the vocation of his calling. If, under the influence of the devil, he shall have taken the habit of a monk or canon regular from any bishop or abbot, he shall after that never again be admitted to any of our monasteries.

XXIII. *What Incomes We Renounce*

Our very name [of monks] and the constitution of our Order prohibit [the possession of] churches, altar revenues, burials, tithes from the labour or harvest of outsiders, manors, serfs, land-rents, oven and mill revenues, and all other incomes of the kind, as contrary to the purity of the monastic vocation.

XXIV. *Whom Do We Admit for Confession and Communion, and to Whom Do We Grant Burial*

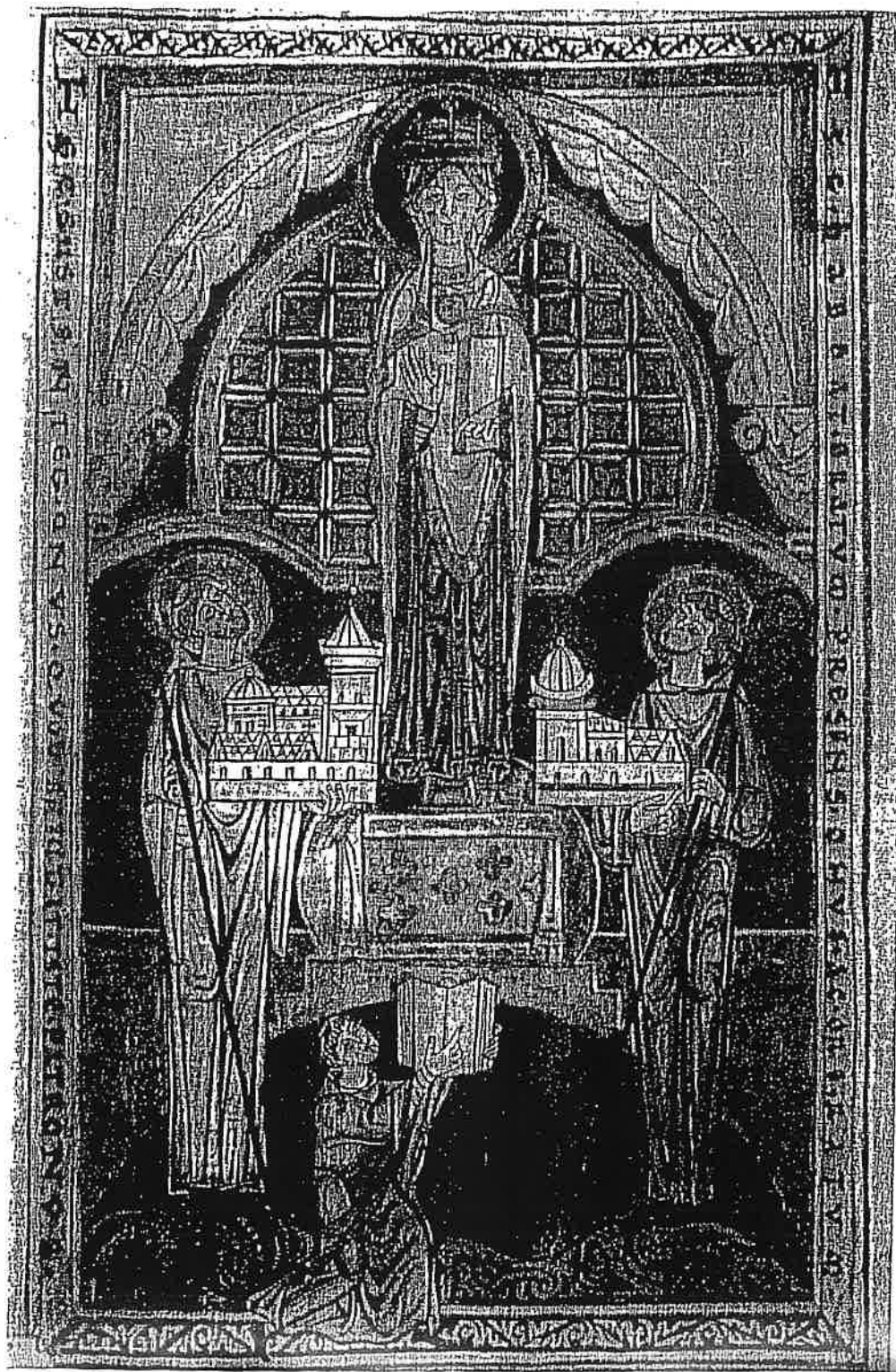
We receive no outsider to confession or to holy communion; nor do we grant burial to any outsider unless he is a guest or one of our hired workers who dies within our monastery; nor do we accept offerings from outsiders during the conventual Mass.

XXV. *What We May or May Not Have in Gold, Precious stones and Silk*

The altar linen and the vestments of the ministers, except the stole and the maniple, must be without silk. The chasuble must be of one colour. Every ornament, vessel and utensil of the monastery must be without gold, silver or precious stones, except the chalice and the communion reed. We are allowed to have these two things made of silver or of gold plate, but never of pure gold.

