

Rule of St. Francis of Assisi (1223)

The Bull of the Lord Pope Honorius III

on the Rule of the Friars Minor

November 29, 1223 A. D.

Honorius

Bishop, Servant of the servants of God,

to our beloved sons, Friar Francis
and the other friars of the Order of the Friars Minor,
greetings and apostolic Benediction:

The Apostolic See is accustomed to deign to grant Her benevolent favor according to the pious wishes and the upright desires of those petitioning to share in it. On which account, beloved sons in the Lord, having yielded to your pious entreaties, We confirm by Our apostolic authority the Rule of your Order, approved by Our predecessor, Pope Innocent, of good memory, quoted herein, and We thoroughly fortify with the patronage of this present writing that, which is as follows:

Chapter I

In the name of the Lord begins the life of the Friars Minor.

The Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this, namely, to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity.

Friar Francis promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Honorius and his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church; and the other friars are bound to obey Friar Francis and his successors.

Chapter II

Concerning those who wish to adopt this life, and how they should be received.

If any would desire to adopt this life and would come to our brothers, let them send them to their Ministers provincial, to whom alone, and not to others, is the permission to receive friars conceded. Let the ministers indeed examine them diligently concerning the Catholic Faith and the sacraments of the Church.

And if they believe these things and want to observe them faithfully and firmly unto the end, and they have no wives or, if they do, their wives have already entered a monastery, or having taken a vow of continence, permission [to enter one] has been granted to them by authority of the bishop of the diocese, and the wives are of such an age that suspicion cannot arise concerning them, let them say unto these the word of the Holy Gospel (cf Mt 19:21), that they should go and sell all that is their own and strive to give it to the poor. But if they cannot do this, a good will suffices for them.

And let the friars and their ministers beware, lest they be solicitous concerning their temporal things, so that they may freely do with their own things, whatever the Lord will have inspired them. If however counsel is required, let the ministers have permission to send them to other God fearing

men, by whose counsel their goods may be spent [erogentur] on the poor. Afterwards let them grant them the clothes of probation, that is, two tunics without a capuche, a cord [cingulum] , breeches, and a caparone [extending] to the cord, unless it seems to the same ministers [that it should be] otherwise according to God. Having truly finished the year of probation, let them be received to obedience, promising to observe always this life and Rule.

And in no manner will it be licit for them to go forth from this religious institute [de ista religione exire], according to the command of the Lord Pope, because according to the Holy Gospel "No one putting hand to the plow and turning back is fit for the Kingdom of God." (Lk 9:62)

And let those who have already promised obedience have a tunic with a capuche, and if they wish to have it, another without a capuche. And let those who are driven by necessity be able to wear footwear. And let all the friars wear cheap clothing and be able to patch these with sack-cloth and other pieces with the blessing of God. I warn and exhort them, not to despise nor judge men, whom they see clothed with soft and colored clothes, using danty food and drink, but rather let each one judge and despise his very self.

Chapter III

Concerning the divine office and fasting; and in what manner the brothers ought to go through the world.

Clerics are to perform [faciant] the divine office according to the Ordo of the Holy Roman Church, except for the psalter, for which they can have beviaries.

Let the laymen indeed say twenty-four "Our Fathers" for matins; for lauds five ; for prime, terce, sext and none, for each of these seven, for vespers, however, twelve; for compline seven; and let them pray for the dead.

And let them fast from the Feast of All saints until Christmas. Indeed may those who voluntarily fast the holy lent, which begins at Ephiphany and for the forty days that follow, which the Lord consecrated with His own holy fast, be blessed by the Lord, and let those who do not wish [to do so] not be constrained. But let them fast the other [lent] until the [day of the] Resurrection of the Lord.

At other times however they are not bound to fast, except on fridays. Indeed in time of manifest necessity the friars are not bound to the corporal fast.

Indeed, I counsel, warn and exhort my friars in the Lord Jesus Christ, that when they go about through the world, they are not to quarrel nor contend in words (cf 2 Tim 2:14), nor are they to judge others, but they are to be meek, peacible and modest, meek and humble, speaking uprightly to all, as is fitting. And they should not ride horseback, unless they are driven [to do so] by manifest necessity or infirmity.

Into whatever house they may enter, first let them say: "Peace to this house." (cf Lk 10:5) And according to the Holy Gospel it is lawful to eat of any of the foods, which are placed before them. (cf Lk 10:8)

Chapter IV
That the brothers should not receive money.

I firmly command all the friars, that in no manner are they to receive coins or money through themselves or through an interposed person. However for the necessities of the infirm and for the clothing of the other friars, only the ministers and the custodes are to conduct a solicitous care, by means of spiritual friends, according to places and seasons and cold regions, as they see expedites necessity; with this always preserved, that, as has been said, they do not receive coins nor money.

Chapter V
On the manner of working.

Let those friars, to whom the Lord gives the grace to work, work faithfully and devotedly, in such a way that, having excluded idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, which all other temporal things should serve zealously [deservire]. Indeed concerning the wages of labor, let them receive for themselves and for their friars what is for the necessity of the body, except coins or money, and this [they should do] humbly, as befits the servants of God and the followers of most holy poverty.

Chapter VI
That the Friars are to appropriate nothing for themselves, and concerning the begging of alms and sick friars.

