

**THE RULE**  
**OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS**  
**OF THE SECULAR THIRD ORDER**  
**OF SAINT DOMINIC**

**Approved and Confirmed**  
**by the Sacred Congregation of Religious**



**Promulgated by**  
**Brother Ludwig Theissling**  
**Master of the Order**

**Rome 1923**

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*- For Historical Purposes -*



## SACRED CONGREGATION OF RELIGIOUS

### DECREE

Our Holy Father, by divine Providence POPE PIUS XI, in an audience given to the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Religious on 23 April 1923, approved and confirmed, in answer to the petition of the Most Rev. Fr. Master General of the Order of Friars Preachers, the *Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Secular Third Order of St. Dominic*, long ago approved by the Supreme Pontiffs Innocent VII and Eugene IV, now brought into harmony, with the needs of our time and revised by the Sacred Congregation as it is in the present copy, the original of which is preserved in the archives of the said Sacred Congregation, and without prejudice to any of the prescriptions of the Sacred Canons.

Given at Rome, from the Secretariat of the S. Congregation of Religious, 23 April 1923.

Camillo Cardinal Laurenti  
*Prefect*

Maurus Serafini, Abb. O.S.B.  
*Secretary*

## CHAPTER 1: THE NATURE AND OBJECT OF THE THIRD ORDER

1. The *Secular Third Order of the Friars Preachers*, or the *Order of Penance of St. Dominic*, also known as the *Militia of Jesus Christ*, is an association of the faithful living in the world, who, sharing in the religious and apostolic life of the Order of Friars Preachers through the observance of their own Rule approved by the Holy See, strive under the direction of the Order to attain to Christian perfection.
2. The object of the Third Order is the sanctification of its members or the practice of a more perfect form of Christian life, and the salvation of souls, in conformity with the condition of the faithful living in the world.
3. The means of attaining this end are, besides the accomplishment of the ordinary precepts and the duties proper to one's state: the observance of this *Rule*, especially assiduous prayer, as far as possible liturgical prayer, the practice of mortification, and apostolic and charitable works for the Faith and the Church according to each one's particular state or condition in life.
4. The assemblies into which the Third Order is divided are called *Fraternities* or *Chapters*. One may, however, for a special reason, be received into the Third Order without being incorporated in any particular Fraternity.
5. Chapters cannot lawfully be erected without the consent of the local Ordinary. As far as possible the brothers and sisters should have distinct chapters.
6. Whatever is said in the *Rule* concerning tertiaries, though expressed in the masculine gender, applies equally to women as well as men, unless the contrary is evident from the context or from the nature of things.
7. The erection is also desirable of chapters of secular priests who, under the direction of a Dominican Father, aspire to a more perfect apostolic life.

## CHAPTER 2: CONCERNING THOSE TO BE RECEIVED AND THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED

8. In the first place, since the spiritual prosperity of this Order depends generally on the reception into it of well-disposed persons, no one shall be admitted into the Third Order unless, in the prudent judgment of the Director, he has been proved, after careful investigation and sufficient test, to be a Catholic of devout life and good repute, sincerely desirous of striving after Christian perfection, and gives good reason to hope, especially if he be young, that he will persevere in his good resolution. Moreover, as a true spiritual son of St. Dominic, he must strive to be an ardent and zealous promoter of the truth of the Catholic religion, and exemplary for his loyalty to the Church and the Roman Pontiff.
9. All, therefore, of both sexes, whether married or single, ecclesiastics or laity (except, however, religious and lay people who already belong to another Third Order) who are thus

well disposed, can be received into the Third Order of the Friars Preachers, provided that they have completed their eighteenth year, or, if the Provincial for a just reason should so permit, at least their seventeenth year. Married persons, however, are not to be received ordinarily without the consent of the spouse, unless there be a just motive for acting otherwise.

10. Those who have power to admit aspirants to the Third Order are:
  - 1° The Master General of the Order, or the Prior Provincial within the limits of his jurisdiction:
  - 2° The lawfully appointed Director of a Fraternity of the Third Order or a Father delegated by him in each case for his own Fraternity:
  - 3° Any priest delegated by the Master General of the Order or by the Prior Provincial. He may not, however, in places where a Fraternity is already erected, use this faculty without the consent of the Director of that Fraternity, or the special permission of the delegating authority. The delegation given by the Master General is for life, but the delegation granted by the Provincial requires the confirmation of his successor
11. For the reception of anyone into a particular Fraternity of the Third Order, the consent of the Council of that Fraternity is required as well as that of the Director.

