

The Rule of 1221 and Statutes

The Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis



Foreword

The Rule of the Association of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis is the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis of 1221, *Memoriale Propositi*. The title Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis is abbreviated using the acronym BSP in these articles and statutes. The word chapter, as used herein, refers to local groups consisting of two or more members. Ministers in this private Catholic Association are those whose function is to serve the local chapter, or Association, in a leadership capacity. The Rule of 1221 is in bold font and the Modern Statutes in regular font. Members of the Association, while in formation or once they are professed, live according to the statutes.

These statutes have been approved by the Church, through the late Father Valerius Messerich O.F.M., the first Visitor of the Association. Also, more recently, through Father Robert Altier, the current visitor of the Association and its original Administrators, Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP, at his request.

Preamble

- Rule** **Here begins the Rule of the Continent Brothers and Sisters. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. The memorial of what is proposed for the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis, living in their own homes, begun in the year of our Lord 1221, is as follows.**
- Statutes** Here begins the Rule and Statutes of the Continent (those who give up things) Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis (BSP). In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. These provisions are relaxed on Sundays and Solemnities if the penitent so chooses. Sunday begins at the vigil Mass for Sunday on Saturday evening according to our Visitor.

Chapter I - Daily Life



Article 1

- Rule** **The men belonging to this brotherhood shall dress in humble, undyed cloth, the price of which is not to exceed six *Ravenna soldi* an ell, unless for evident and necessary cause a temporary dispensation be given. And breadth and thinness of the cloth are to be considered in said price.**
- Statutes**
- A. Those belonging to this Association shall dress in humble, modest, and inexpensive clothes. Subdued, solid colors, as opposed to patterns and designs, should be chosen. Colors shall be solid shades or any shade of blue in honor of the Blessed Mother who is the patroness of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis. The penitent should strive to have only the least expensive and minimum amount of clothing needed for comfort, employment, and utility.
 - B. The penitent should mix and match styles and colors so as appear indistinguishable from other seculars and to avoid the appearance of a wearing a habit. Thus penitents will do penance privately and inconspicuously.
 - C. For evident and necessary cause, a dispensation on clothing colors and quality may be given by the individual's spiritual director or confessor, who also has the authority to approve their wearing a habit if they wish to do so.
 - D. A penitent is not required to dispose of their existing wardrobe when they begin to conform these prescriptions to their life. They may keep and wear their existing clothing until is worn out and replace these things with garments that conform to the Rule when they need to do so.

Article 2

- Rule** **They shall wear their outer garments and furred coats without open throat, sewed shut or uncut but certainly laced up, not open as secular people wear them; and they shall wear their sleeves closed.**
- Statutes**
- A. Clothing that is not visible may be of any color or pattern.
 - B. Men's ties should be simple, conservative, and tasteful and may be patterned and of any color or color combination provided that the ties are subdued in appearance and not "flashy."
 - C. Colorful ornamentation and fancy jewelry are not to be worn unless a dispensation is given by the individual's spiritual director or confessor. Engagement rings, wedding bands, watches, and any other similar adornments, and tasteful and unostentatious religious jewelry such as medals are permitted.

- D. For special events, traveling or vacations, etc., or items received as gifts, a dispensation is given herein for the wearing of earrings, other jewelry, and clothing that falls outside the Rule. Questions on this should be directed to your spiritual director or confessor.
- E. Perfumes, after shave lotions, and so on may be used lightly. Unscented hair sprays, soaps, lotions, and so on can be chosen at the discretion of the penitent.
- F. Female penitents may use cosmetics. The use of extensive makeup is discouraged.
- G. At all times in public, a simple cross or crucifix should be visibly worn. The style chosen is up to the individual. If a penitent is already wearing a religious habit of a First, Second, or Third Order community, the habit of the Order is sufficient. A penitent can be excused from the wearing of a cross, crucifix, or habit if to do so may endanger the penitent's life or impede the penitent's manner of earning a living.

Article 3

- Rule** **The sisters in turn shall wear an outer garment and tunic made of cloth of the same price and humble quality; or at least they are to have with the outer garment a white or black underwrap or petticoat, or an ample linen gown without gathers, the price of an ell of which is not to exceed twelve *Pisa denars*. As to this price, however, and the fur cloaks they wear a dispensation may be given according to the estate of the woman and the custom of the place. They are not to wear silken or dyed veils and ribbons.**
- Statutes**
- A. All clothing and accessories must be modest, simple and of moderate cost, and in conformity to the estate or employment of the person and custom of the place.
 - B. Penitents should attempt to furnish their homes and surroundings according to these same guidelines, i.e. modest, simple and inexpensive and in conformity to the estate or employment of the person or custom of the place. However, the following of this section of the Rule must not create more work or inconvenience for penitents or other family members.

