

**RELIGIOUS LIFE
IN THE
MODERN WORLD**

**SELECTIONS FROM THE NOTRE DAME
INSTITUTES OF SPIRITUALITY**

VOLUME II

The Novitiate

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Religious Life in the Modern World

SELECTIONS FROM THE
NOTRE DAME INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY
VOLUME II

THE NOVITIATE

by

Paul Philippe, O.P.

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P R E F A C E

In 1952 at the National Congress for Religious held at Notre Dame University the Reverend Paul Philippe, O.P. recommended that Institutes of Spirituality be established for the in-service training of Sister superiors and novice mistresses.* He suggested Notre Dame as a site for one of these institutes, a suggestion warmly received and carried out.

The Holy Cross Fathers have collaborated carefully with the Conference of Major Superiors and the Sister Formation Conference in programming. The excellent speakers have represented both the many Religious Orders and the laity. Attendance has been from a multitude of Religious Families both in the United States and abroad.

For a number of years Father Joseph Haley, C.S.C. has been designated to execute program policy and to edit the *Proceedings* of the Institute. Since obedience has called him away from Notre Dame he will no longer continue this function. We express our gratitude to him for his careful work for the Institutes.

In view of the great interest shown in the outstanding talks given during the various Institutes we have decided to reprint many of them in terms of natural groupings with a unifying subject title. In pursuing one subject we have turned to all of our *Proceedings*, and have brought together all of the material in the present handy paperback form.

The present volume, entitled *The Novitiate*, is the second in the series and contains the valuable lectures on "Formation of Novices and the Government of Communities" given in three successive years by Reverend Paul Philippe, O.P.

We know that the message of the Institutes will continue to be a vital aid to the mature and modern Religious striving to strongly "witness for Christ."

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ROBERT S. FELTON, C.S.C. *General Chairman,*
Notre Dame Institutes of Spirituality

* Paul Philippe, O.P., "The Necessity of Special Training for Mistresses and Superiors," *Sisters' Religious Community Life in the United States* (New York, 1952), p.30. (The Most Reverend Paul Philippe is now the Secretary for the Sacred Congregation of Religious.)

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The Formation of Novices
and the Government
of Communities

PART ONE

I. *The Superior*

THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS GOVERNMENT AND THE FUNCTION OF SUPERIORS

NATURE OF RELIGIOUS GOVERNMENT

1. **Definition:** The religious Government consists in the conducting of a religious Community towards its end.
2. The end of this Religious Government is to create a favourable "milieu" for the acquisition of perfection, by ensuring the observance of the Institute's Constitutions and by fostering a good spirit in the Community. Secondly, the end of the religious Government is to stimulate the fervour of each of its members in tending to perfection.
3. The domain of Religious Government is not things, such as Administration, but persons, and persons in their social life, not in their intimate life, such as Spiritual Direction intends.
4. The principal Act of governing is Command, with which obedience corresponds in the subjects. Command is an act of Prudence, according to the objective rules of Justice, moved by an ardent, firm and sweet Charity.

FUNCTION AND POWERS OF SUPERIORS

1. The Superior's part is, first, to govern her Community, secondly to perfect the personal formation of her subjects.
2. The Superior's power is a "dominative power," i.e. the right to oblige the subjects to obey according to the Constitutions in tending to the goals of the Institute. This Authority is limited by the prohibition of obliging subjects to manifest the secrets of their conscience to their Superior.
3. The Superior has a mission: her charge is the result of a divine choice. She represents God. Her office is a grace and a responsibility. The Sisters have the right to be led by their Superior to perfection.
4. The Superior is chosen by the supreme authorities of the Institute, and, therefore, must govern according to their directives. The dependence of higher Superiors in governing is the true condition of a fruitful government.

5. Practically, authority does not only arise from the "power," but also from the personal "influence" of the Superior. This influence proceeds from the competence and personal virtue of this Superior.

THE QUALITIES NECESSARY FOR THE SUPERIOR

N.B. One must specify exactly what is strictly necessary for her to carry out her charge fittingly and what she must desire to possess to become a perfect Superior.

1. As the function of the Superior consists in governing her Community, the principal virtue she requires is supernatural prudence, to which justice must be joined, the supreme social virtue.

2. As the Superior's first duty is to govern by ensuring that the Constitutions are observed, it is indispensable for her to set an example of regularity.

3. As the end of her government consists in leading her daughters to perfection, the Superior must have a strong desire for her daughters' perfection and then she must love them supernaturally.

4. As the desire for perfection on the part of her daughters does not develop normally without a desire for her own perfection, and as her own charity towards them presupposes in her a real love of God, every religious worthy of this name must attain to a certain degree of union with God and must be solicitous about her own spiritual progress.

5. It is desirable that the Superior should already be a holy religious and a woman of prayer, but this must not be considered a necessity: between a holy soul who has no sense of governing and a religious who possesses this but is less advanced in the ways of the spirit, St. Thomas teaches that the latter must be chosen (II-II q.185 a.3; Quodl. 8 a.6):

6. It is fitting that the Superior should possess religious instruction and general culture at least equal to the average of those possessed by her daughters, and, although to some degree less necessary than is required on the part of a Novice Mistress, a certain knowledge of the principles of the spiritual life and of the obligations of the religious state. Finally, she should be fully acquainted with her Constitutions, so that she can speak of them with more fruit than with less art perhaps, either in Chapter or in the conferences she gives to her community, or, in such private counsel she is led to give to her daughters.

7. If she is Superior of a boarding-school or a hospital, she must possess the technical competence needed for the administration of her establishment.

PERSONAL SANCTIFICATION OF THE SUPERIOR

INHERENT DANGERS IN THE SUPERIOR'S CHARGE

1. Crushing administrative worries and harassing occupations, sometimes unavoidable overstrain, carry with them the risk of relegating care for personal perfection to a secondary place and of causing the duties of the religious life to be neglected. Little by little the soul loses its taste for the religious life and becomes enervated. It is indispensable that the Superior should reserve for herself time for prayer and reading, and, as far as possible, that this time should not be taken out of nights that are doubtless already too short. Moreover she must at all cost avoid long continued overstrain, so as to keep well within her rhythm of life, without which there can be no further progress either in her own personal religious life or in that of her community.
2. Pride—self-satisfaction with her rank, with the compliments and honours she receives. To beg God for humility and to accept humiliations due to her own mistakes or to misunderstandings on the part of others.
3. Independence. To be most obedient to higher Superiors and to the dispositions of those holding office (chantress, sacristan, refectorian).
4. Not to dispense too easily, above all from exercises.
5. Useless expenditure. To keep her accounts so as to submit them to whomever has the right to inspect them. When it is allowed, to have a special fund for discreet almsgiving.
6. To be on one's guard against too easy an attachment to a particular priest-counsellor. A Superior, nonetheless, should have a director.
7. To avoid going out too frequently and spending too long in the parlor. Not to let herself be absorbed by any activity that runs counter to the duties of her charge.

THE HELPS OF HER CHARGE FOR PERSONAL SANCTIFICATION

1. The fact that one must set the example and require of others virtues one does not personally possess should call for personal sanctification with greater generosity.
2. Responsibility for souls disposes to prayer and self-sacrifice on their behalf. One has received a divine mission of which one will have to render an account.
3. Anxieties, trials, contradictions, misunderstandings as well as the joys of the Superior make for deeper understanding and love of Christ and the Most Holy Virgin by sharing the feelings they had, when they spent themselves for their disciples.

II. *The Novice-Mistress*

SCOPE OF THE NOVITIATE AND DUTIES OF THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

DEFINITION OF THE NOVITIATE

The Novitiate is the time of probation of the "Novices," namely of the "new" members of the Institute, and is as well, the small Community formed by them and their Mother Mistress, a community separated from the rest of the House. For this reason, too, the place reserved for the Novices is called the Novitiate.

ENDS OF THE NOVITIATE

1. Above all the Novitiate is a time of probation, a trial of the candidate's religious vocation.
2. Then, the Novitiate is a preparation for profession in the Institute, through an instructing of the Novices on the spiritual life and on the end and means of the religious life in general and of the particular life of the Institute, and is an education in religious virtue and the interior life.

DEFINITION OF THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

The Novice-Mistress is the single Religious charged by the higher Superiors with the formation of the Novices.

DUTIES OF THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

1. Above all the Novice-Mistress must discern vocations, prove them and discard persons who are unsuitable.
2. The Novice-Mistress must furthermore instruct the Novices and educate them in religious virtue by means of comment on the Constitutions, spiritual conferences, private talks and observations, and by means of the common life itself.

POWERS OF THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

NATURE AND POWERS OF THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

1. The Novice-Mistress is the single Religious put in charge of the

Novices by the higher Superiors for the Novices; she is the only person vested with competent authority. She cannot remit her powers into the hands of another Sister from motives of false humility.

2. The Novice-Mistress can only exercise her powers in dependence upon the higher Superiors of the Institute. Her charge is a mandate, a mission, a delegation. It is a mission established by the Church itself, by means of the Codex and because her Superiors too have received their own powers from the Church. Grandeur of the task of the Novice-Mistress in the presence of the Church!

It is a mission received and established by the Institute itself, by means of the higher Superiors. "The Novice-Mistress is the perpetual founder of the Order" (P. Lacordaire, *Lettres inédites a des Religieux* Paris, 1874, p. 91). Hence, in practice, the Novice-Mistress must form her daughters, not according to her own ideas, but according to the norms of her Superiors. In addition, the Novices themselves are generally conscious of their Mother's "mission." For them she represents the Institute, even the voice of God. The Novice-Mistress is mistress, yes, but she will not be this unless she is one that ministers.

3. The Novice-Mistress' power is a domestic power.

EXTENT OF THE NOVICE-MISTRESS' POWERS

1. Powers of the Mistress over the Novices' consciences.

The prohibition of the Codex (Can. 530; 1) forbidding Superiors to induce their subjects to manifest their consciences invites the Novice-Mistress to respect her daughters' freedom of conscience. Manifestation of conscience consists in revealing to the Mother the most intimate secrets, actual matter for confession.

Is the Novice-Mistress spiritual "directress"? We must distinguish two degrees of "spiritual direction" in her. A degree that is perfect, intimate and ideal: it is not necessary and cannot be imposed on all the Novices. It calls for affinity of spirit. A degree that is less intimate, simple filial trust on the part of the Novices, religious formation on the Mother's part: this is necessary.

2. Lawful and unlawful demands on the part of the Novice-Mistress. Up to what point can the Novice-Mistress question her daughters? She can ask about their observance of the Constitutions, on their health, their vocation, on their way of meditation, their progress in virtue, but not about their shortcomings in respect of these, namely their sins.

3. Powers and duties of the Novice-Mistress regarding secrets en-

trusted to her. (Cfr. Creusen, "Secrets et confidences," in the *Revue des Communautés Religieuses*, 1949, pp. 176-182). The Novices must be made to realize that the Novice-Mistress has the right and duty to refer to the higher Superiors whatever is necessary for definitive judgment upon their vocations. But there are things which will not change the judgment of the Mother General and which have been entrusted as secret to the Novice-Mistress (secrets to do with family, the past, etc.). These can and, indeed, must be kept secret by the Novice-Mistress.

Regarding the Novices' letters, the Novice-Mistress and not the local Superior generally has the right to read them. Furthermore she is held to secrecy according to the same limits relating to confidence by word of mouth.

4. Powers of the Novice-Mistress and the Novices' Spiritual Director.

If a Novice has had leave to write a sealed letter to her Spiritual Director, the Novice-Mistress cannot read this letter, but can withdraw from the Novice the permission granted, since it is not a question of a right due to a Novice, but of a concession granted to her. It is better not to advise a Novice to maintain regular relations with the Spiritual Director who has guided her vocation: he would become *volente* and *nolente*, the Novice's "Master." Nonetheless, at moments of grave decision for the Novice (Clothing, Profession), particularly if she is not certain about her vocation, it is right to grant, indeed to propose recourse to the ex-Director in a sealed letter.

QUALITIES OF THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

POWERS OF THE OFFICE AND PERSONAL INFLUENCE OF THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

In order to fulfill her office, it is not enough for the Mistress to be nominated and receive her powers: in addition, she must exercise a profound personal influence.

Now to exercise such influence, it is essential the Mistress should be a model for her daughters, possess a proper knowledge and exercise certain virtues.

Therefore, the Mistress must cultivate these gifts and dedicate herself to her charge. This is the reason why the Codex wills that the Mistress should be freed from every other office which would, even to the smallest extent, hinder the exercise of her charge (can. 559). In addition, in this precept of the Church, it is not simply a question of

permitting the Mistress to be present at the different exercises of the Novitiate and to be available for the personal requests of her daughters, but it is also a matter of affording her the possibility of preparing her conferences, the time necessary for thinking over the progress of the Novitiate and for praying for her Novices, especially about the more difficult cases. If the Mistress is overburdened, she cannot exercise the profound influence, which the Church and the Institute expect of her.

EXAMPLE OF HER OWN LIFE AND PERSONAL SANCTIFICATION

1. Necessity of setting the example.

There seems to be no need of proving that the Novice-Mistress must set the example in everything. Let us give but two motives: 1) Her influence would be of no value whatever, if she did not practice herself what she teaches her Novices. The schematic formula which formed a kind of motto for medieval Bishops, "*verbo et exemplo*" must be her own. Indeed, for the Novices, the voice of the Mistress is the voice of God. She is, too, the model of the Religious of the Institute, the incarnation of the Congregation's ideal. Therefore every time the Novices see something that contradicts her teaching, in the life, words or comportment of their Mother, her influence is that much diminished. Novices notice things; they have the sharpest eyes! They are most exacting in regard to their Mistress. But this still remains a motive that is in a sense negative. 2) The deeper reason for the necessity of being really herself in teaching others is this: no one can give what she does not possess.

The Mistress is indeed the Mother, the efficient cause that generates the religious life in the young entrusted to her care. How can she guide them in the ways of holiness, if she does not give them the lead in showing them the road?

2. The principal personal virtues of the Mistress. Before all the Novice-Mistress must be an interior soul and a living Rule.

a. An interior soul, namely a soul of prayer, of supplication. Not only a Religious faithful to her exercises of piety, but a person who lives intensely, whose heart is filled with an ardent love of Jesus and Our Lady, whose will is docile to the movements of the Holy Spirit; a Religious who knows the way to find savor in prayer that is a little difficult and outside the chapel is always recollected, without tension or ostentation, but with full freedom of spirit and sweet joy.

b. A living Rule, namely a Religious who can observe and does observe all the points of the Constitutions.

I say "who can observe," because to be Mistress one must enjoy sufficiently good health. If the Mother is constantly absent from the common exercises, never eats with the others in refectory—I don't say for a month or two after some serious illness, but habitually—then is the fear that the Novices, even the best, will finally be scandalized, for they do not know yet how to distinguish between legitimate dispensations and negligences. It will at least be difficult for the Mother to inculcate the spirit of observance and regularity in her daughters, to correct the lukewarm and above all to send away those Novices whose health is not sound enough for the Institute. It is therefore of practical importance that the Mother should be capable of observing the common life. Otherwise how can she be the "living Rule?"

I say "living." In fact it is not enough for the Mother to be rigorously observant of the Constitutions. The letter of the law is never enough; it is the spirit itself that one needs. Hence the Novice-Mistress must possess the spirit of the Institute, for she must stand as the incarnation of the Congregation's spirit.

There are in fact Mistresses who are souls of deep piety, models of regular observance, but who could perfectly well be Mistresses in any other Religious Order whatever. Generally they are excellent Religious, but one does not sense in them the specific characteristics of their own spiritual family. Now this is a serious matter. To form her own Novices the Mother-Mistress must possess the spirit of the Institute, to live upon the spirit that is proper to her own Congregation. On this condition alone, the Novice-Mistress will in truth be the living exemplar, the attractive, fascinating model that she must be for her own children an interior soul and a living Rule of the Institute.

These qualities can in some degree make up for the lack of educative sense and knowledge that she needs. Indeed, the example of a Novice-Mistress will make a permanent impression upon the spirit and hearts of her daughters: after ten, twenty years they will recall how in similar circumstances she herself behaved, and such an example will then be a help that is really effective.

These personal qualities are, however, not enough to make a Novice-Mistress who is complete.

3. Personal sanctification of the Novice-Mistress in her office.

a. Dangers inherent in the Novice-Mistress' office!

1) Pride: a soul could maintain itself sufficiently advanced in the ways of the spirit and yet attribute to her own self a unique competence in judging of the ideals of the Institute.

2) Attachment to a Novice of more interest who is, therefore, more dear to her.

3) Nervous tension, resulting from the life of the Novitiate that is by its nature so stable and enclosed, perhaps after a great activity devoted to works.

b. Helps from the office through its own power to sanctify.

1) The Novice-Mistress must perforce remake her own Novitiate. She is driven to perfect her own life of prayer and give the example in every direction.

2) The reading she must do for her Novices nourishes her own soul.

3) No office in the Church gives a more practical obligation and better disposes to one's own sanctification than that of Novice-Mistress.

THE PEDAGOGIC SENSE

Besides the exemplary qualities already described, it is absolutely necessary for the Novice-Mistress to have educative sense, the art of instilling in her daughters taste for the interior life, the will to acquire the religious virtues and the spirit of the Institute.

One finds Mistresses, poorly endowed intellectually, who can form their Novices perfectly without being able to explain how. I prefer a Mistress who enjoys such a gift instinctively and empirically to another Mistress who is more brilliant, but in the long run less educative.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

1. Necessity for a certain specialized knowledge:

Because the Mistress must teach her Novices, both in common conferences and private talks, the principles of the spiritual life, the nature of the vows and the religious virtues, the end and the specific means of the Institute, the Constitutions, and about spiritual reading, she must be capable of speaking about all these things with a certain competence.

Therefore, just as the Mother is not a professor of theology but a mistress of life, she must be distrustful of too theoretical a knowledge. The Mistress should, in fact, quicken everything she has learned in books, hiding it away in her intimate life with Our Lord and with Our

Lady in such a way that she can give to her children the fruit, not of her study, but of her living contemplation: "*contemplata aliis tradere.*"

Furthermore, experience is a mistress of the foremost rank, so much the more when one is dealing with an *art* rather than a science: in fact, the Mistress should above all acquire the *habitus magistri*, namely the habitual prudence of the educator.

The dangers, therefore, that threaten the Novice-Mistress are—not to feel the need of instructing herself, of not keeping abreast, of putting things off, particularly after some years in office.

2. Knowledge to be acquired concerning:

a. The nature of the spiritual life and the religious state.

b. The great masters of the spiritual life so as to be able to give advice about spiritual reading.

c. Elements of the Canon Law for the parts that relate to the Novices and their profession, vows, etc.: in practice it is sufficient to have a good manual and know how to use it.

d. One's own Institute: its history, its ideal, its spirit, its end (comparing it with similar Institutes), its Constitutions (the Mother will have to explain every important article), its activity, etc.

e. The principles of pedagogy.

f. Domestic medicine and an idea of the various psychopathic constitutions.

VIRTUES TO BE EXERCISED IN THE OFFICE OF NOVICE-MISTRESS

In this paragraph we are not dealing with the Novice-Mistress' personal virtues, namely those of her intimate life, her interior life with God, her personal regularity in observing the Constitutions, etc. All that constitutes in fact what we have called "the example of her own personal life." It is true that these personal virtues are of the greatest importance in exercising a deep influence on the Novices, especially in setting them the example they must imitate. But the Novice-Mistress' task does not just consist in setting a good example of interior life and regularity. She has to act, namely educate and instruct. Now, to be a good educator, and particularly to be a good educator of young religious, of Novices, she must possess special virtues.

The Novice-Mistress must have above all a great maternal charity, but this charity should be just and firm, and its exercise should be tempered by supernatural prudence. The four virtues of the Mistress, then, are: Charity, Justice, Firmness, Prudence.

THE RELATIONS OF THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

WITH THE SUB-MISTRESS

According to Canon 559, the Sub-Mistress is "immediately subject to the Mistress *for all that refers to the Novitiate.*" In her life as a simple Religious she is subject to the local Superior, just as the Mistress herself is in other matters. The Vice-Mistress must be a collaborator with the Mistress, above all for the external building up of discipline (rubrics, chant, comportment, etc.). She can, however, help the Mistress by her acquaintance with the Novices, telling her all she has observed of them, their characters, their defects and progress, etc.

It can happen that a particular Novice finds it difficult to speak to the Mistress about some point regarding her spiritual life or also to open her confidence with her habitually. If the Mother allows it, and she must allow it if the Vice-Mistress has the stature for this duty, the latter herself can listen to the Novice, give her counsels *in proposito* and urge her to try and go rather to the Mistress herself.

If a Novice confides something to the Vice-Mistress, begging her not to tell it to the Mistress, the Vice-Mistress must show prudence and delicacy: she herself is not charged with the direction of the Novices. If one is really dealing with an exceptional case, she will have to go to the Mistress and tell her that there is a Novice who is asking to confide something secret with her: she will then have to comport herself in accordance with the Mistress' decision. If the Mother judges it opportune to grant the permission, she will use it with discretion, doing her best to bring the Novice by degrees to the Mistress herself.

WITH THE LOCAL SUPERIOR

1. Like every simple Religious, the Mistress depends on the local Superior, and she must ask of her the due permissions, for example, to write to her family, to leave the house for personal motives, etc.
2. Every Mistress, even as head of the Novitiate, also depends on the local Superior, like all the Novices, "for all that regards the regular and general observance of the house" (Canon 561). Indeed, just as the Novitiate constitutes a small Community within the house, this community should, as a member of the general community of the house, be governed by the Superior of the house. Thus the general horary, the carrying out of the ceremonies in the chapel, everything as regards the refectory, laundry, etc., depends on the local Superior.
3. Concerning mixed things, for example, the Novices' walks, they de-

pend on the local Superior in so far as they deprive the house of the collaboration of the Novices for the common tasks, but they depend on the Mistress, for the health and formation of the Novices. So too with the chant, the choice of books for reading in the refectory or for meditation, etc.

4. There is, therefore, need for a complete understanding between the Mistress and the local Superior. It would then show false humility on the part of the Mistress, were she to surrender herself into the hands of the local Superior, especially in mixed matters. Sometimes it is the Mistress's duty to defend the Novitiate's and the Novices' legitimate rights in fact of some local Superior's interference and abuse. If, for example, she forces a Novice to teach in the school or work in the kitchen, so that she misses some important exercise in the Novitiate every day, the Mistress can and must oppose this to the extent of forbidding, if necessary, the Novice to leave the Novitiate in order to fulfill these tasks. There is evident need to avoid going to such extremes, but it is as well to know where one's duty lies.

WITH THE CONFESSORS

1. With one's own Confessor and Director: It is right for the Mistress to have a spiritual Director, who can be the ordinary Confessor or some pious and prudent Priest: indeed, a Mistress has need of a spiritual guide and counsellor. But the Director, particularly if he is the Novices' Confessor, should not be the real master of the Novices through the medium of his child. This is not to imply that the Mistress can never ask advice of her spiritual Father about things regarding the Novitiate, but the Mistress should then be left free to follow or not the Director's advice. A counsel is not a precept: it must be considered, weighed, set aside or accepted, according to one's final judgment.

2. With the Novices' Confessors. The Mistress must never try to obtain from the Confessors information about her children, not even to sound their opinion about the Novices' vocations. Indeed, the Confessor must not talk to the Mistress about her daughters, because he cannot use knowledge acquired in confession. It can, however, occur that the Confessor has received from a Novice herself leave to speak to the Mistress about her soul: but this must be most rare; and Confessors should not lend themselves to this kind of intervention and should advise their penitents to speak directly to the Mother. There are also cases in which the Confessor must oblige the Novice to speak

THE GOVERNMENT OF COMMUNITIES

herself to the Mother, for example, if she is not prepared to take the vow of chastity in the near future.

It can happen that the Mistress is somewhat preoccupied with the state of soul of one of her Novices: in such a case it is a good thing for the Mistress to expose the case to the Confessor. But after the Novice's Confession, the Mistress should not try and find out what has happened.

When a Novice asks to see the Confessor in the parlour, it is better to say that this is not the custom of the Institute. The Confessors should be aware of this, so that no offence is given or taken.

WITH THE COMMUNITY

It is the duty of the Mistress to stay with her Novices. It is, however, just as well that she should not live completely separated from the community, as much for her own religious and nervous balance as for the good of the Novices.

1. For the Mistress herself, it is almost a necessity that she should go every so often into the Community, particularly for recreation. Otherwise she will be too tense. Furthermore, community life sets her alongside her fellow sisters and thus saves her from gradually coming to think of herself as a kind of absolute queen.
2. For the good of the Novices, it is fitting that the Mistress should obtain in recreation news about the Institute, the Church, the world, to convey it back to her daughters, with prudence and discretion. Furthermore, it is not a bad thing for the Sisters of the Community to see the Mistress among them occasionally, both to have some news of the Novices, as well as to find out that, in short, the Mistress is a person of common sense and balance—"just one of themselves," and that their criticisms had no foundation.

III. *Discerning of Vocation*

NATURE OF RELIGIOUS VOCATION

DEFINITION OF RELIGIOUS VOCATION

1. We must above all distinguish *vocation in itself*, namely the calling by God to the religious life in the Institute, and the *manifestation*, namely the signs which reveal it.
2. In itself, namely on God's part, vocation is an act of the Divine Will which moves the human will to embrace the religious state in a particular Institute. Vocation is, therefore, a grace, furthermore an operative grace (stimulating and illuminating), a gift of the Lord, an interior inspiration set by God in our will.
3. Vocation does not, therefore, consist in the *admission by the Superiors* to the religious life in the Institute, as some people claim; vocation must precede admission, because no one can be admitted into the Institute, if the call of God has not been acknowledged. Admission is on that account a necessary condition for the vocation to be complete.
4. The distinction between *general religious vocation* (namely to the religious life in general) and *special religious vocation* (namely to the Institute, introduced at the end of the XVIII century has no foundation in tradition, nor even in the documents of the Church: religious vocation, namely the call of God, is always special to a particular Institute. The Director or the Superior can make a mistake in discerning a girl's true vocation, when they believe that she is called to their own Institute, when in fact she is called to another, but this does not change the girl's true and special vocation.
5. The distinction between "theological vocation" and "juridical vocation" is useless, because the so-called "theological vocation" is really the vocation, and the Church's law only determines the criteria in accordance with which one discerns the same vocation. But on our part, vocation can be defined—our response to God's will.

THE COUNSEL OF PERFECTION AND CORRESPONDENCE TO THE CALL

1. Religious vocation is a counsel of the Lord to embrace a more perfect means for attaining more securely, more speedily, more freely, the

end of human life, but it is not a precept—*si vis perfectus esse*. It is an offer on Our Lord's part, an invitation, not an order.

2. Because a counsel never binds under sin, a girl who verifies the criteria of religious vocation and is even conscious of it does not commit a sin if she does not respond to Our Lord's real call and prefers to get married. She is deprived of special graces through not taking the means recognized by the Church and the Saints as being better for attaining perfection, but *in se* she commits no sin.

3. In addition it can well happen that a girl wants to tend to perfection in the world, in the married state. The mere fact of not wanting to be a Religious does not in itself signify a lack of generosity: not all generous people are called into Religion!

4. But if a person who verifies the criteria of true religious vocation and believes with reasonable motives that she will lose her soul in the world, she is then bound to enter or remain in Religion. Indeed, no one can expose herself to the loss of her soul; she must avoid and must shun all the proximate occasions of sin. This conclusion of St. Alphonsus Liguori is commonly taught.

MANIFESTATION OF VOCATION

VOCATIONS AND RECOGNITION OF VOCATIONS

1. Divine vocation, namely Our Lord's call to the Religious Life into the Institute, is an inspiration which is in itself imperceptible, because it is essentially supernatural, and supernatural realities are not felt. For this reason we cannot prove directly that we are called by Our Lord.

2. But we can and, indeed, must prove the existence of Vocation by objective signs which, according to the Church and the whole tradition, are quite sufficient to give moral certainty.

3. Under the movement of grace, the soul, called by God, reaches its own personal decision, according to objective criteria, and in this way fulfills the Divine Will. Thus the Will of God, in the case of Religious Vocation, manifests itself in the same way as it does in the case of any other divine counsel or precept, namely, there is no necessity to wait for a special manifestation of the "Will of God," but one must judge according to objective criteria, as always, in order to come to a decision.

4. In Canon 538 Holy Church has laid down the three criteria that are necessary and sufficient to recognize a Religious Vocation with moral

certainly: one can admit into Religion every Catholic who is *free from every legitimate* impediment and is animated with a *right and suitable intention*.

5. In addition, there are *revealing signs* of Religious Vocation, of motives which have practically and occasionally stirred the will to dedicate itself to God in the Religious Life: *attraction, interior inspirations, circumstances*.

a. Attraction is a sensible inclination towards the Religious Life that is almost instinctive and unreasoning, which precedes every decision of the will. One should not confuse this with right intention, which is the determination of the will, based upon reasonable motives to dedicate oneself to the service of God. Right intention can exist without attraction, even in the best Vocations. On the contrary it may well happen that a girl has a very powerful attraction towards the Religious Life, even towards the Institute, without possessing a true Vocation, because there is some canonical impediment or some physical or psychological disability.

b. Inspirations are calls by Our Lord: an interior word after Holy Communion, lights during a reading of the Gospel ("Come and follow me"), etc. They are more frequent than it seems, even with persons of a colder and more reasoning temperament. There is, however, need for caution and control, according to the evangelical maxim: "Every tree is known by its fruit" (Luke 6:44). If there is a profound change of life after the inspiration, in the way of piety, virtue, etc., until the entry into the Novitiate, there is not much room for doubt about its supernatural origin. On the contrary, if the subject of this phenomenon is an over-excitabile, deluded type, who loves making mysteries and then telling everyone about them, with no corresponding change for good in her life, it is evident that there has been no sign sent by Our Lord to reveal a true Vocation.

It is worth noting that these inspirations, even in the case when they really come from Our Lord, should not be confused with the Vocation itself, even though this is itself as definite as an "inspiration," a divine movement to dedicate oneself to God's service. Therefore, when a girl feels a movement that urges her to enter Religion, it cannot be said that "she is experiencing the Will of God" or the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that consequently there is no doubt about her Religious Vocation. In fact, what is felt is either the personal decision of the will itself which is attributed to God under the pretext of interior fervour, or it is an "inspiration" in the sense explained above, namely

something that occasionally manifests the objective criteria of Vocation. But then this inspiration must be controlled like all interior inspirations, because it is only too easy to attribute what simply springs from the imagination to the Holy Ghost.

c. Circumstances, something one has read, a sermon one has heard, a valued friend leaving for the Convent, the sudden death of one's "fiance," etc., are occasions which Our Lord may use to arouse in the will a definite determination, namely right intention.

d. Attraction, inspirations and circumstances can, therefore, be revealing signs of a true Religious Vocation. For this reason one should not refuse them consideration, for they cannot be treated "a priori" with contempt or ridicule. There is, nonetheless, need to keep them under control and use them with prudence, and never to depend on them as criteria in order to decide a Vocation. In fact, they can well be wanting, even in the case of an excellent Vocation.

CRITERIA OF VOCATION

RIGHT INTENTION

1. We are treating of intention, that is not simply of a more or less vague desire for the Religious Life, equivalent to a simple velleity ("I would rather like"), but of a true, determined and sustained wish, of the will to consecrate oneself to the service of God in the Religious Life that is proper to this given Institute. Hence the intention must be precise and particularized. It is not enough to wish for perfection in a general sense, but there is also the need to wish for that particular form of perfection that is to be attained through the practice of the three vows, as well as in this particular Institute with its own special characteristics and means. In a word, the intention of which one is treating can be expressed thus: "I wish to become a Sister in this Institute."

2. This intention must be right, namely willed, not by disordered motives that are purely human, but by motives that are morally good, also by the very motives for which the Institute was founded, namely to become a Saint, as well as by those which form the special purpose of the Institute, namely to dedicate oneself to the service of Our Lord through the particular works it performs.

3. It is not required, however, on the part of aspirants, especially those that are younger, or of those less well-developed intellectually, that they should have a perfect and explicit knowledge of this double pur-

pose of the Institute. It is enough that they wish to dedicate their life to Our Lord, even without knowing well what the works of the Institute comprise, provided that they remain content when those are explained to them. "I am ready to do whatever is asked of me."

4. But one essential condition is that the girl's decision is free: she must not enter Religion simply in obedience to her Director or the Mother who had charge of her education. The one and the other can declare that all the signs of Religious Vocation to the Institute are verified, but they must say: "Now you are in a position to decide for yourself—the act of giving yourself to Jesus must come properly from you."

5. The act of decision, namely right intention, can be made in a state of aridity, even to the extent of feeling nothing but the sacrifice involved. This want of attraction and sensible fervour is not a bad sign: it is furthermore an act of cold will, which overcomes natural repugnance and is often a proof of great generosity. A too great repugnance, however, which is almost invincible, is a contrary sign, and it would not be prudent to treat it as a piece of stupidity. Although the Religious Life is one of continuing sacrifice, it must bring with it a happiness in the depth of the heart, a peace which gives normality to the daily struggle. Therefore, one should never advise a girl to choose a form of the Religious Life just because the Institute concerned does not please her for the purpose of making a more generous sacrifice to God. On the contrary, it is perfectly normal and proper that this *right* intention should be to enter where she will find for her soul the greatest possibility of letting her own gifts expand supernaturally in the service of God and her neighbor.

6. How can Superiors and the Novice-Mistress discern if the intention of a girl who presents herself is truly right? It is not enough just to say: there are in fact some people who feign to enter Religion for good motives, but have not the right intention; while there are others who sincerely believe they dedicate themselves to Our Lord with good subterfuges, but are deceived about their own real intentions. In order to judge the value of any candidate's intention, it is usually sufficient to have knowledge of her general comportment. The tree is judged by its fruits. If a girl manifests in the conduct of her daily life a rectitude of intention which corresponds with her declarations before entering religion, she has given quite sufficient proof of her sincerity.