XXVI. *On Sculptures, Paintings and Wooden Crosses*

We may not have sculptures anywhere; we may have paintings, but only on crosses; and we may have crosses made only of wood.



A contemporary illustration of Abbot Stephen Harding (*right*) presenting his church of Cîteaux to the Virgin. On the left is the abbot of St Vaase. Both are dressed in the unbleached white habit of the early Cistercians (Bibliothèque Municipale, Dijon).

¹On the *Charter of Charity*

²Before the Cistercian abbeys began to flourish, the abbot, Dom Stephen, and his brethren ordained that, in order to avoid any cause of conflict between bishop and monks, in no way would abbeys be founded in the diocese of any bishop before he had ratified and confirmed the decree drawn up and confirmed between the monastery of Citeaux and the others which had issued from it. ³In this decree, then, the aforesaid brethren, taking precaution against future shipwreck of their mutual peace, elucidated and decreed and left for their posterity by what covenant, or in what manner, indeed, with what charity their monks throughout abbeys in various parts of the world, though separated in body, could be indissolubly knit together in mind. ⁴They considered that this decree should be called the *Charter of Charity*, because, averting the burdensome levying of all exactions, its statute pursues only charity and the advantage of souls in things human and divine.

¹That the Rule is to be understood and kept by all in one manner. II.

²Now, however, we will and we command them, that they observe the Rule of the blessed Benedict in everything just as it is observed in the New Monastery. ³Let them not introduce a different meaning in the interpretation of the Holy Rule; but as our predecessors, the holy fathers — that is to say, the monks of the New Monastery — understood and kept it, and as we today understand and keep it, so let them too understand and keep it.

¹All are to have the same liturgical books and customs. III.

²And because we receive in our cloister all their monks who come to us, and they likewise receive our monks in their cloisters, it therefore seems to us opportune, and this also is our will, that they have the usages and chant and all the books necessary for the day and night Hours and for Mass according to the form of the usages and books of the New Monastery, so that there may be no discord in our conduct, but that we may live by one charity, one Rule, and like usages.

¹The general statute between abbeys. IV.

²When, however, the abbot of the New Monastery comes to any of these monasteries to make a visit, the local abbot should give him precedence everywhere in the monastery, in token of the fact that the church of the New Monastery is mother of his church; and, as long as he remains there, the visiting abbot should take the place of the local abbot, except that he eats, not in the guesthouse, but with the brethren in the refectory in order to preserve discipline — unless the local abbot is absent.

³Indeed, all visiting abbots of our Order should do likewise. But if several should be visiting, and the local abbot is absent, the senior of them should eat in the guesthouse.

¹That the mother is to visit the daughter once a year. V.

²Let the abbot of the senior church visit once a year all the monasteries
³ he has founded; and should he visit more often, let them for that reason rejoice all the more.

¹Of the General Chapter of abbots at Cîteaux. VII.

²Let all the abbots of these churches come to the New Monastery once a year on the day they decide among themselves, and there let them treat of the salvation of their own souls; if something is to be emended or added to in the observance of the Holy Rule or of the Order, let them so ordain it, and let them re-establish among themselves the good of peace and charity.

³But if any abbot proves to have been less zealous for the Rule or too intent on things secular, or habitually prone to any vice, let him there be charitably proclaimed. Let the one proclaimed prostrate and fulfill the penance assigned him for the fault. But only abbots are to make this proclamation.

⁴But should any church fall into intolerable poverty, let the abbot of that monastery take care to make this matter known before the whole chapter. Then let the abbots, one and all, enkindled by the most intense fire of charity, hasten to relieve the penury of that church, according to their resources, from the goods bestowed on them by God.

¹Of the statute between those who issued from Cîteaux and those whom they have begotten; and that all are to come to the General Chapter, and the punishment of those who do not come. VIII.

²But when any of our churches has grown by the grace of God to such an extent that it can construct another monastery, let them observe between themselves the same agreement we observe between ourselves and our brethren.

This, however, we do will and do reserve to ourselves: that all the abbots from every region are to come to the New Monastery on the day they decide among themselves, and there they are to obey in everything the abbot of that same place and the Chapter in the correction of things amiss and in the observance of the Holy Rule and of the Order.

³But they do not have an annual chapter with those whom they have begotten.