Article 4

- Rule** **And both the brothers and the sisters shall have their fur garments of lamb's wool only. They are permitted to have leather purses and belts sewed in simple fashion without silken thread, and no other kind. Also other vain adornments they shall lay aside at the bidding of the Visitor.**
- Statutes**
- A. Outer winter garments shall be compatible with the climate you live in, and provide adequate protection from the elements. They shall be of either a solid neutral or blue color, simple and modest, consistent with the content of Article 1.
 - B. Purses and belts should be of either a solid neutral or blue color. Suitcases and carry bags should be of these colors if possible also.

Article 5

Rule **They are not to go to unseemly parties or to shows or dances. They shall not donate to actors, and shall forbid their household to donate.**

- Statutes
- A. Attendance at immodest functions or events at which immodest or immoral behavior is exhibited or fostered is forbidden.
 - B. The penitent should avoid the near occasions of sin in all circumstances and should strive always to give good example to others.
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Chapter II – Abstinence



Article 6

- Rule** **All are to abstain from meat save on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, except on account of illness or weakness, for three days at blood-letting, in traveling, or on account of a specially high feast intervening, namely, the Nativity for three days, New Year’s, Epiphany, the Pasch of the Resurrection for three days, Assumption of the glorious Virgin Mary, the solemnity of All Saints and of St. Martin. On the other days, when there is no fasting, they may eat cheese and eggs. But when they are with religious in their convent homes, they have leave to eat what is served to them. And except for the feeble, the ailing, and those traveling, let them be content with dinner and supper. Let the healthy be temperate in eating and drinking.**
- Statutes**
- A. For penitents, all Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays are days of abstinence (that is, meatless days) unless directed otherwise by a physician or spiritual director or confessor. Meat is allowed on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. Soups or casseroles with some meat are permissible if you are at a social gathering or do not have control over the menu.
 - B. Abstinence will follow current Church regulations, and are listed in Appendix A.
 - C. Penitents may eat three meals daily throughout the year. Beverages may be taken at any time.
 - D. Except for Sundays and Solemnities, between meal snacks of solid food should be avoided except for acts of charity, special occasions, or family gatherings.
 - E. At all times, penitents should be temperate in eating and drinking.
 - F. In their own homes, penitents should attempt to prepare foods that other household members enjoy rather than satisfying themselves, and should keep their fasting and abstinence invisible, that is between God and themselves.
 - G. In order to be hospitable, penitents may eat what they prepare for guests, or what is placed before them if they are with others.
 - H. When eating with others in a group setting, the penitent should try to allow others to choose their foods first.
 - I. Travelers while in transit to their destinations and those who are ill, weak, pregnant, or breastfeeding are exempt from following the abstinence provisions of this Rule as they relate to fasting and abstinence.
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Article 7

Rule **Before their dinner and supper let them say the Lord's Prayer once, likewise after their meal, and let them give thanks to God. Otherwise let them say three Our Fathers.**

Statutes A. Before and after meals, let the penitents reverently say either their regular meal prayer, or the Lord's Prayer once, and let all give thanks to God. If they forget they are to say three Our Father's. These prayers may be prayed out loud or silently with head bowed unless to do so would either be dangerous to the penitent or highly offensive to the company kept.

Chapter III - Fasting



Article 8

Rule From the Pasch of the Resurrection to the feast of All Saints they are to fast on Fridays. From the feast of All Saints until Easter they are to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, but still observing the other fasts enjoined in general by the Church.

- Statutes**
- A. All Fridays are days of fast for penitents throughout the year unless a Solemnity in the Church. From the Feast of All Saints until Easter, penitents are to fast on Wednesdays as well as Fridays. Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday are always days of abstinence, following Article 6 unless a Solemnity in the Church.
 - B. Fasting guidelines shall follow current Church law and are listed in Appendix A although the penitent may fast more and in a different manner if they wish. Questions should be referred to the penitent's spiritual advisor or director.
 - C. The amount of food eaten on fast days will be particular to the individual penitent who may feel hungry but should not feel debilitated, drowsy, or ill. The penitent should consult a spiritual director or confessor, or, if needed, a physician regarding the amount of food to be eaten.

Article 9

Rule They are to fast daily, except on account of infirmity or any other need, throughout the fast of St. Martin from after said day until Christmas, and throughout the greater fast from Carnival Sunday until Easter.