SUITABILITY OR APTITUDE IN GENERAL

1. Suitability consists in the candidate's capacity to fulfill all the bur-

dens of the Institute—“*ad religionem onera ferenda idoneus.*” There are then gifts which render a girl apt for Religious life in the Congregation. There are necessary aptitudes, *sine qua non* conditions for Religious Vocation.

2. If one is lacking, for example health, it is as good as saying that girl is not called by God to the Institute.

3. These aptitudes should be not only for the Religious Life in general but also for the Institute itself. There are in fact some people who are apt for the cloistered life, others for parochial works, others for teaching the young, etc.

4. Aptitudes are generally classified thus: physical, psychical and moral aptitudes.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

1. Weak, but normal health, with a sound constitution, can provide much, on condition that the Novice-Mistress takes due care. It is not, therefore, an impediment to the Religious Life.

2. A girl who cannot live in Religion without permanent dispensations and will be permanently unable to observe the Rule is not called by God to the Institute.

3. A girl who has a contagious illness (tuberculosis, inherited venereal malady) should not be accepted. For a tuberculosis case, if she is no longer actually contagious, it would then be possible to accept her, if in all other respects she proves to be a good subject. But one must then reckon with the obligations that the Superiors assume for the future, if a relapse of the illness occurs: a cure would be necessary and treatment in a Sanatorium.

MENTAL AND NERVOUS CONDITIONS

1. The standard of intelligence must at least be sufficiently capable of grasping the obligations of the Religious Life: tendency to perfection, practice of the Vows, etc. How, for example, can a girl observe obedience, if she does not understand the orders of her Superiors? How will she dedicate herself to the works of the Institute if she is incapable of studying and passing the examinations required for teaching or for the nurse's diploma? We grant there are less intelligent subjects, who can be employed in the humbler services of the house, the kitchen, laundry, etc. But here too one looks for at least a normal standard of mental development.

2. Mental balance, namely a sound and healthy judgment, is absolutely

required for admission into Religion, not only to dedicate oneself fruitfully to the works of the Institute, but also to be simply a Religious, namely, to observe the Vows and lead the common life normally. A paranoiae constitution, namely a false judgment that takes things for what they are not and that always struggles against its surroundings, against the Superiors; or a schizoid constitution, that isolates itself from the common life and is always queer, with gestures and words out of harmony with what one expects in a normal person, are grave impediments to the Religious Life, even in degrees that are not too far advanced in these maladies.

3. Nervous state depends very much upon natural affectivity: "The tendency to react with feeling or emotion," conscious or unconscious. So-called "nervous" people are those in whom affectivity is not tamed or curbed by the will. There are three classes of nervous people: the emotive, the neurasthenic or psychothenic and the hysterical.

a. Emotive people are impressionable to a morbid degree for the slightest reasons. They are recognizable by the trembling of the eyelids when they are speaking, by the readiness with which they blush and shed tears when they are recounting some personal episode, etc. They are sentimental people, prone to an exhibition of sensitive affection, though rarely to sensual acts. They look for the affection of particular friendship without being aware of its danger. Generally, these persons are sound and can be educated and corrected, provided that their hyperemotion is not too strong.

b. Neurasthenic and psychothenic persons are restless, anxious and obsessional persons: they are continually analyzing themselves and ruminate irresistibly upon their obsessions. The neurasthenic preoccupy themselves to excess with their physical health, believe themselves to be gravely ill, demand a specialist and take medicine for every imaginable malady, and are generally irritable, diffident and gloomy. The psychothenic do not suffer physically, but morally: they are tormented, are the obsessed victims of scruples, particularly in the matter of chastity. Incapable of dominating their obsessions, after having struggled for so many hours, even for whole nights, they may be practically driven to commit a solitary act which delivers them from the struggle, from the obsession and the anxiety. They look for no pleasure from it, nor do they even find it; and, just as they have almost immediately the feeling of having fallen into sin, so they are the more downcast and inconsolable for having offended Our Lord and lost the state of grace.

Let us say by way of parenthesis that modern theologians, better acquainted with the observations of medicine and psychology, think that the moral responsibility of these acts, done under the impulse of the obsession, is considerably reduced and that, therefore, in many cases these acts are not mortal sins. However, it is well and, indeed, is necessary, that these poor subjects of scruple and obsession should confess in the ordinary Confession, so as not to deprive themselves of Holy Communion in the meantime. One should add that this judgment on the more or less serious gravity of the solitary acts of these young people is valid only *post factum*, namely after the act; but one could not avail oneself of it *ante factum*, namely to give positive permission to these poor young people to commit such acts, before the crises, in order to prevent them. They should accept the trial of their malady and then continue to fight against it, never accepting the commission of a sin.

Now, we may well ask if a neurasthenic or a psychothenic, and especially a girl sexually obsessed, can be admitted into the Religious Life, and we should answer thus: if the trouble is not too far advanced, and above all if after curative treatment there has been enough progress made to give hope of a cure, they can be admitted, provided that in all other respects they are really good subjects. Otherwise it is more charitable to refuse to accept them for the Institute.

With regard to curative treatment, we should recall the august words of the Holy Father to the members of the Congress of the pathology of the nervous system (15 Sept. 1952). The Holy Father reproved pansexual psycho-analysis (that is to say), Freud's. Instead, there are, as the Holy Father advised, other methods of psycho-analysis without danger, even more modern than Freud's psycho-analysis.

c. The hysterical is most distinctively marked by the tendency to draw the attention of those she lives with toward herself; to get herself admired, or to gain their sympathy. The important thing is that all should occupy themselves with her. All means are good to compass this end: pretence of piety, sanctity, mystical graces, ecstasies, stigmata. . . . Hystericals are the craftiest people in the world; they seem to possess a special sense of knowing exactly who will serve their fundamental intention. They cannot even account for this, because they are acting under the impulse of the subconscious, which in their case is abnormal. Such a class of persons must never be admitted into Religion: they will be the calamity of their community, the scourge of

their Superiors. From the moment that the Superior tries to show up their game, they will become vipers, and they will call upon the intervention of the Bishop, and even of the Holy See, etc.

MORAL SUITABILITY

1. Generally speaking, a girl is morally "suitable" for admission into the Institute, when she is already exercising in a sufficiently notable degree the natural virtues, as well as the religious virtues, and has a serious desire to perfect herself in the Religious Life.

2. The natural virtues indispensable for being a good Religious are a right conscience, a profoundly honest character, sincerity and sociability.

Moreover, a girl who is radically incapable of living in community, is habitually insincere, or who shows herself to be, as one says, without conscience, should not be admitted into Religion, because she will be unable to acquire the religious virtues, when she lacks their natural foundation. However, one should see if a girl of this kind is really incorrigible on these points. It may well happen that she has never received a proper education in this respect and shows docility and a desire to correct these natural defects. She can then be admitted after a long trial.

3. The religious virtues required to be morally "suitable" are a true piety, docility towards the Mistress, acceptance of all the renunciations of the Religious Life, the practice of chastity, the will to dedicate her whole life to the service of her neighbor for the love of God in the works of the Institute.

4. For piety, what should we think of a girl, who went to Holy Communion only on the great feasts and who even missed every now and then on Sunday? She would have insufficient piety to become a Religious: the exercises of piety would weigh too heavily upon her and would become unbearable, once the first sensible fervour had passed.

However, we do not demand of a child who is still small a life of piety like that of a girl of eighteen. It seems that the smallest degree to be asked of the first would be Communion every Sunday, a sincere love of Jesus and Our Lady, even if it is still a little too sentimental. Of the second one should ask at least that she makes her Communion several times a week and has the habit, or at least the determination, to consecrate each day a short time to spiritual reading, to silent prayer, even prolonging her thanksgiving after Mass, or during the day, if her occupations allow, making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. But

we cannot demand as a necessary condition that she should already know how to make a meditation or that she should be a "soul of prayer." If she is, so much the better, but it is not required for entry! 5. By docility we mean the consent to be guided and corrected by the Novice-Mistress, also by the Superiors after her Profession. She should know that a Religious is always at school, right up to death, a "School of perfection," as St. Thomas says.

Hence an intractable, choleric, dominative character, as one says, a "bad or difficult character" must be rejected, if it is really intractable. No more do we accept people who criticize everyone, especially in recreation, and more so still, the Superiors, the hierarchy, the Constitutions (this is grave enough). It is a sign of pride that is quite incompatible with the Religious Life, if it is practically a second nature. But when such persons humiliate themselves sincerely and make great efforts to correct themselves, it is an excellent sign: indeed these people are preferable to those of a flabby, infantile temperament. In fact, true obedience is not a passive submission, but a virtue that calls for a firm will to conform itself to the Superior's will, namely overcoming the repugnance of nature, the suggestions of self-will.

We must not, however, demand before entry into Religion so perfect a virtue of obedience, but only docility, the consent to be formed and guided by the Mistress.

6. Further, the candidate should be ready to accept all the renunciations inherent in the Religious Life: regularity of life, with rising in the early morning, a tiresome and uncomfortable habit, dependence in the use of the smallest things, impossibility of ever more following one's whim, however innocent in itself, like buying candies or reading a newspaper. If a girl is incapable of renouncing the comforts of the world and its conveniences, she will never be a good Religious. One should be distrustful of temperaments prone to sensuality in eating and sleeping. If after two or three months they do not correct themselves, or suffer martyrdom in the Religious Life, complaining at the smallest sacrifice, one should send them away at once.

7. Regarding Chastity

a. Before all let us say that to rate its value as a criterion of vocation, we must consider it, not only as a condition of being a true bride of Christ, namely with regard to the Religious life itself, but also in relation to the works of charity in which the greater part of the life of the future Professed will be followed. If there is serious apprehension that a girl may be in proximate danger of a fall when she will be a

catechist in a small parish, or when she will be a nurse in a big hospital, or when she will be in the middle of children and young people she is educating, it is better not to accept her into an Institute of the active life: perhaps she will sanctify herself in a cloistered convent.

b. The Mistress should be careful not to identify *a priori* the virtue and the absolute lack of temptations. There are, thank God, young people who have never had temptations against the lovely virtue, even in the midst of the world, as nurses, teachers, students, etc. Having received a remarkably fine education in the family, they have in consequence passed through the dangers being aware of them. These souls certainly have the infused virtue of chastity, like a gratuitous gift of Our Lady, and must not be disturbed by the Mistress with indiscreet questions. On the other hand there are other girls who resemble the first through lack of temptations, but of whom one cannot yet say that such a peace of the senses is the effect of a true virtue: in fact, their physiological development is not yet complete. One should then consult the doctor. If it is simply a question of *retarded development*, as has been often the case after the war, a retardation which can run up to five or six years, then one can accept such a girl. The Mistress, however, should be careful to follow her daughter's development, especially in moments of crises of conscience, which are more acute in these retarded cases than in those of normal development. But if the lack of sexual temptation is, in the doctor's opinion, the sign of general "infantilism," with no positive hope of later development, then one should reckon seriously upon the grave consequences which the admission of such a creature into Religion will entail. She will always be a dead weight, a religious without personality, suffering from a painful inferiority complex, and she will be at the mercy of solitary habits, the more tenacious, the more infantile they are, because the will will be too weak to conquer the habit and face up to matters of purity humbly and resolutely.

c. With regard to candidates who have committed sins against purity, whatever they may be, one should stick firmly to the following general principle: to be accepted into the Postulency or the Novitiate, there should be moral certainty that at the end of the Novitiate, they will be able to profess and observe the vow of Chastity forever.

d. To be excluded at once:

1) Hypersexual persons, namely those prone by their nature to sexual matters, who have sinned with others, of the same sex or the other sex or by themselves with frenzy: those even who have not yet

sinned, but who exhibit a shocking lack of modesty, shamelessly "playing with fire," with a secret pleasure in taking notice of things which are a cause of grave temptations to others. Such a class of persons, when they are drawn to the Religious Life, say or even believe that they have been converted. It can indeed happen that they enjoy some period of peace from their passions. But the Mistress must not believe it to be a true, supernatural peace: it is simply a psychological peace, due to the curb which the idea of entry into Religion puts on their passions almost instinctively. But this peace will not last through the Novitiate nor after Profession, for their nature would take its revenge and would drive them to acts even graver than before. For this reason the Mistress must remain invincible in face of such persons, notwithstanding their protests of good will and complete conversion.

2) Persons who have committed sins like abortion, who have lived a degrading and infamous life, also those who have spent several years in sin with persons of the same or the other sex. If they have undergone conversion and want to become Religious, they should be directed to a society of rehabilitation like the Sisters Magdalen, or, exceptionally, to a cloistered Monastery, but they should never be received into Institutes of the active life.

3) Persons, already of full age, who, wishing more or less explicitly to become Religious, have nonetheless seduced another person, of the same or the other sex, even only once. In fact, if the prospect of entering Religion has not been strong enough to curb their passing attraction for the other person, we have no assurance that, having become a Religious and been placed in similar circumstances, she will not fall scandalously. Such persons, although not bad, are like the hypersexual. They are too weak to be Religious of the active life, but may well become good contemplative Religious, if the other criteria required are verified in them.

4) Two companions in the Novitiate (and also in the canonical Postulency) who have committed together even a single grave sin against chastity, even if they lament it with bitter tears. If in surroundings as holy as the Novitiate, notwithstanding the strong impressions of the new ideal, they let themselves go to the length of so grave a sin, it is almost fatally certain that they will fall again. The very fact of not being sent away from the Novitiate will be for them, at the moment of a fresh temptation, an excuse to convince themselves that, after all, the matter is not so grave, because the Superiors did not expel them.

5) People who, without being hypersexual, fall into solitary sin every now and then (every month, every two or three months), without taking the necessary means to correct themselves—immediate confession, intense prayer, serious sacrifices in other things. They are half-hearted and discouraged, without even accepting completely the consequences of defeat. They believe, quite falsely, that Profession, then activity and, finally, age will correct them: however, as the time at their disposal passes, they become more and more discouraged. If such people have been admitted, they should be sent away before Profession.

e. To be possibly admitted, but under certain conditions.

1) People who have sinned with others, of the same or the other sex, while they were still living in a state of religious indifference, whether as baptized Catholics, or as Protestants not yet baptized, provided that they are not hypersexual and have been radically converted for about two years without any further sin with others or without any further solitary habits.

2) People who in the world were seduced by another person of the same or the other sex through simple weakness a single time (or two or three times with the same person who had an almost hypnotic power of their victim), provided that:

a) They have a horror and disgust for their sin and an aversion towards their seducer (whether man or woman). If in fact any trace of affection remains for them, even under the best pretexts, it would be necessary to dismiss them.

b) They have done penance and exhibited by their conduct the will never to fall again into such sins of weakness.

c) They are in every other respect pious and delicate souls and really good subjects.

3) Two friends from the Apostolic School who have had a particular friendship with sensible manifestations (embraces, kisses) and also with immodest gestures, but without being really aware of the gravity of their acts, which were due rather to unhealthy curiosity than real malice, provided that they have immediately corrected themselves when the Confessor or the Mother has drawn their attention to it.

4) People who come directly from the world and girls who present themselves at the end of their time in the Apostolic School and who still fall into solitary sin rarely and by surprise, provided that:

a) They have the absolute will to correct themselves and to adopt every means, even heroic, in order to do so;

b) They have already made such progress as to give ground for thinking that they are well on the way to complete victory;

c) They do not let themselves become demoralized after a grave weakness, but put their trust in the infinite Mercy of God and in the all-powerful prayers of Our Lady, and then go to Confession as soon as possible with sincere contrition, just as if they were doing so for the first grave sin in their life;

d) They preserve modesty and holy purity on all points, namely in their general comportment, their looks, their reading, etc., but without any morbidity and tension;

e) They make small but constant efforts and sacrifices in the matter of greediness, exactness in getting up in the morning, etc., in order to strengthen their character at all other points, in such a way that, at the moment temptation comes to them, they have a stronger will to resist. If a girl shows herself so mortified all along the line, so humble and confident in Our Lady, so determined to win the victory, cost what it may, then, not only should one accept her, but one should believe one is dealing with a really fine vocation. Our Lord has permitted this residue of a bad habit contracted from childhood, to constrain a soul to count upon everything from Him and to acquire uncommon virtues. Thus, at a later time, this Religious will be in a position to help so many other girls in desperation over their weakness. But, for the present, since she is still in the midst of her own battle, the Postulant or Novice must find in her Mistress a complete understanding and a strong hand. Final victory depends in large measure upon the Mistress's direction, which must be motherly, prudent and firm.

f) Finally, before Profession, a sufficiently protracted period of complete victory is strongly desirable. The authors who treat of the question are not in agreement about the length of time required without a fall into mortal sin, before taking the Vows. Some require three months, others six, generally a complete year. This last norm is to be adopted, provided that it is not applied too mathematically. If a Novice should have won an almost complete victory, but three or four months before Profession, should have fallen by surprise, through being in poor physical conditions of health and suffering from some degree of fatigue, and that, immediately afterwards, she should be more generous than ever, right up to the end of the Novitiate, it

seems right that she could be allowed to make her Profession at the normal time. Whereas, if it were a case of the beginning of a black period with two or three successive falls, even coming after six or eight months of calm, then one would have to defer the Profession immediately and resume the struggle as though from the start with redoubled courage and the probation of a complete year, even with a dispensation from the Holy See, if the prolongation of the Novitiate had to exceed six months. Such a probation is necessary for the Mistress to have moral certainty that the Novice will be faithful to her Vows after her Profession.

5) The Novice who has never committed a grave sin against chastity and has hitherto always resisted temptations of the flesh, but has never bothered very much about purity, and who in other respects, without being a bad Novice, has lived in a rather commonplace fashion all the way along by squandering Our Lord's Graces, suddenly, after an unprecedented tempest, falls into a solitary sin on a single occasion. She immediately realizes that this sin is the result of her own carelessness and the punishment of Our Lord. From that moment she has become a different person, an exemplary Novice, not simply for a few days, but without any further halt on the way of perfection. Then one can truly sing *Felix culpa*: it was indeed permitted by Our Lord, to awaken this soul from her torpor. It does not, therefore, seem to be the case for deferring her Profession, provided that there are at least three or four months of "new" life between her fall and her Profession.

g. There still remains a somewhat delicate problem to resolve: namely, how the Mistress can ever become acquainted with all these matters in the intimate life of the young people who present themselves for the Novitiate and of her Novices? In PART II we have said that the Mistress cannot force her daughters to manifest their conscience to her: still more so, how could she demand of young aspirants such intimate details of their former lives? Yet, it is a definite part of the Mistress' duty to discriminate whether the candidates to the life of the Institute possess one of the moral criteria required to pronounce the Vows, namely Chastity. In practice, however, in the greater number of cases, the problem resolves itself simply by the fact that the young people and the Novices manifest themselves willingly to the Mistress; and they do so the more fully, the deeper the confidence the Mistress inspires and the greater the attention she pays to their confidences.

But it may well happen that there are some who do not wish or at least do not dare to speak of their past or of their actual falls. As to the past, if the Mother suspects some grave fault, especially with others, she can allude to the conditions required to become a Religious, even specifying some of the points we have distinguished, but with caution and delicacy. It is then probable that the person concerned will understand that she must tell everything that would stand in the way of her Vocation before God. On the other hand the Confessor is competent to discriminate whether such a person is to be found in cases requiring immediate dismissal (cf. d.), or even in cases of admission with due precautions (cf. e.). For this reason, he can and indeed must stop a candidate who is unworthy of entry into the Institution, and he can oblige an Aspirant to speak to the Mistress, if he judges in conscience that it is a case of making everything clear.

As to actual falls, if the Novice does not dare speak to the Mistress, at least she will speak to her Confessor. If she finds herself in so dangerous a state as to arouse fears for her Vocation, she must be advised by her spiritual Father to manifest herself to the Mistress. Thus, if the time of Profession is drawing near, and if the Novice does not feel inclined to speak of her falls to the Mother, the Confessor can, and indeed must, oblige her to tell the Mistress or Superior General, not her own sins themselves, but the fact that the Confessor does not find her able to be professed at the normal date: in fact, even in this, the Confessor is the competent judge and can thus stop an unworthy Novice from ever entering the Institute, without the knowledge of the Superiors.

8. There is finally still one virtue required of a girl who wishes to enter an Institute of the active life: *charity toward one's neighbor*, or to put it more precisely, the disposition to dedicate oneself to the works of charity of the Congregation for the love of God. A girl who dreams of saving her soul by means of prayer alone or of reparation alone is perhaps called to the contemplative life, but must not be received into a teaching or nursing Institute, especially if she takes the liberty of disdaining the works established in the Congregation. Indeed, a Religious of the active life should be ready to sacrifice even her spiritual exercises, when the Superiors arrange for her to dedicate herself to works.

In this case, however, the Sister who gratified herself with activity and was perfectly content to be dispensed from the common spiritual exercises, would show a very poor religious spirit. The true measure is

found in St. Paul's cry: "But I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better. But to abide still in the flesh is needful for you" (Philippians 1:23, 24). Religious who dedicate themselves to the works of charity, with a truly supernatural spirit, feel this almost instinctively, without perhaps being able to explain it. Leaving their prayer at Our Lord's feet in order to remain in the midst of activity is for them a true sacrifice, even though they give themselves completely to their duty without overmuch anxiety. This is the ideal. Nonetheless, it is at least necessary for the girl who wishes to enter the Institute, to have a certain idea of this, even if it is confused and still imperfect.

For a candidate who has had no occasion to dedicate herself to Catholic Action, it will be a good sign if she is obliging in the common life, gladly helping her companions, not refusing to do the chores down to the humblest ones in the Novitiate. On the other hand, an egoistic character who, notwithstanding the Novice Mistress' repeated orders and reproofs, does not submit herself to the service of the common good, must be considered a very doubtful vocation for an Institute of the common life.

LACK OF EVERY CANONICAL IMPEDIMENT

We list only the various points and refer the reader to standard treatises of this matter.

1. The Catholic Religion: only apostasy is a canonical impediment. But in many Institutes one adds conversion from heresy or infidelity. In practice several years of probation are required.
2. Age: In many Institutes a dispensation is necessary to receive a candidate over 30 years of age. If there are no limits in the Constitutions, it is as well to refuse every person over 40 years of age.
3. Freedom: The candidate must decide for herself.
4. The case of married persons: show sufficient strictness before acceptance.
5. The case of Religious who are changing their Institutes and of ex-Novices: in these cases too, great strictness is necessary.
6. The case of persons who have been condemned or liable to be so for some grave misdeed. In practice, never accept them.
7. The case of persons who must help their parents or grandparents.
8. The parents' consent is not required by the Codex for the admission of minors. It is, however, better to obtain it whenever possible. What is to be done in the case of minors who have left their home despite

the refusal of their parents? If there is no grave danger to their souls in returning home, and if it is certain that the parents will appeal to the police, it is better to advise them to return to their families.

9. Dowries.

10. Testimonial letters.

SUCCESSIVE ACTS IN THE DISCERNING OF VOCATIONS

DUTIES OF THE MISTRESS RELATING TO THE DISCERNING OF VOCATIONS

1. The Novice-Mistress is the delegate of the Major Superiors:

a. To judge if the candidates have (or have not) the vocation for the Institute;

b. To propose to the Superiors of the Institute whether the candidates can be admitted or must be dismissed;

c. To foster and stimulate vocations, without making it obligatory to enter or remain, still less to be clothed and professed.

2. The Mistress must take great care to purify her intentions in the discernment of Vocations. Right intention is a most grave duty on her part, never to accept persons who have no Vocation with a view to increasing the number of Religious in the Institute, or, on the contrary to refuse or send away persons who displease her from purely personal motives.

3. The Mistress must offer much prayer to the Holy Spirit and Our Lady in order to obtain the necessary light upon the Vocations of the candidates and the Novices, but she must not count upon the inspiration of the moment. She must observe the norms of the Church, namely the "criteria of Vocations."

DISPOSITIONS BEFORE ENTRY

1. When the candidates for the Religious Life come from the Apostolic School of the same Institute, the dispositions are simplified: it is generally the Superior General who decides which girls shall enter the Novitiate. It is as well, however, that the Novice-Mistress should obtain leave of the Mother General to go and visit the girls in the college before their departure for the Novitiate.

2. When a candidate comes directly from the world, she is generally recommended by some Priest friend of the Institute or by some Sister in the Congregation. Such persons will probably write, so one will already know something of this girl. Also, she herself will write: this first letter will probably manifest her motives for entering the Insti-

tute. She will, however, insist perhaps more upon "revealing criteria," upon the history of her Vocation, than upon her true and evidential "criteria."

3. If the reports of those who recommend her are good, and if her letter has made a good impression, one should invite her to come and pay a visit to the Novitiate House: in fact, one should never accept a candidate without having seen her at least once.

4. After the Mistress' visit to the Apostolic College, or after the candidate's visit to the Novitiate, the Mistress should obtain information upon the candidate's families and state of health, asking also for the testimonial letters of those who have the legal right to furnish them.

5. Immediately after the beginning of the canonical Postulancy, each candidate's biographical card should be completed, as well as visits to the doctor of the House, radiographical examinations, blood tests, etc.

COMPREHENSIVE JUDGMENT ON VOCATION

1. "*Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quocumque defectu*": "all the elements that contribute to it are required to render a thing good, but the defect of a single element is sufficient to render it bad." This principle of Aristotle is golden for the practical discerning of Vocations. If one of the criteria required for Vocation in the Institute is missing, one must conclude at once that there is no Vocation, at least for the Institute, a single one, I say, even the smallest, even if all the other qualities are there to an exceptional degree, for example, if a girl is too emotional to live in community.

2. But, if nothing is lacking, it does not, therefore, mean that the girl is called by God, because it may well happen that she has no intention of becoming a Religious. If all the people who are endowed with the gifts required to be a Religious had to enter Religion, just because they were well fitted for it, then the great majority of good Christians would have to become Religious! In fact, suitability is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition. In order to enter Religion, a right intention is required in addition, namely the positive will to become a Religious, quite apart from mentioning the absence of every canonical impediment.

3. Among the three classes of criteria or "evidential signs," "right intention" is the principal. The others are rather conditions *sine qua non*. Each is infallible under its own negative aspect. If any one of

the following is lacking—canonical age, physical health, the required chastity, or piety, the Mistress can declare at once that the girl is not called by Our Lord. On the other hand, right intention being a positive sign, its existence must be positively proved. If it is not clearly evident, the Mistress will be unable to declare that the girl has the Vocation.

4. When there remains some doubt about the Vocation in the examination of the various criteria, it is a good thing to ask oneself:

a. What will this person be like in the Religious Life, when she is forty years of age:

b. Will she be happy in the Institute?

c. Will she be good? (Criteria of Cardinal Verdier)

5. Further, in the discerning of Vocations, instead of considering only the good of the subject, one should consider as well, and, indeed first of all, the good of the Institute. Is such a subject well fitted or not to procure the good of the Institute? Will she contribute to the fervour of the others? To the works of charity? One must never accept a person or consecrate a Novice just because she is a soul to be saved, which she would lose in the world: this motive could be sufficient for her entry into a House of Refuge, but not for admission into an Institute of the active life.

6. Every time that a serious doubt persists on any one of the criteria that is difficult to determine (nervous temperament, difficult character, a positive right intention, etc.), one should decide in the negative. Too often one pays attention to quantity to the detriment of the quality of the Vocations.

7. One should, however, avoid the opposite extreme. In order to admit a person into Religion, it is not required that she should be already perfect on every point; it is sufficient for her to have the "right intention to *tend to perfection*, namely that she should have the will to progress and to let herself be corrected by her successive Superiors." Therefore, a Mistress must not declare that a Postulant has no Vocation, just because she has not yet succeeded in overcoming all her defects of character, notwithstanding her sincere efforts. It is quite right that the Mistress should test the veracity of her daughter's vocations, but only up to a certain point. When her comprehensive judgment is sufficiently confirmed by her own accurate observations, the Mistress must stimulate the Novices to be faithful to their Vocation and help them in their difficulties and temptations against it.

ADMISSION AND DISMISSAL OF CANDIDATES AND NOVICES

1. The act of admission into the Postulancy, like the clothing or admission into the Novitiate, and the Profession or admission into the body of the members of the Institute, are canonical acts which are recognized by Holy Church and by God Himself. It is only when a girl is canonically admitted into the Postulancy, when a Postulant receives the Habit, when a Novice makes her Profession, that those persons can be sure that they are called by God (if the three signs required by the Church are otherwise verified).

2. Canonical admission into the Institute, like dismissal, are acts reserved to the Major Superiors, with their Council. But in order to form their decisive judgment, they refer to the Mistress. Therefore, the determination whether it is expedient to admit or dismiss subjects is often her own concern.

3. One should get rid of persons, who will certainly be unable to be Religious, before their entry into the Institute. One can admit into the Postulancy uncertain Vocations, namely those in whom there is no negative impediment, without having sufficient positive signs. It can happen that the candidate is uncertain, but that the Mothers are certain of her Vocation. It can also happen that the Mothers have insufficient positive signs, but the candidate begs them to let her give proof of the veracity of her Vocation.

4. When the doubt persists after some months from admission, one can prolong the Postulancy up to six months. If the doubt still persists, one can prolong the Novitiate by six months. And if it becomes necessary to ask for an extension of temporary Vows, the Codex permits it for three years. However, the longer one puts it off, the more difficult the dismissal will always become: the candidate will already have passed nine and a half years (or ten and a half if there is a two years Novitiate) and will have great difficulty in finding a situation in the world. Therefore, one should not wait right up to this last period in order to dismiss a person, whose vocation remains uncertain: one should make an end of it from the moment that it becomes quite clear that there will probably enough be no new factors to remove the doubt in question. Now the principle to keep always firmly to in this question is this: one cannot admit into religion or even keep a dubious vocation. Therefore, for a vocation to be considered as dubious, it is enough that there are insufficient positive elements. Even after Simple Profession, at the moment for

deciding whether a Religious can or cannot make her perpetual Profession, if after so many years the Superiors, *even though they have nothing against her*, cannot be *positively* certain that she will be a good Religious (what will she have become at the age of forty?), they have a sufficient motive for not admitting her to perpetual Profession and also sending her away at once. It is evident that, *a fortiori*, this motive holds good for sending back to the world a postulant before her Clothing and a Novice before her Profession.

5. When all the criteria of true Vocation have been verified and both the Mistress as well as the Major Superiors have recognized it, are they bound or not to admit the candidate to the Postulancy, the Postulant to Clothing, the Novice to temporary Profession, the newly-Professed to perpetual Profession? We must distinguish the cases:

The Institute is never bound to admit a candidate to its Postulancy, nor a Postulant to Clothing: therefore, no candidate has a right to enter into an Institute, even if her Spiritual Director and some Religious of the same Institute have assured her that she had a true Vocation for it.

As to the Novices, if, at the end of their Novitiate they have obtained a favorable vote on their suitability, it seems that they have the right to make Profession, seeing that the Codex says that "when the time of the Novitiate is completed, if the Novice is judged suitable, *let her* be admitted to Profession. She can also be dismissed by the Superiors for some just motive" (Canon 571). Therefore, to prevent a Novice from making Profession requires a just cause. Hence, if no such motive exists, namely if one is dealing with a very good Novice, the Institute would not do well in refusing her the grace consecrating herself to God.

A fortiori, a Religious professed in temporary Vows, who has satisfied all the proofs of the Religious Life during the time established by the Constitutions, has the right to make her perpetual Profession at the due time: "just motives" would be required on the part of her Superiors to refuse to profess her and to dismiss her (Canon 637).

6. How to proceed in the dismissal of Novices who are unfitted for Religious Life in the Institute?—Above all, one should act with maternal charity, by preparing their soul to accept the Divine Will by making them understand that they will not be abandoned by God because they are leaving the Religious Life, but that they can save themselves and even sanctify themselves in the world with Our Lady's help.

It is better that the departing Novice should go away without taking leave of her fellow-Novices, especially in the Common Room or Chapel, at least, if it is possible: the departure of a fellow-Novice always upsets the others.

It is a duty to charity (though not in strict justice) to give material help to the departing Novice, at least for the early days.

It will also be a good thing for the Mistress to remain in relations with her daughter and help her morally in her readjustment in the world.

NATURE OF RELIGIOUS FORMATION AND ITS METHODS

1. Nature and end of education in general.
2. Acts of Religious Formation.
 - a. Instruction.
 - b. Education of the virtues and the interior life.
 - c. Action by example.
3. Problem of using the methods of experimental pedagogy.
4. Virtuous action of the Novice-Mistress and the Superior: principles of religious formation and government.

It is in the exercise of the virtues proper to their respective functions that the Novice-Mistress and the Superior form their daughters and govern their community. Hence the plan of this Part.

5. Method of getting to know one's subjects.
 - a. To win their confidence, to be affable, to show that one is interested in them, that one really loves them.
 - b. To let them speak, to respect their confidences (on their family, health, propensities, spiritual aspirations, etc.).
 - c. Way of putting questions. To stimulate their impression (on a book, even a work of art, etc.).
 - d. To observe the Novices in recreation.
 - e. To entrust them with a little piece of work in which they manifest themselves.

CHARITY OF THE SUPERIOR AND THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

1. Charity the source of action for the Superior and Novice-Mistress.
 - a. The love of God, union with Christ and the Most Holy Virgin—"the soul of the whole apostolate" of the Superior and the Novice-Mistress.
 - b. Charity towards their daughters proceeds from the same virtue as charity towards God.

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2. Qualities of maternal charity of the Superior and Novice-Mistress.
 - a. Not to be simply a Superior, but above all a "mother." To love in order to understand.
 - b. To be the source of animation, for the glory of God.
 - c. To pray and do penance for one's daughters.
3. Amiable goodness.
To be affable. To show sympathy. To smile readily.
4. Mercifulness.
To incline towards distress. Never to despise. To love enough to correct. To dispose suffering in order to save.
5. Pacifying words.
To know the way to comfort, console, pacify, encourage, even to congratulate intentionally.
6. Universal devotedness: all to all.
7. Dangers of the heart.
 - a. To mistrust one's own heart: to keep watch over the least attachment to a Novice or an inferior. But not to treat her with rigor under pretext of personal detachment.
 - b. To mistrust still more the heart of one's children: attachment of a Novice to her Mother Mistress is very frequent, because of the unique influence exercised by her in the disclosing of the spiritual life, and because she represents Christ or the Most Holy Virgin. Not to crush brutally.

