

Carmelite Rule of St. Albert

The Carmelite Rule of St. Albert of Jerusalem was given to the Brothers of the Most Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel between 1206 and 1214, and approved on January 30, 1226 by Pope Honorius III. The text also contains changes and adaptation for the hermits to live the mendicant or friar way of life. These changes were accepted by Pope Innocent IV on October 1, 1247, in the decree "Quae Honorem".

Albert, by the grace of God, Patriarch of Jerusalem, to his beloved sons, B and the other religious hermits who live under obedience, near the fountain of Elijah on Mount Carmel, health in the Lord and the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Fathers have instituted many and various ways, by which everyone, in whatever Order he may be or whatever mode of religious life he has, may live in obedience to Jesus Christ and serve Him faithfully with a pure heart and a good conscience. But since you desire us to give you a rule of life conformable to your Institute, which you shall observe for the future, we give it to you as follows.

We ordain in the first place that one of you be Prior, who shall be elected to that office by the unanimous consent of all, or of the greater and wiser part: to this Prior all the others shall promise obedience, and having promised, endeavor to practice it faithfully, together with chastity and poverty.

You may have foundations in deserts, or wherever they shall be given to you, suitable and adaptable to the observance of your rule, as the prior and the other religious shall judge proper.

Moreover, each one shall have a separate cell, in the place wherein you propose to live, which shall be assigned to him by the order of the Prior, and with the consent of the other religious, or the more capable part of them.

But you shall all assemble in the refectory to take in common the food which shall be given to you, while hearing some part of Holy Scripture read, when this can be conveniently done. No religious shall leave the cell assigned to him or exchange it with another without leave from the Prior. The cell of the Prior shall be at the entrance of the monastery, in order that he may be the first to meet those who come there and everything shall be done according to his will and direction. Each one shall remain in his cell or near it, meditating day and night on the Law of the Lord and watching in prayer, unless otherwise justly occupied.

Those who understand how to pray the canonical hours with the clerics shall pray them according to the Statutes of the holy fathers and the approved custom of the Church. Those who do not, shall pray The Our Father twenty-five times for Matins, except on Sundays and solemn feasts, on which we ordain that the number be doubled, so that The Our Father shall be prayed fifty times for Matins. For Laudes the same prayer shall be prayed seven times. It shall

likewise be prayed seven times for each of the other Hours, except Vespers, shall be prayed fifteen times.

No religious is to call anything his own but everything shall be in common. And the Prior, or the religious appointed by him, shall distribute to each one whatever he may need according to his age and necessities. You may, if necessary, keep asses or mules and some cattle and poultry for food.

Let an oratory to be erected, as conveniently as possible, in the midst of the cells, where you are to assemble each morning to celebrate Mass when this can be conveniently done.

On Sundays or other days if necessary, you shall treat of the observance of the Rule and the salvation of souls. At the same time the faults and defects of the religious (if there be any) shall be corrected with charity.

You shall fast every day except Sunday from the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross until Easter Sunday unless sickness, infirmity or any other just cause shall prevent you, for necessity has no law. You are not to eat flesh meat except as a remedy in case of sickness or infirmity. But since you are frequently obliged to beg when traveling, you may outside your own convents, in order not to be troublesome to your hosts, take vegetables cooked with flesh meat. On sea, however, you are allowed to eat flesh meat.

As the life of man upon earth is a warfare and all who live piously in Christ shall suffer persecution; moreover your adversary, the devil, goes about seeking whom he may devour. Endeavor, therefore, with all diligence to put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the snares of the devil. Gird your loins with the girdle of chastity and guard your hearts with holy thought, for it is written: a holy thought shall preserve you. Put on the breastplate of justice, that you may love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul and with your whole strength and your neighbor as yourself. In all things take the shield of faith wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one for without faith it is impossible to please God. Place likewise on your head the helmet of salvation that you may hope for salvation from your Savior alone who saves His people from their sins. Let the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, dwell abundantly in your mouths and hearts and whatsoever you do, let it be done in the Name of the Lord.

You shall do some kind of work that the devil may always find you occupied lest thru idleness he may gain an entrance into your souls. In this you have the teaching and example of St. Paul, the Apostle, by whose mouth Christ spoke, who was appointed by God as preacher and teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. If you follow him, you can not err. He says, "For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil. We worked night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you while we preached to you the gospel of God. Not that we did not have the right to do so but that we might make ourselves an example for you to imitate

us. For indeed when we were with you we used to charge you; if any man will not work, neither let him eat. For we have heard that some among you are living irregularly, doing no work but busy at meddling. Now such persons we charge and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ that they work quietly and eat their own bread.” This is a good and holy way. Follow it!

The Apostle recommends silence, since he commands us to observe it while working. And as the prophet testifies: Silence is the service of Justice. And again: In silence and hope shall your strength be. Hence we ordain that you observe silence from the end of Compline to the end of Prime the following day. Although you are not obliged to observe silence so rigorously at other times, yet you should avoid talking too much. For as it is written and experience also teaches: In the multitude of words there shall not want sin. And he that has no guard on his speech shall meet with evils. Again: He that uses many words shall hurt his own soul. And Our Lord says in the Gospel that of every idle word men speak, they shall give account on the day of judgment. Therefore, let each one make a balance for his words and a just bridle for his mouth that he may not slip by his tongue and fall and his fall be incurable unto death. Let him with the prophet take heed to his ways that he sin not with his tongue and endeavor to observe silence with diligence and care for it is the service of justice.

And you, Brother B., and whoever shall be elected Prior after you, always bear in mind and observe in practice what Our Lord says in the Gospel: “Whosoever wishes to be first among you shall be the slave of all and whosoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant.

And you also, Brethren, honor your Prior with humility, considering not him but in his person Christ who placed him over you and who says to the Prelates of His Church: “He that hears you, hears Me and he that despises you, despises Me,” that you may not be brought into judgment for contempt, but rather by your obedience merit the reward of eternal life.

These points we have briefly written for you appointing a Rule for your Institute according to which you shall live. But if anyone does more than is herein prescribed, Our Lord will reward him on the Day of Judgment. Let him, however, use discretion, which is the rule of all virtue.