- Statutes**
- A. Penitents are to observe a pre-Christmas fast from November 12, the day after the Feast of St. Martin, until Christmas and a pre-Easter fast from Ash Wednesday until Easter.
 - B. Penitents who are guests in the homes of others, or who have been invited out to eat, are permitted to eat what is set before them unless that day is a day of fast and/or abstinence enjoined by the Church.
 - C. Sundays and Church Solemnities are never days of fast or abstinence. These include the Octave of Christmas, the Feasts of New Year's, Epiphany, Annunciation, the Octave of Easter, and the Feasts of the Ascension, Assumption, All Saints, Immaculate Conception, and all other Solemnities of the Church.
 - D. Penitents are permitted to celebrate birthday parties, anniversaries, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and other special occasions unless these would fall on a fast day enjoined by the Church. Fasting and abstinence is not required at these events, but is permitted if kept invisible to others.

- E. Additional exceptions to the fasting provisions of this Rule are listed under Articles 6, 10, and 11 and in Appendix A, or may be designated by an individual's spiritual director or confessor.
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Article 10

Rule **Sisters who are pregnant are free to refrain until their purification from the corporal observances except those regarding their dress and prayers.**

Statutes A. All pregnant and breastfeeding mothers are exempt from fasting and abstinence both by the Church and the Rule.

Article 11

Rule **Those engaged in fatiguing work shall be allowed to take food three times a day from the Pasch of the Resurrection until the Dedication feast of St. Michael. And when they work for others it will be allowed them to eat everything served to them, except on Fridays and on the fasts enjoined in general by the Church.**

Statutes A. Fatiguing work may be either physical or mental as determined by the penitent.

 B. Those engaged in fatiguing work are not bound to fast or abstain while working. They are bound to follow, however, the days of fast and abstinence enjoined by the Church unless their spiritual director or confessor exempts them.

Chapter IV – Prayer



Article 12

Rule All are daily to say the seven canonical Hours, that is: *Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline*. The clerics are to say them after the manner of the clergy. Those who know the Psalter are to say the *Deus in nomine tuo* (Psalm 54) and the *Beati Immaculati* (Psalm 119) up to the *Legem pone* (Verse 33) for Prime, and the other psalms of the Hours, with the Glory Be to the Father; but when they do not attend church, they are to say for Matins the psalms the Church says or any eighteen psalms; or at least to say the Our Father as do the unlettered at any of the Hours. The others say twelve Our Fathers for Matins and for every one of the other Hours seven Our Fathers with the Glory Be to the Father after each one. And those who know the Creed and the *Miserere mei Deus* (Ps. 51) should say it at Prime and Compline. If they do not say that at the Hours indicated, they shall say three Our Fathers.

- Statutes**
- A. Prayer is the core of growth in a life with God. Penitents must be committed to a life of prayer as outlined in this Rule. More prayer than what is listed, including daily mental prayer, meditation, and contemplation, is encouraged.
 - B. One may have to adjust one's schedule to make time to pray. Unnecessary activities that inhibit one's prayer life should be dropped. However, prayer should enhance and support one's daily duties such as caring for family members, keeping house, or earning a living. Penitents may find it necessary to pray during the night, while driving, while doing house or yard work, and so on in order to complete their daily prayer schedule.
 - C. While the Liturgy of the Hours is the preferred method of prayer, any of the prayer options listed at the end of this section are equally permissible depending on the situation at the time of prayer.
 - D. There will arise certain days on which a penitent finds it difficult to say all the required prayers in any form. On such days, the penitent should at least raise their mind to God at the required prayer times and have the intention to pray even though the opportunity is not available.
 - E. All should renew the consecration of themselves and the Association to Our Lady regularly if not daily. The recommended prayer of consecration of the Association, The Marian Consecration Prayer, is in Appendix B.
 - F. All are to develop a formal pattern of prayer that is consistent with their lifestyle even if they develop it from the optional prayers. The recommended method of prayer for all following this Rule is the Liturgy of the Hours.
 - G. For those who have no breviary, other offices approved by the Church may be substituted. These include the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin or the Office of the Passion.
 - H. For those without breviaries or copies of other offices, other Psalms may be substituted from the Bible for each of the hours.

- I. If a penitent cannot read or has no Bible, breviary, or Office book, the penitent may pray Our Father's, Hail Mary's, and Glory Be's in place of each office as directed below under Option Four.
- J. All penitents who have completed Novice 1 formation, and others who wish to do so, are to pray daily the seven canonical Hours from the Liturgy of the Hours if it is available. The penitent is free to decide when these Hours are to be prayed, or to choose a different option of prayer if that is best.
- K. In addition, for Morning Prayer, all are to add the Apostles' Creed to their recitation of Psalms 51, 54, and 119 to verse 32. It is very acceptable to memorize these psalms to facilitate their recitation. If the Creed and Psalm 51 cannot be said for some reason, three additional Our Fathers should be said in place of these prayers.
- L. For Night Prayer, in addition to Compline, right before retiring, all are to pray Psalm 51 and the Apostles' Creed. If the penitent cannot say the Creed and Psalm 51 for some reason, three Our Fathers should be substituted for them.
- M. The Glory Be to the Father is to be prayed after each psalm while praying the LOH unless otherwise stated in the psalter.
- N. In addition, penitents should, if possible, spend a minimum of fifteen minutes daily in meditation, mental, or contemplative prayer.
- O. Any one of the following prayer options may be used by the penitent to fulfill their daily prayer schedule. It is acceptable to mix and match prayer options for any of the hours on any day.