THE PRUDENCE OF THE SUPERIOR AND THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

1. Importance of prudence for the Superior and the Novice-Mistress.
 - a. The virtue which quite practically sets in due hierarchy the means relating to the ends of the Religious Life and the Institute. Its principal acts.
 - b. The virtue proper to the Superior and to governments.
 - c. The Novice-Mistress above all needs right judgment, but she must also rule her small community and exhort and stimulate each of her Novices and form their virtues.
2. Right intention in the exercise of authority: preliminary condition. To purify one's intention before acting. To pray for that, therefore. The passions so often falsify the intention.
3. Counsel: to foresee, reflect, pray, ask advice of one's Superiors, for a Superior at her Council, etc.
4. Decision: (judgment and choice).

a. To know how to judge with good sense what one must say and do.

b. To know how to decide (the indecisive), to carry one's own responsibilities (not to have recourse to one's Major Superiors for a simple yes or no. In general, not to make a decision in prayer itself, but after having prayed, according to objective standards of judgment.

5. Command and other acts of authority.

a. The different acts of authority.

1) Order (command—*imperium*), which imposes obedience.

2) Exhortation, which stimulates to action. To invite, to pray, to entreat.

3) Order given by way of counsel, which suggest what should be done.

b. Qualities of an order.

1) Necessary. It must impose itself by force of things. Not to multiply orders, above all when things are going of themselves without a fresh order.

2) Practicable: to foresee if it will be so, before giving it.

3) Clear and concise: to take time to formulate it. If it is important, to ask a third party if he has understood its formulation.

c. To modify or annul an order when necessary. The Superior's obstinacy does harm. But to avoid manifold counter-orders which weaken authority.

d. To explain orders often to Novices: this teaches them a great deal in order to know why they have been given. Also to exact blind obedience in other circumstances.

e. To let a Novice sometimes (but more often a professed of mature age) expose her difficulties in the fact of an order, but never allow her to criticize it in public.

f. Not to be afraid of repeating the same orders to the same people (e.g. silence, exactness), but not to nag too much, for that weakens authority and gives rise to a bad spirit.

6. Execution and control.

a. To demand as perfect an execution as possible to the orders given.

b. In a number of cases, to demand an account of what has been done.

c. To control oneself. To exercise a certain supervision, without suspicion, but without ingenuousness about human weakness.

THE JUSTICE OF THE SUPERIOR AND
THE NOVICE-MISTRESS

1. The sense of right, of the objective, of what is due, of justice.

A sense which is not natural to woman, but which is indispensable to the Superior and very useful for the Novice-Mistress to instil into her daughters.

2. The service of the common good.

The Superior must not only occupy herself with each of the members of her community, but must be again and above all at the service of the community as such, in addition to that of each member. She must demand of her Sisters that they serve the common good, each according to her duty.

3. Impartiality in governing.

To share out the goods (spiritual and material) and the burdens with justice, mistrusting one's passions (favoritism by affection, reprimands by antipathy, etc.).

4. Respect for the legitimate rights and the personality of each.

Religious, Novices themselves, have rights.

a. Natural rights: to be nourished, to be clothed fittingly, taken care of (to see up to what degree). Right to discretion concerning secrets entrusted to the Superior or the Novice-Mistress.

b. Rights of the supernatural order: respect for secrets of conscience, rights as regards Confessors, etc.

5. Repression of general abuses and correction of individual faults.

a. Grave duty of the Superior and the Novice-Mistress to correct their daughters, to repress abuses in the community, even to punish.

b. Mistresses of Novices must rather correct individual faults and Superiors repress general abuses, but not exclusively.

c. To make one's observations and to reprimand calmly, firmly, and with goodness. To recognize what is good when putting one's fingers on what is bad.

d. To choose the psychological moment for reprimands or punishment, to avoid doing so in recreation, or if it is necessary to recall a Sister, who is forgetting herself, to do so rather with humor, so as not to transform recreation into chapter. To reprimand afterwards.

e. Not to grow tired of repeating the same observations and reprimands. But not to weary one's daughters under pretext of "letting nothing pass." To know sometimes when to shut one's eyes, above

all if there is no danger of injustice to third parties and if this act of clemency will not be interpreted as an approval.

f. When reprimand is not enough, to punish. To impose a penance which counts. In case of relapse, not to double the punishment automatically, but to try to persuade the soul of the danger that it is incurring. Not to threaten a punishment that never comes.

g. Conduct to be pursued with the incorrigible.

1) If it is a case of a Novice, after having tried everything, threaten her with dismissal and, if she does not change, dismiss her.

2) If it is a case of a perpetually professed, not to threaten dismissal, except in the case of grave public scandal; then have recourse to the Major Superiors in view of a dismissal. Except for this case, not to make the best of open faults, but to be merciful towards the small weaknesses, above all of the aged.

3) In the face of long-standing abuses in the community, only to act with prudence, after having prayed a great deal and reflected upon the consequences of intervening, and, above all, after having obtained the leave of the Major Superiors. But to recall that God perhaps is waiting for the turn of this Superior in the community to suppress these abuses.

THE FORTITUDE OF THE SUPERIOR AND THE MISTRESS OF NOVICES

1. Firmness in governing and in the education of the Novices.

a. The weakness of Superiors is the principal cause of the decadence of communities. Not to give way when it is a matter of duty. The energy of a Superior often suffices to galvanize people's wills.

b. A weak Mother-Mistress will never form her Novices, even if she is a living example and has excellent principles. If she is strong, she will leave an ineffaceable imprint upon them, even though she speaks little of it.

c. To temper firmness with sweetness.

2. Magnanimity of the Superior and the Novice-Mistress.

a. To have great desires for one's community and one's subjects.

b. To shun pusillanimity in formation and government, by losing oneself in details.

3. Patience and Perseverance of the Superior and the Novice-Mistress

a. Patience. To be mistress over one's nerves. Serenity in trials checks and desperate situations. To have confidence in the Most Holy Virgin.

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b. Perseverance. Not to wish the Novices to be perfect straight away. A work of time.

Workshop Summary¹

1. When there is a choice to be made between time for the Superior's own spiritual exercises and time given for the Sisters, which takes precedence?

The consensus was that the Superior is appointed for the Sisters, and therefore her first duty is to assist them. It was felt, however, that a Superior cannot give what she does not have. She must nourish her own spiritual life; otherwise, she is not capable of guiding or inspiring confidence in others. In dealing with the Sisters the law of charity would take precedence. A Superior is in office to serve her charges. The Parable of the Good Samaritan was mentioned, and it was felt that God would compensate for this service to her subjects. Difficulties should be settled at the time for subject's own peace. A Sister may not return, if she finds that the time is inopportune and the superior too busy with other affairs. Spiritual needs of a serious nature are usually emergencies and happen only occasionally.

2. If a religious seems indifferent to her Superior, how would you impress upon her the duty of spirituality?

All the Sisters thought it advisable to win the confidence of the Sister and to work through natural motives to supernatural motives. In regard to indifference, it was suggested that we try to find the cause of the Sister's attitude. Many seemed to think that sickness or fatigue would be the cause. Some suggestions were: a) earnest prayer and mortification on the part of the Superior and others of the community; b) acts of kindness shown to this particular Sister by the Superior and other Sisters; c) spiritual reading; d) admonition at Chapter with the subjects being asked to read the chapter of the Constitution that stresses the needed quality; e) a new assignment if the difficulty is personal.

3. Why is a deep spiritual faith not included as an essential for the Superior?

¹Note: This report of the discussions on the material of Father Philippe's lectures was prepared by Sister Helen Marie, P.B.V.M., to whom we are indebted.

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Subjects are expected to accept the Superior in the light of faith in order to recognize her authority as coming from God. The Superior herself must accept her office, her Sisters, her duties, the daily events, disappointments, misunderstandings, and even her success in the light of faith. Subjects would soon recognize the lack of faith evidenced by undue anxiety, preoccupation, discouragement, irritation, or over-elation. Such a Superior would give preference to the material well-being of the institute, which false emphasis would in turn lead to a spirit of mediocrity.

4. Is it necessary for the Novice-Mistress to be always with the novices at recreation?

The Constitution usually takes care of this. This is a good time for the mistress to discover just what the novice is like, for it is at recreation that the novice most clearly reveals herself. Sometimes difficulties arise at recreation if the mistress is not present. The mistress should be able to leave once in a while to enjoy recreation with the community. There should be no objection to leaving novices alone on these occasions. Their training would have little effect if they could not be left alone. No other Sister, except the assistant mistress, would have the right to go to the novitiate.

5. Should not training of postulants be given in strictly religious subjects?

Since most communities are thinking of getting their subjects ready for teaching, superiors feel it necessary to train their postulants in spiritual and secular subjects.

Girls entering a convent make a terrific mental adjustment. The Sisters' opinion was that postulants are not ready for a program of only spiritual subjects. It was suggested that subjects chosen for postulants should not require a great deal of time for preparation. Work in secular subjects during postulancy affords a good opportunity to weed out those unable to carry the studies required by the institute. Leave the strictly spiritual program for the canonical year.

The mind of the Church is that postulants are lay people until they take the habit. One Sister offered the suggestion of Abbe Kothern that the postulants should be put into the apostolate of the order as soon as they enter.

Some groups felt it a wonderful opportunity to integrate spirituality with the work of the community. In the case of Sister nurses, how-

ever, it was agreed that the postulants' training should be all spiritual.

One group suggested the inclusion of mental hygiene in the training of postulants.

Father Philippe: It is the mind of the Church that postulancy is a time of preparation for novitiate. If it is a custom to have all spiritual subjects, it is all right. If there is a combination, there is nothing contrary to Canon Law, but the combination is not the mind of the Church.

6. Do you think there is a loss sustained in the novitiate if the Mistress is in office for a long period of time?

The majority felt that the longer the Mistress is in office the more competent she would be. The usual time would be from nine to twelve years. The constitutions of the community would usually be the deciding factor. Her experience is most valuable. The general opinion was that more development would take place in her spiritual life and she would have more to offer as a result of her experience. After all, the personality of the Novice-Mistress is more important than her years in office. As far as the modern girl is concerned, the Novice-Mistress would understand her better than other members of the community would, for she is with the modern girls constantly. Others thought that it was the mind of the Church that no one should be left in an office in religion too long. The question was raised: What is meant by "too long"? How many years would this mean?

Father Philippe: It is bad to change Novice-Mistresses in the middle of the canonical year. It is better to change a day or two after reception. Some in the years of novitiate and junior professed have as many as five mistresses. This is a very serious problem.

7. Organization of the Juniorate

The following are some ways in which juniorates are organized:

The junior Sisters are kept in the novitiate house for two years. They have their own mistress, who gives them instructions. They continue their academic studies. The third year they go out to branch houses and do the work of the institute. They may mingle with professed Sisters.

Others send the junior Sisters to their college for the three years. Here they are under a mistress. They do practice teaching during this time.

In other communities, two months prior to profession, the junior

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Sisters are given intensified training, which is called a second novitiate.

Some communities have the junior Sisters teach for three years. They return to the motherhouse each summer, where they receive special instruction and guidance from a Sister appointed as mistress.

The junior Sisters, in some communities, are sent to places near the motherhouse. They return each weekend to the motherhouse, where they are under the direction of a mistress. Special conferences are given once a month.

Other junior Sisters must contact the mistress every two or three months, either in person or by letter. Once a month they write out a meditation and send it to the motherhouse, to the mistress.

The last year before final profession juniors in some communities return to the juniorate for a year of tertianship, which includes a thirty-day retreat.

Father Philippe: Father Larraona says it is necessary to supplement the novitiate with a program to initiate the Sisters to their special end, the apostolate. The schedule must not be so strict as that during the canonical year. Young professed need some direction. Young professed in small houses far from the motherhouse meet great problems that arise because they are not trained sufficiently. The juniorate is a sort of state of formation. Juniorate Sisters do not have the same freedom as do the perpetually professed. They must be prepared by technical formation; at the same time there must be work on their religious formation.

It is necessary to appoint a special mistress for the juniorate. It is sometimes good to determine to have a special house for them, distinct from the motherhouse. Sometimes, when there are very few such Sisters, the local superior might be their mistress. In that case the local superior has to be appointed by the Mother General to give special instruction.

The three ends of the juniorate are formation, practical action, probation.

The mistress of the young professed should never interfere in the apostolic life of the Sisters but only in their spiritual life. If the mistress is not very prudent, she may give junior Sisters some rather disturbing advice.

8. Must right intention be had before entering or may it be acquired after the postulant has been in the order—before reception or profession?

The ideal would be that the postulant have the right intention. Many postulants feel, however, that they do have this intention when they enter. After novitiate training they may discover that their first intention was not so perfect.

Just how do we determine whether or not a girl has the right intention? The general idea of one who applies is to serve God in a better way. Right intention comes from the heart. Only the spiritual director can discern this.

One Sister said that she had read that anyone who enters a community and prays for perseverance will get the right intention after she enters if she doesn't have it before.

9. If the Office is missed at a particular set time, must it be read privately?

Most Sisters felt that the constitutions would answer this question. If the Sisters are obliged to say the Office and they are absent at the time the Office is chanted, it is customary for them to read the Office privately unless they are dispensed by the superior. Some Sisters who chant the Office feel that if they cannot be present, the chanting by the choir fulfills their obligation. One Sister would like to know just how the Sabbatine Privilege would be possible if the Office did not have to be made up but could be replaced by other prayers.

Father Philippe: There is a tendency to introduce the Divine Office in English in place of the Little Office provided the whole congregation agrees. In Germany, Italy, France, Ireland, many communities that were reciting the Little Office have changed to the Divine Office without Matins and Lauds. Never introduce an innovation without long preparation. It is the mind of the Church.

10. What do you think about letting postulants have a visit home before reception?

Some communities allow a visit of fourteen days prior to reception. They say that postulants are most eager to get back to the convent. A visit prior to reception seems to be a good test. The majority of communities represented did not permit postulants to go home. Some communities have a candidacy. Girls are permitted to go home at the end of the candidacy. On returning they enter the postulancy.

Father Philippe: In itself it is not very good for postulants to go home.

Rome will easily permit two years of novitiate instead of one.

When the permission is given, the second year is obligatory and superiors cannot dispense from it. The Sacred Congregation has a bad impression when a congregation that has asked for two years begins to request dispensations. It is permitted to use novices in second year in the work of the institute. Formation could not be complete without real contact with the apostolate. But a novice is a novice and must be proved and guided by a Sister provided by the Mother General. This may be the local superior, provided the house is not too important. The use of novices in this second year should be motivated by the advantage of the novice and not by the needs of the congregation. It is a good opportunity for the congregation and the novice to prove her ability and to learn how to sanctify herself in apostolic work. She must not be too heavily burdened. Novices are young Sisters, and they will suffer if they are not well guided.

11. How often should the novices have instruction by a priest?

Individual communities should decide for themselves the frequency of instructions by a priest.

One community had two classes a day, five times a week for the canonical group. The constitutions usually stipulate the type of instruction to be given.

Father Philippe: Since the Novice-Mistress has to teach the spirit of the institute and the religious life, it is better to reserve for the priest the matter of theology—instructions on the great dogmas: incarnation, redemption, Our Lady's role in religious life, perfections of God, the indwelling of God. It is not normal for a woman to teach theology when there is a priest to teach it. A Novice-Mistress would do some of the teaching and should teach at least once a day. If you want to follow an outline and teach the matter a novice should know before her profession, 360 days are not too many. It is good to give spiritual talks relating to the feasts just before these feasts come. In many communities the Novice-Mistress and the assistant mistress and the priest give two talks a day. Some of these are on secondary things, as rubrics, chant, chapter of faults. Sometimes the second conference is a comment on the constitutions.

12. Should the novitiate and the postulancy be separated or may they be together?

One group advocated that novices and postulants be separated. Some thought that postulants admire novices much more if they are

separated and that novices in this case are less worldly. Recreation with the novice seems to be a great privilege for the postulants. All other groups agreed that they should be together. Numbers would be the only reason for separation. One Sister asked: "If postulants are considered seculars up to the time they receive the habit, should they be permitted in the novitiate?"

Father Philippe: Postulants are not considered seculars up to the time they receive the habit.

13. How often may postulants and novices be permitted to have visitors?

Customs take care of this. Visits to canonical novices varied from once a month to no visits at all during this year. The general tendency seems to be twice or three times a year. All agreed that visiting hours were usually from two to five on Sunday afternoon. Exceptions are made for parents who come from a great distance.

14. Should letters of professed Sisters be opened and read?

Superiors, the Sisters thought, should respect letters to senior members of their communities. This same respect should be given to letters from parents of even the younger professed. In other cases opening letters is a safeguard for younger Sisters. Many thought that the letters should be slit but not read. Reading should be left to the discretion of the Superior.

15. May the local superior enter the novitiate at any time to see to the cleaning or upkeep of this part of the house?

There was little discussion on this point. The general idea was that the Novice-Mistress or the Mother General would have to give permission to the local superior to enter the novitiate.

16. Should postulants be held to strict observance of the rule as soon as they enter or should they be gradually initiated?

Girls should prepare for entrance. The habit of smoking, for example, should be broken before entrance. Many have the postulants begin with little silence and then gradually get more strict. The great silence is observed from the beginning. Having novices and postulants together tends to distract the novices, if the postulants have more recreation. It is much easier for the postulant to start right away. The girl who enters expects to keep the rule. More concessions are given

to postulants than to novices, especially if the two are separate. The majority are of the opinion that girls are more mature and have a greater sense of responsibility if they enter the postulancy directly rather than if they enter from an aspirant class.

Father Philippe: It is better for the postulants to follow the regular life from the beginning. If one who is going to enter will not break an undesirable habit before she enters, it is not a very good sign.

17. Why should the Novice-Mistress be a soul of prayer rather than of prudence?

The mistress is usually selected because she is a soul of prayer. Prudence is usually a quality suggested by the constitutions; the two, however, are seldom separated. Novices tend to imitate the mistress. Prayer is essential to the religious life. We get virtue, therefore, prudence, through prayer.

Father Philippe: A soul of prayer: This does not mean merely attendance at exercises. It is a question of union with God. A Novice-Mistress has to teach first of all the sense of God.

18. Is it well for the Mother General and the Novice-Mistress to have a spiritual director?

Mothers General and Novice-Mistresses often have need for a spiritual director. After discussion the Sisters concluded that having a spiritual director was almost a necessity. The greatest difficulty seemed to be in getting the right direction. As for local superiors and other members of the community, direction should be from the confessor, if possible. If there is danger of imposing on other Sisters because of this, then the Sister should ask for a special time. Certain spiritual books would be an aid to the Sisters, too. *Spiritual Director* by Father Steck, O.F.M., was suggested.

19. Manifestation of Conscience

Little discussion was carried on. The Sisters thought that the problems of women are best understood by a woman.

20. How do various communities spend the recreation period?

The Sisters unanimously agreed that school work should not be done at recreation. Some communities do not even permit school to be mentioned. Limited time is given for exercise outdoors such as walking or games. During the week sewing is done. Games, cards,

piano, radio and record players are used at recreation. If it is convenient, roller skating, folk dancing etc. are indulged in. Picnic suppers, occasional movies, ball games and gym periods are also a part of recreation. One community has free recreation once a week from July to September. Many communities have reading for part of the meal followed by conversation. Most communities do not have recreation for breakfast except on large feasts. Novices are given a free afternoon once a week. One community varies the day each week. Some communities have restricted use of television and seem to find it educational.

Father Philippe: It is better to have exceptions from time to time than to give too much freedom each day. Reading should be watched. *Life* magazine is not good as a rule. There are exceptional issues that may be all right to read. Magazines like *Newsweek* and *Time* are good for the Sisters to read.

21. Should Novice-Mistresses try the Novices? To what extent?

This problem seemed to be difficult to discuss. Novices are individuals. They should be put to trial, but this does not necessarily mean that the Mistress be severe. Checking the orderliness of the novices' cells and watching their reaction to correction are important. If the novice shows resentment, she should be further tried as a matter of training.

The ordinary novitiate trials are many. Novices must hand in things that they receive: the Novice-Mistress may try her novices by not mentioning these articles. Asking small permission is also difficult.

Training in orderliness may be given by having the Novice-Mistress keep articles the novices leave around. Before they can have the article again, they must ask the Novice-Mistress for it. Putting two conflicting personalities together at work is a trial for novices.

Correction in private is better than correction in public. Correction should not be given before visiting day as the effect carries over to the novice's family. The sisters all felt that there are so many difficulties that come up for the novices that it isn't necessary to frame special trials. The Novice-Mistress should be thoroughly honest and sincere with the novice, for she is training the young nun for life.

22. Should credit be offered for secular subjects during the canonical year?

During the canonical year no secular sciences are pursued. Courses

in Religion are given for credit in each community. Some communities permit the novices to take courses for credit in Gregorian chant, Languages or Speech. Training in the Spiritual Life dominates this year. One sister asked whether it is against Canon Law or the spirit of Canon Law to give credit for secular subjects during this year. Why is it that Canonicals may not receive credit for this work?

Father Philippe: The canonical year seems to be too lax in this country. It is hard to conform this with the mind of the church if this year is not a contemplative year. The novitiate should be different from the regular life. That should be one year of 365 days absolutely dedicated to God. It should be possible for the novice to dedicate this time to God and to acquire the spirit of prayer. This is the opinion of all spiritual Fathers. Even the study of theology should not be had if it is a question of real hard work. It is better if they just read it without having to study it. There should be no tension during this year. It isn't the credit that is harmful; it is the tension that comes if you have examinations, etc.

23. What is the order of the day for Postulants when they enter?

It was agreed that Postulants should be kept as busy as possible. It is good to have them physically tired at night. Usually a novice is appointed as a companion for a postulant for the first few days. She tries to explain customs and the order of the day to the postulant. The Postulant-Mistress gives short instructions for short periods of time.

One community has a day of recollection for the postulants the day after they enter. One community has the entrance date just prior to the Reception ceremony. This seems to make a deep impression on the postulants. Postulants need not rise as early as the other Sisters. They have longer periods of recreation and usually have a get-acquainted party or picnic the first few days.

24. What is the work of the Assistant Novice-Mistress?

The Assistant Novice-Mistress has delegated powers from the Novice-Mistress. In one community she serves in the capacity of an instructor of sewing and music. In several communities she replaces the Mistress when she is absent. Permissions for small things may be obtained from the Assistant. Power to advise the Novice is not usually given to the Assistant. An Assistant Novice-Mistress in one community takes care of the postulants at recreation. She also helps censor mail and supervises the domestic work of the novices.

25. Do you approve of Sisters who are mentally ill being placed in State institutions?

If possible, Sisters should be kept in Catholic institutions. Kindness is needed at this time, and this can be best obtained in institutions conducted by Sisters. Because of the few institutions managed by Catholics it is a problem for Religious Superiors. One community was told that exorbitant expenses justify their sending a sister to a State institution. Permission from the Bishop was given in another case because the Bishop felt that the Sister could not benefit in a spiritual way during this time. Regular visits to the institution were made by the chaplain in order that he might know the Sister's condition.

Another sister mentioned her experiences visiting a Sister in a State institution. She would never advise a Superior to place any Sister in a State institution. Even the lay people working in the hospital were shocked at Catholic Sisters in such a place. A good Catholic psychiatrist should always be consulted before a Sister is placed in an institution for mental cases.

26. Is it advisable to admit candidates over thirty years of age?

Constitutions in most communities designate dispensations needed after the age of thirty or thirty-five. Most Sisters felt the reason for this was because of the training needed for the works of the institute. Many good girls have had to delay their vocation because of illness of parents, etc. Girls of thirty or more are very much more independent and find adjustment to religious life difficult. Most girls in the Novitiate are from 18-20 years of age. It is difficult for older members to take the same direction. The physical struggle, too, is a real trial on an older person. Some excellent administrators, superiors and teachers have come from groups who have entered later. Age must not hinder the person who has an earnest desire for sanctification and the necessary qualifications for religious life.

27. To what extent should the local superior report external acts, etc., to the higher superior?

It was agreed that a local superior should care for the spiritual and physical needs of her Sisters as far as possible. If correction needs to be made and the local superior can not do it, then she must refer to the higher superior. External traits and characteristics should be dis-

cussed so the Mother General will know how to place particular Sisters. The following quotation was given: "Anything told the superior in confidence cannot be revealed without the person's consent." A local Superior may command a Sister to reveal a confidence to the higher superior. Is such a command given in virtue of obedience? If it is, then the local superior can report the external act to the higher superiors.

Father, the Sisters would like to have you define what is meant by conscience matter?

Father Philippe: Practically speaking matters of conscience are matters of confession. You could ask a Sister to reveal things to you so that it would not be a matter of conscience. If it is something absolutely personal, the local superior has no right to reveal it to the higher superior.

28. Must a girl who wants to become a Sister break her friendship with a boyfriend? How early?

There seemed to be no objection to a prospective postulant having friendship with boys up to the time the girl enters. All agreed that steady company keeping, however, should not continue. When a girl decides on religious life she should gradually break off steady company keeping. A girl engaged does not keep company with others: neither should a girl contemplating religious life. A spiritual director, confessor or a Sister who is guiding the girl would surely inform her of this.

29. What is to be said of friendships between Sisters themselves, between Sisters and superiors, between Sisters and lay people?

Many good friendships exist in religious life. Associations of superiors with subjects should be friendly ones. The ideal situation would be a real family spirit. If relationships are good, religious unity will be had, permissions will be asked and in general the health of the Sisters will be better as will the rule be more perfectly kept.

If the superior shows this friendly feeling toward just one or two members, charity suffers, the superior loses the confidence and trust of the Sisters, jealousies will rise. Respect for the superior will be lowered as will the religious morale. Silence will be broken and criticisms will result. Younger religious become discouraged. Obedience suffers. The rule will not be kept. The superior will fail to set a good example and it will be difficult for the subject to see God in

their Superiors. The Sisters should be careful of passing judgment on Superiors for often they do not know the reasons for a superior going out of her way to give special attention to a particular Sister.

Friendship based on Christ's love often helps one another correct defects that might not be corrected by a superior. A good friendship gives a richness to life that nothing else natural can give and, therefore, it leads the soul to Christ. Gratitude is often the basis of friendships between Sisters. However, sometimes these friendships lead to a waste of time and criticism. If this friendship is not moderated, it may lead to a loss of vocation. Most of the criticism mentioned before may be applied here.

Sisters may often bring secular friends closer to God if they try to give good example to them. We, in justice, should be a real inspiration to our pupils, our charges. Many times lay people look to us for sympathy. They expect to find Christ in us. A good public relations program is an essential today. Sisters must watch that scandal is never given. This might be done in conversation. When gossip is discussed, community affairs are often discussed. Much time may be wasted. Friendships with members of the other sex often give scandal. Seculars look up to Sisters. They are easily scandalized. The action of an individual Sister may cause seculars to judge all Sisters. Many times violations of poverty are had and the religious spirit is broken. If such friendships are not curtailed they may result in loss of vocation. Harmful friendships with seculars are often the result of a lack of confidence and trust in members of their own community. Therefore, good family spirit in our communities, real trust in our Sisters, and a Christ-like love for each one will keep the Sisters happy in the community.

Father Philippe: The local superior should try to make friends in the community in which she is working. She represents the community. It is good to be friendly with the mothers and fathers of the children in your school. Often times the mothers need help in their religious life, and they get it by talking to you. It is one of the duties of the local superior to help the parents in the parish. Often a Sister can be of better help than the priest can. This is the work of the apostolate. Try to get to know the parents of your children. But, this friendship must not be for yourself. You do not need that. If you need a friendship, this association is bad: if you do not need it, it is good.

30. Is it permissible for a Novice-Mistress to use gift money to buy ordinary materials or supplies for the use of the novices without asking permission from the higher superior?

All permissions to spend money for novices or postulants goes through the Superior General according to some of the Novice-Mistresses. Others have an understanding or blanket permission to spend the novices' money. Another Novice-Mistress mentioned that she had to get permission from the local superior to spend any money in the novitiate. In a couple of cases the Mother General gives this permission at the time the sister is appointed Mistress.

THE FORMATION OF NOVICES AND THE GOVERNMENT OF COMMUNITIES

Rev. Paul Philippe, O.P.

I.

Principles of the Formation of the Novices

NATURE OF THE FORMATION OF NOVICES

The Novice Mistress has two main tasks: to discern vocations and to form the novices whose vocations have already been acknowledged.

To understand *how* to form the novice, it is necessary, in the first place, to know *what* is to be formed in her, that is, what is the *aim* of the formation, the integral program of the formation of the Novitiate.

What we shall say about the *Novitiate* holds true also for the *Juniorate*, insofar as it has for its scope the deepening of the work begun in the Novitiate. The stress, however, shall be laid chiefly on the spiritual preparation of the newly professed for the works of the Institute, that is, on the Institute's special end. When the Institute entrusts the Novice Mistress with the young religious, it is for the purpose that she would make of them *religious of the Institute*, in other words, that she would form in them *spiritual life, religious life and apostolic life* in accordance with the spirit of the Institute.

In fact, it is necessary that the novices be *interior souls* at the moment of their Profession and throughout their life, that they practice the *Christian* (virtues) and *religious virtues*, that they dedicate themselves with zeal to the works of the Institute, and all this in concordance with the proper spirit of the Institute.

Hence, the end to be attained during the Novitiate and the Juniorate is contained in the four following points:

- 1) formation in piety
- 2) formation in religious asceticism
- 3) formation in the works of the Institute
- 4) formation in the spirit of the Institute.

This is the integral substance of the formation to be given to the novices. I say "integral" because you cannot leave out any of these points without endangering essentially the formation of the novices according to the adage: "Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quocumque defectu"—that is, "For a thing to be good, it must have all the necessary elements; it will be bad if it lacks even one of them". Consequently, the Novice Mistress must always have before her eyes the integral program of the formation of the Novitiate.

This year, I am not going to speak about the particular formation in *piety*, in *virtues*, in the *apostolate*, and in the *spirit of the Institute*, but I shall limit myself to the treatment of the *general principles of formation*, in other words, to the method to be followed in order to *know* the novice, to *instruct* her, and to *correct* her. Afterwards we are going to study the *means* which the Novitiate places in the hands of the Novice Mistress for the formation of her novices: the *life of the Novitiate* (Regulations and the horarium, life in common, and recreation), the *Chapter of Faults*, the *instructions* (or spiritual conferences). It would also be worthwhile to speak of *direction* (spiritual private-talks), and of *spiritual reading*, but the time is too limited to treat these matters this year.

INSTRUCTION AND EDUCATION OF THE NOVICES

To give the novices the formation in piety, in the Christian and religious virtues, in the gift of self for the works of charity, in the spirit of the Institute, it is necessary to *instruct* their intelligence and *educate* their will. In fact, the formation of the novices consists purely in these two: *instruction*, whereby the *intellect* of the novice is nurtured with principles, convictions, ideas—forces—and *education* whereby the virtues that will make them true religious, interior souls and Sisters dedicated to apostolic works will be formed in their *will*.

The means of *instruction* are mainly the spiritual conferences or *lessons* of the Novice Mistress given to the whole Novitiate (supplemented by conferences given by priests invited by the Superiors) and the spiritual reading (private or in common).

The *education* is accomplished mainly by the private comments (observations) made by the Novice Mistress (for example, during the individual "direction" talks) or by observations made in public (as for example in the Chapter of Faults), or by means of the community life itself (a regulated life, example of Sisters).

But instruction need not be separated from education—the Novice Mistress instructs also in private spiritual direction and in the Chapter of Faults. Likewise the example of Sisters and the regulated life itself teach the novices and impart profundity to their convictions and enlighten their minds with solid principles.

On the other hand, in the lessons of the Novice Mistress and in their spiritual reading, the Novices acquire the desire to do better, inflame their will with the love of God and with zeal for souls.

The reason for this lies in the fact that the *instructions* given to the novices are not a purely speculative teaching as would be given by a professor of—let us say—theology, but are the communication of a *doctrine of life*, of a knowledge so organized as to stimulate the love of God and to move to virtue; an affective, practical knowledge.

NECESSITY AND NATURE OF THE INSTRUCTION

The education of the *will* is impossible without a previous instruction of the intellect. In fact, to form the will of our novices, that is, to change their mode of loving and acting so that they would love and act as we desire, it is necessary first to convince their intellect.

The why of this necessity is profound and permits us to understand the nature of the instruction. God alone can change the will because He alone is in this faculty; He lives at the very root of this power, impelling it from within, just as He is at the root of our intellect, enlightening it from within. We, on the other hand, when we want to act on another person, to exercise an influence on her, cannot do it without passing from the outside, that is, without setting before the other person's intellect the truth and the good that we acknowledge in order that the other person, too, would be *convinced* personally that this thing is true or that that act is good and that it can be performed. Consequently, we cannot infuse into others what we ourselves have and love. We must *make them see it*, we must make their intellect react and, thus, they themselves will form the decision to act as we want them to act. Hence, all education depends upon the *presentation* to the intellect of another person of the object that he is to adopt.

Instruction and education are compared by St. Thomas to the medical art. It is not the physician who changes the health of the sick, but he offers the body a medicine that makes it react (cf. *Summa*, Ia, Q. 117, a.1). Thus you can do nothing but present to the intellect of your novices the ideas—forces—which will be adopted by them personally and which will impel their will to act.