### **CHAPTER 3: THE HABIT OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS**

12. The entire habit of the Third Order, made of plain woolen material, consists of a white tunic, a leather belt worn round the waist, and, for the brothers, a black mantle with capuce, for the sisters a black mantle with veil and linen coif.
13. The tertiaries ordinarily, however, wear instead of the habit of the Order a small white woolen scapular under their secular dress.
14. At public functions, tertiaries, with the consent of the local ordinary, may wear the full habit of the Third Order, or some particular insignia, according to local custom. But, if they take part collectively, they shall have their distinctive insignia, and walk after the cross of the Fraternity.
15. Outside of sacred functions, tertiaries are forbidden to wear the entire habit of the Third Order without the special permission of the Master General of the Order and the consent of the local ordinary.
16. At their death, tertiaries may be clothed in the entire habit of the Third Order, or even in that of the First or Second Order.
17. Although the tertiaries may wear any dress appropriate to their age and state in life, yet its form should be conspicuously in accord with Christian modesty, and devoid of worldly vanity, as becomes the servants and handmaids of Christ.

## **CHAPTER 4: RECEPTION INTO THE THIRD ORDER AND THE BLESSING OF THE HABIT**

18. When the time of probation has expired, the postulant may be received by the Director, or by his delegate, before an altar in the Church or in some other suitable place, according to the ceremonial of the Third Order, in the presence of at least some members of the Fraternity. But, if the postulant is not to be assigned to any particular Fraternity, he may be received without the presence of witnesses.
19. As soon as he has duly received the habit, he is admitted to participation in all the spiritual goods of the brothers and sisters of the Order.
20. The scapular must be blessed as often as it is renewed. All the priests of the Dominican Order, besides those who have the faculty of giving the habit, can bless the scapular. But in places where there are neither Fathers of the Order nor a Director of a Chapter, any priest having faculties to hear confessions may bless it.

## **CHAPTER 5: THE NOVITIATE AND PROFESSION**

21. Before being admitted to profession, the novices must spend one year under the direction of the Master of Novices studying the *Rule*, in order to acquire a knowledge of their obligations and strive to assimilate the spirit of our Holy Father, St. Dominic.
22. When the year of probation is finished, or even sooner if exceptional circumstances demand it, the novice, with the consent of the majority of the Council of the Chapter, may be received to profession by the Director.
23. Those who have been privately admitted to the Third Order can be received to profession according to the prudent judgment of a priest duly authorized to receive them.
24. The profession consists in a formal promise, without a vow however, to live according to the *Rule* of the Third Order of the Friars Preachers.
25. The form of Profession is as follows:

*To the honor of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Blessed Dominic, I, N. N., in the presence of you, the Director, and the Prior (or Prioress) of the Chapter of the Third Order of Penance of St. Dominic established here, as representative of the Most Reverend Master General of the Order, do promise that henceforth I will live according to the Rule and manner of the Brothers and Sisters of the said Order of Penance of Blessed Dominic until death.*

26. In every Fraternity there shall be a book in which are registered the names of its members and the dates of their reception and profession. Those who receive tertiaries privately must send the same information to the Father Provincial of the Province in which the tertiary habitually resides, or to the Superior from whom they received the faculty.

27. The Brethren of the Third Order, after their profession, which is for life, are bound to persevere in this Order, nor may they without a just cause pass to another Third Order.

## **CHAPTER 6: THE RECITATION OF THE OFFICE**

28. Tertiaries shall recite daily either the ancient Office which is the *Pater noster*, or the *Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, according to the Dominican rite, or the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary. When unable to satisfy the above obligation, they may recite any one of the *Little Offices* approved in the Order, or even a third part of the Rosary.
29. If they recite the ancient Office of the *Pater noster*, they shall say: for Matins twenty-eight *Paters* and *Aves*, for Vespers fourteen, and seven for each of the Little Hours. They shall also say the Apostles' Creed at the beginning of Matins, before Prime and at the end of Compline. Matins may be said in the evening for the following day, or on the morning of that day; the Little Hours before mid-day; and Vespers and Compline towards evening. The Office, however, may be said at any time of the day, provided that the order of the Hours is regularly observed.
30. Priests and those in Sacred Orders satisfy this obligation by the recitation of the Divine Office; but once a day they shall say the responsory *O Spem Miram* with the versicle and prayer in honor of St. Dominic.
31. Tertiary priests may, with the permission of the Master General of the Order, use the Dominican Breviary and Missal, and the Calendar of the Order.