- i. **OPTION ONE: PRAY THE COMPLETE LITURGY OF THE HOURS AS PRESCRIBED IN THE CURRENT BREVIARY**

The Office of Readings may be prayed at any time during the day. The little hours of *Terce* (Mid-morning Prayer—about 9 a.m.), *Sext* (Mid-day Prayer—about noon), and *None* (Mid-afternoon Prayer—about 3 p.m.) are prayed at approximately the hours described. Penitents may combine these prayers and say them at alternate hours if their personal schedules require it. For example, the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer may both be said at dawn if need requires. Midmorning, Midday, and Midafternoon Prayer may be combined at noon and Evening Prayer and Night Prayer combined prior to bedtime. If need be, all seven hours can be prayed at one time if that is best for the individual. Clerics are to recite the Hours after the manner of the clergy.

- ii. **OPTION TWO: PRAY THE FULL TWENTY-DECADE ROSARY.**

The full twenty decades of the Rosary can be broken up so that the Rosary is prayed, in part, throughout the day to approximately correspond to the times of the hours.

- iii. **OPTION THREE: PRAY AN HOUR OF MENTAL OR CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER DAILY.**

This may be broken up into two 30 minute segments or four 15 minute segments. An ideal place for contemplative prayer is before the Blessed Sacrament.

iv. OPTION FOUR: PRAY OTHER PRAYERS AS FOLLOWS

For the Office of Readings, twelve Our Father's, twelve Hail Mary's, and twelve Glory Be's with the *Requiem Aeternam* after each; and for every one of the remaining hours, seven Our Father's, seven Hail Mary's, and seven Glory Be's with the *Requiem Aeternam* after each. In total fifty-four Our Father's, Hail Mary's and Glory Be's with the *Requiem Aeternam* after each constitutes a day's prayer under this option.

v. OPTION FIVE: OTHER SUBSTITUTIONS

Those parenting small children or otherwise suffering continuous distractions or time constraints may, with the permission of their spiritual director or confessors, substitute short pious ejaculations for the hours. These may be as simple as mentally lifting one's mind to God. Penitents should, however, endeavor to pray Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer from the Divine Office if at all possible, unless dispensed from doing so by their spiritual director or confessors.

Article 13

Rule **The sick are not to say the Hours unless they wish.**

Statutes A. The sick are exempt from saying the Divine Office unless they wish to do so. Their sickness and its pains becomes their prayer.

Article 14

Rule **All are to go to Matins in the fast of St. Martin and in the great fast, unless inconvenience for persons or affairs should threaten.**

Statutes A. Since public recitation of Matins is rarely available these days penitents are encouraged to go to daily Mass when they feel they can. Also, during Advent and Lent penitents should make an extra effort to go to daily Mass.

B. At Mass, signs of devotion and reverence before the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist should follow the parish priest's or the bishop's directives where they have been given. Kneeling during the Consecration of the Mass, after receiving Communion, or in Adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is always encouraged and deemed appropriate in this Association and by its Visitor except where the bishop has otherwise specified. The Eucharist should always be received on the tongue where possible.

Chapter V – The Sacraments and Other Matters



Article 15

Rule They are to make a confession of their sins three times a year and to receive Communion at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. They are to be reconciled with their neighbors and to restore what belongs to others. They are to make up for past tithes and pay future tithes.

Statutes

- A. Penitents should go to confession monthly if at all possible, and to receive the Eucharist weekly.
- B. All are to be reconciled in every way possible and to tithe ten percent of their income to their parish, the Catholic Church, or to charitable organizations whose goals are in keeping with the Church hierarchy and magisterium. If a ten percent tithe seems too high, the penitent should consult their spiritual director or confessor, or their parish priest about the appropriate amount of the tithe and then should follow the advice given if they reasonably can. Since the penitent is to financially support their home chapter of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis and the work of this Association, a portion of one's tithe may go to this cause.

Article 16

Rule They are not to take up lethal weapons, or bear them about, against anybody.

Statutes

- A. The sick are exempt from saying the Divine Office unless they wish to do so. Their sickness and its pains becomes their prayer.