This manner of proceeding suffers no exception. Even in the case when you give a command to a novice without giving her any reason for the command, exacting of her will an act of blind obedience, you are obliged to appeal to her practical mind: you must speak in order to give her the command, and your words touch her intellect and convince her that she ought to obey without arguing, without understanding the why of the command. She then makes a free act of practical reason: "I ought to obey immediately." And this conviction impels her will to yield to your will. This is a very limited case, in which the instruction is reduced to a minimum, but demonstrates how, even here, it is impossible to act on the will of another without using the intellect as the starting point.

Generally speaking, the part that the intellect plays is very important in the formation of the novice because it is not enough to bend the will blindly, although this, too, is excellent. It is necessary to give the novices convictions that would last them for all their life, inculcate the desire for a life of prayer, love for Jesus and His Blessed Mother, and the spirit of the Institute. It is, therefore, necessary to give them the principles of life, and deep motives for mortification, for dedicating themselves to prayer, etc.

The formation of novices cannot be limited to the teaching of obedience. It is good to break self-will, but it is not enough. In order that a novice be truly formed in obedience, it is not enough that she obey every time the Novice Mistress gives her precise orders, but it is necessary for her to be convinced that she will be obliged to obey after the Novitiate in all circumstances. Hence the necessity of forming her judgment, of making her understand the importance and the very nature of obedience. The perfection of obedience does not consist in the annihilation of personality, but in the will to identify continuously our will with that of the Superiors, even when we do not see the motive for their commands, even when we see things differently. Now, this conformity of the will requires a strong will and, consequently, a right judgment. Woe to the Novice Mistress who would bring up her novices in passivity, in childishness (infantilism) under the guise of spiritual

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childlikeness. All the Saints, not excepting the Little Flower, were and will always be strong women, with a personality. Now, it is impossible to form strong characters, ardent wills, capable of perseverance in tending towards perfection amidst all the difficulties of life, without forming at the same time the conscience, the judgment, the virtue of prudence; without giving principles, without revealing the secrets of interior life, the importance of the Holy Eucharist, of the Passion of Christ, the indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity, the infinite transcendence of God. . .

We should not be satisfied, as are practically too many Novice Mistresses, with submission to the discipline of the Novitiate, because it is to build on sand, it is to do artificial work and to prepare the novices for a mediocre life, without the internal springs for striving after perfection. It is necessary to *instruct*.

INSUFFICIENCY OF INSTRUCTION AND THE NATURE OF EDUCATION

It would, however, be falling into the opposite extreme to reduce the formation of novices to instruction with very fine spiritual conferences, with private talks on prayer, on perfection, etc. The Novitiate is not a school and Novice Mistress is not a professor of spiritual theology. It is not enough to inculcate good principles, however practical, in the minds of the novices; it is not enough that they be convinced of the importance of prayer and of obedience. It is necessary to train their will in order to act and to act well; to pray in reality, to be obedient genuinely. But this is much more difficult!

Note well my words: the Novice Mistress forms the will of the novice to proceed to action, to act well, etc., but she is the one that acts, it is her will that proceeds to action. We consequently, always encounter the same thing, the same difficulty: we cannot make the will act, we cannot impose even a single act upon the will of another person, we cannot be the direct cause of his action because we are outside of him. God alone can be the internal motor of the will. That is why we must pray. If the Novice Mistress cannot change the will of her spiritual daughter, she can change—we may say so—the will of the Eternal Father in reference to her (and we may say so because, in fact, it is God himself that has foreseen and inspired this, her prayer, in order to grant the novice the grace for which the Novice Mistress asks Him in her prayer).

However, it remains true that the Novice Mistress cannot act directly upon the will of her daughters: she will never be anything else but the "Causa coadiuvans extrinsecus"—says St. Thomas (I-II q.4, a.8)—helping the novices to act, to orient themselves well. The Novice Mistress is like a tutor, like a pole for a young plant to lean upon to help it grow, directing it towards its end and supporting it. But it is not the pole that grows, that lives—it is the plant. The pole is there solely for the purpose of aiding the young plant.

The comparison, however, is not perfect because the Novice Mistress does not limit herself to supporting and guiding the activities of the Novices, but she also sustains and exhorts them to action. Here is where the education comes in: while the instruction consists in giving the intellect sound principles, the education consists essentially in making the will produce acts, and good acts, always more and more perfect. Quantity, therefore, but much more quality—existence of the acts, but much more the perfection of the acts. The etymology of the word "education" is fully justified: it comes from the Latin "ducere" which means "to lead" and it gave rise to the "educere", which means to lead out from potentiality to actuality. The will of the novice has the potentiality for good, for religious perfection, and the education of the Novice Mistress consists in making this potentiality turn into actuality. She is an educator (one that leads out—"educere") and directress ("ducere") that *leads* to the end. Cf. St. Thomas (*Summa* I, q.117, a.1; *De veritate* q.11, a.1; a.6; a.9).

Let us repeat it once more: it is precisely the will of the novice that passes from potentiality to act. The will of the Novice Mistress can only help, that is, can support, persuade, stimulate with her counsels and commands the will of the novice to decide, *by herself*, to act.

If I have so insisted on this fundamental principle of St. Thomas on education, it is because the "Active School" of modern psychology, with its aversion for all coercion from the outside ("drill"), and with its method of stimulating and guiding the child, did not invent anything new. St. Thomas taught that the master is none else but the helper of nature, ("minister naturae" *ibid.*).

Accordingly, all education must tend to develop the potentiality of the will and render it more and more capable of *acting personally*. However, since we treat of the education of religious, whose ideal is exactly to tend to perfection in obedience to their Superiors and in

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the observance of their Constitutions, "*acting personally*", which is the aim of education, will not consist in acting independently, but in conforming the will, *conscientiously and with fortitude*, to the will of the Superiors.

It is, moreover, necessary to clarify another point that is very important today: a novice is no longer the young lady of Catholic Action—she is a religious. That is why, even if we take into account the teachings of modern pedagogy, we may not introduce its methods without precaution into our Novitiates and Juniorates. When this "Active School" teaches that we should never give commands to the young, but give them the impression that they act *of themselves*, of their own initiative, it is true that the education of the child must tend to make of him an adult, who would know how to govern himself; it is true that the art of the educator is to teach the one being educated to get along without the educator and, consequently, to teach him the proper use of liberty. But religious life has a completely different aim, even quite the contrary: it is precisely adults that enter to submit the use of their liberty to the disposal of the Superiors, to be guided by them to Christian perfection and to eternal life. The religious accepts voluntarily to be treated till his death as a son, a child; he places obedience at the base of his religious life, as a characteristic virtue of his state of life—a state of dependence that, of itself, *liberates* him from sin because it places him in the hands of Superiors, which means to him: in the hands of God. Therefore religious life helps the soul to be truly free, to reach the real liberty, to share in the infinite liberty of God. But liberty is not independence.

This is why the method of forming a novice is quite different from the one in which you form a young girl who is to stay in the world. However, there are some common principles of education, about which we have already spoken: form the will to *act* personally (in *obedience*, as regards a religious, and *independently* when an adult in the world is concerned).

HOW TO FORM THE NOVICES

LOVE THE NOVICES

Two conditions are indispensable to form the Novices: to love them and to know them. Above all to love them.

We must, in fact, perform the work of God Himself in the novices, in other words, we must sanctify them. The Novice Mistress is like

the instrument of the Eternal Father in the souls. Now, the sanctification of souls, like their creation, is the work of infinite Love, an act of God's predilection for these chosen souls. How, then, could the Novice Mistress perform God's work if she were not united with Him, if she would not love the novices as God loves them, with the same love with which He loves them? Consequently, all her action upon the novices must be drawn from her union with God, nourished at the only source necessary: prayer. Charity is the motor of her action and the measure of her efficacy in forming the novices.

Furthermore, love will make her understand the novices better by that affinity that gives a certain *intuition* of the spiritual needs of the novice. The more a mother loves her daughter, the better she senses, as if instinctively, her innermost reactions. Love, further, makes the Novice Mistress *exact* in forming the novices and *ingenious* in selecting means for their efficacious education.

But her charity must not remain hidden in the depths of her heart. The Novice Mistress must be a true mother, a *good* mother, sympathetic, warm, approachable, one that wins over hearts, is loved by her daughters.

There may, however, exist the danger that the novices will become attached to the Novice Mistress, seeing in her the ideal of their life, seeing in her even Jesus and the Blessed Virgin. They may at least, in all sincerity, say that in her they love Jesus and the Blessed Virgin. But this love needs to be purified. When the Novice Mistress becomes aware that a novice loves her in too human a way and is unconsciously becoming attached to her, she must not reject her brutally; she would run the risk of plucking good grain together with the weed and of breaking sacred ties in the heart of the novice with the intention of "opening her eyes". It is better to withdraw little by little, without saying it, to treat the novice with somewhat more severity, to expose her to trial—but delicately, with love and, above all, with justice.

She must practice charity with all as the *Good Pastor* has done it, bending mercifully over the weak, despising no one, knowing how to comfort, console, calm, encourage, and even, sometimes, to praise: "You have done this well, dear child, this has pleased Jesus", etc.

It is important to know when and how to *smile*, which is an excellent way of opening hearts (cf. St. Theresa of the Child-Jesus).

But loving, love enough to be able to *correct*, to *inflict suffering*, if necessary, in order to save. However, make it known that you are doing it out of well-understood charity.

TO KNOW THE NOVICES

Let us recall the classical picture of a novice: A young religious, forever laughing, breaking all upon which she lays her hands, easily scandalized, as a rule happy, thoughtless, ready to conquer the world of perfection, carrying to exaggeration her practice of piety and of penitence, inexperienced and easily disturbed by her weaknesses, and even inclined to scrupulosity—particularly in matters of purity or of interior aridity.

Since each novice differs from another and since the formation should be *personal*, it is the duty of the Novice Mistress to know each novice, her character, her evil *propensities* and good *aspirations*, the grade and quality of her *intelligence* (intuitive or discursive), her *physical condition* (often defects of character in community life have their source in malfunction of the endocrine glands or of the stomach); a sad and closed-in novice may be a victim of scruples in matters of purity that can be cured by a physician's counsel and proper medicine, etc.; her *family*, etc. In a word, the Novice Mistress must be interested in all that pertains to each one of her novices.

What to do to know them better? In the first place, the Novice Mistress must show that she is interested in them, that she loves them *personally*. When they will have confidence, they will talk. They will even desire it, will feel the need to talk.

Then when they come, *allow them to talk*. This seems evident, and yet, how many Novice Mistresses and Superiors won't let them talk, but always talk themselves!

Respect the confidences of the novice and never ridicule any serious matter.

How to make the taciturn novice speak? *Question* her about her family (has she received any good news? how is her little sister?—and the like); about her health (does she sleep well? does she have a good appetite?); does she like the works of charity of the Institute; would she like to make her profession, to be the spouse of Jesus; would she want to be a martyr for the love of Jesus? Provoke her to express her impression of the book read in the refectory, etc.

A good occasion to gain better knowledge of the novices is the *recreation*: there they are more natural, more simple. You should also profit by observing the novices at various *duties* assigned them in the Novitiate (infirmarian, librarian, etc.)—observe their behavior, the personal qualities and defects which they betray.

In observing the novices and in listening to them, the Novice Mistress must avoid these two extremes: *credulity* and *suspicion*. There are Novice-Mistresses who believe all that their novices tell them, especially about other novices—without verifying their words. You must listen to everything, but don't believe everything, and you must check, and even distrust, all denunciations, particularly those that come from thoughtless and inconsiderate novices or from those that are subject to jealousy and antipathy. They are the ones that you must reprimand and correct when things will prove to be different from what they had related to you.

On the other hand, you must avoid suspicion, imagining a priori that the novices lack sincerity. The Novice Mistress is not a police-officer, she ought not spend her time in watching or, worse, in organizing delation among her spiritual daughters.

There is one thing that must be mentioned: never, under no pretext, not even that of vocation or of the salvation of a soul, may a "letter of conscience" be opened (the permission may be withdrawn if there are evidences that this correspondence brings harm to the soul of the novice, but it may never be read and sealed again).

TO FORM THE NOVICES PROGRESSIVELY

The procedure to be followed in the instruction of the intellect and in the education of the will may be compared to the laws of physical nutrition: it is necessary to give food suitable to the age (different for a child of six months, for a girl of ten, for a grown-up, for an old woman), suitable to the station of life (a Sister that teaches four to five hours per day has greater needs than a cloistered nun), suitable for the various seasons for the same person. In like manner, instruction must be proportioned to the actual capacity of the intellect, and you cannot expect a Postulant of two months nor a novice of ten months to be perfect in obedience or fraternal charity.

In instructing, it is necessary to start from easy things, from familiar principles and draw new consequences from them. It is always a temptation for the Novice Mistress to jump over elementary things, taking it for granted that her spiritual daughters know them already. It is certainly more interesting to talk about the lofty things of the spiritual life. But if the fundamentals are lacking, you build on sand. It is, however, good to open somewhat the mind of the novice on the sublime things of spiritual life, as on the occasion of a Saint's life read in the refectory. In this as in other things, it is a question of

measure (of how much): you must not follow a too rigid order, you cannot hold their minds solely on things that are for beginners.

Similarly in the training of virtues you must avoid "forcing the march" of the novices. When the Novice Mistress is too exacting in the beginning, there often arises a tense atmosphere in the Novitiate, a certain nervousness that is detrimental to the spiritual development of the novices.

Let time do its work. As in nature plants don't grow in a day and fruit requires some months to mature, so also in spiritual life you need patience, much patience and perseverance.

According to St. Thomas, habits and virtues grow by the repetition of the acts—even the supernatural virtues. Therefore the Novice Mistress must make the novices practice virtues, and she, too, must repeat to them her observations, but without tiring and nagging her spiritual daughters. - Again a question of measure!

Repetition of the acts of virtue—yes! but only when the occasion for practicing them presents itself. You must not practice them as if "in vacuo", in a void, solely to perform them. It would be a completely artificial education. Look for quality rather than for quantity. The Novice Mistress must make the novices produce acts that would be more and more perfect, correcting the defects observed in the practice of this or that virtue.

Now, little by little the habit is formed. A habit, "habitus" is recognized, according to St. Thomas, by two signs (characteristics): *facility* in performing the acts and *joy* that is felt in their performance.

However, virtue will not be perfect until its practice will become as if natural, as if instinctive. This degree is not usually acquired in the Novitiate. But it is well to teach the novices to tend toward this "eventuality"—and to tell them that this is not accomplished without the grace of the Holy Ghost, without the aid of His gifts. The Saints were persons as if possessed by God and acted in conformity with His Will as if under His immediate impulse. Hence sanctity presupposes a great purity of intention, a consummate virtue. This is the real perfection of which the Novice Mistress must inculcate desire in her novices without danger of false mysticism.

Is there a logical order existing in the matter to be taught and in the virtues in which to educate? No, it is necessary to form all of these together: the life of prayer, of unity with God and human honesty, humility and magnanimity (generosity), poverty and chastity, etc. Of course, when we shall speak about spiritual instructions, we shall

say that there need be a certain order in the explanation of the above matters. You cannot treat about all of them together, because the human mind must consider things one after another. But beside the orderly teaching there is the instruction in the diverse circumstances of the life of the Novitiate and there is the partial training of virtues. And so here you cannot fix a gradated program, but rather see to it that all the virtues would grow together as grow the fingers of the hand. Hence the Novice Mistress would err if she would intend to form in her Novices: 1) the woman, 2) the Christian, 3) the religious, 4) the member of the Institute. Form well the member of the Institute and, by way of consequence, there shall be implicitly the religious, the Christian, the woman.

TO FORM THE INTENTION OF THE ACTS

Now let us take a novice at the beginning of her Novitiate to form her. What should we demand of her in the first place?

That she do all for the love of God. This is the *intention* that must, or at least, will have to rule all her acts. To the Novice Mistress belongs the duty of purifying this intention of all its imperfections, of all its human motives: not to act out of self-love, to please the Novice Mistress, or through human respect, but to do God's Will, to please Jesus.

Hence it can be seen that from the very beginning of the religious formation, the Novice Mistress must appeal to the supernatural motives, even to the highest motive of the spiritual life, which is the love of God, a love of benevolence, of friendship towards Him.

And it cannot be done in a different way; love is the principle and the measure of all the acts of the will. The will does not decide to act, except under the impulse of love toward good, real or false.

For this reason the whole art of the Novice Mistress consists in sustaining, in the will of her spiritual daughter, a great love toward the spiritual good to be attained.

It is futile, for example, to expect a novice to obey a certain point of the Constitutions if she is not first convinced that this act of obedience will be good for her, and immediately, too.

Let us make it more precise: the will reaches for the goal before reaching for the means. Therefore the Novice Mistress must teach the novices to *act always*—to do all and always for the love of God, even if it comes to choosing the minutest particulars among the means of the daily life. For when the will of the novice is seized by a

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sincere and intense love of God and of Jesus, you can demand all from her and she will consider everything as a test of her love toward her Father and toward her Spouse.

Consequently, it is necessary to accustom the novice to live under the eyes of God, in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity that lives in her soul; in other words, it is not enough to act *for God*, it is necessary to act *with God*, in union with Him.

TO FORM THE JUDGMENT OF THE NOVICES.

Let us suppose now that our novice is well oriented toward the goal, is full of good will to do all for the love of God. But this purity of intention is not enough. She must know how to choose the means; hence the need to have a good judgment.

The formation of common sense is very important in the education of novices. Generally, they have much generosity, the *intention* to dedicate themselves wholly to God, but they still lack good judgment: *they will what is good*, but don't know how to do it.

The first thing to do is to develop the ability to reflect. Instead of leaving all to chance, one should seek counsel on the means to undertake: she should pray to God in order to know His Will, of course without expecting an answer through special revelation, but simply being sure that God will make His Will known by means of circumstances, for example, through Superiors; consult the confessor; take into account a previous *experience* and compare it with the present case, also similar circumstances, etc. In a word, it is necessary to accustom the novices not to act precipitately, without deliberation.

The habit of reflecting before acting will give the novices a sense of equilibrium, the right measure. The Novice Mistress will teach them to distinguish the essentials from the accidentals in the spiritual life—the ends from the means. Above all, she will teach them to judge objectively. To judge? Yes, but not in the sense condemned by Our Lord in the Gospel, that is, to act like a judge in tribunal,—God alone and, by participation, civil and ecclesiastical judges may judge a person, that is, may pass sentence, condemn or acquit. This kind of judgment, being always rash, is a sin. On the contrary, the judgment that consists in evaluating someone's ideas or things with objectivity is not a sin, is even a duty when we deal with things essential to spiritual life, to religious life, to our Institute. But, as in similar cases, the novice must be educated so as not to fall into criticism, that is into judging the person. To the Novice Mistress then

belongs the delicate task of forming right judgment in her novices.

TO FORM THE WILL OF THE NOVICE FOR DECISION AND FOR ACTION

It is not enough to form the judgment, it is also necessary to form the will to decide and to command. There are persons that judge well, but remain always undecided: it is necessary to know what is needed to make a decision on time. Such persons in religious life *have recourse* to their Superiors with the slightest things. Such a type of a person the Novice Mistress must teach to assume responsibilities, within the limits, evidently, of obedience. It would be anything but forming her correctly, letting her find in the Novice Mistress the person who makes all the decisions herself.

On the other hand, there are impulsive persons who make decisions without heeding the counsels of others or even their own judgment, although it can be sound: it seems that they forget to use their head. Maybe they are under the impulse of a certain passion or under the impression of an "inspiration" received in prayer, which their imagination attributes to the Holy Ghost: "God wants this, God demands this of me." The Novice Mistress must teach such novices to make decisions solely in conformity with objective criterions and not in conformity with uncontrolled impressions or inspirations.

It is also the duty of Novice Mistresses to form the novices to make *resolutions*. To be efficacious, the resolutions must be few at a time, and rather detailed; if they are too general, i.e., to become a saint, they won't be fruitful.

In reference to this, it is necessary to teach the novices how to make the *particular examen*—making a resolution for one week and examining every day how it was kept.

The most difficult among these successive acts is certainly the keeping of resolutions, *persevering* in the tendency towards perfection, in the correction of our faults, in the practice of prayer.

The virtue of *fortitude* is needed here to reinforce the will, probably weakened by many pernicious influences.

In a word, it is necessary to form the character of the novices, to form *strong characters, personalities*, which does not mean, let us repeat it, to form their independence: we are forming the *religious*, that is, persons whose life is going to be, till death, a life of dependence, of sacrificing self. But it is precisely the true submission of judgment and of will that requires, *to be meritorious*, a real character and strong personality, as had the saints.

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TO FORM THE CONSCIENCE OF THE NOVICES

Now the will has come to the end of her course: determined to act under the impulse of the love of God, enlightened by right judgment, she has taken the proper means and has attained the beloved good, or, contrarily, she has stopped on the road, weakened or fascinated by some false good.

That is why it is necessary now to judge the act performed; it is for the *conscience* to sanction our acts and to dictate new resolutions in order to put the soul back on the "right track."

It is now the duty of the Novice Mistress to teach how to make the *examination of conscience*, a very important act, recommended by St. Anthony the Great as early as the fourth century, as one of the principal means of spiritual perfection. The examen makes us see ourselves sincerely as we are: it makes us call good what is good and bad what is bad. Nothing is more efficacious in teaching the soul, than to make this examen sincerely, with loyalty towards self and absolute honesty.

Before beginning it, it is necessary to ask the Lord to illuminate our soul and show it to us as He sees it. In this manner, united with God, we see things as they are in reality. The verdict of the conscience is like the verdict of God, but gives us, with repentance, hope in His infinite Mercy.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

I. Duties towards God:

1. *Faith*—Lack of spirit of faith. Too human outlooks. Practical naturalism.
2. *Hope*—Lack of hope in God. Despair. Not to desire heaven actively. Discouragement. Presumption.
3. *Charity*—Lack of conformity with the will of God; of fidelity to His expressed will, of seeking what pleases Him. Union with God not very real. Am I really sufficiently moved by the desire for God, for His glory, for perfection in everything (effective charity: to do all for the love of God)? Am I sufficiently docile to the Holy Ghost (controlled inspirations)?
4. *Religion*—Exercises of Piety.
 - a. *Morning prayer*. Offering of the day.
 - b. *Holy Mass—Communion*.
 - c. *The Office*. (Preparation. Distractions.)

- d. *Prescribed exercises of piety*—Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, the rosary, etc.
- e. *Spiritual reading*—Holy Scripture, Authors. Lives of Saints.
- f. *Devotions*: of Order (Passion of Christ, Blessed Virgin, Holy Founder, etc.), of own Country, personal.
- g. *Evening prayer. Examen of conscience. Preparation for death.*
- h. *Confession.*

II. Duties toward self:

1. *Prudence*:

- a. *Conscience*: lack of delicacy of conscience or meticulousness (scruples?)
- b. *Counsel*: negligence to take information, and then to pray. Lack of forethought.
- c. *Decision*: “imprudence” in choice. Incapacity to make resolutions, time lost in deciding. Impulsiveness, precipitance.
- d. *Order and execution*: haste or negligence in “beginning to act.”

2. *Fortitude*:

- a. *Softness* of character. Cowardice of effort.
- b. *Pusillanimity* (lack of magnanimity).
- c. *Impatience*—anger. Fury.
- d. Lack of *perseverance*. Obstinacy.

3. *Temperance*:

- a. Mortification of the five senses, of memory (reminiscences), of imagination. Not chastising sufficiently one’s own body. Doing it imprudently and without the control of obedience.
- b. *Moderation* in nourishment (palate) and resting.
- c. *Chastity*—Lack of delicacy in thoughts, in looks, in touch. Lack of prayer in temptations (to feel, to sense is not to consent).

4. *Obedience*:

- a. To the orders of the Superiors (Submission of practical judgment).
- b. To the Constitutions (examen on certain points, e.g., silence).

5. *Poverty*:

- a. Attachment to created goods. Lack of the spirit of poverty.
- b. Insufficient dependence upon the Superiors in the use (giving, receiving, lending, destroying) of goods given us for personal use and of the Community goods.

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c. Not having thought enough of the poor.

6. *Humility*:

a. Before God (nothing—nil and sinner). Believing to be someone.

b. Before others: desiring to be well seen. Not accepting severe judgments, calumny.

c. Ambition.

7. *Penitence*:

a. Lack of repentance of one's faults.

b. Lack of reparation.

III. Duties towards neighbor. Examining one's self on duties of charity and of justice towards "various" neighbors. Not forgetting that frankness is a social virtue.

1. *Duties toward the religious family*:

a. Toward the *Superiors*: respect, submission, prayers, sensitiveness.

b. Toward *Sisters*: charity (shunning human affection, repressing antipathy). Justice (slanders, calumnies).

c. Toward the *Community and Order*: devotedness to the common good.

2. *Duties toward our family* (parents, brothers, sisters).

a. Of respect, of affection and of gratitude (negligence or excessive attachment).

b. Of devotedness and of prayer (particularly in certain circumstances).

3. *Duties of office* (teacher, nurse, etc.,)

a. Daily preparation for this duty of state and its faithful execution.

b. Solicitude for the souls of children (or of the sick or the poor approached).

4. *Duties towards our Country*:

5. *Duties towards the Church*:

a. The Church. The Holy Father. The Hierarchy. The Priests.

b. The Apostolate (in our Country, among other Nations, on Missions).

c. The conversion of protestants, Jews, the infidels.

d. The persecuted members of the Church (faithful, religious, Priests, Bishops).

e. The Ordinary and the Diocese—his works.

6. *Duties towards the Souls in Purgatory*.

THE VARIOUS ACTS OF AUTHORITY AT THE DISPOSITION OF THE
MISTRESS OF NOVICESI. *Before the act to be performed by the Novice.*

1. *Counselling* is the weakest act of authority. Instead of imposing an act, the Novice Mistress can *suggest it*, particularly in reference to a very impressionable Novice, or in a crisis, or when the matter treated is one of "counsel," that is, not obligatory; also in reference to vocation or profession, when the novice hesitates, the Novice Mistress cannot but give her counsel. Also in matter of spiritual direction, for example, advise a novice disturbed by scruples to go to the confessor or to some other priest.

2. *Exhorting*: for a delicate soul, a simple exhortation of the Novice Mistress is already an order; however, it does not take the absolute form of a precept. It is a *suggestion* that makes an appeal to the generosity of the novice—an *invitation*.

The exhortation may assume the form of a *request*: "I beg you to do this" or even of an entreaty, "For the love of God, I entreat you not to leave the convent in this moment of crisis".

Is it necessary to use this mode of acting on the novices? In fact, as has already been said many times, education consists in teaching to act *voluntarily*; the acts must come forth from the will of the subject. Otherwise, you can obtain probably a uniform external discipline, but the "habits," the profound virtues will not be formed. If the Novice Mistress uses but precepts, little by little she accustoms the novices to wait for orders to act and thwarts all their élan for perfection, their generosity in advancing.

3. *Commanding*: However a Novice Mistress who would not give orders to her spiritual daughters would err seriously against her duty, for she would not form in them that which is essential in religious life, that is, the virtue of obedience, submission to the Superiors.

As we have already said, a novice is no longer a young girl working in Catholic Action, but a religious, who has chosen a life of dependence. Hence, she expects of her Superiors, and first of all of her Novice Mistress, to be led, to be urged to perfection.

To be fruitful, an order must take on certain qualities: it must be opportune, as if brought about naturally by the very situation, it must be incontestable. All that would smack of authoritarianism must be avoided, i.e., almost formal precepts for the least things. It must be practicable: hence the necessity to foresee if it will be such. It must

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be *clear and concise*: if it is an order for the Novitiate, written on the bulletin board, you must take time to word it well; also when it pertains to an important matter, first make the Vice-Mistress read it to see how she would understand it.

Sometimes an order has to be modified, or even annulled when necessary: stubbornness on the part of the Novice Mistress to maintain an order that is no longer timely, makes a bad impression. On the other hand, she must avoid successive countermands, which weaken the authority.

From time to time demand blind obedience without explaining the command. Also from time to time explain the why of a given order, but never to justify yourself (as if apologizing for having given it) but for the sake of instructing the novice in its importance.

4. *Putting on trial, exercising*: From the beginning of Monasticism, that is, from the 4th century till today, all the holy Founders felt the need of "trying" the novices (cf. for ex. the Rule of St. Benedict). But it must be done at the proper time. A certain surveillance, unsuspecting, but also not naive in reference to human frailty, is necessary: it is even a duty to enter the cell of the novice from time to time, unexpectedly, to control what is being done there. If a novice leaves things for her use (missal, pen) in disorder, the Novice Mistress ought to take them and oblige the novice to come and ask for them.

When two novices feel a mutual antipathy, the Novice Mistress ought to assign them both to the same duty, at least for some time.

The trials are a means to know the novice better, but also the means to form them in humility and obedience. A Novice Mistress that avoids all that can exercise her novices will never be able to form strong characters, and she also risks the danger of never coming to know the real defects or the generosity of her spiritual daughters.

II. *Sanctions after the act performed by the Novice*

1. *Reproving or encouraging*. When a novice does well, particularly after some reproof of the Novice Mistress, it is well to acknowledge it, at least from time to time, and to encourage her. (You may also not do it sometimes to test her). But you may never congratulate her (according to the worldly custom) that is, never praise the *person*, especially in public. However, the Novice Mistress may, in cases not too frequent, express also in public her satisfaction of a thing done by a single novice or by a group (for example after a feast of the Novitiate, or after an exceptional labor).

Reproving, upbraiding is rather difficult. But there is no true education without correction. The correction should be made with *justice* (nothing ruins the formation more than an unjust reprimand) with *measure* and *precision* (one should not exaggerate but limit the reproval to the wrong done); however, the occasion can be taken from this fault, though perhaps very limited in itself, to uncover a deeper evil, with the precaution, however, of never charging the novice with intentions for which there are no objective proofs, and not to accuse a novice of having committed a grave sin since the Novice Mistress has no power over the conscience; with *goodness* and *composure* but also with *firmness*, that is "*fortiter et suaviter*" (avoiding rude and inappropriate words that betray impatience or even anger; however, on rare occasions, making use of an indignant tone, when a milder tone might be interpreted as weakness or as tacit approbation).

It is necessary to choose the psychological moment for reproval: refraining from doing it during recreation (if, however, a novice says something improper, the Novice Mistress may, good-humoredly, call her attention to it or change the subject, but after the recreation call the novice to correct her).

Sometimes it is better to wait a few days to see whether the novice will improve of herself or whether she will take advantage of the Novice Mistress's silence to continue. If for example, the Novice Mistress sees that two novices talk where and when they ought not, it would perhaps be more profitable to say nothing when passing them, giving them the occasion to stop; but later, she would do well to make them understand that the fact has not escaped her attention. Often it is even better to wait till the nearest chapter and reprove them in front of the other novices.

2. *Punishing*.—The custom of imposing certain *penances* was codified already in the first Egyptian monasteries of the 4th century. When we shall speak of the Chapter of Faults, we shall treat about penances to be given to the novices for the purpose of obtaining efficacious fruits of formation. Now, we shall satisfy ourselves with determining the conditions for punishment, for the "penances," to be truly a principle of formation of the novices. As regards the penances imposed in Chapter, it must be confessed that the very fact of expecting to receive one diminishes its formative value. To be efficacious a penance received in Chapter must be unusual and accompanied by some explanation of the Novice Mistress. A punishment, on the

contrary, imposed privately, after some severe reproof, carries a considerable weight, but must be used with prudence.

II.

Means of Formation in Use in the Novitiate

In all religious Institutes, the Constitutions and the usages put at the Mistress of Novice's disposition are diverse means for the formation of her spiritual daughters. These means may be divided into two categories: collective means and individual means.

The principal *collective means* are: *common life* (regular life and fraternal life), the *Chapter of Faults* (or analogous exercise) and the *instructions* of the Novice Mistress (or "spiritual conferences").

The principal *individual means* are: the *spiritual direction* (or "private conferences" with the Novice Mistress), the *spiritual readings* (even if some are made in common, they are not of themselves common exercise). Also the *observations* (comments) and *orders* directed personally by the Novice Mistress to a novice could be mentioned among the private means but in reference to this enough has been said in Chapter I.

COMMON LIFE

NATURE AND NECESSITY OF COMMON LIFE FOR SANTIFICATION

The Novitiate constitutes a small society, with its common purpose, its Rules, its authority (the Novice Mistress), its members who live in common. The Novitiate, further, forms a part of the house where it resides and it is a house of the Institute, a real religious society that has its laws (Constitutions) and its general Authority.

The novices, consequently, live together under the same roof, have all their goods in common, practice the same observances and assemble each day around the same altar, are Sisters, and prepare themselves for the same works of mercy. Hence, a real Community with all the elements that constitute it: purpose, law, authority, goods, observance, cult, affections, apostolate.

It is this way in all the religious institutes: moreover, common life

is one of the necessary elements for the approbation of the Holy See. But why? Why is it necessary to live together to sanctify one's self? It would seem rather that to live with God, the greatest possible solitude would be sought. Did not the first monks flee into the desert "to pray to God alone"?

It is true that the first monks were hermits, but soon, as Cassian relates, they understood the need of help from others to sanctify themselves.

St. Pachomius then founded the first convent in Egypt: thus came to life cenobitism, that is, life in common of the religious.

In the *Summa*, St. Thomas summarizing nine centuries of religious experience, teaches that "social life" is necessary to acquire Christian perfection: Man, says he, has need to be instructed by others on contemplation, and to be formed by correction and the example of others in order to restrain the defects of his affection (cf. II-II, q.188, a.8).

In this text, St. Thomas considers solely the advantages of the common life as a *means to personal perfection*. But common life is, likewise, a most useful means for the *apostolate*: "team work," and in the order of the day also in religious life. However, the foremost purpose of the common life in religion is its religious value, or personal sanctification, which does not impede the inculcation of the necessity to collaborate in the works of the Institute. Likewise, in the Juniorate it will be necessary to prepare the Sisters for this laboring in common.