## **CHAPTER 7: CONFESSION, COMMUNION, AND OTHER PIOUS PRACTICES**

32. The tertiaries shall, unless legitimately hindered, approach the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist at least twice each month. But if they do so more frequently, and even daily receive the most Holy Body of Christ, their devotion is to be commended.
33. Tertiaries should make every possible effort to assist daily at the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and piously and attentively unite with the priest who is celebrating. Likewise, they should devote themselves to mental prayer and works of piety in conformity with the spirit of the Order.
34. Let them be particularly and lovingly devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, most faithful Patroness of the whole Order, to her Spouse St. Joseph, to the Blessed Patriarch Dominic, to St. Catherine of Siena, Patroness of the Third Order, and to all the Saints and Blessed of the Order.
35. Let them behave with great reverence in Church, especially during the celebration of the Divine Offices, and be an example to all the faithful.

36. It is greatly to be desired that in each Fraternity a retreat of not less than three days be made at least once a year.

### **CHAPTER 8: FASTS**

37. In addition to the fasts and abstinences prescribed by the Church, the tertiaries, who are not impeded from doing so, shall fast on the vigils of the feasts of the Most Holy Rosary, our Holy Father St. Dominic, and St. Catherine of Siena. Moreover, in accordance with the penitential spirit of the Order and the prescriptions of the ancient Rule, it is laudable that they fast on all the Fridays of the year, and perform other penitential works with the advice of the Director, or of a prudent confessor.

### **CHAPTER 9: THE AVOIDANCE OF WORLDLINESS**

38. Tertiaries should abstain from frequenting places of worldly amusements. They should not, for instance, go to dances or frivolous entertainments. But if it is impossible for them to abstain from these things, let them learn to make a virtue of necessity and, if time permits, let them seek permission from the Father Director, or at least inform him.

### **CHAPTER 10: REVERENCE TOWARD PRELATES AND CLERGY**

39. Tertiaries should show the greatest reverence towards their bishop and parish priest, and faithfully accomplish their duties towards them in accordance with local laws or customs. Let them hold in esteem the other clergy also, according to the dignity and official position of each.

### **CHAPTER 11: APOSTOLIC AND CHARITABLE WORKS**

40. Following the example of the Apostolic Patriarch Dominic and the Seraphic Virgin Catherine of Siena, tertiaries should be animated with an ardent and generous desire for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.
41. Mindful of the traditions of our forefathers, the tertiaries should labor by word and deed for the truth of the Catholic Faith, for the Church and the Roman Pontiff, proving themselves their valiant defenders in everything and always. Let them also assist in apostolic works, especially those of the Order.
42. They should devote themselves, under the direction of Superiors, to works of charity and mercy, either singly or collectively, according to the circumstances of the time and local necessities, and as far as their condition and capacity will permit.
43. They should also help the parish priest in the pious works of the parish, and particularly, where it is necessary, in giving religious instruction to boys and girls.

## CHAPTER 12: VISITING AND ASSISTING THE SICK

44. Let visitors of the sick be appointed in the Fraternity, who, according to the wish of the Director, may charitably visit the sick brethren and endeavor to assist them spiritually and temporally.

## CHAPTER 13: DEATH OF THE BRETHERN AND SUFFRAGES

45. The death of a member of the Fraternity shall be announced as soon as possible to the other members, who, unless lawfully prevented, should personally attend the obsequies for the deceased.
46. Moreover, within eight days from the receipt of the notice of the death, each member of that Fraternity shall recite a third part of the Rosary, hear one Mass, and apply one Holy Communion for the soul of the deceased.
47. Each tertiary shall daily say one *Pater*, *Ave*, and *Requiem* for the living and dead of the whole Order.
48. Besides, each tertiary shall annually have celebrated, or at least assist at, three Masses for the welfare of the Brothers and Sisters, both living and dead.