Article 17

Rule All are to refrain from formal oaths unless where necessity compels, in the cases excepted by the Sovereign Pontiff in his indult, that is, for peace, for the Faith, under calumny, and in bearing witness.

Statutes

- A. All are to refrain from formal oaths except where required by law.

Article 18

Rule Also in their ordinary conversations they will do their best to avoid oaths. And should anyone have sworn thoughtlessly through a slip of the tongue, as happens where there is much talking, he should the evening of the same day, when he is obliged to think over what he has

done, say three Our Fathers in amends of such oaths. Let each member fortify his household to serve God.

- Statutes
- A. They are not to take oaths in ordinary conversations.
 - B. They are to watch their speech and, should they sin by speaking, they are to say, by evening of that same day, three Our Father's.
 - C. Let each member teach his or her household to love and serve God.
 - D. Let the members lovingly serve others outside their house-hold by participating, as much as obligations, time, finances, and health permit, in the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy, following the guidance of God and their spiritual director or confessor. Let them serve all with the charity and mercy of Christ. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy are listed in Appendix C.
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Chapter VI – Mass and Meetings



Article 19

Rule **All the brothers and sisters of every city and place are to foregather every month at the time the ministers see fit, in a church which the ministers will make known, and there assist at Divine Services.**

- Statutes**
- A. Penitents living in proximity to each other should stay in touch with one another and ideally form a chapter to assist each other in this way of life, subject to the Association’s guidelines on forming a chapter.
 - B. No chapter may be formed without a spiritual assistant unless there isn’t one available. The spiritual assistant must be a priest, deacon, or male or female religious who upholds all the teachings of the Catholic Church and who fully supports the penitents in living this Rule of Life.
 - C. Where a chapter does not have access to a local spiritual assistant it must obtain permission from the Visitor or one of the ministers of the Association to continue meeting while looking for one. Specific questions or issues may be directed to the Visitor or Administrators of the Association for resolution at such times. One spiritual assistant can be responsible for more than one chapter.
 - D. Chapters that are temporarily without spiritual assistants may wish to use audio or video tapes to provide formation for their members until a new spiritual assistant is located.
 - E. All members of this Association are to gather for their monthly chapter meeting at a time the local ministers see fit. If possible, they should attend Mass as part of this meeting.
 - F. If there is no local chapter of the Association, or if the local chapter is too small to provide a vital community life to its members, a member of the BSP is permitted to attend the meeting of a different chapter of the Association; an area Third Order meeting if agreeable to the affected Third Order members; or live this Rule on their own under a competent spiritual director or confessor as they decide. E-mail contact with other BSP members may help in these situations. All members so affected should be in regular contact with the Communication Center of the Association.

Article 20

Rule **And every member is to give the treasurer one ordinary denar. The treasurer is to collect this money and distribute it on the advice of the ministers among the poor brothers and sisters, especially the sick and those who may have nothing for their funeral services, and thereupon among the poor; and they are to offer something of the money to the aforesaid church.**

- Statutes
- A. All members are responsible to provide for the financial needs of their Chapter and the Association on some reasonable basis consistent with their state in life and financial ability. There are no fixed dues or fees, but there are fixed expenses.
 - B. The fixed expenses affiliated with running the Association include but are not limited to mail and newsletter costs, formation materials, miscellaneous printing, phone expenses, computer expenses and the cost of maintaining the Web page. Monies received will be used to cover these expenses and to provide alms for needy members, as approved by the Administrators and the Council of the Association. Members wishing to assist other members financially or otherwise may do so anonymously through the BSP.
 - C. A simple financial report will be maintained by the treasurer and available upon request by any member of the Association.
 - D. If a chapter in the Association requests a visit from the Visitor or someone else, they should reimburse the expenses of the visit.
 - E. In the United States of America, all monies donated to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis are tax deductible as the BSP is a bona fide tax-exempt non-profit organization registered in the State of Minnesota and in the National Catholic Directory under the Diocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.
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Article 21

- Rule** **And, if it be convenient at the time, they are to have some religious who is informed in the words of God to exhort them and strengthen them to persevere in their penance and in performing the works of mercy. And except for the officers, they are to remain quiet during the Mass and sermon, intent on the Office, on prayer, and on the sermon.**
- Statutes
- A. At Mass the penitents should pay particular attention to the Gospel, the homily or sermon, the Consecration of the Eucharist, and its worthy reception.
 - B. In their chapter meetings they are to listen attentively and to speak charitably striving always and in all things to contribute what they have to share with all present.
 - C. All members should have the opportunity to faith share about their spiritual experiences and concerns at each gathering of the Association.
 - D. It is suggested that all penitents make an annual retreat or hermitage experience, unless exempted by a spiritual director, confessor, or their Chapter minister. All are encouraged to attend the annual retreat of the Association if one is held and they can do so.
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Chapter VII – Works of Mercy