COMMON LIFE AND THE FORMATION OF MORAL VIRTUES

Common life imposes the obligation to practice moral virtues. The very fact of following the community in everything, without being able to do what would be pleasing to our whim, is a mortification: to get up at the sound of the bell when one still feels the need of sleep; to go to the chapel for common prayers when one would prefer to remain in silence before the Blessed Sacrament; to sit at the table in the common refectory and never be able, not a single day, to eat what one prefers; each day spend one to two hours in recreation with persons more or, perhaps, less sympathetic; from morning till night to be occupied with work of little interest to us and much different from the one about which we dreamed on entering the Institute; not to be understood by the Superior; not to be able to possess something, nor buy a book that one would like to have, not even to offer it to a Sister or a person who has need of it; never be able

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to disclose one's feelings, nor "to give one's heart" to another person who would truly be a friend; and all this every day, with the obligation of persevering till death under pain of losing all the fruit of what has been acquired with such difficulty—even under pain of not saving the soul. St. John Berchmans, S.J. had good reasons to call common life "the penance of penances"! In fact, there isn't a single moral virtue that a religious would not be obliged to practice in common life: humility and obedience, chastity and temperance, patience and perseverance, poverty, etc. Common life is, in fact, the best school of moral virtues, and this in its double aspect—in so far as it is a regulated life and as it is a social life.

In as much as it is a regulated life, the common discipline binds us, as if by force, to practice religious virtues: if today we do not feel inclined to do good, we still should observe the Rule, making virtue of necessity. It isn't perhaps very generous, but at least in the evening we shall have our duty done, and the little drop of water will have done its work falling once more upon the rock. "To follow the community by observing the Rule well is the straight road leading to God," wrote St. Francis de Sales in his "Entertainments" with his Visitation daughters.

Likewise from the social aspect, common life is a grand school of virtue. But it will be understood better, when considered as a school of charity.

COMMON LIFE AND CHARITY

In as much as the life of the Novitiate is a life in common, it is most efficacious in forming characters. Common life is like a torrent into which an angular pebble is thrown: after several months of friction in contact with other stones, rounded by the tumultuous waters, it, too, will become smoothed. Accordingly, a difficult character that consents to be formed, after several months of Novitiate, will become entirely softened.

And here, too, you make virtue of necessity: in order not to cut a poor figure we render service to a Sister, who like the importunate friend of the Gospel, comes to disturb us during our spare time. The service will probably be given reluctantly, but after all it will be given. In this manner we are going to have one more virtuous act. The next time, we are going to do it more generously, through charity.

Common life, consequently, is a grand school of charity, of interior charity toward a neighbor and of the gift of self to others. We are all obliged to practice it, whether we like it or not. It is, however,

a rough school, we must confess it, because despite our best intentions, we often collide with others: different temperaments—some irritable, touchy, some unrestrained, others incommunicative (close-lipped)—diverse grades of intelligence and of education, etc. And it is charity that makes us bear all, as says the Apostle in a passage of his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, which ought to be commented on by all the Novice Mistresses to their spiritual daughters: “Charity is patient, is kind, charity does not envy, is not pretentious, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, is not self-seeking, is not provoked; thinks no evil, does not rejoice over wickedness, but rejoices with the truth; bears with all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Cor. XIII, 4-7).

Charity is then the main condition for deriving profit from this excellent means of formation which is the common life. And, at the same time, charity is an excellent generator of all the other virtues in fraternal life; it is the motor that animates the whole common life. Moreover, fraternal charity is the sign, the thermometer of spiritual life: “By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John XIII, 35)

The Novice Mistress ought to remind the novices often that all are in the Novitiate because all have been called by Jesus to be His spouses; hence, to have the same love in the heart; to be united in tending toward the same end, competing in love and helping one another; to bring pleasure to her divine Spouse: “Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor.” The Rule of St. Augustine begins thus: “Before all, know that you are united to be of one mind in the same house and to form among you one soul and one heart in God.”

But it is necessary to know precisely in what does the supernatural love of others consist. It is not a sentiment, it is not a human friendship. Besides fraternal love is not solely a love of neighbor “for God,” as if it consisted in loving first the neighbor (example: an impulse of compassion for a pauper, an orphan, a sick person) and then referring this love to God. Certainly, this manner of loving one’s neighbor is not bad; it is even meritorious on the part of the soul when in the state of grace, because it is “commanded” by charity and is directed towards God. In this manner a Christian daughter loves her mother, her family; in this manner she loved her friends in the world; in this manner we love often our pupils, our sick, etc. But these sentiments, however good, are natural: it is natural for children to love their parents, as it is natural for man to feel compassion for all that suffer.

We need not defend ourselves against these sentiments, because they aid us in the exercise of charity. However, in themselves, they are not exactly "formal" acts of charity but human acts "commanded" by charity.

Charity is not a human virtue, but is theological, divine. It consists in loving one's neighbor as God loves him, also with the same love that God loves him. This is the characteristic of fraternal love, its newness in Christianity: "A new command I give you, that you love one another" (John XIII, 34). We can now understand why charity toward our neighbor is the same virtue that generates in us love towards God: the one theological virtue whose object is God Himself. We love others out of charity because we are united with God and because we include in our hearts the persons that He loves.

So it is verily our neighbor, this particular person, that we love, because it is truly he whom God loves and because we participate in this divine love for him. Even more, out of charity, we love him more than we would love another one through human love, because God loves him more than we do.

We, consequently, form our novices to love their companions with the love with which God loves them: it will often be the means to cause the disappearance of antipathies, temptations to "judge" some Sister: "She is loved by God." And with this charity, respect for the Sisters will also grow, since they will be seen in the light of faith: "They are called by Jesus to be His spouses; they are the temples of the Holy Ghost, the members of Christ."

The Novice Mistress ought to insist often on the fact that the Novitiate constitutes a real family of real sisters, an image, or rather a part of the *Mystical Body of Christ*. In the eternal mind of God, in the Heart of Jesus, it is not by chance that they are actually assembled in the same Novitiate, but that they would help themselves mutually in their vocation. That is why each one is partially responsible for the sanctification of the others. All that one does serves the others—thanks to the "*communion of saints*." It is impossible, therefore, to save one's self alone: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar," says St. John. (1 John IV, 20)

This profound union of all the novices must not remain in the depths of the heart: "Probatio dilectionis, exhibitio est operis", says St. Gregory the Great: it is necessary to prove the—love ("dilectic"), by good works. In other words, it is necessary to manifest charity towards Sisters by solid acts of virtue, to render them due services

willingly, to take part in the sad or happy events of their families, to pray for the Sisters whom we see tempted against vocation, to give good example, to beg pardon when we have given offense to one or other, etc.

It is well that the Novice Mistress calm the novices who are disturbed by the realization of the fact that, despite their sincere efforts, they are not yet capable of overcoming their antipathies, their impatience in common life, etc. In fact the infused virtue of charity does not suppress, as if by miracle, our exterior defects and natural difficulties; it has not yet succeeded in gaining a perfect dominion over our human activity. The interior intention is genuine and meritorious before the Lord, only it has not yet perfectly passed into acts. Hence the necessity to reassure the novices who complain of their inability to overcome their defects: tell them that they should never consent to these defects but, after having failed, she should repent immediately and make reparation, then persevere wholeheartedly; assure them that they are going to see, little by little, the action of Grace in them and how charity will take possession of them.

In view of the remarkable fruits of the intimate unity among Sisters for their mutual sanctification it might come to someone's mind that it would be better to sustain and to cherish *spiritual friendships*, whose benefits have been proved before entering religion. What, then, should the Novice Mistress think of friendships between novices?

It is obvious that we do not have in mind *particular friendship*, a friendship based on sensitive affection, inclined to exclusiveness and to sensuality. This kind of friendship the Novice Mistress must fight unrelentingly. But as concerns true friendship, which can be defined with Father de Guibert, S.J. (*Spiritual Theology* lesson 32; Sheed and Ward) as "reciprocal affection of a spiritual order that unites two souls in the same ideal," is not *in itself* anything wrong, is even something good. Many young girls have proved its benefits while yet in the world, and owe their perseverance in good and their fidelity to the Lord's calling to a true friend that has sustained them in difficult moments. However, the problem is to know if friendship is still useful and advisable in religious life, now that common life constitutes a real unity among the Sisters and an aid of the highest order.

The right answer is to be sought in the directives given by St. Francis de Sales to his Visitation daughters: "It is necessary to love all our Sisters as equally as possible. But it is not in our power to have for all the same suavity of love." (Entertainments IV: On Cordiality)

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Consequently, no searching for friendship on our part, but a sincere and persevering effort to find in the charity for all of our Sisters and in the common life the help that we need. However, as St. Francis de Sales noticed, it is independent of the will when there rises between two Sisters who work together for several years a certain spiritual affinity; for example, two General Counselors work together, often must exchange ideas, and then realize that they always have had the same aspirations in the service of God, the same outlook on the ideal and the works of the Institute. Another example: a Sister, guessing that a Sister is in danger and that she is not aware of it, speaks to her with delicacy and charity, and helps her to realize the danger. She does it herself, because the local Superior would not understand the Sister. This gives birth to a deep gratitude and a profound confidence in the Sister toward her good Samaritan. They now begin to help themselves mutually, without however endangering common life, without carrying on behind the back of the Superior prolonged confidential talks; when separated, they do not write to each other, but in exceptional cases, and always send their letters through their Superiors. It cannot be denied that between these two Sisters, as between the two General Counsellors, there exist ties—good ties—that do not exist between each of them and the rest of the Sisters, with whom each is bound by charity alone. Ties of spiritual friendship? In themselves, according to the Thomistic definition of friendship (reciprocal love of benevolence)—yes. But if you ask these Sisters whether they believe themselves to be friends, they will surely answer “no.” And they are right: “We are not friends but Sisters—truly Sisters in Christ.” In fact, their union is nothing else but a more particular application of fraternal charity. That is why it is better not to speak about “friendship” among religious.

On the other hand, let us repeat it, though these special ties might be very good in certain conditions with determined limits, yet they should never be sought for, under pain of falling soon into particular friendship: it is Providence that allows such intimate friendships to be born when there is need of them, and also, probably, for a certain period of time.

In any case, these friendships may never be permitted between two novices, for several reasons:

1. They are too sensitive and uncertain and it can easily change into particular friendship.
2. There is no need of them for the novices, because they have their

Novice Mistress, who, according to the Holy Church, is the only one that may act upon them.

3. It is necessary, during the years of spiritual formation to insist on the essential and wholly supernatural means, and these are: common life and fraternal charity.

THE COMMON LIFE AND THE INTERIOR LIFE

The conviction of the impossibility of saving oneself without attending to our Sisters, and the consideration of the benefits of the common life, might cause a desire of intensifying the relations among the religious of the same Institute, of the same Community, much more of the same Novitiate. It would not be the case of stirring up relations of friendship among particular Sisters, but of creating a spirit of collaboration among all the Sisters so intimately as to cause them to place in common even their spiritual life.

This way of conceiving the ideal of the common life not only would be somewhat utopian because many Sisters, at least after a certain age, would refuse these confidences, and then there would no longer be any "common life," but moreover it would be false and dangerous. As a matter of fact, every Religious has the sacred right to keep secret her interior life of relation with God and all that regards her conscience. If Holy Mother the Church forbids the Superiors to induce their subjects to manifest the secrets of their conscience (can. 530,1) with greater reason she would not approve the custom of manifesting the same secrets in public, for example, in Chapter. Yet more, even if this manner of action were not imposed upon the Sisters, it should really be considered wrong in itself.

In fact, the interior life is a life of complete "indwelling," that is, one lives in the depths of the soul where the Most Holy Trinity lives. Therefore it transcends, that is, it excels the social life, shuns the common life. And that, not only because the authority of the common life is prohibited from entering there, but because it is such by its own nature: the relations of the soul with God are independent of the life of society, and they require a true and healthy interior liberty.

This does not signify that the Novice Mistress does not have anything to give to her daughters on their interior life; on the contrary, she must form them upon this point, instruct them on the relations that they must entertain with their Divine Spouse, educate them in the method of praying, of participating in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, of reciting the Office, etc.

The formation of the novices to piety is one of the most sacred duties of the Novice Mistress. But her role really limits itself to the formation (instruction and education): the content of their interior life must be respected by her. If they desire to speak of it, the Novice Mistress will listen to them and advise them accordingly. But, of itself, it is a hidden treasure, the "secret of the King."

Rather it will be well that, at an opportune time, the Novice Mistress tells them that it would be lacking in discretion against the Lord Himself, to confide their relations with Him on the life of their conscience, to one who has not the right to know them.

On the other hand, the Sisters do not have any right upon the intimate life of anyone; therefore, on the part of each one, she would be indiscreet to reveal it to them, and on the part of the "community," of the "chapter of the Sisters," it would be an abuse of authority to use pressure on the soul of anyone, under the pretext of helping her better.

Such a concept of the common life savors unfortunately, of the "totalitarianism" which teaches the right of the society to direct consciences. It is so contrary to the spirit of the Church that one should not even believe it possible for one to dream of introducing these methods into the religious life, and above all, into the Novitiate.

Furthermore, the desire to put all in common form, comes more or less unconsciously, from *curiosity*, that urges us to lift the veil that hides the intimate things of those with whom we live.

Therefore the Novice Mistress must teach the novices to respect the intimate life of their companions as a sacred thing, also to respect their legitimate practices of piety (that one must not make fun of them to the point of contempt), of their reading (not seeking to know what they read), their artistic tastes (not all are obligated to prefer Bach to Mozart), their idea (St. Thomas teaches that concord, effected by charity, seeks the union of the will, not the identity of the opinions: *Summa* II-II, q. 37 a 2; a q. 30 a 3 ad 2). She should also teach them to respect the candor, and even the ingenuity of some younger novices (and also the elder Sisters of the Community, often judged severely as imperfect or of a narrow and antiquated spirit). Respect of others is not a natural thing to the novices, nevertheless it is really necessary so that the common life does not weigh too heavily and that it may exercise its beneficial influence.

It is the duty then of the Novice Mistress to create a climate of fervent common life without suffocating interior liberty, the personal

life of each (which has nothing to do with false individualism), is to make war on singularity and on egoism, to develop the gift of oneself to the service of the common good, to preserve the uniform regularity of the observances, to stimulate union of hearts, but she should not try to put them all in the same mould, but should strive for a healthy diversity of persons which dilates souls instead of suffocating them.

Therefore in the schedule of the Novitiate it would be desirable that there be given a certain *free time*, for example, a half hour each day, or one or two hours on Sunday and on the great feast days, in which the novices can freely pray or read, in the chapel or in the Community room, or in the cell, in the garden, etc. Then it belongs to the Novice Mistress to make the novices ascertain for themselves, privately or in chapter, the results of their experience on the subject. Thus, this unscheduled time will give to the more fervent novices the possibility of satisfying their thirst to dedicate themselves a bit more to intimate prayer and also it will inculcate in all the novices the sense of their own responsibility under the control of the Novice Mistress.

RECREATIONS

Recreation is perhaps the moment in which the common life exercises and manifests itself the most; in the hands of the Novice Mistress it is a most precious means of knowing the novices, who reveal themselves in their spontaneity, a means to instruct them in many things in a manner not didactical, a method of forming them without their perceiving it. It is a delicate art which requires finesse, ingenuity, culture, and interior life, an art that is not to be found in books, but which "one learns by mistakes." But it will not be useless to pray the Lord to help us a bit!

Above all, to bear its fruits, recreation must be a recreation, that is a time of true repose, physically and mentally, a time when the body and the mind "re-create" themselves. Therefore it should not be transformed into just one more exercise; the string of the bow must not always remain taut, otherwise one will break it! Many cases of nervous exhaustion would have been avoided in certain Novitiates if the recreations had been what they should have been.

Let us then permit our dear novices to speak, to laugh, let us sing with them—and not only pious songs (cf. St. Teresa of Avila).

However, let us avoid all that which savors of frivolity, the spirit of the world, or of criticism of the absent.

Variety must be one of the rules of the recreations. Once in a

while have some nice surprise, such as candy given by some person, or to show beautiful pictures lent by some priest returned from a pilgrimage to Fatima, Lourdes, Palestine or Rome, also on some occasions to listen to a religious concert on the radio.

But more often we will be contented to converse, walking in the garden or remaining in the community room. If we walk, and if the number of novices does not permit that all walk in the same path with the Novice Mistress, one lets them form free groups, not less than three novices. If we remain in the community room, we can certainly profit by it to do some needlework. Instead we can sometimes do some manual work together in the garden, for example, to pick cherries or vegetables, as long as it does not last too many days and does not tire the novices too much.

The Novice Mistress should take care not to do all the talking herself, but should make the novices speak; she should not be afraid once in a while also to make one of them speak, asking her, for example, to relate about some journey, or the customs of her region (religious feasts peculiar thereto), pilgrimages, etc.: this will be an excellent exercise to discuss some facts heard in the refectory reading or on some passage of Holy Scripture, on a point of theology, at least if the Novice Mistress is in position to solve the questions of her daughters. Unless it is prohibited by the usages of the Institute, it is well to permit, or yet more, to invite (although without being indiscreet) the novices to give news of their family, to permit them to show photographs received from home, etc., in recreation (but not outside of it). It is also something to be recommended, (as Pope Pius XI told the Superiors, also those of the enclosed Communities) that in recreation the Novice Mistress keeps the novices informed of the principal news of the world, especially, but not solely, the happenings of the Catholic world, for example, on the occasion of the death of 50 persons in a plane accident. The Novice Mistress can suggest many useful things. One should favor games in the open air.

Must the Novice Mistress always be present at recreation? No.

1. Because it is not possible if she wishes sometimes to go to recreation with the Community, which is not only good, but even necessary;
2. Because thus they can be more spontaneous and less taut than under the eyes of the Novice Mistress if she is too strict in recreation, or more desirous of her presence if she knows how to make the recreations interesting;
3. Because the novices learn to use their liberty with proper prudence.

Generally there are two recreations, one after dinner, the other after supper. These must be obligatory to all, except particular cases (indisposition or other reason authorized by the Novice Mistress.) Therefore the Novice Mistress must not grant permission to a novice not to attend in order to pray, to write to the family, nor (excepting in urgent cases) to do some work for the Novitiate. In the same manner, the Novice Mistress must take care not to permit the Sisters of the Community, not even the Local Superior, to engage the novices for work which would always prevent the same novice from attending the recreations. This does not count for the service of the refectory or of the dishes, which one takes in turn. As for the infirmary, it is good to nominate two who take turns for one week at a time so that they are not always deprived of the recreations, nor of the refectory reading.

When some novice is in the infirmary for a short time, and is not afflicted with a contagious disease, nor too tired, the Novice Mistress must organize a visit in turns of two novices during the recreations.

In many Institutes they have the custom of inviting the novices to attend the recreations of the Community on feast days. It is excellent if it is rare (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, some great feast of the Blessed Virgin, feasts of the Holy Founders, a feast or a visit of the Mother General, etc.). If it were too frequent it would lose its benefit and would occasion contacts of the novices with the Sisters of the Community, which is dangerous and also prohibited by the Church.

In various Institutes there are one or two supplementary recreations daily, for example, after breakfast in the morning or after the snack in the afternoon. If the novices, on the whole, are very young, (16, 17 years), these two recreations will be very useful for them; otherwise they do not seem necessary and could be substituted by a "free time" during which they might take a walk in the garden privately and in silence.

In some Institutes it is customary to give the novices one day in the month on which, outside of the Community exercises (choir and refectory), they can organize freely, but under the control of the Novice Mistress, their free time (prayer, reading, manual labor, repose). An excellent method, this, for the Missionary Institutes or those of Social Assistance, where the Sisters will often have to organize their time to safeguard the essential. In other Institutes, for example, of hospitals, of education, these methods seem less useful. One could use them during the three months of great heat in which the schedule

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is generally less rigid. In any case, the important thing is that the Novice Mistress exacts from each one a sincere report of the proceedings of the day and give her observations accordingly.

Other educational, recreational moments in the common life are the preparation for feasts, e.g., of the Novice Mistress, of the Mother General, and the preparation for Christmas (with the making of the crib). It is necessary to allow a great deal of initiative in these moments (yet limiting the time to two or three weeks for the organizer.) For her NAMEDAY the Novice Mistress delegates the Vice-Mistress to grant the necessary permissions in order that the novices have the joy of giving her a surprise. These feasts often reveal the qualities—and the hidden defects of the novices to the Novice Mistress, develop the spirit of initiative, teach the novices to work together and strengthen union—often the community spirit is not born until one of these feasts takes place.

ORGANIZATION OF THE NOVITIATE

In order that the Novitiate function well, it is not enough that there be an excellent Novice Mistress and that she knows how to arouse a true fraternal spirit among the novices; it is necessary, beyond that, that this little society have its “employees.” In every well-organized Novitiate there are the dean, infirmarian, librarian, sacristan, a Sister in charge of the linens, the bell-ringer, the Sister charged with the care of the community room, etc.

The duties of each “employee” must be well determined, also written on a card that one gives to the one assigned at the time of her appointment.

To the *dean* the principal duty of trust is confided: she is expected to see to the good material order of the Novitiate, of distributing the small objects of necessity (soap, tooth-paste, paper, ink, etc). In her store-room are also the articles necessary to the little Community: polish, electric bulbs, brooms, etc. For the supply of these objects, the dean makes a list of them, submits it to the Novice Mistress who signs it, and then goes to the Sister of the Community entrusted with these things. When the Novitiate is large, it is still better that another novice, for example, a “vice-dean” be entrusted with the supplies. In fact, in large Novitiates, the dean is very occupied and must go to the Novice Mistress every morning to take her orders for the day. To her also falls the organization of the feasts, the exceptional recreations, the designating of the composition of the groups for walks

(of three novices, always different ones) etc. It is well that in the Novitiate there be a bulletin board in a place where all pass frequently, where there will be affixed the many notices of the Novice Mistress, also of the dean as also of the others having a responsibility: but the dean is expected to care for this bulletin board (to arrange it with taste, to take away the notices which have become useless, etc.). The dean is also expected to think of the nameday of each novice.

The *librarian* must keep the card-index of the library up to date, in the alphabetical order of the authors. There must be a copy-book with separate pages for each letter of the alphabet in which the novices write the author and the title of the book which they take, with the date and their name (4 columns, therefore). When they return the book, they cancel the line written by them, and they put the book, not directly into the book-case, but on some table. It falls to the librarian to put it in its place. No book, no review, no newspaper can be introduced into the Novitiate without the permission of the Novice Mistress. When she places a new book into the library, the librarian must put the stamp in it (distinct from that of the Community library), inscribe there the mark which indicates its place in the book-case (for example, A-3), make a card indicating the author, the title, the publisher, the number of volumes, and then the mark. Finally it will be necessary to put it in evidence on a small table for some time (for example, one week), where the novices will be able to see it, without having the permission, for the present, to take it with them. It also falls to the librarian to inform the Novice Mistress of the books which need to be bound. When a book is missing, because it has not been written in the copy-book as being out, the librarian must put a notice on the Novitiate bulletin board.

The *Sacristan* is entrusted with the oratory of the Novitiate: she places the flowers there (however not cutting them in the garden without permission of the gardener), keeping it clean, preparing it for the customary prayers of the Novitiate, etc. An excellent usage is to place a card at the entrance of the little chapel where the novices can write the intentions recommended to their companions (my sick mother, the marriage of my sister, a deceased aunt, a vocation, a conversion, etc.). At the beginning of November one should also post a list of the deceased parents of the novices with the date of their death.

In a larger Novitiate, there are also other duties (cleaning of the common places, preparation of the reading for the refectory,

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book bindery, copying room, games, gymnastics), and one must appoint some "vice" (vice dean, vice infirmarian, etc.) who learn and can perhaps become heads after some months.

In fact one needs to change the novices in the duties about every three or four months in order to teach them the various details as well as to place on the shoulders of all the weight of the more responsible employments.

In the choosing of the subjects the Novice Mistress must be mindful of two things: the good of the little community, that is the smooth functioning of the Novitiate, and the religious formation of each of her charges. Therefore this last criterion must always come before that of the common good, because the Novitiate has no reason to exist as a group if it is not for the spiritual formation of the individual novices. If, then, a novice, a registered nurse, needs to be "placed in the shade" for a time, she must not be appointed infirmarian of the Novitiate, even if this obliges the Novice Mistress to choose another much less fitted.

In fact, these duties (employments) although being necessary to the functioning of the Novitiate, must, above all, be considered by the Novice Mistress under their aspect of educative means of great efficacy.

Therefore, it is necessary that the Novice Mistress give to the novice assigned, a true responsibility, although controlled by her, and *guide* her spirit of initiative, not failing however, to make her observations in the matter to them so that their unhappy "experiences" instruct them.

THE RULES AND THE SCHEDULE OF THE NOVITIATE

THE RULES OF THE NOVITIATE

Nature of the Rules of the Novitiate

The Rules of the Novitiate are not a simple extract from the Constitutions on the points regarding the novices: if it were thus, it would be useless, since the novices have the Constitutions in hand. The Rules must also not be a *Directory*, that is, a spiritual comment on the Constitutions and a Book of Customs, of some of the more important acts in the life of the Institute (for example, Directory from the General Chapter).

The object of the Rules is to determine (to state precisely) and to apply to the life of the Novitiate what one finds in such a house, the norms of the Constitutions in regard to the novices.

Therefore they must be brief—7 or 8 pages—and arranged together.

One must avoid, as far as possible, the negative style “It is forbidden to the novices,” “the novices must never . . .” in order not to give to the Rules the aspect of the norms of a prison. However, it is not always possible to avoid this.

Model of Rules for a Novitiate (to be re-arranged according to the places and Order of the Day of the Institute)

I. PURPOSE OF THE NOVITIATE

The Novitiate has three purposes: to prove the vocation of the Postulants and of the novice, to educate them in the spiritual and religious life, according to the Constitutions and the spirit of the Institute, and thus to prepare them for profession and for the works of the Institute.

II. RULES OF THE NOVITIATE

The present Rules have the purpose of determining and applying to the life of the Novitiate of . . . (name of the place), the norms of the Constitutions regarding the novices.

III. THE MISTRESS OF NOVICES

1. *Permissions and Exceptions.* The novices must ask all necessary permissions from the Novice Mistress, possibly in the morning after breakfast, and in the afternoon after recreation. Upon returning, after having been out, they must immediately go to the Novice Mistress.

The Mother Mistress has the faculty of exempting the novices, in case of need, from this or that regular observance of the Constitutions and of declaring when a novice is exempt from grave obligation towards an Ecclesiastical Law (sickness which prevents going to Mass on Sunday).

If a novice has presumed a permission, she must render an account of it to the Novice Mistress. If, through her fault, she has been absent from some common exercise, she must accuse herself of it to the Novice Mistress at the time indicated.

In the absence of the Novice Mistress the novices must have recourse to the Vice Mistress for the same permissions or rendering an account.

2. *Private Interviews with the Mother Mistress.* The novices must be permitted to go to the Novice Mistress each time that they desire it for their spiritual needs. They are exhorted to present themselves

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to her every fifteen days for a spiritual interview, in which they will take council with the Novice Mistress for their spiritual readings and the personal penances.

IV. THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. *Daily Visits to the Blessed Sacrament* (time and duration)
2. *Prayers in the Novitiate Oratory* (in the evening)
3. *Daily Spiritual Reading*
 - a. In common (time and duration)
 - b. In private (time and duration—in book designated by the Novice Mistress)
4. *Sunday*
 - a. In order to truly consecrate Sunday to Our Lord, the novices are invited to give part of the “free time” to some pious reading and to silent prayer, provided the duties to correspond with the family or the charity in the Novitiate are accomplished.
5. *First Friday of the Month* (practices in use)
6. *Retreat for the Professions*
 - a. When the annual retreats of the Community have been made prior to three months before her first profession, the novice makes only three strict days of retreat.
 - b. On the eve of entrance into retreat, one sings or recites the “Veni Creator” in the Novitiate Oratory (after the evening prayers).
 - c. During the retreat, the novices must spend the recreations in silence, make spiritual reading, and a supplementary meditation.

V. INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE MOTHER MISTRESS

1. The Novice Mistress gives an instruction in the community room every day at . . . (time) (or indicates the times: Monday at . . . Tuesday at . . . etc.)

VI. STUDY

The novices have the duty to study the material of the instructions, not with curiosity, but in order to deepen the principles taught and in order to clarify the points remaining obscure to them.

In this study, the novices generally spend (. . .) hours a day, from . . . to . . . excepting . . .

The first of their studies must be to re-read the notes taken during the instructions.

VII. LIBRARY

The library in the Novitiate is open from . . . to . . . (if the books are arranged in the community room, abolish this sentence).

There are some books at the free disposition of the novices. For the others one must ask permission of the Novice Mistress.

The books newly acquired are exposed in the library for eight days and must not be removed before being placed in the book-case.

No book, no review, no newspaper must be introduced into the Novitiate without having been submitted to the Novice Mistress.

VIII. CHAPTER OF FAULTS (or similar exercise)

The Chapter of Faults takes place in the Community Room every . . . at . . . except when there is a great feast, three days before or three days after this day.

IX. CONFESSIONS

1. The *Ordinary Confessor* of the Novitiate comes here . . . from . . . Hour to . . . The novices who have no motives of conscience to refrain from confessing to him, must present themselves in some order, taking care not to make him wait.

2. There has been designated by His Excellency the (Arch) Bishop, one (or two) additional confessors. If, for a serious motive of conscience, a novice has need of confessing to him (regularly or in a single case) it is sufficient that she tells it to the Novice Mistress.

3. If, for the peace of her own conscience, a novice wishes to confess to a priest approved for the diocese, but not for the community, her confession is valid and licit.

4. An *extraordinary confessor* is designated for the novices, and comes in the Ember Days of Advent, Lent, and Pentecost. The novices have the obligation of presenting themselves to him even if they do not intend to confess, at least to receive his blessing.

X. SILENCE

In case of necessity it is permitted to speak on the threshold of the cell for two minutes at the most, in the community room, or in the place designated. It is not permitted to enter into the cell of others, nor to speak in the corridor. To speak more at length, one must ask the permission of the Novice Mistress and then go to the Community Room.

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During the summer siesta (nap) there is profound silence, and one must avoid going out of the cell.

XI. RECREATIONS

The recreations after dinner and supper are obligatory. It is not allowed to form groups of two (to be determined whether some other recreation is useful in the morning or in the afternoon, the hour and the conditions: never in two's).

When a Novice is sick in her cell, two novices are designated each time by the dean for the recreation with her, provided that the Novice Mistress has given permission. When the bell rings for the close of the recreation, they must leave the cell immediately.

XII. WALKS

1. *The number and the time.*

2. *Formation of the groups:* The groups when taking walks must be composed of three novices. The formation of the groups is arranged by the dean (housekeeper) and posted before noon. Sometimes the formation of the groups may be free — and after they are assembled, a sheet can be posted on which the novices write their names in front of blank lines for groups of three (1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . ;)

XIII. SEPARATION FROM THE COMMUNITY

The novices must not go out of the Novitiate individually without the permission of the Novice Mistress. Being outside of the Novitiate they have no permission to speak with the Sisters of the Community, except in case of necessity (assignment, a true duty of charity).

If a novice desires to speak to the Mother General, she must tell the Novice Mistress, who will inform the Reverend Mother.

XIV. THE PARLOR

The novices have permission to receive their family in the parlor (. . .) total number of days in the year, with liberty to divide the visits. If their family lives at a distance and intends to come for several days, the novice must refer it to the Novice Mistress and submit herself to her decision.

XV. LETTERS

Excepting in the case of those who are designated by the Code of

Canon Law (refer to Constitution Number) the novices may not receive or write a letter without permission of the Novice Mistress, and must place their letters open in the box of the Mistress.

On the whole they must limit their correspondence to parents, and write to them once a month. In grave cases the Novice Mistress can grant them an exceptional permission.

XVI. SUPPLIES

The objects in common use (soap, paper, etc.) can be furnished without a special permission by the dean in the time appointed.

When a novice needs to have her shoes or her pen, etc. repaired, she must ask the permission of the Novice Mistress and deliver the objects to the dean (housekeeper) marked by a tag with her name.

XVII THE CELL, CLOTHING, BATH, AND FOOD

1. Every morning the novices must uncover their own bed and ventilate their own cells before they go to choir. They must sweep it every day when returning from breakfast, but without losing time.

2. In the evening the novices must change their personal linens before they go to bed.

3. At the hour appointed on the schedule, the novices may take a bath (or shower).

4. It is not permitted to keep food in the cell. If some novice believes herself in need of special food, for motives of health, she must speak about it to the Novice Mistress and abide by her judgment.

SCHEDULE OF THE NOVITIATE

I. PRELIMINARY NOTE

The following schedule is given solely by way of indication; it is the result of a comparative study made from a great number of Schedules in use in Roman Novitiates (Italian or International). To be of use, it must be modified according to the order of the exercises of the house where the Novitiate is located (hour of the Mass, of the Office, of the meals, etc.) It supposes the recitation in choir of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin.

II. DAILY ORDER

1. *From Rising until the end of the domestic duties (from 5:30 to 9)*

5:30—Rising (½ hour)

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- 6:00—Prayer—Little Office of the Blessed Virgin ($\frac{1}{2}$ hour)
6:30—Meditation ($\frac{1}{2}$ hour)
7:00—Holy Mass and thanksgiving ($\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour)
7:45—Breakfast ($\frac{1}{4}$ hour)
8:00—Cleaning of the cells in the Novitiate (1 hour)
2. *Instructions and Manual Work of the Morning* (from 9:00 until 12:15)
9:00—Instruction (from the Novice Mistress or from a priest) ($\frac{3}{4}$ hour)
9:45—Repose in silence ($\frac{1}{4}$ hour)
10:00—Study (1 hour)
11:00—Manual work (1 hour)
12:00—Visit to the Blessed Sacrament ($\frac{1}{4}$ hour)
12:15—Particular examen ($\frac{1}{4}$ hour)
3. *Dinner and recreation* (from 12:30 to 2:15)
12:30—Dinner ($\frac{3}{4}$ hour)
1:15—Recreation (1 hour)
4. *Exercises of the Afternoon* (2:15 to 6:15)
2:15—Vespers & Compline of the Blessed Virgin ($\frac{1}{4}$ hour)
2:30—Instruction ($\frac{3}{4}$ hour)
3:15—Study (1 hour)
4:15—Luncheon and repose ($\frac{1}{2}$ hour)
4:45—Spiritual reading ($\frac{1}{2}$ hour)
5:15—Manual work (1 hour)
6:15—Practical instruction (singing, etc.— $\frac{1}{2}$ hour)
5. *Exercises of the Evening* (6:45 to 9:30)
6:45—Rosary—Matins & Lauds ($\frac{3}{4}$ hour)
7:30—Supper ($\frac{3}{4}$ hour)
8:15—Recreation ($\frac{3}{4}$ hour)
9:00—Examen of conscience, prayer ($\frac{1}{4}$ hour)
9:15—Repose ($\frac{1}{2}$ hour to prepare oneself)
9:45—Lights to be put out.

