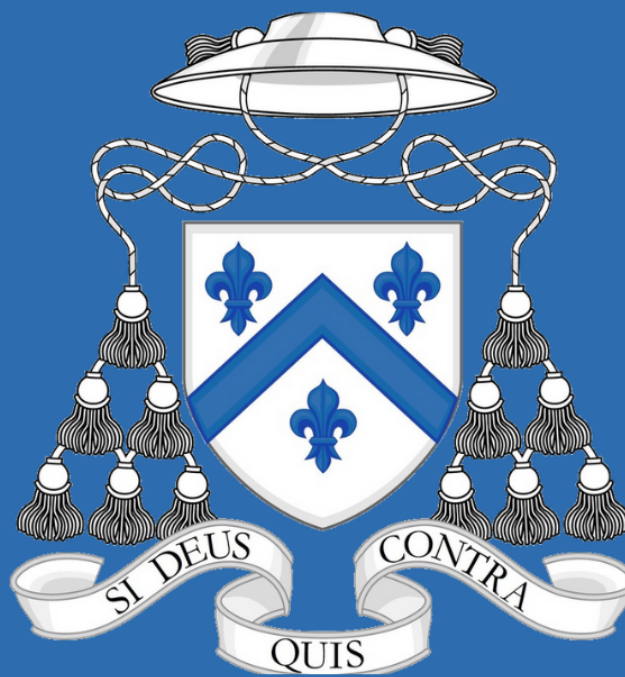


Constitutions of the Third Order of the Canons Regular of Prémontré



Canonry of Our Lady of Sorrows and
St Philip Benizi, Chelmsford

MMXXI

PREFACE

Adapted from the 'Manual of The Third Order of St Norbert', compiled by Rev Martin Gendens o.praem., London: Burns & Oates, 1889.

What is, then, the spirit which should animate and guide the Norbertine Tertiary? The spirit of the Third Order must evidently be the spirit of the First Order itself. Let me explain in a few words wherein this spirit principally consists. For further details I must refer the reader to the Introduction to the Life of St. Norbert, which treats at greater length of the mission and spirit of the Premonstratensian Order.

Three elements constitute essentially a Canonical Order, viz., the clerical dignity, the religious state, and stability or permanent service in a particular church. The Norbertine Tertiary is consequently affiliated to an Order of Canons Regular. Now two specific duties arise from the nature of a Canonical Order, viz., 1st - *Laus Dei in Choro* or the singing of the Divine Office, and 2nd- *Zelus animarum*, or zeal for the salvation of souls. These are also, though of course only relatively and proportionately, the special duties of the Norbertine Tertiary.

- (1) *Laus Dei* or the "praise of God". The Norbertine Tertiary must be fervent and constant in his prayers; he must be willing to take care of, or to contribute to, all that concerns the altar, the House of God, and the Divine Offices; he should cherish a tender and enlightened love for Holy Mass - the most perfect and final expression of religious worship; in general, he should give to God what is due to His Divine Majesty, by repeated acts of the virtue of religion, and make reparation for sins committed against this virtue.
- (2) *Zelus animarum*, or "zeal for souls", which is in general an act of intense charity, whereby the Norbertine Tertiary must ardently seek the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbour, and constantly reject what is opposed thereto. He must, endeavour to avoid, in all conversation in which he takes part, all detraction, immodest language, and blasphemy. He must try to restore peace between enemies, and always show himself ready to forgive an injury. He should be ready to cooperate with his pastor in all the good works of the parish. He should heartily join the Apostleship of prayer, and make the intentions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus his own.
- (3) To the particular ends which are common to, and characteristic of, all Canonical Orders, St. Norbert added fasting, abstinence, mortification, and other works of penance, together with other pious customs peculiar to Monastic Orders, whereby his Order became as it were, Monastico-Canonical.

Norbertine Tertiaries should thus be animated with a spirit of habitual penance. It is true that the laws of fasting and abstinence which formerly bound the Norbertine Tertiary have been mitigated and that works of piety and charity can now take their place; nevertheless, the Tertiary should remember that, as St. Norbert has said, "he is obliged to continually mortify his passions, and to spend his whole life in works of penance". The love of God will give him a hatred of sin, and also the spirit of penance for his own sins, and of reparation for the sins of his neighbour.