Article 22

- Rule** **Whenever any brother or sister happens to fall ill, the ministers, if the patient let them know of it, shall in person or through others visit the patient once a week, and remind him of penance; and if they find it expedient, they are to supply him from the common fund with what he may need for the body.**
- Statutes**
- A. When a member falls ill, fellow penitents should visit the person or else send a card or make a phone call to the ailing party, to comfort them and encourage them to pray, receive the Sacraments, and stay close to the Lord. Weekly contact is encouraged.
 - B. If penitents are able to provide help to ill members, they should lovingly do so.

Article 23

- Rule** **And if the ailing person depart from this life, it is to be published to the brothers and sisters who may be present in the city or place, so that they may gather for the funeral; and they are not to leave until the Mass has been celebrated and the body consigned to burial. Thereupon each member within eight days of the demise shall say for the soul of the deceased: a Mass, if he is a priest; fifty psalms, if he understands the Psalter,* or if not, then fifty Our Fathers with the *Requiem Aeternam* at the end of each.**
- Statutes**
- A. If a member dies the other members of the Association in the area should gather for the funeral if distance, work and family commitments allow. They are not to leave until the Mass is celebrated and the body consigned to burial. Penitents are encouraged to designate someone they know to notify the BSP Administrators of their death so they can be prayed for.
 - B. Within eight days of the demise, each member shall say for the soul of the deceased: a Mass, if a priest, otherwise fifty Psalms. If a member cannot read the Psalter, he or she may say fifty Our Father's with the words "May the souls of the faithful departed through the Mercy of God rest in peace" following each Our Father.
 - C. Penitents may, if they wish, add the ejaculation, "Lord, have mercy on _____'s soul" or the Glory be, after praying each psalm.

Article 24

Rule In addition, every year, for the welfare of the brothers and sisters living and dead, each priest is to say three Masses, each member knowing the Psalter is to recite it, and the rest shall say one hundred Our Fathers with the *Requiem Aeternam* at the end of each.

- Statutes**
- A. In addition, every year, for the welfare of the brothers and sisters living and dead, each priest must say three Masses and the other members are to recite the entire Psalter from the Bible. The Psalter may be recited all at once, in sections throughout the year, or by praying one psalm or section of psalm daily.
 - B. Those who cannot read shall say one hundred Our Father's with the words "May the souls of the faithful departed through the Mercy of God rest in peace" after each Our Father. These may be said all at once or throughout the year.
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Article 25

Rule All who have the right are to make their last will and make disposition of their goods within three months after their profession, lest anyone of them die intestate.

- Statutes**
- A. All are to make their last will and testament within three months of their profession to live the Rule, lest anyone of them die before creating a valid will.
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Article 26

Rule As regards making peace among the brothers and sisters or non-members at odds, let what the ministers find proper be done; even, if it be expedient, upon consultation with the Lord Bishop.

- Statutes**
- A. All are to make peace with members of the Association and all others, seeking, if necessary, the consultation of the Church.
 - B. The penitent must daily pray for all those who refuse to make peace with them and must forgive such people all wrongs they have done at least in their heart.
 - C. The brothers and sisters are always to take the first steps toward reconciliation. Under no circumstances are penitents to hold grudges or wish ill to anyone.
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Article 27

Rule If contrary to their right and privileges trouble is made for the brothers and sisters by the mayors and governors of the places where they live, the ministers of the place shall do what they shall find expedient on the advice of the Lord Bishop.

- Statutes
- A. If contrary to their rights and privileges, trouble is made for the brothers and sisters by those in civil authority of the places where they live, the ministers of the place shall do what they shall find expedient on the advice of their chapter's spiritual assistant, their spiritual director or confessor, or their parish priest.
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Article 28

Rule **Let each member accept and faithfully exercise the ministry of other offices imposed on him, although anyone may retire from office after a year.**

- Statutes
- A. Let each member accept and faithfully exercise the ministry of other offices imposed on him or her, although anyone may retire from office after a year.
 - B. The penitent should follow the consensus of the electing group in determining whether or not to accept an office. If nominated for a position it is prudent to consider if the nomination be the will of God. This holds true for the election as well.
 - C. All nominations and elections must be conducted in absolute charity and honesty. Secret ballot elections are the proper way to elect someone from among those nominated. The person getting the most votes is the one elected. Terms of office are one year, unless otherwise agreed to by a majority of those affected. In small groups such assignments may need to be of indefinite length.
 - D. If a penitent who is nominated for, or elected to, office feels stress over this service, the penitent should prayerfully examine the causes of this stress and discuss these with a spiritual director or confessor, the chapter minister, and the chapter's spiritual assistant. If these problems persist such persons may ask to be replaced at their discretion.
 - E. In elections, only professed members shall be eligible to nominate and vote and also eligible for office. If an insufficient number of members are professed, officers shall be appointed, or at least approved, by the BSP Administrators.
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Article 29