III. OBSERVATIONS

The study of this order of the day is very instructive: it shows that the religious, even the novices, notwithstanding the best intentions, devote 13 of the 24 hours of the day to the corporal life, while they reserve only 8 hours to the life of spirit. However how can one do otherwise? It is true, but it is well to point out.

1. *Life of the Spirit:*

a) *Prayer*

Holy Mass	$\frac{3}{4}$ hour	
Office of the B.V.M.	$1\frac{1}{4}$ hours	
Meditation	$\frac{1}{2}$ hour	
Visit to the B. S.	$\frac{1}{4}$ hour	
Rosary	$\frac{1}{4}$ hour	
Examen (Part. and of conscience)	$\frac{1}{2}$ hour	
Total	$3\frac{1}{2}$ Hours	$3\frac{1}{2}$ hours

b) *Formation of the Intellect:*

Instruction	2 hours		
Study	2 hours		
Spiritual reading	$\frac{1}{2}$ hour		
Total time	$4\frac{1}{2}$ hours	$4\frac{1}{2}$ hours	
		<u>8 hours</u>	8 hours

2. *Manual work*

3 hours

3. *Corporal life*

a. *Meals*

Breakfast	$\frac{1}{4}$ hour	
Dinner	$\frac{1}{2}$ hour	
Collation	$\frac{1}{4}$ hour	
Supper	$\frac{1}{2}$ hour	
Total		<u>$1\frac{1}{2}$ hours</u>

b. *Recreations* 2 hours

c. *Repose in silence* $\frac{1}{2}$ hour

d. *Toilet (morning, evening)* 1 hour

Total $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours

e. *Sleep* 8 hours

13 hours

Grand Total

13 hours
24 hours

THE CHAPTER OF FAULTS

THE OBSERVATIONS OF THE MISTRESS OF NOVICES

The word "Chapter" has come from the fact that every day, in the Benedictine Monasteries, one reads a chapter of the Rule of Saint Benedict, in a special hall called therefore "Chapter", after which, the Abbot commented on the text of it and gave his advice and orders for the work of the day. Then the monks accused themselves of their defects against the Rule.

Therefore the Novice Mistress should commence the Chapter of Faults by giving various *Notices* (again calling attention to silence, the exactitude to the common acts, etc.). At the beginning of Advent or of Lent she says some words to prepare the souls of the novices to make these times fruitful, etc., all of which must not last longer than 8 to 10 minutes.

THE "ACCUSATION" OF THE NOVICES

After the notices of the Novice Mistress, the novices accuse themselves of their exterior failures against the Constitutions and the regulations of the Novitiate. The Novice Mistress must prevent them from transforming their accusation into a public confession of their sins, or at least of the intentions they had in their faults against the Constitutions and regulations of the Novitiate.

Actually, many novices would desire to do this and do not understand why that is not pleasing to the Church: One must make them understand that if all could confess themselves thus in public, those who would not wish it would be morally obliged to do so, and finally their conscience would be violated; therefore the Church, which holds much to the preservation of the liberty of the conscience of her children, does not wish to expose this exercise to the danger of becoming a moral pressure of the Community on persons, and more wisely insists that the accusation in Chapter be limited to exterior acts, without manifesting the intentions.

On the contrary, it is necessary to teach the novices that God alone has the right to know the state of our conscience and especially our sins: this modern need to humiliate oneself before the "community"—is it not a sign of the diminution of the sense of sin?

Before one wishes to humiliate herself before her companions, as if our faults might have, above all, offended the "Common life" it must

be better understood what the essence of sin is, that it is an offense against God Himself. If the Chapter transforms itself into an accusation of sins, it would diminish, little by little, the sense of the necessity of the Sacrament of Penance, that is, of the Blood of Jesus which washes our soul and assures us pardon of our Father.

However, true humility is a virtue which, first of all, urges one to humiliate oneself before God.

And finally, in the accusation of one's own sins before one's companions, there would be danger of arousing their admiration, though perhaps unconsciously, with beautiful demonstrations of humility, which are anything but the virtue of humility! To the truly humble soul, these methods are repugnant to them, almost instinctively, as a profanation of something sacred.

It is for these motives that the Church desires that in Chapter we hold to the accusation of exterior faults against the Constitutions, which, for the novices, also extends to the faults against their Novitiate regulations. If they make it with sincerity, the Chapter will be for them a true school of humility and of interior penance.

On the other hand, it is necessary to make the novices understand the reason for having the Chapter: as the Constitutions do not bind "ad culpam," that is, under pain of sin, but "ad poenam"—(under penalty), that is, to receive a penance for the failure to observe them, it is necessary that there be an exercise in which there be an accusation of these faults to the Superiors to receive the just penance from them. Without the Chapter (or a like exercise), there would not be the sanction, which, in the mind of the Church, corresponds to our exterior faults, just as there is the tribunal of Penance which sanctions our interior faults.

The virtues to be exacted from the Novices in their accusation are *sincerity* and *sobriety*.

It is necessary to teach them to be faithful in making reparation of their faults, even the small ones, against the Constitutions and the regulations of the Novitiate, and to make it as a proof that they thus give of their sincerity, of their love towards Jesus, their future Spouse: the fidelity to the religious observance which must be the basis of their life until death.

Therefore they must *believe* that the Lord will bless their sincerity in accusing themselves in Chapter, and thus to repair their faults. Therefore it is necessary that they prepare themselves for the Chapter, praying the Lord to profit by it.

However, the major part of the novices, especially among the more generous, are inclined to confound perfection and meticulousness: they think that, in order not to fail in sincerity, they must enter into all the particulars. The accusation of the Chapter must be brief and moderate. In the beginning, and perhaps for several years, it would be better to exact, at least from the more timid, that they write their accusation on a paper which they read in Chapter.

THE "PENANCE"

After the accusation of each novice the Novice Mistress makes observations to them accordingly, and gives them a penance. It is a difficult art, if one wishes the observations to be fruitful, and that the penance be not a pure formality. As one does not know what the novice will say, it requires a prompt tactfulness which is not given to all Novice Mistresses. Therefore it is well to prepare the Chapter a little, thinking of each of the novices who are to accuse themselves, in the presence of the Lord, and studying which observations are to be made this week, whether the novice merits to be reprimanded on some point of which she will not accuse herself, or whether, instead, she needs to be encouraged.

The "penance" must not be imposed according to the material damage done, but according to the responsibility of the novice: for example, to the novice who has broken an electric machine for washing the clothes one must not give a greater penance because the cost is "one thousand dollars" but because she has the duty to be more attentive in manoeuvring it than if she had broken a broom.

However, it would be to fall into the contrary excess to pay attention solely to the intentions: One must also take into account the scandal given. If a novice has come to the Novice Mistress before the Chapter and is humiliated with true contrition for a grave fault against charity, that is good; nevertheless, she had given a bad example to her fellow-Sisters and must receive a good penance.

What penances must the Mistress of Novices give? If she gives some prayers, as to recite 3 Hail Mary's, she must not limit herself to this kind of penance, or at least she should vary them, adapting them to the circumstances (a "De Profundis" for her deceased aunt, 3 Hail Mary's for a sick mother, a visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament of 5 minutes, for the journey of the Mother General to the Institutes of the missions, etc.)

But it is better training to give a penance that has a relation to

the fault: a novice that often leaves the doors slam must close every door slowly that she will have to open during an entire day; a novice that leaves the light burn without necessity, will be obliged to put out the light of her cell three times before she leaves it burn, every time she enters there, and that during one evening. A novice that leaves everything in disorder must help the librarian to put the books in place during one hour for three days; a novice who always has her shoes dirty will be obliged to clean those of a companion during one week, etc.

FRATERNAL CORRECTION. In some Institutes "fraternal correction" is customary. The essential quality of this correction is the charity with which it must be practiced, and, yet more, how the novices must appreciate it as a means of religious perfection. In fact, "fraternal correction" is really an act of the virtue of charity, according to Saint Thomas.

THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE MISTRESS OF NOVICES

MATTERS TO TEACH THE NOVICES

I. THE SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE INSTITUTE

The principal matters which the Novice Mistress must teach her daughters are:

1. *The spiritual life* (union with God, mortification, degrees of prayer, devotions, use of the Sacraments, etc.)
2. *Nature of the religious life* (end, vows, means)
3. *All that which regards the Institute* (Constitutions, history, works, spirit)

II. RELIGION

When possible, it is fitting that the instructions in Christian Doctrine demanded by the Code be given by priests. However, where this is not possible, the Novice Mistress must do it herself.

It is necessary to have courses in *Dogma, Sacred Scripture, Liturgy, and Church History*. It is useless to have a special course of *Morals*, because the matter is covered in the instructions on the spiritual life.

III. SINGING AND POLITENESS

It is necessary to add a practical course of modern and Gregorian Singing and some lessons in religious politeness.

FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF THE INSTRUCTIONS

I. GENERAL NUMBER (FREQUENCY) OF THE INSTRUCTIONS

In the daily order suggested in Chapter II, there are two lessons a day of 45 minutes and one of a half hour, excepting on Sunday (on which there remains only that of a half hour) and on the day of Chapter (which takes the place of one of the lessons of $\frac{3}{4}$ hour.) In the week, then, there are in all eleven lessons of 45 minutes and seven lessons of 30 minutes.

II. FREQUENCY OF INSTRUCTIONS ON EVERY SUBJECT DURING THE WEEK

1. *Lessons of 45 minutes*

6—Spiritual and religious life (every day except Sunday)

3—Dogma

1—Sacred Scripture

1—Liturgy (1st semester) and Church History (2nd semester)

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11 Total

2. *Lessons of 30 Minutes*

3—Constitutions (on which occasion one treats of the history, of the works, and of the spirit of the Institute)

3—Singing (or politeness every once in a while)

1—Exhortation of the Mistress of Novices on Sundays

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7 Total

METHOD OF TEACHING "THE SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE"

I. WHAT MUST THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE BE?

The instructions of the Novice Mistress on the spiritual and religious life in the Institute must be understood as the teaching of a *practical science*.

In as much as it is a *science*, this teaching must explain "the why" of the things of the spiritual and religious life: One must make the novices understand *why* they need to mortify themselves, *why* they need to obey a Superior, *why* they need to preserve chastity and

practice poverty, *why* it is necessary to dedicate a certain time every day to meditation and another time to the liturgical prayers, etc.

Inasmuch as it is a *practical* science, this teaching must show *how* to obey the Superiors, *how* to preserve chastity and poverty, *how* to make the meditation, etc.

In other words, it is necessary to *enlighten* the intellect, giving it some solid and clear principles, and it is necessary to help and stimulate the will, teaching the practical methods of the spiritual life.

The Novice Mistress must then avoid two excesses: Making of the instructions a course of spiritual theology, or, indeed, contenting herself with an exhortation which excites the affections in the present moment, but does not form profoundly neither the intellect nor the will. Certainly it is not easy to find the right measure: one should not be abstract nor sentimental.

II. HOW ONE MUST COMPOSE THE GENERAL PROGRAM OF THE INSTRUCTIONS

At the beginning of her charge, rather at the beginning of each year of the Novitiate, the Novice Mistress must compose a general outline to follow during the entire year so that she says *all* that is necessary for the complete formation of a novice.

To know what is necessary to teach, so that *nothing essential be forgotten*, she will need to consult the manual of spirituality (Tanqueray PSS, Heerinck, O.F.M., DeGuibert, S.J., Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., Gabriele di S.M. Maddalena, O.C.D., etc.): it will perhaps be useful to copy their indexes and compare them. However, it will be necessary to remind oneself that the object of the manuals and of the courses of ascetic theology and mysticism is not that of the instructions of a Novice Mistress. They teach a science and are obliged to tell what will be interesting to all. Therefore the Novice Mistress must eliminate many things that will be useless or also dangerous for some beginners (for example, the extraordinary mystical facts such as ecstasies.) To determine what is necessary to reject, one must close the books (after having studied them attentively) and place before oneself the spiritual needs of the novices: "What do they expect from me?" "What must I say to them in order that they may become good religious of our Institute?" As soon as she discovers these things she writes them as they come, even without order. Within a few days she will have them in great number. Then, comparing her ideas with the list of the matter taken from the indexes of the manuals of

spirituality, the Novice Mistress *will* easily *eliminate* the *useless things* as far as her novices are concerned and will find herself confronted with the material to preserve.

It is necessary after that to organize this material, that is, to compose the general outline of the instructions of the year. For this, too, one cannot, one must not follow the order of the manuals: It is a *deduced* order which begins from the universal principles in order to descend to the practical things. When a young person arrives as a Postulant in the Novitiate, she expects something other than some general considerations on the human acts, or on goodness in general: she wants to know what the Institute is, what to do in order to be a good religious, in order to love Jesus, etc. Certainly it is necessary to proceed according to order; one cannot tell everything the first day; but at least it is necessary to bear in mind the actual needs of the novices, and, if one must make the practical counsels precede the theoretical considerations, it is well to say why one does so: such an explanation will have great advantage in drawing attention immediately to the principle to be inculcated into the intelligence of the novices.

It is necessary that the connection between the various chapters of the general schedule of the year manifest the connection that really exists between the various things to be treated. For example, before speaking of the three individual vows, it is necessary to say what the vows of religion are in general, and this one cannot explain without speaking of the evangelical counsels, which are incomprehensible if they are not put in relation to the precepts, and, principally, with the precept of charity; therefore it is necessary first to know to what the precept of charity obliges in order to treat of poverty, of chastity, and of obedience.

However, it would be losing time (and the time is brief in order to teach all that which is essential in the spiritual and religious life in one year) to rise again to the universal principles of the human acts (for example, it is necessary to "do good and avoid evil"): One must give the *immediate principles* which explain the *essence* of the things treated, that is, that give their "wherefores": the "wherefore" of the vows of religion is that they are some means in order better to practice the precept of charity.

Must the "spiritual life" and the "religious life" be taught in two distinct courses, or in just one course of instructions? The advantage of the distinction is that one can inculcate into the novices two

important things at the same time; for example, mental prayer in the course on the "spiritual life" and obedience in the course on the "religious life," instead of waiting until the middle of the year to treat one of these two points in the case of one course only. However, this advantage is minimized in comparison to the inconveniences of the two separate courses: First, many things must be repeated, for example, the end of the spiritual life and the end of the religious life, the nature of Christian mortification and the reason for the religious vows; the importance of liturgical prayer in the interior life and in the life of the Institute, etc. And then, these distinctions could make the novices believe that they must occupy themselves with two distinct things: their "spiritual life" and their "religious life." Now, even though they are two distinct *concepts*, the religious life and the spiritual life, they are the same *thing* in the same person; on the contrary one should show the novices how their religious life, for example, their obedience, is, according to the intentions of God for them, the only means of arriving at the perfection of the spiritual life, to intimate union with Our Lord. Therefore, it is advisable to have only one general schedule which embraces all the matter of their spiritual, religious life and that of the Institute.

Then, after one has composed the general schedule, it will be necessary to count the *number of lessons* of which one will dispose in the course of the year, attributing to each chapter the approximate number of lessons that come, according to the importance of the matter.

III. MODEL OF GENERAL OUTLINES FOR THE YEAR

The two following models are not given as a norm to be followed blindly, but as suggestions; they will have to be adapted to the special needs of the novices, according to the end proper to the Institute.

FIRST OUTLINE—THE SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE INSTITUTE OF . . .

N.B. Although being composed for one year and a half (Postulancy and Novitiate) this plan can be extended to two and a half years, in the Institutes that have a second year of Novitiate, or also to several years if it is chosen for the instructions in a Juniorate made completely in the same house.

I. *General Description of the Life of the Institute (brief).*

a. The double end and the means of the Institute (brief).

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1) The double end of any religious Institute. Unity of the religious life according to the principle end and various types: (contemplative life or active life) according to the various special ends.

2) The end of our religious life.

3) The special end of our Institute.

4) The means proper to the Institute.

b. Brief history of the Institute and Intention—Life of the Founders.

2. *The principal end of the Institute and the means prescribed for it.*

a. The principal end of the Institute.

1) Christian perfection and the Imitation of Christ.

2) The nature of the interior life.

3) The vocation to perfection and the obligation to tend thereto.

b. The immediate means prescribed for the interior life, according to the manner proper to the Institute.

1) Prayer and the life of prayer.

2) The Liturgical life.

3) The exercises of piety in use in the Institute.

4) The special devotions of the Institute.

c. The ascetic means which lead to the interior life.

1) The moral virtues and the precepts.

2) The evangelical counsels.

3) The three individual vows.

4) The religious life as a means of perfection.

5) The ascetic means proper to the Institute.

3. *The special end of the Institute and the means prescribed for it.*

a. The special end of the Institute.

1) The special extrinsic means: the salvation of souls.

2) The special immediate end: the works of charity of the

Institute.

b. The means prescribed to the special end.

Conclusion—The spirit of the Institute.

SECOND OUTLINE: HOW THE SPOUSE OF CHRIST LIVES IN THE LITURGICAL CYCLE

1. *Advent*

a. Christ expected in the Old Testament (cf. Isaias—Psalms).

b. Why? The divine vocation of man and sin.

c. How the Spouse of Christ must expect the Advent of Jesus.

- d. Model given by the Liturgy: Our Lady.
 - e. (December 8) *The Immaculate Conception*, divine response to original sin. Our union with Our Lady to purify ourselves: *our chastity*.
2. *Christmas*
- a. The lessons of *Bethlehem*: humility, spiritual childhood, poverty, spiritual cheerfulness.
 - b. Epiphany: Manifestation of Christ the King our Head, "true God and true man," "Jesus" (Saviour).
 - c. *Nazareth*: Life of the Holy Family, model of the life of charity in religion. *Silence*, obedience of Jesus, model of our *Obedience*—Saint Joseph, model of *silence*.
3. *Lent*
- a. Jesus the Redeemer—Necessity of reparation for sin. One repays with love, but His love is proved by sacrifice. Religious *Mortification*, in union with the Passion of Jesus.
 - b. Prayer, mortification, suffering, offerings also for *saving* sinners and *repairing* the offense to God: Jesus invited the three dearest Apostles to watch with Him in Gethsemani.
 - c. The Passion of Jesus; Compassion of Mary, Model of the Spouse of Christ at the foot of the cross.
4. *Easter and Ascension*
- a. *The Resurrection of Christ*, sign of ours. *Faith*.
 - b. *Baptism*. The religious profession, a new baptism.
 - c. New life of Christ. *Sanctifying grace*.
 - d. *The Ascension*. Hope. Jesus prepares our place for us in Paradise and awaits us: desire for Him, confidence in Him.
5. *Pentecost and Feast of the Most Holy Trinity*.
- a. *The Holy Spirit* promised by Jesus. His graces, His *gifts*. The "mystical life" is none other than the life of the soul "possessed" by the Holy Spirit. To merit this highest grace: *docility and fidelity* all along the line for many years.
 - b. *The Most Holy Trinity*: The Father, of Whom Jesus speaks much, the Son, Our Lord, the Spirit of Love. *The presence of the Three Persons* in the soul, temple of God, perpetual source of the *interior life*.
6. *Corpus Christi*
- a. *The Eucharist*, mystery of the presence of Jesus. *Adoration*.

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- b. The *Mass*, sacrifice of Christ, center of the Catholic cult and of the day of the Spouse of Jesus.
 - c. *Holy Communion*. The thanksgiving.
 - d. *Mental prayer*, surrounding daily Communion.
 - e. The Office (divine or of the Blessed Virgin), participation in the prayer of the Church, in union with that of Jesus.
7. *From Corpus Christi to Advent*:
- a. *The Feast of the Sacred Heart*. Love of Jesus, our Spouse.
 - b. *The Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul*. The Church—the Hierarchy—the Apostolate.
 - c. *The Feast of the Assumption*. Paradise reward of fidelity throughout life.
 - d. *The teaching of the parables* of the Sundays “after Pentecost.”
 - e. *The Feast of the Most Holy Rosary*: How to recite the rosary.
 - f. *The month of the Faithful Departed*: Prayers for the “Church suffering.”

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION AND EXECUTION OF THE INSTRUCTIONS

I. *Immediate preparation of the Instruction.*

The Novice Mistress must absolutely *foresee the time* of preparation: she needs *one hour* during which no one must disturb her.

Then she *reads, prays, and writes the detailed plan* of her instruction, copying only the texts to be quoted (or taking the book with her if the text is too long).

II. *Execution of the Instruction.*

It is necessary to speak *clearly*, sufficiently *slow* so that the novices can take notes, but not to dictate (excepting some definitions or texts to be remembered).

The tone is to be simple, fervent, not doctoral, but material: it is necessary to illuminate the intellect, yes, but also to stimulate the will, rather, when the subject demands it, to inflame the heart. Every once in a while the novices need to feel that the heart of their Mother vibrates with the things of which she speaks.

To render her instructions more vivid, she often needs to place before the eyes of the novices some *models*: above all the figure of *Our Lord*, their Spouse—His humility, His obedience, His love of the Heavenly Father, His life of continuous sacrifice . . . ; *Our Lady*, perfect model of the life of faith and of hope, the Most Holy Virgin and Mother, full of mercy for us; the saintly *Founders* or protectors of the Institute, etc.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE NOVICES IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE MISTRESS OF NOVICES.

1. The Novice Mistress should require of the novices the taking of some *notes* in a copy book (one for every course), and should sometimes request these copy books to verify how her daughters have understood her lessons.

2. It is necessary that a special time of the day in the schedule be dedicated to the *study* of the material taught and, especially, of the instructions on the spiritual and religious life.

3. Let the Novice Mistress recommend that the novices place their doubts on the matter taught by her into her letter box. The Novice Mistress can respond to them privately or in a future instruction if it is something of interest to all (but without giving the name of the author), or elsewhere (in recreation, during a walk, in Chapter, etc.)

4. Every once in a while let the Novice Mistress exact a brief paper from all of the novices, written in the cell during the time of study, on some subject treated by her, or which must be treated soon, for example: "Why do you love the Institute?" "What does the Lenten Season say to you?" "How can one profit by the Mass?" "How can the common life be developed?" "What, according to your view, is sanctity?"

In order not to transform the Instructions into a "Study Club," it is not well to put these problems in common discussion, excepting by way of exception, for example, in the summer, during a walk, after having well prepared the gathering. As a rule, it will be better to return the compositions with corrections in the margins, or to speak of them privately.

From time to time, if the Novice Mistress deems it opportune, she might read to all one of the replies which is more suggestive of their false ideas (for example, on the nature of the religious sanctity, on the ideals of the Institute), without giving the name of the novice, and to request the novices to put a "reply" giving their opinion into her letter box.

This "active" method must be introduced with great prudence in the Novitiate, and will be more easily used in the Juniorates. However, one need not fear too much if every novice responds privately and in writing. Then one can profit by all the advantages of modern teaching without their dangers for the spirit of recollection, which must animate the life of a Novitiate.

In fact, as we have said in Part III, the object of the teaching given by the Novice Mistress is to *personally form* the understanding of the novices. Therefore it is necessary that they *interest themselves* in the instructions of the Novice Mistress, that they *understand them*. Now the human understanding cannot "assimilate the ideas of others without a certain work of spiritual 'mastication,' " as the stomach does with material foods: it must personally *reflect*—it must rather *express* to itself the concepts received. Now it really belongs to the Novice Mistress to control this internal work of the understanding, requesting that they express *to her* that which they have understood. Rather, it is by this method that the Novice Mistress will know her daughters better and can correct their wrong ideas.

Thus the teaching given in her instructions will be completed by the private study of the novices under her direction. However, the instructions must always remain the center, the essential of the teaching of the Novice Mistress.

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Discussion Question: What is the practice of the various communities regarding the preparation of meditation. Is it public or private, is the meditation itself carried out publicly or privately the following morning? Is there a prescribed book?

A summarization of the information indicated that with the professed Sisters it is common practice to have private preparation and private meditation, and that in this matter the professed Sisters are allowed a great deal of liberty as to the choice of a book to be used. Books most widely used included *New Practical Meditations* by Vercruyse, *Our Way to the Father*, by Krenz, the *New Testament*, and approved Lives of Christ.

Two plans were in common use among novices. One was to have preparation in common and meditation in private; the other was to have private preparation and private meditation. The practice among junior professed was very similar to that for novices with a possible wider latitude in the selection of meditation material. This selection was always subject to the approval of the Mistress of Novices or the Superior.

Discussion Question: What is permitted in the way of recreational literature? In the reading of newspapers and periodicals?

In some instances Sisters were permitted to read the newspapers freely; in others, newspapers were read only for class needs. Several communities have the practice of appointing a Sister of the community to clip articles from the newspaper and make them available to the other members of the community. Most religious communities did not permit novices to read newspapers and magazines. Current news articles were read at table from approved national weeklies. In some instances novices were permitted to read Catholic periodicals.

Discussion Question: Does the Superior give conferences to her Sisters on the Mystical Life?

Insufficiency of time and the need for clarification of the term kept the group from reporting anything significant on this question.

Father Philippe: With reference to meditation, in the novitiate the Mistress of Novices should provide assistance in the preparation and making of the meditation. However, the help should be given before the meditation and not during that period.

Question: The early hour assigned to the exercise often makes meditation difficult. Would it not be better to change the hour to some other period of the day?

Father Philippe: Meditation before Mass has been a universal practice at least from the ninth century; therefore, it seems to be the most profitable time for the exercise. If it is duty that has caused the drowsiness at that early hour, God will bless one's efforts. The struggle against drowsiness is a proof of our faithfulness.

Question: Since there seemed to be some confusion as to just what is meant by the mystical life, will you please explain the term?

Father Philippe: Although there have been various schools of thought on this question, there is now quite general agreement that the essence of the mystical life is the possession of the soul by the Holy Ghost. It consists of a very deep union of the soul with God by faith and charity.

Discussion Question: What is the nature of the activities provided in the period of community recreation. How long is the period of recreation, and how would you evaluate it?

It seemed to be the opinion of the group that since the majority

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of Sisters are engaged in mental work, the recreation period should provide activities that would truly be relaxing, and of such a variety to suit the interests and needs of different types of temperaments. A great deal of outdoor activity is provided in most religious novitiates, but oftentimes young religious assigned to the missions with older religious are denied this relaxation. It sometimes happens that the types of activities made available to Sisters are limited because of lack of space or other facilities. Permitting Sisters to recreate by two's was frowned upon as a practice which would threaten the development of community spirit and in some instances might lead to the development of particular friendships. Among the religious communities represented in this discussion group, the use of television during recreation was permitted by some and prohibited by others.

Discussion Question: What is the practice with regard to private penances? Should they be encouraged? What is their value?

The group appeared to agree that the practice of private penance should be encouraged and preserved, otherwise we would be acting less generously than people of the world who oftentimes show more zeal in this respect than religious. However, the group was mindful of the penance of the common life, and felt that it should be stressed as a means of penance. Whenever penance involved the health of the religious it was considered necessary for the subject to consult her Superior.

Father Philippe: We should be clear on the point as to why the Superior or confessor is to be consulted in the matter of penance. The Superior must be consulted for the performance of supererogatory penance because her life is already given to the community and she is not free to give what is given to the community. The confessor must be consulted because he knows what is good for the soul, but he has this right to grant the permission itself.

Discussion Question: Are the penances imposed at the chapter of faults the same for all?

The rules or customs of most religious communities specify what penances should be imposed at the chapter of faults, and in practice the majority give the same penance to all Sisters at any particular chapter. Any variation in the nature of the penance is from chapter to chapter rather than with the nature of the fault.

Father Philippe: Penance given at chapter should be in accord-

ance with the nature of the fault. The penance given to a person who is late to prayers should be different from that given to a person who runs down the corridor. The penance should have meaning for the Sister. However, in practice, it is quite difficult to suit the penance to the nature of the offense.

Question: Should public penances be encouraged?

Father Philippe: If the public penance has not been practiced in your community, I would say in general do not introduce it; do not put more and more burdens on the Sisters. If the penance has fallen into disuse, that is something else. Penance is not an end in themselves, but must be judged by their fruits.

Question: May a Superior exempt a Sister from the laws of fasting?

Father Philippe: A Superior has no jurisdiction and thus she may not exempt from the laws of the Church. But she has declarative power: she may declare that a Sister is not well enough to fast, and therefore should not fast. But this is different from exemption: she is merely declaring what she considers to be a prudent act on the part of the Sister in this circumstance.

Discussion Question: What is the necessity of spiritual direction? How can a Superior see to it that a certain amount of direction is given to the Sisters?

It was generally agreed that for the average Sister the rules, spiritual reading, conferences, and confession provide adequate direction. In extraordinary cases the Sister may go out of the house to another director, or the Superior might have a director come in for the benefit of those who desire his counsel. In this matter, the attitude of the Superior should be one of willingness to provide a director whenever this is possible. There seemed to be some sentiment to the effect that oftentimes priests are unwilling or unable to direct Sisters. Another practical problem is the fact that in the smaller missions additional priests for direction are not available. It was felt that Sisters themselves could assist the confessor by confessing in such a manner as to indicate to the priest their interest in being directed and supplying enough information that he could use for the direction of a particular person. It was thought that Mistresses of Novices might train their subjects on how to seek spiritual direction prudently and efficaciously and thus lay the foundation for their life needs. Just how Mistresses would proceed with this instruction was left unsolved.

Father Philippe: It is well to define the aim of spiritual direction.

The priest knows more of the interior aspect of the conscience. The director is a father who guides the soul. Ordinarily direction should be given in the confessional. The rest of the community should make no comments about the time given to direction.

With reference to direction given by the Superior, the ideal would be to have a certain time when the Sisters would come for direction. However, when there is a scheduled visit sometimes there is nothing to say. Set a period, such as once a month, or every two weeks, but let the subject choose the day and time. If subjects do not come faithfully, perhaps a time could be set when they would come to talk about their offices.

Discussion Question: What is the practice in the various communities with respect to correspondence? Is it permitted to send sealed letters to one's director?

There was great variation of practice in the different communities. In the novitiates postulants write home once a week, every two weeks, or monthly. Novices usually write home once a month, although in a few communities they write as infrequently as once a year.

Some communities have very specific regulations governing correspondence; others have very general specifications, but on the whole the regulations for the professed are less restricted than for the novices. In the case of the junior professed, in some communities the regulation regarding letter writing was the same as for the professed; in others it was somewhat more restricted.

Question: Since letters from one's family often contain very personal matter, would it not be better for the Superior not to open them?

Father Philippe: A wise rule is always to open the letters, but not necessarily always read them. It sometimes happens that a Superior is not too discreet in the use of the information she obtains in this manner.

Question: Most religious communities have regulations governing correspondence, but since some religious carry on correspondence by telephone, should this not also be restricted?

Father Philippe: Of course this is no problem with novices. Norms should be set up according to the norms for letters. Why give a Sister permission to telephone every week when the rule specifies once a month for letters?

Question: How is it possible to get the more conservative members of a community to accept the modification of the religious habit?

Father Philippe: A good principle to follow in the matter of modification is never to modify unless there is unanimity. The real reason for modification is that it is the desire of the Holy See. If Sisters wear seven or eight pounds, it is often a great impediment for young girls. Furthermore, there can be a great impairment of health.

Question: In the book *Religious Sisters* the Novice Mistress is warned against adopting modern methods of teaching. Will you please explain what is meant by this caution?

Father Philippe: It probably refers to the methods used and promulgated by the active school. There are two principles: one is good and the other is not so good. The end of education is to develop personality; the other is to develop independence. The first is good for the Mistress; the second is good for training women of the world. Were we to use the second too freely we might not train adequately in obedience. Training in initiative could go too far and then there would not be training in obedience.

Question: What does Canon Law indicate should be done if the Superior suspects an abuse of sealed correspondence with a priest?

Father Philippe: Canon Law says nothing about this; it is only a question of custom. If the Superior is sure there is an abuse she merely tells the Sister that she no longer has permission to write to the priest. If necessary, the Superior may write to the priest and tell him that she desires the correspondence to cease.

Question: In our community the chapter of faults has become quite routine. What should be done to make the exercise more profitable?

Father Philippe: Often the chapter of faults is too formalistic. Since the 16th century and earlier, the chapter of faults has been common in many religious communities. It is a means of leading us to perfection since it helps keep us on the right track. Sisters should be made to realize the importance of the chapter of faults and must make an examination as sincerely as they do for confession. If the penance in chapter is tempered to the fault and to the character of the Sister it will be more beneficial.

Question: Would it be proper to have both a private accusation of a single fault and a public accusation?

Father Philippe: If a community has private accusation what would be the value of the public accusation? Try to relate the penance to the fault. For the novice who always lets the door slam,

close the door very slowly. A novice who never has her shoes polished should be obliged to shine those of others.

Discussion: In some communities there is a system of fraternal correction, sometimes before the first and final profession or before important days of a Sister's life. Sometimes the list of faults of a particular Sister are given to the Mistress of Novices who uses this information in the direction of that Sister. It is efficacious in disposing her for profession. In all cases the Mistress evaluates the comments before telling them to the novice. Some may object to this practice because it would tend to make the novice critical. On the other hand, it often happens that it gives an opportunity to correct the other novices.