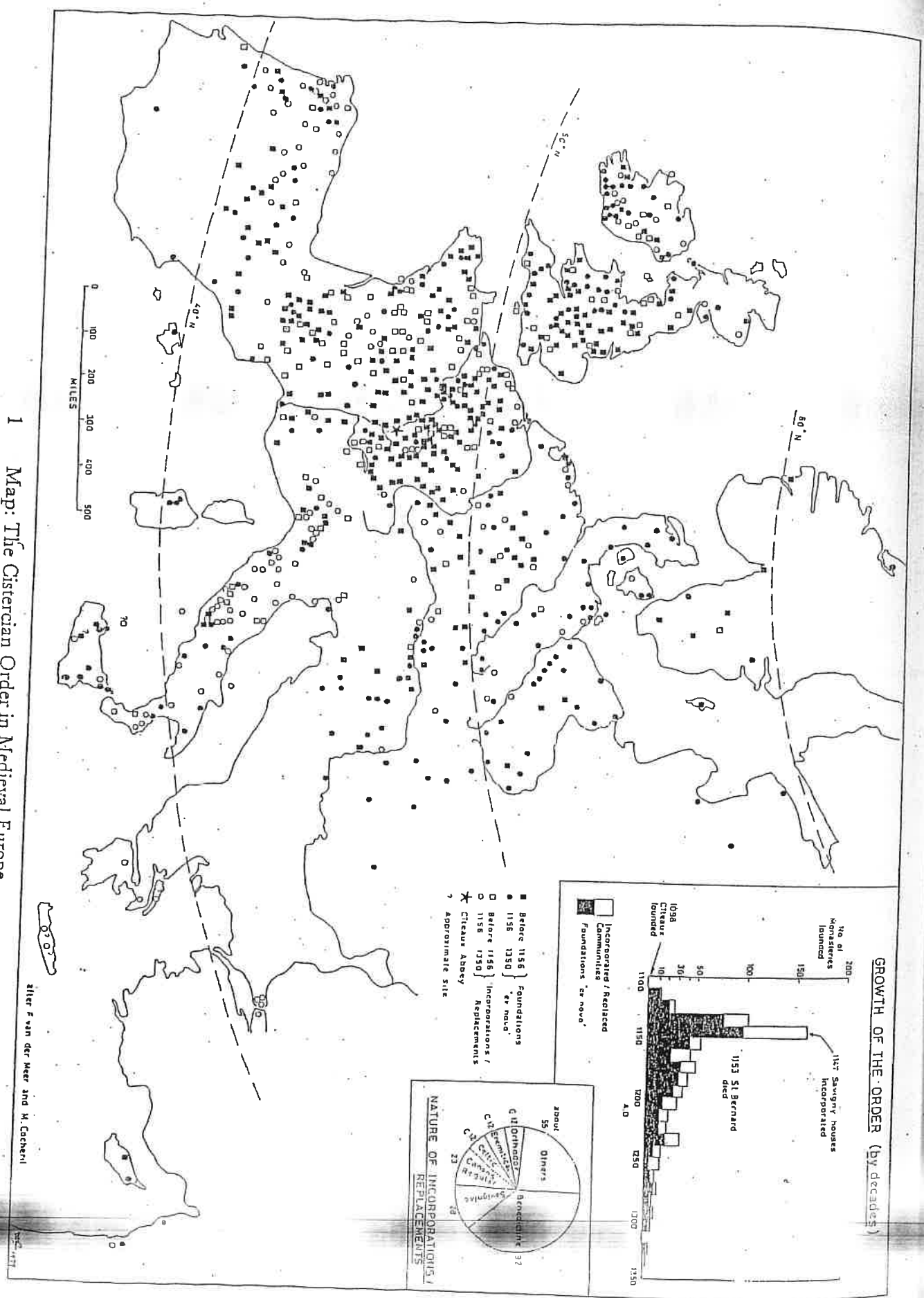
⁴However, should on occasion bodily infirmity or the blessing of novices prevent one of our abbots from being able to come to the aforesaid place of assembly on the appointed day, he should send his prior thither, who will take care to make known to the Chapter the reason for his staying away, and who will also, should we decree or change anything, bring this information back home to his abbot and brethren. ⁵But should anyone for any other excuse ever presume to stay away from our General Chapter, let him prostrate for his fault at the Chapter of the following year, and make satisfaction by the penance for a less serious fault for as long as the master of the Chapter judges.

¹Of the death and election of abbots. XI.

²Upon the death of their father, the brethren of the New Monastery are to send three messengers to the abbots, as we have said above — or more should they so wish — and are to gather there as many as they can summon within fifteen days; and with their consent, let them appoint as their shepherd one whom God has foreseen. ³In the meantime, however, the lord abbot of la Ferté is to take the place of the deceased abbot in everything, as we said earlier regarding a different matter, until another abbot may, upon being elected, receive with the help of God both the place and its pastoral care.

⁴Also in the rest of the monasteries widowed in whatever manner of their own pastor, let the brethren of that place convoke the abbot of that church which gave them birth, and in his presence and with his advice let them elect for themselves an abbot from among their own brethren or those of the New Monastery or from the other churches. ⁵For Cistercians are not allowed to take to themselves an abbot from churches outside [the Order], or to give their own monks for the same purpose. But whatever person the monks elect from whatever monastery of our Order, let them receive him without opposition.

1 Map: The Cistercian Order in Medieval Europe.



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