Rule **When anybody wishes to enter this brotherhood, the ministers shall carefully inquire into his standing and occupation, and they shall explain to him the obligations of the brotherhood, especially that of restoring what belongs to others. And if he is content with it, let him be vested according to the prescribed way, and he must make satisfaction for his debts, paying money according to what pledged provision is given. They are to reconcile themselves with their neighbors and to pay up their tithes.**

- Statutes
- A. When others wish to enter this Association, the Association Administrators shall carefully inquire into their standing and occupation and should question them thoroughly to ascertain their adherence to the Church's teaching regarding faith, Church authority, and morals. Only those who hold to the views of the Church's magisterium, or who change their views to adopt those of the Church, shall be considered for admission to the Association or retain membership.
 - B. Moreover, the ministers shall explain to all inquirers the obligations of life under the Rule, especially that of restoring what belongs to others. And if those inquiring are content with that, let them begin to follow the rules of formation as set up by the Association.
 - C. Those living this life must at once begin to pay up their debts, are to reconcile with their neighbors, and begin to tithe if they have not been doing so.
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Article 30

Rule **After these particulars are complied with, when the year is up and he seems suitable to them, let him on the advice of some discreet brothers be received on this condition: that he promise he will all the time of his life observe everything here written, or to be written or abated on the advice of the brothers, unless on occasion there be a valid dispensation by the ministers; and that he will, when called upon by the ministers, render satisfaction as the Visitor shall ordain if he has done anything contrary to this condition. And this promise is to be put in writing then and there by a public notary. Even so nobody is to be received otherwise, unless in consideration of the estate and rank of the person it shall seem advisable to the ministers.**

- Statutes
- A. After these particulars are complied with and the year of postulancy and three years of novice formation have elapsed, if those novices seem suitable to the ministers of their chapter and the Administrators of the Association, let them be received on this condition— that they promise that they will observe everything here written, or to be written or changed on the advice of the ruling body of the Association, unless on occasion there be a valid dispensation by the Association Administrators or Visitors, their own personal spiritual director or confessors, or due to family necessity; and that they will, when called upon by the ministers, render satisfaction as the Visitor or Association Administrators shall ordain if they have done anything contrary to this condition.
 - B. Penitents may profess to live the Rule for life or for a year. Yearly professions are to be renewed annually for up to three years and may be changed at any time to a lifetime profession.
 - C. All professions are to be put in writing then and there and signed by the penitent and also by the Association Administrators and the spiritual assistant, or the priest or person who receives the profession. Nobody is to be received otherwise.
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Article 31

Rule **No one is to depart from this brotherhood and from what is contained herein, except to enter a religious Order.**

- Statutes
- A. A penitent who has professed to live this Rule must have the consent of his or her spiritual director or confessor in order to be released from the profession. The penitent should also petition, in writing, the spiritual assistant, Association Administrators and/or Visitor for release and shall give the reasons for the request. The Association Administrators and Visitor may also question the penitent to see if the Association has failed the penitent in some way.
 - B. Those who wish to depart from this Association to enter a religious Order should receive not only permission but also the blessing of the entire Association. It is the norm of the Church that individuals should always move towards a greater commitment to Christ and His Church when they leave one lifestyle for another.
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Article 32

Rule **No heretic or person in bad repute for heresy is to be received. If he is under suspicion of it, he may be admitted if otherwise fit, upon being cleared before the bishop.**

- Statutes
- A. No person who does not adhere totally to all that the Catholic Church teaches through its hierarchy and magisterium, and no person in bad repute for disputing these teachings, shall be admitted to the BSP. If such persons are under suspicion of this, they may be admitted if otherwise fit, upon being cleared by the bishop, their spiritual director, confessor, or parish priest, or in the absence of these people, the Administrators of the Association or the Visitor.
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Article 33

Rule **Married women are not to be received except with the consent and leave of their husbands.**

- Statutes
- A. Those married are not to be received except with the consent of their spouses, provided they are living with said spouse. If separation, annulment, or divorce has occurred, spousal consent is not required.
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Article 34

Rule **Brothers and sisters ejected from the brotherhood as incorrigible are not to be received in it again except it please the saner portion of the brothers.**