Deposited in the question box was a method proposed to novices in order to know and make the work of formation positive: After having explained the different temperaments and after having given the novice the means to discover her predominant fault, the Mistress proposes to her novices the following work which she invites them to do alone with God. If they wish it, or if they express a desire to be helped by the Mistress she will aid them. The novice writes the type of temperament which she has discovered, her evil tendencies, and her predominant fault. If the novice then wishes to come to the Mistress, the latter may discreetly and in a friendly manner go through the items and modify them if there be need. She then proposes the virtues to practice in order to overcome the evil tendencies. Finally, she indicates the virtue which ought to predominate in order to combat most efficaciously the predominant fault.

This outline, compiled by the Mistress, is given to the novice who copies it, then returns it to the Mistress. This interview may last as long as two hours but it is profitable both to the Mistress and to the novice because of the enlightenment for both. It therefore simplifies subsequent work.

Father Philippe: It seems like a good practice. Of course its value would depend upon the type of Mistress. She should never force or urge in any way, but leave the novice really free.

Question: Some communities are introducing the Breviary in the vernacular instead of reciting the Office of the Blessed Virgin. Could we have a discussion and explanation about the relative merits of each?

Father Philippe: It is difficult to answer this since we do not have a group of Mothers General. When it is possible to recite the Office,

then it is better. But there is always danger that a change may bring about division and disturb people.

One Sister commented that their community had adopted the Divine Office in English in 1939 and have found it to be a great source of strength, rather than a burden as it was expected to be. They say Prime and sing Compline in Choir as their community morning and evening prayers. The Little Hours, Vespers, Matins and Lauds are said privately by each Sister and take only about fifty minutes.

A Cenacle Sister commented that most of their postulants are drawn to their particular order because of the Divine Office. This is because of the fact that so many young people today are trained in the Office.

Question: If an assistant Novice Mistress observes that a novice is constantly violating a point of rule, would she be bound to report it to Superiors?

Father Philippe: Yes, she must report to the Mistress.

Question: You say you do not approve of the novices discussing questions, will you please explain?

Father Philippe: The spiritual conferences should put the novices in an atmosphere of prayer especially if the Mistress is teaching the vows. There should be a spirit of reverence; it should generate a real atmosphere of prayer. Secondly, sometimes the Mistress would need a very sharp intellect in order to answer all the objections and novices would lose their esteem of her if she were unable to do so.

Question: In some novitiates during the second year the matter of the vows is used for the subject matter of the English course and the papers are corrected for English. What do you think of this practice?

Father Philippe: It depends upon what they are learning as a result of combining these two activities.

Question: In groups of young professed would you allow discussion on matters of the vows and on religious observance?

Father Philippe: In the first two years you have to change a girl from the "old man" into the "new man," as St. Paul says, to become really a religious Sister. This is the aim regardless of the Order. During the time of temporary vows the Sisters must learn how to perfect this aim. This period requires more of an active contribution from the Sisters and helps mature them. The Mistress of the junior professed has to show how the spiritual life will be a source of activity and, therefore, discussion is useful.

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Question: In this country every Sister does the work of three Sisters. She longs for the interior life but is too busy and weary. Will God make up for this?

Father Philippe: You do not see the fruit of your work. The very fact that you yearn for this deeper life is a sign that the Holy Ghost is working. In time there will be more vocations and they will lighten your burdens, but you must cooperate with the Holy Ghost and not multiply your works for no matter how many vocations you will be just as busy. When it is obedience even if you don't have the same feeling you could have if you had more time, God will reward you another way. If it is not a personal problem; it is a problem of the Bishops and major Superiors. It looks as though you are being sacrificed, but it isn't true. God will reward you.

Question: If a novice who has been very faithful to prayer says she has only aridity, is it a sign that she is entering contemplation?

Father Philippe: If she is humble, obedient, and charitable, and faithful to mental prayer, and yet prayer becomes more difficult, it could be only physical aridity, but it might also be an indication that God wants her more faithfully to give herself in blind faith to the Lord, and thus that, she will be filled by the grace of contemplation. But it is very rare that a novice receives this gift.

Question: If a girl comes to the novitiate trained in Catholic Action, how would you handle her?

Father Philippe: Don't give her leadership in the novitiate, but don't expect her immediately to be as humble as the little girl who has only cleaned a house. Be kind and understanding. If she is a leader, she really wants to serve God and sometimes needs more time than the others. Being deprived of leadership in the novitiate will not stifle her abilities, but rather sanctify them.

Question: Is a local Superior authorized to perform penances without permission or should she ask her confessor or major Superior?

Father Philippe: The rule is the same as for the ordinary Sisters. If it is an extraordinary penance then ordinarily she should ask this permission. Local Superiors should not perform penances that she will not grant to her subjects. She has to be more faithful to common things than others.

THE ROLE OF THE SISTER SUPERIOR AND NOVICE MISTRESS

REVEREND PAUL PHILIPPE, O.P.

I

Spiritual Direction

NATURE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

I. *Definition.*

Spiritual direction is the art of guiding another's conscience towards Christian perfection. The etymology of the word "*direction*" is quite suggestive: the Latin *dirigere* comes from *reggere* and signifies "to trace a straight path, a straight line," then, consequently, "to move, to urge someone in this direct path" and finally "to order or to dispose everything so that one might reach the right goal". Spiritual direction consists, therefore, in directing the conscience of the Sisters to the right path of religious perfection as does the pilot in guiding the ship in its course.

Direction is not a science, therefore, but an *art*. It is not sufficient to teach the Sisters of what interior life consists and the virtues to be acquired, but it is necessary to make them act and to guide their first steps in meditation.

Spiritual direction guides the *conscience*, and therefore it remains in one's own conscience. Consequently, an essential condition for direction is a manifestation of the conscience to the spiritual director, whoever he or she is. In Part I of the course we said that the *total* "manifestation of the conscience," that is, the secrets of conscience which are material for confession, cannot be imposed upon the novices by their Mistress nor upon the professed by their Superior. The Sisters may open themselves to her if they wish to do so but they

cannot be "compelled" by her. Whereas, with the priest-confessor, or "director," it will be necessary to do so with great generosity and simplicity. Even with the Novice Mistress, however, the novices may and must open themselves in matters which concern their religious formation. Therefore, a true spiritual "direction," a real private and personal formation of the conscience is possible on the part of the Mistress even with the novices who have no intention of mentioning all their secrets of conscience to her. And in a due proportion, it is the same relations of simplicity and docility that should exist between the professed Sisters and their Superiors, but without any obligations.

II. Nature of the Relation between the Person Who is Directed and the Person Directing.

Between the novices and their Mistress, between the professed Sisters and their Superior, as between them and the priest who directs them, there are no relations of real obedience *in the act itself of direction*, but there are relations of *docility*. The director (or the Novice Mistress when she directs) is not a Superior because he does not have social and juridical authority over the conscience. His authority is of a moral order, born of the competency recognized by the soul which is being directed. He is esteemed for his marked prudence in guiding consciences towards religious perfection. In fact, his authority is reinforced even more by the fact that he is the ordinary or extraordinary confessor appointed by ecclesiastical Superiors because of his ability, and is, therefore, qualified to be an authoritative counselor to the novices. The same can be said of the Novice Mistress: she is not a priest but is precisely the person appointed to guide the novices towards religious perfection, having been chosen from among many religious in the congregation for this office. And the same must be said of the Superior if we recall the ancient concept of the Abbot and the Abbess; who was the true and unique spiritual Father or Mother of his or her community.

Obedience is not required of the Sisters but *docility* is, that is to say, a submission of their intellect and their will to the *directives*, to the competent advice given by the director.

Docility pertains to the virtue of *prudence* which makes us receive moral formation efficaciously from another more competent and stronger than we.

Consequently, spiritual direction consists essentially in the collaboration of the director's prudence with the prudence of the soul being

directed. The still imperfect prudence of the latter relies on the prudence of the spiritual guardian. With her spiritual father—or with her spiritual mother—she reflects (*consilium*); with him she decides (*electio*) and with him imposes upon herself the order of execution (*imperium*). However, the director (or the Novice Mistress) may very well give advice to his spiritual daughter, tell her what he would do in her place, but he (or she) cannot substitute his own prudence for her prudence. For example, in the case of a vocation it is the novice who must decide and adhere to her intention. The director cannot change her will from within. Only God can do this. The art of the director (or the Novice Mistress) consists, therefore, in convincing his spiritual daughter to adopt his counsels and thus, little by little he introduces his ideas and his desires into the intellect and will of the novice.

III. *The Vow of Obedience to the Director or to the Novice Mistress.*

Never in the novitiate should the Novice Mistress or the confessor permit a novice to make a private vow of obedience into *their* hands for this would be contrary to the spirit of the Church which imposes a definite time of probation free from vows.

As for ex-novices, who have abandoned the novitiate for reasons of health, in very exceptional cases it may be permitted them to make a private vow of obedience into the hands of a Mother or even of the director, provided that the two following conditions be fulfilled: 1) The vow concerns precise and limited matter, that is to say, it should be made “according to a rule”; 2) It should be made for a brief period of time (six months, one year) and never perpetually.

THE DIRECTION OF NOVICES BY THEIR MISTRESS

OR

EVENTUALLY OF PROFESSED SISTERS BY THEIR SUPERIOR

1st Function: *To Know.*

The Mistress should know the conscience of the novice who *wishes* to be directed. She does not, however, have the right to question her on her sins if the novice does not spontaneously make them known.

The Mistress should proceed here with a right intention, avoiding curiosity. She must not seek to know for her own use, for the purpose of documentation, for example. She must be disinterested and avoid indiscretions in questioning. In order to know she must:

1. *Listen to everything*; not manifest any surprise or be scandalized; let the subject speak; not give any evidence of annoyance or displeasure; she must not seek her own convenience but the good of souls; she must not let the novice think that she has already been judged but must hear her with charity; not to permit her to tell all she feels she must say constitutes for the novice a source of pain and torture. Let the Novice Mistress remember that she is not infallible and that, by listening she can always learn something, clarify an impression, modify a judgment.

2. *Written report*. This written report could be useful for the novice at the beginning of the novitiate, or she may even request it because of an incident which has left an exceptional imprint in her life. It can be suggested, advised, in the first case; granted in the second case but never required. The habitual or frequent written report is certainly noxious.

3. *Questioning*. This must be done but with discretion.

4. Supervise the application of resolutions made but in the most gentle and delicate manner.

5. *Distinguish* good from evil; intentions from the acts themselves. Distinguish the normal from the pathological, the graces of the Holy Spirit and its inspirations for a more perfect life from imagination, from natural zeal. Distinguish laziness from functional fatigue.

6. *Remember* what was said by the Sisters in previous meetings. The interest of the Mistress or of the Superior which manifests itself in remembering the various problems and situations of her daughters is most efficacious. Should she find it hard to remember, let her resort to taking a few notes.

7. *The subject matter of spiritual direction*. The colleagues of the Sister with her spiritual directress may consist of the following subjects: 1) Vocation; 2) The spiritual exercises of the week or of the month; 3) The duties of state or religious life and the progress therein; neglect or fidelity; attraction or repugnance for certain duties or offices; 4) Relations with her Sisters; 5) Health and personal difficulties; 6) Various and casual questions.

2nd Function: *To Judge*.

It is the duty and the right of the Mistress and of the Superior to judge. This is her particular charge. Let her observe, however:

1. Not to make all her judgments known to the novice; doing so would be dangerous in every way.

2. Let her be careful to judge a soul without making too evident her thoughts in her regard.

3. Let the needs of the soul suggest to her what she must say but let her absolutely avoid any falsehood or deceit.

4. Let her judgment be upright, frank and free from passion.

5. Let her judge individually the one person who stands before her. There are no recipes for the direction of souls. Let her not be deceived; let her judge the novice according to what she is and not according to what she says.

6. Let her not permit the novices to become monitors, nor let them take upon themselves the expression of judgments and opinions. This can happen in the case of persons of frank and impulsive temperaments but must not be tolerated.

3rd Function: *To Enlighten the Intellect.*

The "directors" must clarify all doubts of conscience. The Sister comes to her chiefly for this direction.

1. Let the Mistress or the Superior when she is directing finish the work she begins in her conferences and instructions. Let her note the particular reactions of the soul regarding her teachings.

2. Let her not impose her personal opinions, even in the choice of books and pious practices. Let her exhort, advise, direct.

3. Let her fear *illumination*. Let her not believe, that is, not presume to have special lights for guiding souls in an extraordinary sense.

4th Function: *To Encourage.*

After having known, judged, and enlightened the Sister, the Mistress or the Superior must incite her, encourage her, spur her on the way of perfection.

She must know how to ask sacrifices of them, always avoiding however, and this absolutely, authoritarianism, for this would foster pusillanimity on the part of the Sister.

The "director" must lead the Sister to make her own decisions. She must not impose her decision on the Sister. One cannot take the place of the conscience.

Frequency of Direction. The ideal for the novitiate would be once a week; it should be done at least every two weeks. As for the juniorate, once a month. For the professed sisters, when it is necessary.

The Length of the Direction Period: They should not be overly

prolonged. Normally each interview should last a minimum of fifteen minutes and a maximum of an hour. Give each one the time she requires.

DIRECTION BY A PRIEST

I. *Which Priest?*

1. *The ordinary Confessor of the community.*

Usually the ordinary confessor takes advantage of the weekly confession to direct souls.

Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalena affirms, as a result of his long experience, that on an average *five minutes* suffice for each Sister belonging to an active Community. The principal points of weekly direction in the confessional are: "to clear up doubts of conscience, to observe the sincerity of the soul, to encourage her to do better." But the Superior must grant this time to her Sisters! Unfortunately, alas!

2. *The extraordinary and the additional confessor.*

Father Gabriel writes for Italian Sisters—but it is also true in the United States that "so many small religious communities of our country towns do not usually see any priest other than their pastor, who sometimes does not understand spiritual life at all and is content to give them absolution with the usual short speech repeated to all."

In such a case the Sisters rely on the "extraordinary confessor." It is necessary to choose a very good extraordinary confessor, even if obliged to pay rather heavy travelling expenses for this great need of the community.

Besides the extraordinary confessor, the community has additional confessors who can also serve as directors.

If a Sister has already gone to confession to an additional confessor or to some other occasional confessor, she is not obliged to go to confession to the ordinary confessor also. However, if the Novice Mistress or a Superior does so herself, it will perhaps be well for her to go to confession to the two, if this unusual confession would draw the Sisters' attention or scandalize them.

3. *The special director who is not a confessor.*

Perhaps the novice had had a director before entering the community. She (or the director himself) would like to continue the direction. If this priest is not a friend of the house, of the community, does not have occasion to come, it is better to bring the direction to an end. Only if the novice has doubts concerning her vocation would it be wise to advise her to write to the director. Otherwise

this priest will not do any good, because he does not know the milieu in which his spiritual daughter is now living.

The case is different if the priest is a friend of the house, one who comes from time to time to give a spiritual conference, who knows the spirit of the community, it would be well to accept him as director. It is always better to see him in *the confessional*. However, depending on the customs of the community, he could be seen even in the parlor, especially to conceal somewhat from the other Sisters the exceptional character of the case.

4. *Direction by correspondence.*

A) In Canon Law no right of a Sister to write "letters of conscience" is recognized. However the Mistress or the Superior is not forbidden to grant this permission. From this very moment the right of censor of these particular letters on the part of the Mistress or of the Superior ceases, but she retains the power of limiting or revoking the right itself.

B) When there is question of a priest who had been director of the novice before her entrance into religion, the permission to send sealed letters may exceptionally be granted, especially in the case of doubt regarding vocation.

C) As for the Novice Mistress herself or a Superior, it is normal that she have a director and that she write him from time to time. For simple Sisters and novices, however, there is no need of special direction by correspondence except in rare cases, for example, in case of mystical graces, of purification or of extraordinary trials. This may even be dangerous for an imperfect soul lest she become proud to be able to say that she has a director. Many communities are not aware of the *harm* which has been done by "letters of conscience" and by the director's reply, whereby he interferes in matters pertaining to the house, not knowing very well the circumstances in which his spiritual daughters live.

D) A priest should never accept spiritual correspondence with one whom he has never met. Therefore, the Novice Mistress or the Superior must *refuse* outright the permission to write sealed letters (and even unsealed ones) to a priest whom the Sister does not know even though he enjoys a great reputation (a Professor of mystical theology, for instance), except of course, in exceptional cases, under the advice of the ordinary director or of the Superior herself, but then the Sister will not write to this priest as to her spiritual director but as to a counsellor, that is for a "consultation."

E) The letters must be *brief*, that is on the part of the priest and also on the part of the Sisters, without any expression of affection, without anything which could not be revealed should there be an inquiry by the Bishop or by the Holy See. In fact, the following proposition by Molinos (head of Quietism, d. 1696) has been condemned: "There is no faculty of jurisdiction in the world which can command that letters of the director regarding the interior life of a soul be revealed." (Prop. 68) Since this is a condemnation, it means that the Church (Holy Office or the Bishop) *may* command that the letters of the director be revealed if false direction or some abuse is suspected. Naturally, ecclesiastical authorities make no use of this power except in extraordinary cases.

F) Never, never should a priest or a Sister (portress) send or receive a letter *clandestinely* under any pretext whatsoever, even though passing through the confessor's hands or writing to the confessor and handing him the letter personally. Should there be an *exceptional* need to send a letter refused by the Superior, it could be sent to the Ordinary, but unsealed, leaving him free to send it or to withhold it.

5. *The choice, the change, the plurality of directors.*

A) One should not ask the confessor (ordinary, extraordinary, additional, or the retreat master, etc.) right after the first confession if he is willing to become the director. One should wait, pray, consider the matter in the light of experience.

B) May one make a change? Providence generally takes care of imposing this change upon us by removing our director from his office as a confessor to the Community or by sending him to another house. Therefore, save in an exceptional case, it is not well to force Providence by asking the priest to continue his direction by correspondence. Let us change since the Lord wills it. It may happen, however, that after a few months or years of direction under one priest the soul may encounter unforeseen difficulties: his direction is insufficient or he does not understand her. After vain attempts and efforts, it is better to change, but it is fitting to inform him with courage, unless it be exceptionally embarrassing to do so. Above all, beware of the illusions of souls who are always seeking the perfect director, and always dissatisfied with the one whom they have.

C) Normally there should be but one director. It is not forbidden, however, to seek counsel of another priest who may be visiting the community, particularly in a period of trial. It would be well,

nevertheless, to mention it to the director. A good director will even appreciate this liberty on the part of his spiritual daughter for it does not diminish in the least her trust in him.

The only case in which one may and should seek advice from another priest without referring the matter to the director is when the problem of conscience arises precisely over the Sister's relations with the director.

II. *The Relations Between the Director and the Novice Mistress or the Superior.*

Should there be collaboration? Yes, if we understand this collaboration in the sense that each one works in his own field, the director in matters of "conscience" for the director and the Novice Mistress or the Superior in matters of religious life. No, if we mean by "collaboration" an *agreement* between the Superior or the Novice Mistress and the confessor as to the manner of treating each soul.

The Novice Mistress or the Superior may speak to the director of a Sister revealing something about her exterior behavior which escapes him, but she should not solicit this information. But never should he mention to the Mistress or to the Superior what he has learned from his spiritual daughter even though such information might help the Mistress in guiding the Sister. Perhaps this principle seems severe and the priest might believe it opportune to speak in certain cases, when, for example, there is question of a scrupulous soul or of a Sister whom the Mistress does not understand because she is unaware of some particular circumstance. The Sister herself may even request the priest to speak to the Novice Mistress or to the Superior. However, notwithstanding that this would dispense him from the seal of the confessional or the professional secret, it is better for the Father not to take this step because he would be deprived of his liberty and little by little the soul would lose her trust in him, or it could happen that the Superior or some Sister having learned that the Father talks, will no longer confide in him with tranquillity and peace.

III. *Limitations of the Power of the Director of Religious Women.*

1. The Sister, particularly the novice, must not seek in the director an instructor in the spirituality of the Community, unless he be a member of the same spiritual family (Franciscan, Benedictine, Dominican, etc.), but they must *only* seek counsel and not expect real instructions from him. They must not even ask him for instructions

on the nature of religious life, on the vows, but only for counsel. To be sure, they may have him verify very briefly whether they are right on a particular point, but this *only if they have not received a satisfactory reply from their Mistress or their Superior*.

2. The Sisters or novices must not ask the director for a dispensation from some exercise or permission, for some penance of supererogation, because he has no dominative power over their religious life; they must request these dispensations and permissions from their Mistress or Superior. However, before approaching her, it would be well, if there is question of something important, to ask the director if in the case of her soul it is advisable to ask this permission. In fact, the director is *judge of the conscience*. He knows whether or not the *intention* of the Sister is pure in making these requests.

3. As to *private vows* the novices must be instructed not to ask of the director permission to pronounce the three private vows of obedience, of poverty, and also of chastity, because this is contrary to the mind of the Church. As for the promise of offering oneself up as a victim or of that of the most perfect greater perfection, they must be told that they are not sufficiently advanced in spiritual life to make these vows which are reserved to very perfect souls. Then, too, concerning the *vow of victimhood*, it would be necessary along with the director's consent to ask the permission of the Superior, because a religious cannot dispose of her life without the permission of her Superior. (Suppose she were stricken with an illness which would last for years and years!) Finally, regarding the *vow of greater perfection*, it is necessary to practice "greater perfection" for some months, a year, before binding oneself with a vow.

IV. *Limitations in Relations with the Director.*

It is well to approach the director in a supernatural spirit but we must not allow ourselves to be deceived as to what is "supernatural" in this matter. Indeed, it is wrong to "seek Jesus in the priest" to the extent that one ultimately gives to the director the love which is due to Jesus alone. Thus are born "spiritual friendships" and false mysticism.

It must be explained to these Sisters that the priest is *not* Jesus, not even "Jesus sacramentally"—as the Host is truly Jesus sacramentally since the bread does not remain substantially but only its species, the appearances, remains. Instead the priest remains a man speaking

in the name of Jesus, an *instrument* of the Lord. Therefore, one cannot give to the priest the love that is due to Jesus alone, the Spouse of the soul.

When a priest perceives that a soul is attached to him, in this way, simply, without suspecting any evil he must act with great prudence in order not to disturb her conscience unnecessarily; however, he must *delicately* detach her, directing her soul toward the Lord, and if this does not suffice, seek a pretext to put an end to the direction.

In the same manner, if the Novice Mistress perceives that one of her daughters is too much attached to the director, let her also act with delicacy. In this case a word could be said to the priest provided that he will accept it well and not believe that there is a desire to criticize his attitude toward the Sister. If, unfortunately, this were true there would be all the more reason for warning him, and if he does not understand and if the case is somewhat serious, it would be necessary to inform the Bishop, his Superior.

V. *The Director in Case of a Change of Community.*

1. A novice and more particularly a professed Sister must never consider the question of a change of congregation without submitting it to her director. It is true that in this case the Novice Mistress has not the grace of state. In fact, the grace which is hers as a Novice Mistress permits her to verify whether a novice has or does not have the qualifications necessary to become a religious in her community. She does not, however, have the grace to judge the *conscience* of a Sister. "The Mother tells me that I am called to be a Dominican Hospital Sister. I, however, feel invincibly drawn towards the teaching Ursulines." Who will judge whether the conscience of the novice is right or wrong? Only the director can do so in this case.

2. When it is question of a professed Sister, the director must always counsel her to remain in her Community seeking to sanctify herself where the Lord placed her. Experience proves that in 999 cases out of a 1000 a Sister of the active life who believes herself called to the contemplative life, even in the same spiritual family (Dominican, for example), has wrongly *interpreted* a real impulse of the Holy Spirit to lead a more interior life in her state of active life. Imagination has led her to believe that the Lord wanted a *change* in her state of life while, on the contrary, it is only a question of progress-

ing in the same state! When the desire is for a change from a community devoted to the active life to another of the same kind but of a different type of spirituality, the director should be even more severe, for after a few months the Sister will make comparisons between the first community and the new one; she will begin to criticize, to be discontented, and finally she will request permission to return whence she had come.

The only case worthy of serious consideration for a professed Sister would be that of a young woman who had entered this community because urged to do so by her ex-director, notwithstanding her aversion to it while her desire to enter elsewhere had been constantly opposed. In such a case consideration of a change would be justified. However, even in this particular case it should not necessarily be proposed or permitted, for it might be too late (she may now be 35 or 40 years old), and she would give more glory to the Lord by offering her daily sacrifice than by making a transfer which would be rather uncertain as to the future.

3. In the case of a novice or of a postulant one should be much broader if it becomes evident that she is not happy and is unsuccessful in overcoming her repugnance towards the community but is thinking constantly of another order. It would be absurd to counsel her to accept the habit and to make profession in such a state of soul.

II

The Training of the Sisters in Piety

By the word "piety" is meant interior life, that is the life of the soul in its relation with God.

The Mistress of Novices should train her novices and the Superior should help the Sisters to love and to know God, to live in union with Jesus, to be docile to the Holy Spirit, to cultivate devotion to Our Lady.

In the interior life one must distinguish:

1. *The various acts of the soul* in its relation with God: acts of *faith*, of *hope* and of *love*, acts of *religion* (reverence, praise and adoration, prayers of petition, of thanksgiving), and finally *contemplation* (that is, intimate and affective knowledge of God, acquired or mystical).

2. *The chief objects of interior life*, that is, the various persons who are objects of the soul's relation in her life of prayer are: God in His transcendence, the Most Holy Trinity, Christ, the Holy Spirit, Our Lady.

3. *The chief exercises of piety* in which are practiced the various acts of the interior life, in relation with the various persons (with God, with Our Lord, with the Blessed Virgin) They are:

Vocal prayer, private or liturgical.

Mental prayer (or meditation) acquired or mystical.

Various exercises and "devotions": practice of the presence of God (or habitual recollection), the Way of the Cross, etc.

THE CHIEF OBJECTS OF INTERIOR LIFE

To train Sisters in piety, the most efficacious and profound method is to inculcate in them the awareness of God, the love of Jesus, fidelity to the Holy Spirit, a great devotion to Our Blessed Lady. It is useless to give them details of the method of meditation in use in the con-

gregation, if first they have not been taught the sense of God, if there has not been aroused in them a holy passion for Jesus.

One of the chief principles of Saint Thomas is that acts are specified by their objects. If the intellect and the will of the novice have been filled with the Holy Spirit and with the Blessed Virgin, then her acts will spring from the depths of her soul with an almost invincible strength and earnestness. Naturally the novice will have to be trained in these acts, and, therefore, she will have to be taught to meditate and to love. But then it will be a question of giving proper direction to a source of living water rather than of operating a vacuum.

I. *The Sense of God.*

It will be necessary, first of all, to inculcate the sense of God in the soul of the Sister.

We must honestly confess that our first interest, our first concern is not generally God. Yes, we wish to live *for* God, but we do not live *with* God. Our interest is not in God *Himself*, in His life. Do we endeavor to know how God lives? Do we think from morning till night of the thoughts of God, of God's wishes? Do we live with the thought that we have been created to see and to love God throughout eternity, that Paradise will consist chiefly in contemplating the Divine perfections and the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity? This is the first duty of the Novice Mistress. If a Novice Mistress had done nothing other than to make her novices aware of God, and to create a longing for God Himself, she would not have wasted her time! This is not sufficient, of course, but if the awareness of God exists in a soul, the rest will come more easily because the soul then will consider everything under the eye of God, as God sees her.

What means are to be used to convey this awareness? It will be necessary not only to teach it once in spiritual conferences but to repeat it in private conferences, in general assemblies, in a word, to inculcate into the souls of the novices the following truths:

1. God is infinitely perfect, most holy.
2. God is just. He is the just One whose justice is superior to all human justice.
3. God is good (insist upon Divine Mercy).
4. God is eternal (give this sense of eternity). Is it possible to know what eternity is? It is possible to have a concept of it but we cannot sense it. In order to translate the concept into simple language we can say: Eternity is a *nunc* (a *now*) which never ends.

“Eternity is the perfect and simultaneous possession of life without end.” (St. Thomas)

5. God is infinite, transcendent, ineffable. If a soul possesses the sense of this mystery, she already possesses a good interior life. Saint Thomas says that the highest degree of the knowledge of God here below consists precisely in knowing that God surpasses what we are able to know of Him. We, in fact, are capable of knowing “why” God is. We are unable to understand Him. God is everything, and before Him we are truly nothing.

II. *God is Triune.*

1. In the Trinity there is no difference except between the Persons themselves. In the eternal generation, the Son proceeds from the Father; the Father is the Father of the Son and the Son is the Son of the Father. God, therefore, acts within us as God, not as a Person: the actions “ad extra” are always of the Trinity. We say, for example, that the Holy Spirit is the Master of the interior life, but this is a matter of “appropriation.” But in reality the Master of the interior life is God, the Trinity.

2. *God lives within us.* God as the Creator of our being is at the root of our very being. We are in His hands and if He did not sustain us, we would be reduced to nothing.

3. *God dwells in our hearts.* The Most Holy Trinity lives His immanent generation in us, but this Divine Procession is one single surge, one eternal generation and procession and our tiny soul is touched by that generation.

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father in eternal procession, but when He comes to us through grace we have the temporal procession. Here lies the mystery of the interior life which can be lived fully even in the active life.

This indwelling does not constitute a new mode of existence on the part of God, but he draws us to Himself, He lifts us to Himself by a participation in the divine life. We are made children of God. But for what purpose? To know and to love the three Divine Persons as they are; to know the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the Father Himself—that is to say, the Most Holy Trinity, under the veil of Faith. When God acts in us, it is God in His Essence.

The different appropriations are means of making us understand the attributes of God in themselves—for example, power, wisdom, love.

Our soul is a sanctuary in which the Divine Processions are being continually accomplished, here below the veil of faith, in Heaven face to face.

We can say that we are possessed by God and that we possess God within us. The disposition most suited for this presence of God in us is interior silence. Novices must be taught to create silence within their hearts. This silence must be taught prudently in order to avoid false mysticism. One must beware of precocious and presumed continuous interior silences, but one must direct wisely toward real mysticism. "God is honored by silence." (St. Thomas)

4. *God sees us and loves us.* We are His children. God in His eternity knows everything. We have been in the mind of God from all eternity. He has seen what we were to do, He has determined our final beatitude, He has established that one day we would leave this earth to enjoy Him. We are in the Divine Being.

When a novice really believes that God loves her, that she can have this confidence, her life is changed.

God loves us and we love Him! We must correspond with grace to this love of God by loving Him: this is just what He wants of us.

It would be well that the Novice Mistress and the Superior speak at least once of predestination as an act of Divine Love, but it would be better that the question be treated by a priest.

III. *Christ, Model and Spouse.*

1. The Model because He has lived the moral virtues.

2. The Spouse, because He has become incarnate to make visible His love for us.

No one has ever seen God, but we can see Someone Who is God. Jesus thought of us when He became incarnate out of love for each one of us.

Lead souls to consider the virtues in the holy soul of Jesus. He knew His Father as no one else does. He saw God continually. He is the model of our apostolic life.

To understand that the beatific vision does not impede other action, it suffices to think of our Lord, of His active and apostolic life. Jesus spoke of two of His virtues: the conformity of His will to the Divine Will and humility.

Consider Jesus the Saviour; speak of the redemption; make them understand just what the Passion of Jesus is. His whole life is ordained to Calvary: His physical and moral sufferings and the

awareness of sin which He alone fully possessed. Jesus alone could understand the meaning of sin and suffer from it.

IV. *The Holy Spirit, Master of the Interior Life.*

It is necessary to inculcate in the soul of the Sisters the conviction that spiritual life, sanctification, and even more specifically the life of prayer, must be entrusted to God Himself, to the Holy Spirit.

God must be the guide, the great Director of souls, but we must cooperate. He guides and urges us frequently by means of inspirations which all souls are capable of receiving, even those of sinners.

What are these inspirations? St. Francis de Sales in his "Treatise on Divine Love" (Book II, ch. 18.) says, "We call inspirations all the lights, movements, attractions which God excites in us to awaken, to stimulate, to spur us on to virtue, to good resolutions, to love."

Characteristic of the interior life is docility of the soul to the Holy Spirit, to His movements, to His inspirations. This docility draws down the favors of God Who diminishes these favors when the soul is unfaithful. The responsive soul which corresponds with God is spurred on to perfection by Him through His inspirations.

A sure sign of the validity of an inspiration is the peace and the humility which it leaves in the soul. On the other hand, anxiety, restlessness, self-centeredness are generally bad signs.

Peace and humility make one faithful at the present moment without any worry regarding the past and without anxiety concerning the future. If a soul succeeds not only in creating silence during mental prayer but lives from morning to night in the present moment, humbling herself serenely in that moment for any future infidelity, she could be beatified immediately.

This *nunc*, in fact, already places her in eternity. Indeed, if a soul can eliminate memory of the past and anxiety for the future, she is already participating in eternal life: *nunc*.

This confidence that grace will never fail us, that the Holy Spirit watches and sustains us, is a great aid towards sanctity.

V. *How Should We Act in the Presence of an Inspiration?*

1. When one has been interiorly moved to perform an act which at the moment is judged to be manifestly good, fitting, reasonable (a slight renunciation of a legitimate satisfaction, a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in leisure moments allowed by the Rule, an act of charity towards one's neighbor, interior acts of love of God, little

mortifications of the senses, etc.), one must be faithful to it. They are operating graces, which spur us on to a life of perfection. Docility to the Holy Spirit is the condition of perfection.

2. When we are moved to acts which are not manifestly reasonable, especially if there is a question of important acts which place one under obligations regarding the future or which may have external consequences, we must place ourselves interiorly in a state of docility to the Holy Spirit, wishing to do only the will of God. We should not precipitate with exaggeration into action without first weighing reasonably and objectively the pro and con.

For example, if we receive an inspiration to request the Superior's permission to perform a humiliating penance, to stay up late to pray, etc., we should not rush immediately to the Superior but rather reflect on the reasonableness of the matter.