The fourth and fifth ends of the Tertiary are characteristic of the Norbertine Order. They are put forward in this way: "Imitating as a true child the virtues of our Father St. Norbert, he must heartily cherish and zealously promote a sincere devotion to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and a tender devotion to the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary".

These remarks have their place at the commencement of the Rule of the Tertiaries in order to remind them in a few words of the position which the Third Order of St. Norbert holds in the bosom of the Catholic Church. They may, moreover, encourage themselves to study it and to grasp its full meaning by the reflection that it is the work of a Saint, and that the works of a Saint are always attended with special benedictions. They may encourage themselves to an exact observance of their Rule by surveying the vast field which is opened to them. Following in the train of countless holy souls who have shed glory on the Order of Prémontré, they have the right and the duty of striving to reach the highest pinnacle of evangelical perfection by simply using the means afforded to the Norbertine Brotherhood. To them, indeed, in a special manner, are addressed those words of our Divine Saviour: "Be ye perfect as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." [Matt. v. 48].

The principal end of this Sacred Third Order is that the Brothers and Sisters imitate the virtues of our holy Father Norbert.

Die 7 Junii, 1889

C ONSTITUTIONS OF THE THIRD ORDER OF THE CANONS REGULAR OF PRÉMONTRÉ, CANONRY OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS AND ST PHILIP BENIZI, CHELMSFORD.

1. These provisions do not apply to donatus brothers except insofar as the Prelate may choose to apply them in specific instances.
2. Members of the Third Order of the Canons Regular of Prémontré, clerics or lay persons, commit themselves to strive for Christian perfection, inspired by the canonical tradition and apostolic life of the Order. They are also known as *Fratres et Sorores ad succerendum*, that is “Assistant Brothers and Sisters”, owing to the assistance they give to and receive from the Order.
3. Inspired by the teaching and and example of Our Holy Fathers Augustine and Norbert and striving for Christian perfection, the Third Order of the Canons Regular of Prémontré takes on a specific form of ecclesial *communio*, that is, communion with God and each other in God seeking to be, “of one mind and heart on the way to God”, in the words of our Holy Rule.
4. Within the framework of their daily lives in the world members strive to establish unity of mind and heart in God with those with whom they live and work. They will, therefore, seek intimate communion with God before all else and then communion with their neighbour keeping in mind the first words of our Holy Rule, “*Let us love God above all things, dearest Brothers, then our neighbour, for these are the chief commandments given to us.*”
5. In imitation of the example of Our Holy Father Norbert members will also be attentive, according to their various situations, to promote devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and offer reparation for sins against It.
6. Members of the Third Order are a spiritual arm of the Norbertine Community reaching out into all areas of life, seeking to share with others what they themselves gain as sons and daughters of Our Holy Father Norbert. Their affiliation with the Canonry is not, therefore, for their own personal good alone. It is chiefly by their Christian example, and presence among others, that they hope to bring the Order's ideal of *communio* into the world where they live and work.
7. Communion between the members of the Third Order and with the entire Order is in the order of charity. The members of the Third Order freely offer their spiritual and material assistance to the Canonry of Our Lady of Sorrows and St Philip Benizi. The Canonry is bound in turn to manifest toward the members of the Third Order spiritual care and a fraternal charity which desires to see developed and deepened that charity in such a manner that they form only one flock and one shepherd in the service of God and all people after the pattern of St. Norbert.
8. The members of the Third Order, in offering their day to God, constitute a community of faith and charity which is a living expression of the communion of saints. All members share in the spiritual graces of the canonry to which they belong.
9. The Prelate is the spiritual father of the Third Order, and all members owe him the respect due to a spiritual father. He may appoint a canon who is charged with the spiritual care of

the Third Order, in whole or in part, and this delegate may be assisted by others. His duties may include the following:

- a. Accepting new novices and professed into the Third Order;
 - b. Approving, in the Prelate's name, any officers of the Third Order;
 - c. Giving spiritual conferences;
 - d. Organising meetings;
 - e. Arranging noviciate classes;
 - f. Organising days of recollection and retreats;
 - g. Arranging, where practical, spiritual direction for the members who desire it;
 - h. Approving, if needed, a rule of life for novices;
 - i. Approving any major changes in the rule of life of the professed;
 - j. Developing the fraternal life among the members as well as between them and members of the Canonry. He does this by:
 - i. Keeping the channels of communication open between the members. This may be delegated to such members of the Third Order as deemed appropriate.
 - ii. Communicating to members not at attendance at regularly organised meetings. This may be delegated to such members of the Third Order as deemed appropriate
 - iii. Keeping the Prelate, and the rest of the Canonry, informed of the happenings and developments in the Third Order.
10. The Prelate must exercise vigilance that the ends of the Third Order are observed, and that no abuse of discipline, no defect of faith or morals trouble the activities of the Third Order. On the other hand, the Third Order is subject to the vigilance of the Holy See, of the Abbot General, and also, to the extent that apostolic activity is directed into the diocese, the local Ordinary (canon 305).
11. No member legitimately inscribed in the Third Order can be dismissed by the Prelate without a just cause. Those who have publicly distanced themselves from the Catholic faith or who have placed themselves outside the ecclesial communion, or who have incurred an excommunication, after warning, must be dismissed by the Prelate or the canon delegated by him; however, the right to hierarchical recourse remains intact (canons 308, 1737ff).
12. The admission of members into Third Order must always be done in such a manner that it reveals the spiritual character of the bond with the Canonry.
13. The rites of admission and profession into the Third Order (found in Appendix A) may be presided over by the Prelate or the canon who is delegated by the Prelate, who is normally a canon of this Canonry.
14. There are two types of membership of the Third Order affiliated to the Canonry: clerical and lay. To provide for the needs of members and their spiritual formation the Prelate, or canon delegated by him, may direct that there be separate provision and meetings for clerical and lay members of the Third Order.
15. Formation consists of three stages:
 - a. **Aspirancy:** before seeking entrance into the noviciate one who aspires to join the Third Order should become acquainted with the Canonry and spirituality of the Order over a period of time, normally at least one year. Application to join

the Third Order should be made under the guidance of the Prelate, or canon delegated by him.

- b. **Noviciate:** The noviciate begins with the imposition of the scapular and ends with profession. It usually lasts one year. Novices are required to visit the Priory for classes during the noviciate year, this should normally be at least three visits each lasting two canonical days. Clerical novices may be invited to stay in the Priory and are also normally required to join the Canonry Retreat held in the year of their noviciate.

The purpose of noviciate formation is to definitively discern a vocation to the Third Order, to develop a Norbertine spirituality and to strengthen the spiritual bond with the Canonry.

- c. **Professed life:** After profession into the Third Order the member is to grow in knowledge and practice of Norbertine spirituality and develop the spiritual bond with the Canonry.

The professed member of the Third Order should endeavour to attend any such meetings as organised by the Priory. Clerical members may additionally be invited to stay in the Priory, join the annual Canonry Retreat and other days of recollection.

In discussion with the Prelate, or canon delegated by him, and spiritual director or confessor the member may find it useful to draw up a rule of life to be followed with fidelity. If drawn up this rule of life is to be submitted to the Prelate, or canon delegated by him, for approval, as are any and all revisions.

16. Every person legitimately inscribed in the Third Order is free to leave the Order.
17. If the Prelate deems it advantageous for the Canonry and members of the Third Order he may direct that officers be appointed to aid in various aspects of the organisation of the Third Order; he, or the canon delegated by him, shall indicate in standing orders (or other such measures) the roles, duties and responsibilities of any such officers, particularly if they have oversight of clerical members, lay members, or all members.
18. Changes to this constitution may only be made by the Prelate, and are to be promulgated by communication to members.

Appendix A

BLESSING AND IMPOSITION OF THE SCAPULAR OF THE THIRD ORDER, AND FORM OF PROFESSION INTO THE THIRD ORDER.

These rites may be presided over by the Prelate or the priest he delegates.

I. Blessing and Imposition of the Small Scapular of the Third Order:

The Prelate, vested in rochet and stole, stands before the altar, the aspirant kneeling before him on the altar step, humbly joining his hands together.