## CHAPTER 14: THE SUPERIORS OF THE THIRD ORDER

49. The Order of Friars Preachers is placed under the direction and correction of the Master General of the Order, to whom as a consequence both Fraternities and individual tertiaries as well as all the Directors are subject in all matters that pertain to their manner of life in accordance with the *Rule*.
50. Besides the Master General of the Order, Provincials also within the limits of their own Province have, by reason of their office, pastoral care of the Third Order.
51. The Master General of the Order and Priors Provincial have the right to visit either personally or by delegates each Fraternity once a year or even oftener if necessary. Whatever it may seem good to them to decide whether by way of counsel, admonition, ordination, or correction, even including the deposition of an official, should be accepted by each and all cheerfully and humbly.
52. Tertiaries who are not members of any Fraternity shall regard as their Superior the Master General of the Order or the Prior Provincial; while those who belong to a Fraternity depend also on the Director and the other superiors of that Fraternity.
53. The appointment of the Director of a Fraternity erected in a church of the Order is reserved exclusively to the Master General or the Prior Provincial. In the case of churches not belonging to the Order the consent of the local Ordinary is also required.

54. The Director is appointed for three years, on the expiration of which he may be re-appointed.
55. During his term of office, the Director, as such, can discharge those duties which concern the training and spiritual direction of the Brethren. As to preaching sermons to them, the laws of the Church shall be observed.
56. Directors who are secular priests must send to the Provincial once a year an account of the state and progress of the Fraternity entrusted to their care.

### **CHAPTER 15: OFFICIALS**

57. In every Fraternity there shall be a Prior, Subprior, Novice Master, and other Officials and Councilors.
58. The Council of the Fraternity may not exceed twelve in number. The Prior, Subprior and Novice Master are, by reason of their office, members of this Council.
59. On the erection of a Fraternity all the Officials are appointed by the Provincial; and also on the dissolution of the Council, which happens automatically as often as the whole Council or even the majority of the Councilors from any cause whatever retire from office.
60. The Officials and Councilors hold office for three years; but each year a third part of the Council shall be renewed by the Director and the remaining Councilors. In the year, however, in which the Officials are to be renewed, the Council must first be completed, and then the Director with the whole Council shall select the Prior and other Officials. In case of disagreement between the Director and Council, recourse must be had to the Prior Provincial.

### **CHAPTER 16: THE OFFICE OF PRIOR AND OTHER OFFICIALS**

61. The office of Prior is carefully to see that the *Rule* is observed by all the members. He should also diligently note whether in the movements, comportment or dress of any member of his Fraternity anything occurs which might be offensive to the eye. If he notice any of the members transgressing or even negligent, let him charitably admonish and correct them; or, should it seem to him more expedient, he may report the matter t for correction to the Director of the Fraternity.
62. In the absence of the Prior the Subprior takes his place.
63. The other officials shall accomplish their respective duties according as particular customs and the needs of each Fraternity may best determine.
64. The Council shall be summoned by the Director, who presides at it, as often as the vote of the Council is required according to the *Rule*, or when any important matters according to its particular statutes have to be transacted.

## **CHAPTER 17: THE MEETINGS OF THE BRETHREN**

65. Once a month, on a fixed day and hour, the Brethren of the Chapter shall assemble to hear a sermon from the Director, and to assist at Mass if the hour be suitable.
66. The Director shall read and explain the *Rule* to the Brethren, inform them of the matters to be discussed and point out and correct such negligence's as he thinks fit before God, and in accordance with the *Rule*.
67. Let the suffrages for the living and the dead be said also, and absolution given from the faults committed against the *Rule*.

## **CHAPTER 18: THE CORRECTION OF THE BRETHREN**

68. Should anyone be found guilty of a notable fault, and, after having been admonished by the Director, fails to amend, let him be corrected according to his condition and in proportion to the gravity or levity of his fault. He can even be temporarily excluded from the meetings of the Brethren; or even perpetually, with the consent, however, of the Fraternity, if after one or two admonitions he does not amend; nor can he be again admitted without the consent of the Council of the Fraternity.
69. Only the Master General of the Order or the Prior Provincial may, for serious reasons, expel a member from the Third Order; and this, in case of grave scandal, even without admonition.

## **CHAPTER 19: DISPENSATIONS**

70. The Master General of the Order has full power to dispense from any precept of this *Rule*. Likewise, the Provincial within the limits of his jurisdiction, or even the Director in his Fraternity, or their delegate, can dispense their tertiaries in special cases and for a reasonable cause.

## **CHAPTER 20: THE NATURE AND OBLIGATION OF THIS RULE**

71. The precepts of this *Rule*, except those which are divine or ecclesiastical, do not oblige the Brothers and Sisters under pain of sin before God, but only to the punishment determined by the law or to be imposed by the Prelate or Director in accordance with the prescriptions of Chapter 18. Mindful, however, of their profession, let all the Brethren observe the ordinations of this *Rule* by the help of the grace of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, God for ever and ever. Amen.