Let the Friars appropriate nothing for themselves, neither house nor place, nor any thing. And as pilgrims and exiles (cf 1 Pt 2:11) in this age let them go about for alms confidently, as ones serving the Lord in poverty and humility, nor is it proper that they be ashamed [to do so], since the Lord made Himself poor in this world (cf 2 Cor 8:9) for us. This is that loftiness of most high poverty, which has established you, my most dear Friars, as heirs and kings of the Kingdom of Heaven, making you poor in things, it has raised you high in virtues (cf Jm 2:5). Let this be your "portion", which leads you "into the land of the living" (cfr Ps 141,6). Cleaving totally to this, most beloved Friars, may you want to have nothing other under heaven in perpetuity, for the [sake of] the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, wherever the friars are and find themselves, let them mutually show themselves to be among their family members. And let them without fear manifest to one another their own need, since, if a mother nourishes and loves her own son (cf 1 Th 2:7) according to the flesh, how much more diligently should he love and nourish his own spiritual brother?

And, if any of them should fall into infirmity, the other friars should care for him, as they would want to be cared for themselves.

Chapter VII
On the penance to be imposed on Friars who are sinning.

If any of the friars, at the instigation of the enemy, should sin mortally, for those sins, concerning which it has be ordained among the friars, that one have recourse to the Ministers provincial alone, the aforesaid friars are bound to have recourse to them as soon as they can, without delay. Indeed let the Ministers themselves, if they are priests, with mercy enjoin upon them a penance; if indeed they are not priests, let them have it enjoined by other priests of the order, as it will seem to them to better expedite [the matter] according to God. And they should beware, not to

grow angry and be distressed on account of the sin of another, since anger and distress impede charity in themselves and in others.

Chapter VIII

On the election of the Minister general of this fraternity; and on the Chapter at Pentecost.

All the friars are bound to have always one of the friars of this very same religion as Minister general and servant of the whole fraternity and they are bound firmly to obey him. When he dies, let an election of a successor be made by the Ministers provincials and the custodes in the Pentecost Chapter, in which the ministers provincial are bound to convene at once [or at the same time], wherever it will have been determined by the minister general; and this once every three years or at another interval greater or less, as it will have been ordained by the aforesaid minister.

And if at any time it may appear to all the Ministers provincial and to the custodes, that the aforesaid minister is not sufficient for the service and common utility of the friars, the aforesaid friars, to whom the electing has been given, are bound in the Name of the Lord to choose another another as their guard [in custodem]. Indeed, after the Pentecost Chapter, let the ministers and custodes each be able, if they want and if it will seem to be expedient for them, once in the same year to call their friars together in chapter in their own custodies.

Chapter IX

On preachers.

Let the friars not preach in the diocese of any bishop, when he has spoken against their [preaching]. And let no friar at all [penitus] dare preach to the people, unless he will have been examined by the minister general of this fraternity and approved, and there be conceded to him by the same the office of preaching.

I also warn and exhort these same friars, that in preaching, that they do, their expressions be considered and chaste (cf Ps 11:7; 17:21), for [sake of] the utility and edification of the people, by announcing to them vices and virtues, punishment and glory with brevity of speech; since a brief word did the Lord speak upon the earth. (cf Rom 9:28)

Chapter X

On the admonition and correction of the friars.

Let the friars, who are ministers and servants of the other friars, visit and warn their friars and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything which is contrary to their soul and our Rule. Indeed let the friars, who are subjects, remember, that for the sake of God they have renounced their own wills. Whence I firmly command them, to obey thier ministers in all things which they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not contrary to their soul or to our Rule. And wherever the friars are, who know and understand, that they themselves are not able to observe the rule spiritually, they should and can have recourse to their ministers. Indeed let the ministers receive them charitably and kindly and be so familiar with them, that they can speak to them and act as lords with their servants; for so it should be, because the ministers are the servants of all the friars.

Indeed I warn and exhort the friars in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they beware of all pride, vain glory, envy, avarice (cf Lk 12:15), care and sollicitude for this age, detraction and murmuring, and that those who are ignorant of letters not care to learn letters; but let them strive, so that above all things they should desire to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy operation, to pray always to

Him with a pure heart and to have humility, [and] patience in persecution and in infirmity, and to love those who persecute and correct and accuse us, because the Lord says, "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute and calumniate you" (Mt. 5:44). "Blessed are those who suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:10). "He who has persevered until the end, however, will be saved" (Mt. 10:22).

Chapter XI

That the brothers should not enter the monasteries of nuns.

I firmly command all the brothers not to have suspicious company or conversation with women, and not to enter the monasteries of nuns, except those [friars] to whom special permission has been conceded by the Apostolic See; neither are they to be godfathers of men or women [so that] scandal may not arise on this account among the friars nor concerning them.

Chapter XII

Concerning those going among the Saracens and other infidels.

Let whoever of the friars who by divine inspiration wants to go among the saracens and other infidels seek permission for that reason from their minister provincial. Indeed the ministers are to grant permission to go to none, except those whom seems to be fit to be sent.

For which sake I enjoin the ministers by obedience, to seek from the Lord Pope one of the cardinals of the Roman Church, who is to be the governor, protector, and corrector of this fraternity, so that always subject and prostrate at the feet of this same Holy Church, stable in the Catholic Faith (cf Col 1:23) we may observe, what we have firmly promised: the poverty and humility and the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Confirmation of the Rule

Let it not be in any way licit to anyone among men to infringe this page of our confirmation, or to contravene it with rash daring. If anyone however would presume to attempt this, let him know himself to have incurred the indignation of the Omnipotent God and of Blessed Peter and Paul, His Apostles.

Given at the Lateran, on the third day of the Kalens of December, in the eight year of Our Pontificate.