3. If we are moved to acts *manifestly* contrary to our duties (to a law of God or of the Church, to a point of the Constitutions, to an order of Superiors), we must never take advantage of this inspiration to disobey but we must convince ourselves that we have been deceived in believing that this interior inspiration might have come from God.

4. When a duty is objectively clear, there is no need to wait for a special inspiration of the Holy Spirit to fulfill it, but it is necessary to pray to accomplish it well.

When there is some doubt concerning the present duty, we must implore the Holy Spirit and Our Lady for light; but this light is not usually granted us until the opportune moment and ordinarily not as an interior inspiration. Often exterior circumstances make the Divine Will known to us.

5. Finally, it is not necessary to wait for the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in order to examine a case objectively and reasonably nor to fulfill an act when duty obliges.

It is probably in guiding our prudence that God will answer our prayers. The gift of counsel sometimes enlightens prudence without manifesting itself as a real and true inspiration.

OUR LADY

1. *Our Lady, the Immediate Model of the Spouse of Christ.*

Christ is the Spouse with whom the religious is united, the great "object" of her love. To live for Jesus, to live with Jesus, to live Jesus.

But who has lived more intimately with Him than Our Lady? She knew all the *mysteries* of Jesus as no one will ever be able to know them and through love she penetrated into the depths of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Our Blessed Lady always lived under the *veil of faith*; she never doubted the divinity of Jesus but she could not see it: she believed. Therefore, she was in the same condition in which we find ourselves, in the same state of faith. She practiced every virtue under the veil of Faith, while Jesus practiced them in the beatific vision of the Divine Essence. Mary is, therefore, a model of imitation more proximate to us than is Christ.

Therefore, we must teach the Sisters how to imitate Our Blessed Lady in her earthly life, that they act like her under similar circumstances. They should even seek to live their interior life as Our Lady did—that is, loving and knowing Jesus, and God as She loved and knew Him, reproducing in themselves Her interior life.

In order to be a “spouse of Christ” we must imitate, even continue the life of the perfect “Spouse of the Canticle of Canticles,” wherein the liturgy recognizes Our Lady (Cfr. the first nocturn of almost every feast of the Virgin in the Divine Office.) She is really the *Sponsa Verbi*!

2. *Our Lady, Mother of the Interior Life.*

It is not sufficient to contemplate the perfection of Mary in order to imitate her. It is necessary to beg her to help us, to obtain for us from God, from Jesus, this interior life. She is our Mother. She is so powerful by her prayers: “*omnipotentia supplex*”.

Let us entrust to her the formation of the Sisters, especially their formation to piety. Let us inculcate in them the habit of having recourse to her so that she herself may teach them how *she* lived ever in the presence of God, how *she* prayed, what her sentiments were at the foot of the Cross and at the Mass of St. John.

St. Bernard used to say that “of Mary we never have enough”: “*De Maria numquam satis*”. Some fear that this Marian devotion might take something away from the devotion due to Jesus, the sole Mediator, as St. Paul says. This might be true if we looked upon Our Lady as being of the same order with Christ, on a slightly inferior level. But Our Blessed Lady stands at the side of Jesus as the queen, the Spouse who supplicates to obtain *from Him* the graces of which we stand in need. She is at our side as the Mother who leads her

son to Communion. The child does not receive the Mother but the Host, Jesus Himself. He is led to the Eucharistic table by his mother. In this manner the Sisters are led by the Blessed Virgin to Jesus. They do not go to her but to Him or go to her to be aided in going to Him, to Him, the sole Spouse of their hearts. *N.B.* St. Grigenlon de Montfore explains this doctrine as perhaps no saint has ever taught it in his *Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Too often is seen in this small volume only the "slavery" to the Blessed Virgin, while the spiritual doctrine of the saint is much richer and more general. One should read, often meditate on the following passages (indicated by the marginal numbers of the modern editions—for example, edition of the de Montfort Fathers) 20, 25, 34-36, 44, 49-50, 140, 144, 157, 179, 199, 216, 217, 219-220, 222, 225, 258-260, 264, 266.

THE CHURCH

The Novice Mistress and the Superior must inculcate in the Sisters the sense of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ and the Hierarchy.

1. *The Mystical Body, object of the interior life.*

Interior life should not be restricted to the contemplation and the love of God but should embrace the whole Mystical Body of Christ, "Christus totus", as St. Augustine says. A religious who wishes to be a spouse of Christ and would not love to contemplate the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, the Spouse of Christ, in its glorious splendor of the Saints (The Church Triumphant), in the sufferings of Purgatory (the Church Suffering) and the tragic struggles on earth (the Church Militant), would not be a real spouse of Christ.

It is necessary to open the heart and the mind of the Sisters, to open them so wide as to allow them to embrace the whole Church in their interior lives, especially during Mass. Woe to the Novice Mistress or the Superior who forms the interior life in an individualistic way only.

Naturally, as with the devotion to Our Blessed Mother, here, too, there are some dangers:

1. To speak so much of this that souls no longer think of God Himself, of His mysteries, and of His perfections;

2. To consider in the Mystical Body of Christ the relations between the members rather than the relations of the members with

the Head. (*N.B.* Comment on or at least seek inspiration from the Encyclical: *Mystici corporis.*)

The Superior and the Novice Mistress should teach the Sisters to pray for the whole Church, especially for the "silent Church" and also for the Church of mission countries like Africa and, in our own country, for so many souls who do not possess the Faith or who are in the state of mortal sin, and, likewise, for the enemies of the Church.

Finally, the Sisters should be trained to pray for the souls in Purgatory—not only for the souls of their dear ones (parents, brothers, or sisters, relatives and friends) but for all souls, especially for those who are most abandoned. This is the duty of religious.

This life of prayer for the Church Suffering, however, must be lived, too, in union with the Church Triumphant, with the Saints of Paradise, with the angels who glorify the Lord. How beautiful are the litanies of the Saints which place us in that spirit of universal prayer which embraces the whole Church!

EXERCISES OF PIETY

I. *Eucharistic Piety.*

1. *How to train the Sisters to assist at Mass* (Cfr. Encyclical: *Mediator Dei.*)

A. The Mass, renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross.

The Priest.

Identical Victim and identical ends.

Infinite value of the Divine Sacrifice.

B. The participation of religious in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The necessity of our participation.

Nature: no priestly power, but an offering through the priest of the bread and of the wine, signs of our interior oblation as victims to be united to the Sacred Victim.

C. The Mass, the center of the Sisters' day.

2. *How to train the Sisters for the reception of Holy Communion.*

A. Holy Communion is Jesus in His Sacrifice.

B. Holy Communion for the love of Jesus, for Him.

C. Thanksgiving.

D. Spiritual Communion during the day.

3. *The Visit to the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.*

A. Liturgical prayer is a vocal, common and public prayer.

B. The necessity of a vocal prayer for man: to aid his interior prayer, obliging him to manifest exteriorly his interior sentiments. It is the application to prayer of the law of the relations between body and soul.

C. Necessity for common prayer: to help each other.

D. The necessity for public prayer: to participate in the prayer of the Church as a Mystical Body united to its Head: "Domine, in unione. . . ."

II. *Public Prayer*

1. *Forms of liturgical prayer.*

A. The Mass, above all.

B. The Divine Office, prayer of the Church, may be recited in common or privately.

C. The Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

2. *The fruits derived from the recitation of the Office.*

A. For God: above all, a prayer of praise.

B. For the Church: in the name of the Church.

C. For the soul: the richness of the psalms and other liturgical treatises.

D. Manner of reciting the office.

3. *The liturgical year.*

A. The meaning of the liturgical seasons: Christ lives again during the liturgical year.

B. How to profit from the liturgical seasons.

III. *Mental Prayer*

1. *Necessity and nature of mental prayer.*

A. Liturgical prayer does not suffice; it is necessary also to live alone with God alone in silence.

The half hour morning meditation and, likewise, the time of thanksgiving, of the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, all the free moments consecrated by us to prayer, are the most precious moments of the day because these are the times in which we pour out our soul to God and are nourished by God Himself. They are moments consecrated to God alone, to tell our Father and Jesus that we love Him, that we wish to know Him better in order to love Him better, moments in which we open our hearts totally to the Holy Spirit so that He may fill us with love and with the intimate knowledge of

the divine mysteries. They are most precious moments for the spouse because she finally meets with her Spouse. St. Theresa, called by Pius XI the "Mistress of Prayer," defined prayer, "a colloquy of friendship in which we love and we believe that we are loved by Him." (*Life*, C.26)

Mental prayer is, therefore, an exercise of pure love, the moment of divine friendship.

Therefore, we do not meditate in order to progress in moral virtues, even though it is true that meditation has this moral effect, but we do it to exercise the theological virtues, to increase faith, hope, charity and even our religious reverence. In a word, God is the end of mental prayer.

B. Life of prayer and exercise of prayer. To become a "soul of prayer" it is necessary to dedicate oneself to the *exercise* of prayer. Vice-versa, a Sister who is satisfied with the half hour of meditation without cultivating the spirit of prayer during the day will never succeed either in "praying" or in becoming a "soul of prayer"—that is to say, a person leading an interior life. Therefore, it is necessary, above all, that the Novice Mistress convince her novices that they must make of the daily exercise of "meditation" the *means*, and the *necessary* means, of acquiring a life of prayer, an interior life. If they go to meditation "out of obedience," then it is almost a waste of time, and, certainly, the formative aspect which every exercise performed during the novitiate should assume, is completely lost. It is necessary, therefore, to instill in the novices the conviction that there is question here of life or death for their souls. If they wish to become interior souls, then let them dedicate all their efforts to meditating well. And if they are not fervent on this point, let them know that they will never be real spouses of Christ, but spouses in name only.

C. The novices must be taught *perseverance* in this holy exercise, fidelity at any cost to daily meditation of at least a half hour. When they come to chapel because the bell rings, even if the soul is entirely dry, arid, even if it is necessary to struggle against sleep every day or against distractions throughout the time of meditation, they must try earnestly to make this meditation well.

A half hour consecrated to meditation is never wasted. It is sufficient that we come to chapel for God, that we protest from the depths of our hearts that we wish to remain there for Him, at His feet, for

Him because this is pleasing to Him. The Sisters must believe that God is glorified when He sees a poor, generous soul persevering blindly in spite of her nature which cries out that she is wasting her time.

2. *How to instruct the Sisters to pray.*

A. Why do we prefer the term "mental prayer" to "meditation"?

Because "prayer" consists in *speaking to God* ("oratio" in classical Latin signifies "discourse") while meditation consists in thinking of God. There is an abyss between meditating on this truth of faith that God is present in me, and speaking with God present in me, although it be the same subject—that is to say, the presence of God.

B. *An ardent belief in the presence of God in us* (or of us in God or of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in our chapel), is the immediate principle of mental prayer. "Let us place ourselves in the presence of God" should not be an act preliminary to the exercise but the essential attitude of the soul. If we could remain a whole half hour in the presence of God, mental prayer would be excellent.

However, there is question here of *faith* not of sentiment. It is not necessary to endeavor to "feel" the presence of God but to acknowledge our faith in God present. "I believe that You are in me, Oh Lord."

C. *The Necessity of nourishing the soul with "subjects."*

Even if this faith in the presence of God were sufficient for recollection, not only once but every day, this does not suffice to acquire a real life of prayer. It is the foundation but not everything, because this truth of the presence of God is not the only truth of faith. Rather, above this "*existence*" of God within us, it is necessary to live of the "*essence*" of God.

The *object* of acquired prayer as well as that of infused contemplation is not the presence of God, but *God Himself*, His perfection, His mysteries, His infinite transcendence.

Therefore, it is necessary to *nourish* acquired mental prayer with substantial "subjects" (not technical, as in theology) but "easily" digested by the soul.

For this reason, there must be a *preparation* for prayer—"points", and, therefore, it is necessary to *read* something *before* the exercise and perhaps even *during* the exercise, but during the exercise it must be *short* and all ordained to prayer.

The subject matter can fruitfully be chosen according to the liturgical season. In a case of great aridity, St. Ignatius and other

masters counsel the recitation of some prayer meditated upon slowly: Our Father, Hail Mary, Magnificat or meditation on the rosary.

D. *Necessity of meditating on the points.*

To "meditate" signifies to exercise, to masticate, to ruminate, according to the medieval masters; St. Bernard, for example. Then all of this must be ordained to prayer, speaking often to God of what we have been meditating upon.

Here, then, lies the necessity of a *method*. We must make use of the method in use in the Community.

E. *The progressive simplification of mental prayer.*

Meditation must be simplified but never to the point of becoming vacuous.

It is necessary also to simplify meditation by speaking as little as possible and being as silent as possible but never seeking to "listen" to God because we risk listening to ourselves because of the well-known mechanism of the sub-conscience.

Meditation thus simplified terminates from time to time in acts of "contemplation," either acquired or mystical—that is, in very simple acts of knowledge of God, *intuitions*, on the perfections, the mysteries, the very presence of God.

3. *Mystical Contemplation.*

A. *Nature and end of infused contemplation.*

It is essentially an *affective and experimental knowledge of God* aroused *under the impulse of the Holy Spirit*.

It is said to be *infused* because instead of being acquired through the effort of the intellect as a result of meditation, it is a question of lights and movements of love in which the soul is more passive than active. These movements of grace cannot be foreseen nor can they be produced or aroused.

It is said to be *mystical* because it leads us even into the divine mysteries, and, above all, it makes us experience that these are *mysteries* and that here is the ineffable mystery of God, the Holy of Holies.

It is said to be *affective* because it is a knowledge of God caused by the love which we have for God, aroused *through love* and ordained *to the love* of God.

Contemplation is caused *by love* because it is charity which spurs the intellect to know the God Who is love. The more we love a person, the more do we desire to know him.

But this is also true of contemplation acquired by mental prayer.

In the case of mystical contemplation the love which moves the soul is infused by the Holy Spirit—strong, divine love—which surpasses our poor customary strength.

Mystical contemplation is a knowledge of God *in love* because love keeps us actually united with God, makes us almost *touch* God in the depths of our soul. Thus united intimately with God our intellect knows, *experiences* God present. This “experience” of God present is the specific act of mystical contemplation. In this presence produced by love and in love, in this experienced union the intellect knows even the divine mysteries, God in His infinite perfections but as present, as living, our soul touches the ineffability of the divine mystery, experiences the awareness of God on a level superior to the usual human experience. The soul is unable to explain what she is experiencing, but . . . it is God!

Finally, mystical contemplation is ordained to love; it makes one love God better, its end is love, a more profound *union* and a desire to serve God, to *prove* one’s love to Him by a more perfect life and a fuller gift of one’s self to souls.

But mystical contemplation always remains a knowledge of God through faith, under the veil of faith. God can never be seen here below. Mystical contemplation, is, however, a preparation, even a taste of eternal happiness. Mystical contemplation, nevertheless, is generally of *very brief* duration, particularly in the early stages—a second, a minute, and then the soul must return to mental prayer (acquired).

B. Disposition of the soul in regard to mystical contemplation.

The Novice Mistress must speak of this matter to her novices at least once, so that they may know that it is a thing good in itself, that it is the perfect form of prayer such as one finds in the saints and the Blessed Virgin.

However, they must be warned that this unusual grace is not obtained immediately but generally after long years of religious life. Therefore, the novices must not believe too soon that they have reached the mystical state.

It could be, however—and it is well that the Novice Mistress know it but not reveal it!—that a very generous and faithful privileged novice could receive some authentic graces, not “extraordinary” but a simple illumination of her faith on a mystery of God accompanied by an intense love. In such a case there must be no *a priori* doubt

concerning the divine origin of this grace nor must it be believed immediately that she is already a "mystical soul," because probably it is only a question of a movement of the Holy Spirit to spur the soul on to become more faithful. After this she will remain some months and even years in darkness and will be obliged to meditate as the others do.

As a general rule, mystical contemplation is not granted by God except to the most generous souls and after many years of fidelity and the practice of virtues and mental prayer. God comes in His own time . . . and He chooses the wise virgins.

It is permitted, however, to *desire* this grace provided one seeks not the "extraordinary" but to love God more.

Workshop Summary

Question: When you write to the Sacred Congregation of Religious must you write in Latin, Italian or English?

English. You should write in the language of your country. The Sacred Congregation uses Latin in writing indulgences, dispensations, etc.

Question: If a professed Sister had had shock treatments for mental illness, is cured and has come back to the community, should she be required to live the community life?

In such a case the best thing would be for the Sister to live the community life. If she found herself excluded from it she could very easily become sick again. However if she finds it difficult, then the Superior should consult with the doctor and find out what is best for the Sister.

Question: A Sister who has made perpetual vows has developed a very marked hysteria. Would the Superior be right in letting her alone?

The Superior would not be justified in just letting her alone. If she is not capable of living the community life the Sister should be exclaustated. There are two kinds of exclaustation. The first is *absentia in domo*, "out of the house" for a certain length of time. The Mother General and the Bishop may give permission for this absence from the community for a period of six months, for more than six months permission of the Holy See is required. Such an absence from the community may be given for reasons of health. When such a permission is granted it usually means the Sister goes to a hospital. She wears the religious habit and is under obedience to her religious Superior. They are still members of the community but absent for a time for serious reasons. The second kind of exclaust-

tration requires an indult from the Holy See. This is an indult of secularization asked by a Sister who feels she has a problem of vocation. When the indult is granted she does not wear the habit but must keep her vows. Her obedience is to the Bishop of the diocese in which she lives. This kind of indult is granted for a period of three years which means that she may return to the community and take up her life as a Sister again. In such an instance the community is not obliged to provide for the Sister during the time she is away from the community.

An indult of exclaustation cannot be sought for a Sister because of illness. However where it is a case of a Sister who needs to be dismissed from the community then an indult of secularization should be obtained from the Holy See.

Question: Suppose the Sister isn't cured in three years, must the indult be renewed?

Of course, the Holy See will renew it as long as it is deemed necessary. You cannot dismiss a Sister for reasons of poor health. But you can ask for an indult of exclaustation if the common good required it.

Question: Do you approve of psychological tests before entrance in order to screen out neurosthenia?

Yes, but some of these tests are very complicated and not too practical for the religious life. Sometimes a good Novice Mistress's and Superior's judgment is far better. These tests contain many things that do not apply to the religious life and therefore you cannot place too much reliance on them. I think it better to ask a good doctor, a Catholic doctor that would know the religious life and your community, if this girl would have the balance and soundness of mind to live the religious life.

Question: Did we understand you to say this morning that the Holy Father does not approve of psychoanalysis or psychiatric treatment?

I said that the Holy Father does not approve of Freudian psychoanalysis. It certainly would not be helpful to a Sister's vocation to have her expose her innermost thoughts, imaginations, etc., to a doctor who did not have a Catholic foundation by which he could judge the Sister. A vocation can be easily destroyed by such advice.

Question: You spoke this morning of the importance of knowing the subject in spiritual direction. Could you explain a little bit more how you can distinguish between those who are sincere and those who are not?

This is sometimes difficult to determine. Some believe they are sincere when actually they are not. There are others who know they have a fault of not being sincere but this is only in small things. I do not mean that they would lie. The one who would lie has not true religious spirit and if she is not professed should be dismissed. For the Sister who is not sincere and does not realize this, then it is up to the Superior to explain the fault to her. How do you recognize insincerity? It will make itself known in the Sister's actions in time. However you must be careful that you don't mistake timidity for insincerity. It is better to believe too much than to doubt real sincerity. It is very necessary in the government of the community, especially for the Novice Mistress, to have a spirit of trustfulness. It is better to be wrong twice than to doubt sincerity, better to believe twice than to doubt once and be mistaken.

Question: What do you think of requiring a written account of the monthly day of recollection?

It depends on the custom of the community. In a community where it has been the custom then it can serve a good purpose. In a community where it has not been the custom then you should be prudent in making use of this method. Regardless of the custom, it must be limited in its use. I do not think it is necessary to require it as an act of obedience, nor to require that the most secret things of the heart be written down. The Sister should be invited to write freely what she desires and this can help in the directing of this Sister. But you cannot impose on the Sister the obligation of exposing her soul. If it is a question of giving an account of how the Sister keeps her religious schedule, makes her religious exercises, etc., then it is all right. But if it is a matter of conscience, of things that pertain to her spiritual life then you cannot ask that this be exposed.

Question: Would it be morally wrong to use one clergy book for many Sisters? Should we make restitution?

We are morally bound to the terms of any contract we enter into freely. If a clergy book is given for one Sister then it cannot be

used by many. If the terms of the contract allow you to use one book for many then it would be permitted.

Question: Should college credits be given to canonical novices for the courses they take in religion during their stay in the novitiate?

I do not think this would be in accordance with the mind of the Holy See. The novitiate is the time set aside for formation in the spiritual life. It is the time to discover what the novice is like and to form and train her in the basic principles of the spiritual life. It is not the year to be pursuing courses of study as in the scholasticate. The year in the novitiate is very special. Teach the novices how to pray, how to practice virtue, explain the constitutions, the history of your community. These are the subjects to be pursued in the novitiate.

Question: When a Sister has permission from her bishop to call a certain confessor from a considerable distance, is it in the mind of the Church that this be for confession? Should the Sister spend two or three hours in the parlor with her confessor, and this several times during the year?

I presume this is for confession not direction. If the Sister disturbs the community, wastes time, does not profit from this privilege, does not progress in her spiritual life, or neglects her duties, then, of course, this is an abuse and it would be good for the local superior to admonish her. If there would be no change then the matter should be reported to the Bishop. But if there is no abuse of the privilege and she is two or three hours in the parlor with the confessor and the effects are good, then there is nothing wrong with it.

Question: If a confessor is appointed to the Motherhouse and does not give spiritual direction to the Sisters, what steps can be taken to get spiritual direction for the Sisters who need it? Is there a source where the Sisters can learn to take the initiative to get spiritual direction?

Superiors and the Novice Mistress can judge of the vocation of the novices. But it is terrible not to have direction when we need it. Essentially we do not need a spiritual director but spiritual direction. I believe it is necessary to have a spiritual director in the Motherhouse. Superiors should see to it that a spiritual director is appointed by the Bishop.

Question: The spiritual direction you speak of, is this given at the time of the weekly confession or only when the Sister asks for it?

Personally I think it is possible for a priest who believes that he must give direction to give that direction in very few words, in less than five minutes at the regular confession time. The confessor is not to give an instruction or to teach, but to give direction. If the penitent has no difficulty or problem, he gives absolution. If there is a question he answers briefly and to the point. It is important that you know the priest and that he knows you in order that he may be able to help you. If the Sister knows how to make her confession in a few minutes then there is time for direction. But if the Sister spends a great deal of time in the confession itself, time not needed to reveal her sins, then the priest does not have time to give the proper directions. After the confession has been made then you can ask the priest for the help you need.

Question: If a novice or a young Sister would take a long time for confession would the Novice Mistress or Superior have the right to talk to her about it?

I do not think that long confessions are good. Certainly in most instances it is more for the individual than for the glory of God. Perhaps she is scrupulous. Certainly she is not thinking of the time of the priest or of the community. The Novice Mistress or Superior would have the right to tell her about this. It might be better to write to the priest and tell him that you think this long confession is an abuse.

Question: There is, over and above the ordinary and extraordinary confessors, another priest appointed as confessor and who lives at the convent. If a young Sister or novice, outside the regular confession time, asks for another priest to be called in, may the Superior tell her to go to the priest in the house, or must she call in the other priest who is asked for?

Absolute liberty of conscience must be permitted. Unless the request in one that is entirely unreasonable, v.g. for a Sister in New York to ask for a priest in Chicago, then her request should be heeded. As long as it is not an abuse, she has a right to request whatever confessor she desires. It might be difficult for her to open her conscience to

the regular confessor and therefore needs this other priest for her peace of conscience. Do not restrict liberty of conscience.

Question: In that case could not the burden be on the confessor? Is it not said in the decree for confessors for religious women that when a confessor feels he is called upon by a religious and if he sees there is no great need for this special call, it is his place to ask the Sister not to send for him so often?

Yes, the priest should prudently tell her.

Question: When a subject voluntarily reveals conscience matter to a Superior and then is changed to a new mission and the first Superior sees possible temptations for the subject at this new place, is there any obligation on the part of the Superior to make this known?

If the Superior knows that in this particular mission there is real danger to the vocation or the conscience of the Sister, then she should do everything she can to protect the Sister. The best way is to tell the Mother General or Provincial that it is dangerous for this Sister to be at that particular mission without revealing the reason why. However the obligation of secrecy is limited by the greater duty one has to protect the soul of the Sister and if necessary the reason could be made known to higher Superiors.

Question: When a confessor of the community gives advice contrary to the Constitutions must it be followed?

The confessor has no right to give advice contrary to the Constitutions. The confessor is the judge of conscience according to the Constitutions and the schedule of religious life. The confessor has to advise his penitents according to duty not contrary to it.

Question: How serious is the obligation of recurring to a spiritual director if the regular confessor always regards you as a "good Sister"?

There is no canonical obligation. Perhaps there would be a moral obligation if this particular confessor is not giving you the help you need. If the other Sisters in the convent find that the regular confession can give them the direction they need then perhaps it is the fault of the one Sister who cannot. But if all the other Sisters have the same complaint then the Superior should ask for another con-

fessor. There is always the extraordinary confessor who comes four times a year who can give the help the ordinary confessor cannot give.

Question: Can a Superior insist that a Sister ask for an indult of excommunication after repeated warnings have failed to bring about better conduct? What is the mind of the Church in accepting an indult?

If a Sister refuses to accept an indult or to ask for one, the Mother General should ask the Holy See to impose one. Always ask this through the Bishop. The Holy See, not the community, then imposes the indult. A Mother General should never ask the Holy See to impose an indult unless repeated warnings have been given to the subject and no correction has been made. An indult of excommunication is the last resort.

Question: If a young professed Sister before leaving the community reveals to her immediate Superior the real reasons for leaving, although she does not tell them to her higher Superiors, does the local Superior violate confidence if she reveals the reasons for the Sister's leaving to the higher Superiors after the Sister has left?

If it is useful and good for the higher Superiors to know why the Sister left then they should be told. If there is no need to tell them then they should not be told.

Question: A novice received the habit on July 3, 1955. She left July 26, 1955. After two hours at home she realized her mistake. The community took her back the next day. She was not out of the convent twenty-four hours. What is her status?

This depends on the intention the novice had when she left. If she had intended to quit the novitiate and return to her family, then she must begin her novitiate all over. If she left with the permission of the Superior to go home and wouldn't stay twenty-four hours, she may come back and continue her novitiate.

Question: A Sister who has asked permission to write to a priest receives letters from him marked "conscience matter". What is the Superior to do?

The best thing to do is to call the Sister and ask her what this is all

about. If she says, "I don't know," then write to the priest and explain to the priest that all letters go through the Superior. If it is a question of conscience then the Sister should have the letter unopened.

Question: Did I understand you to say that even in the case of a false mysticism a Sister should have a spiritual director?

I would say that in the case of false mysticism a Sister would need a spiritual director even more than a Sister in true mysticism. From your question it would seem to imply that I said all Sisters should have a special spiritual director. I did not say that. Ordinarily it is the regular confessor who is the spiritual director, and that only in extraordinary and special cases should a soul have a special director.

Question: A group of Sisters and priests are engaged in the same kind of work. The priests are not named as confessors. May a Sister go to confession weekly to one of them?

This priest is not the ordinary confessor. If the Sister wants to go to him weekly, that means ordinarily even though she goes to the regular one appointed. If she wants to have him as an additional confessor regularly, she has, or he has, or the Superior has to ask for permission to have him named a regular confessor for this Sister. The Bishop is obliged to grant this permission if the priest has the faculties in the diocese. If the practice is not to go weekly but frequently and without the intention of making him the ordinary confessor, then the priest does not have to get special permission as long as he has faculties in the diocese.

Question: If the convent or hospital where a Sister is stationed is very close to the Motherhouse, may a Sister telephone to the Provincial without her Superior's permission?

Surely. But if it is a question of things that pertain to the Superior's jurisdiction then the Provincial should tell the Sister to get these permissions from the Superior.

Question: What do you think about a Superior who never opens letters received by the Sisters? Should she open them once in a while?

It depends on the customs in the community. Some communities never open letters. In other communities the Superiors open them

and do not read them. Again there are communities where the letters are read in their entirety. The custom in the community determines the course of action to be followed.

Question: May a novice during her canonical year teach one subject in a high school?

No. The canonical year is something unique in the life of a religious. The more active the life of the community the more contemplative should this year be. If they are not formed deeply in the religious life and in the life of virtue during this one year then its lack will be felt all the lifetime of the Sister.

Question: When is it advisable to refer a Sister to a priest for direction when she has come to the Superior for advice?

She can refer her to a priest when she knows it is a difficult case. Perhaps it is a question of a delicate matter and she cannot go to the confessor. We can never do too much for a Sister who needs help. If the Superior knows a good and prudent priest she may encourage the Sister to see him.

Question: How can a young professed Sister be trained to read and profit by spiritual reading in the fundamentals of the spiritual life? Some Sisters prefer to read nothing but the lives of the saints.

There is a real difficulty about spiritual reading. First, we should not be content with devotional readings, with small articles in religious magazines. It is good to read these but they should not constitute a Sister's spiritual reading. We should always have a good book chosen from the best spiritual authors of our community or of another religious family. By the time a Sister has been in the community any length of time she should have read all the great spiritual authors. But this must be done with prudence. A Sister right out of the novitiate should not start reading John of the Cross. A book like St. Theresa of Avila's *Way of Perfection* would be good in the beginning. Most of the books of the great spiritual authors have been translated into English. I do not mean modern manuals of psychology but real spiritual books. Garrigou-Lagrange and Tanqueray have good treatises on the spiritual life but they do not make good spiritual reading. You should read the Sacred Scriptures, not only the Gospels but the Epistles and the Old Testament. It is good to know how

to teach young Sisters to read the Bible. They should not start with the Book of Genesis and go right on through. But rather begin with the Psalms and then follow the Bible according to the liturgical year, in Advent, Isaias, in Lent, Jeremias, etc.

In using a book at meditation time, this practice should not develop into a time of spiritual reading. If it is necessary to read from a book during meditation time then it is only to get the thought. It is not to discover but to recall, and once the thought has been recalled to mind then the book should be put aside.

With regard to changing a book if it does not satisfy us, it is a general principle that one should not change a book without reason. Be sure to distinguish between studying a spiritual subject and doing spiritual reading. One must be filled with the book itself. Of course, it is possible to do spiritual studying, for instance, if a Novice Mistress has very little time for herself and she has to prepare spiritual conferences. It would be better if she did other spiritual reading but because of the lack of time she could combine both the obligation to give spiritual conferences and the obligation to do spiritual reading in the reading and studying of the one book. However, if you read to study, it is not spiritual reading for your soul.

Question: If a young professed Sister has been advised by the Superior to read a certain book which she feels is not doing her any good, should she be made to finish it?

If she is a novice, I would insist that she finish reading it, particularly if it is a book on the fundamentals of the religious life. If she is a professed Sister then perhaps you would not insist on this particular book since there are many books on the fundamentals of the religious life. You would advise her to read something similar by another author, particularly if the Sister is prudent and has a good religious spirit and you have confidence in her to select her own spiritual reading.

Question: What do you think about public reading of the subject matter for meditation?

I would not change any custom in the community. It is not the purpose of this Institute to give new directions for communities. But since you ask I will give my opinion. It is better not to read the meditation publicly. If it is done, then it should be done with

the intention that all are invited to meditate on the same subject, but it should not be imposed. For a group of postulants perhaps it is good. But it is far better to have a personal book and this should be used only as a means. Use it in the measure you need it. The end or purpose of meditation and spiritual reading are entirely different. Meditation should not be a time for spiritual reading.

Question: A Novice Mistress refuses to give a novice a recommendation to another community in the hope of keeping her from leaving. Is this right?

An employer is obliged in justice to give a good report on an employee where it is deserved, more so should a religious Superior give a good recommendation to a subject who wishes to leave the community and the subject is worthy of it. A Novice Mistress cannot refuse to give this recommendation. She is obliged to tell the truth about the subject.

Question: May we use moral persuasion with a novice who is in doubt about her vocation in order to get her to remain with the view that you know she will eventually find this to be her true vocation?

Yes, you may, if you feel that she is really called by God. Of course, a Novice Mistress is not infallible. She may find that she is wrong. She must be humble and prudent and use the graces of state that are hers. The novice should confide her difficulties with her Mistress and follow her advice.

Question: When a novice doubts her vocation, yet seems to have all the qualities of a true vocation, what procedure do you advise the Novice Mistress to follow?

The same. Help her to realize her difficulties and to find her real vocation. It is her duty to make it easy for her to leave if after several talks the Novice Mistress finds that the novice does not have a vocation.

Question: When is it the duty of a director to inform the Superior that a subject is scrupulous?

The director is not bound by the secrecy of the confessional, therefore he may inform the Superior when he judges it prudent and necessary. But if the subject is really scrupulous, the Superior ordinarily

will know it. If it is a question of a delicate matter in the confessional then it comes under the seal of confession and the director could not say anything about it. The confessor could advise the subject to tell her Superior but that is all.

Question: Should a Superior give spiritual direction only when the Sisters ask for it, or should she send for them periodically?

For professed Sisters, it should be given when they ask for it. However I think it is a very good custom for the Superior to see the Sisters once a month for spiritual direction. The Superior should speak very friendly with the subject about her work, her family, etc., and then little by little to bring the conversation around to spiritual things. She should not ask questions but by her leading of the conversation bring the Sister around to speaking of spiritual things and her own spiritual life. It is good for Superiors to be available when the Sisters want to speak to her. The Superior is the one who is responsible to leading the Sisters toward perfection and how could this be done if the Superior is not available to the Sisters.

Question: Is it advisable for the Novice Mistress to be present when the chaplain gives instruction? Some chaplains do not like this.

It is better to be there just to be able to explain later any points that need to be clarified. Also the Novice Mistress herself could profit from the instructions. However she is not to be present as a disciplinarian.

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