- Statutes
- A. Brothers and sisters ejected from a chapter or the Association as incorrigible are not to be received in it again except it please the majority of those members affected.
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Chapter VIII – Correction, Dispensation, Officers



Article 35

- Rule** **The ministers of any city or place shall report public faults of the brothers and sisters to the Visitor for punishment. And if anyone proves incorrigible, after consultation with some of the discreet brothers he should be denounced to the Visitor, to be expelled by him from the brotherhood, and thereupon it should be published in the meeting. Moreover, if it is a brother, he should be denounced to the mayor or the governor.**
- Statutes**
- A. The ministers shall report public faults of any members to the Visitor or Association Administrators for disciplinary action or review. And if anyone proves incorrigible they should be denounced to the Visitor or Association Administrators to be expelled by them from the Association, and thereupon it should be recorded in Association records.
 - B. If the incorrigible action was a crime against public laws, the criminal offender must be made known to proper public authority.
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Article 36

- Rule** **If anyone learns that a scandal is occurring relative to brothers and sisters, he shall report it to the ministers and shall have opportunity to report it to the Visitor. He need not be held to report it in the case of husband against wife.**
- Statutes**
- A. If anyone learns that scandal is occurring relative to brothers and sisters in any matter, that person shall report it to the Visitor or Association Administrators. All such reports shall be kept strictly confidential and only communicated to those who need to know.
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Article 37

- Rule** **The Visitor has the power to dispense all the brothers and sisters in any of these points if he finds it advisable.**
- Statutes**
- A. The Visitor has the power to dispense all brothers and sisters in any of these points if the Visitor finds it advisable. The Association Administrators may also make such dispensations in the absence of the Visitor provided they are later reviewed by the Visitor if that is possible.
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Article 38

- Rule** **When the year has passed, the ministers with the counsel of the brothers are to elect two other ministers; and a faithful treasurer, who is to provide for the need of the brothers and sisters and other poor; and messengers who at the command of the ministers are to publish what is said and done by the fraternity.**
- Statutes** A. As soon as possible the members of a Chapter are to elect a minister, associate minister, and a faithful treasurer who is to provide for the needs of the chapter with chapter funds as well as those of the brothers and sisters and other poor in the chapter if possible; and a secretary who, at the command of the ministers, is to publish what is said and done at their chapter meetings. The same holds true for BSP Headquarters through the Association Administrators.
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Article 39

- Rule** **In all the above mentioned points no one is to be obligated under guilt, but under penalty; yet so that if after being admonished twice by the ministers he should fail to discharge the penalty imposed or to be imposed on him by the Visitor, he shall be obligated under guilt as contumacious.**
- Statutes** A. In all the above mentioned points, no one is to be obligated under guilt, but under penalty; yet so if after being admonished twice by the Visitor and/or Association Administrators he or she should fail to discharge the penalty imposed or to be imposed on him they shall be obligated under guilt as contumacious and so expelled from the chapter or Association.
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Conclusion



Rule **HERE ENDS THE RULE AND STATUTES OF THE CONTINENT BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE OF ST. FRANCIS, THAT IS THOSE WHO GIVE UP THINGS IN FULFILLMENT OF THE GOSPELS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

Author of the Rule: Cardinal Hugolino dei Conti dei Segni, with the approval of St. Francis of Assisi, 1221 AD. Source of the Original Rule: Franciscan Omnibus of Sources

Statutes These Modern Statutes have been drafted by the Association Administrators and approved by the Visitor of the Association of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis and through them the Church.

Addendum to the Statutes

Every penitent should have a spiritual director or confessor if they can be found for help in discerning how to grow in the penitential lifestyle and understand the motion of the Holy Spirit. Pray for this grace. Spiritually mature priests, deacons, or other male or female religious can serve as spiritual directors, provided they are supportive of all the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and are also supportive of the intentions of the brother or sister to live the Rule. In their absence, other Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis, who are experienced in the “things of God” can serve as spiritual directors if approved by a spiritual assistant of this Association or the Administrators of the Association in their absence.

It is expected that most penitents will have a spiritual director by the middle of the first year of novice formation and that they will be meeting with their spiritual directors at least monthly. Everyone who makes a permanent profession to live this Rule should have a spiritual director if possible.

Spiritual direction is best done face to face, but spiritual direction via computer, phone, or postal mail is permitted, provided the individuals involved have met in person. Spiritual directors serve as advisors not military commanders. A good relationship enables penitent and director to discuss points of disagreement. Generally, once discussion is ended, it is safer for penitents to follow the director’s advice, wary of pride in one’s own opinions and judgment. However, before the tribunal of Christ, each person will have to take full responsibility for every decision. The virtue of prudence requires that penitents not deviate from a director’s advice without prayerful consideration of the entire situation.