The Prelate asks:

V. What do you ask?

R. The mercy of God, and yours, Reverend Father, and the society of your holy Order.

The Prelate may then give a short exhortation on the Rule and Spirit of the Third Order. He then says the following prayers:

V. Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

R. Who made Heaven and earth.

V. Show us Thy mercy, O Lord.

R. And grant us Thy salvation.

V. O Lord, hear my prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto Thee.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

Let us pray. O Almighty Father and everlasting God, Who didst will that Thy only Son should clothe Himself with the garment of our mortality, we beseech Thee to let the immense blessing + of Thy mercy be bestowed on this garment which the holy Fathers have appointed to be worn by those who renounce the world in token of innocence and humility, and to vouchsafe so to bless + it that Thy servant who shall be clothed with it may be worthy to put on Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, world without end. R. Amen.

Let us pray. Almighty, everlasting God, loving and merciful, Who grantest pardon and mercy to sinners who ask for mercy, we beseech Thy immense clemency that Thou wouldst be pleased so to bless + and sanctify + this scapular that whosoever wearing it shall implore Thy mercy may obtain of Thy grace the forgiveness of all his sins through Our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, world without end. R. Amen.

The Prelate, or the priest delegated by him then sprinkles the scapular with holy water, and vests the aspirant, still kneeling, with the blessed scapular, saying:

Receive, Brother (Sister) this white scapular, in order that you may clothe yourself with a greater increase of God's grace, and that you may be worthy to walk in white with the Lamb, Who liveth and reigneth with God the Father in unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

R. Amen.

V. Save Thy Servant.

R. Who putteth his (her) trust in Thee, O my God.

V. Be unto him, O Lord, a tower of strength.

R. From the face of the enemy.

V. O Lord, hear my prayer.
R. And let my cry come unto Thee.
V. The Lord be with you.
R. And with your spirit.

Let us pray. Give ear, O Lord, to our supplication, and vouchsafe to bless + this Thy servant whom we have vested in Thy Name with the scapular of our Order, that by Thy grace he may persevere in devotion in Thy Church, and obtain eternal life. Through Christ, Our Lord. R. Amen.

Let us pray. Stretch forth, O Lord, unto this Thy servant the right hand of Thy heavenly help, that he may seek Thee with his whole heart, and obtain what he rightly asketh. Through Christ Our Lord. R. Amen.

The Prelate, or the priest delegated by him, sprinkles the aspirant with holy water, and gives him or her the customary sign of peace. He then adds:

I by the authority which I possess receive you as a Brother (Sister) of the Third Order, and by this act I declare that, through the bounty of the Apostolic See, you can gain all the Indulgences granted to our holy Order, and I make you, during your lifetime and after your death, a partaker of all the sacrifices and prayers that are offered up, and other spiritual good works which, through the grace of God, are performed in our Order. In the Name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. R. Amen.

All being finished, the Brother Sacristan writes the name of the "Frater / Soror ad succurrendum," that is, of the new Brother or Sister, in the Register of the members of the Third Order.

II. Form of Profession:

When the year of the noviciate is over, the novice kneels before the the Prelate seated before the altar. The Prelate, or the priest delegated by him, asks him:

V. Do you still persevere in your resolutions?

R. I do

The Prelate says:

You must then, in the future, walk in the way of God's commandments, and promise anew to keep His commandments.

The Prelate then takes the joined hands of each Novice in his own. The Novice makes his (or her) Profession in these words:

I **N. N.** promise to Almighty God, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Holy Father Norbert, to all the Saints, and to you, Father, during the rest of my life to keep the commandments of God, and to receive the penances imposed on me for my transgressions. I firmly propose to cherish and to promote the worship of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, to prevent, as far as I can, all detraction, immodest language, and blasphemies, and to reconcile enemies; and I now heartily forgive my enemies for God's sake.

After the Profession, the Prelate blesses the scapular in the following form:

V. Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

R. Who made Heaven and earth.

Let us pray. O Lord Jesus Christ, Who didst vouchsafe to clothe Thyself with the garment of our mortality, we beseech Thee, of the abundance of Thy mercy, that Thou wouldst be pleased so to bless + this garment, which the holy Fathers have appointed to be worn in token of innocence and humility, that this Thy servant, who is to be clothed therewith, may be worthy to put on Thee Christ Our Lord. Who liveth and reigneth, God, world without end. R. Amen.

The Prelate then puts the blessed scapular on the now professed Brother, saying:

May the Lord clothe thee with the new man who is created according to God in justice and holiness of truth. R. Amen.

V. Save Thy Servant,

R. Who hopeth in Thee, O my God.

V. Send him help from the holy place.

R. And protect him (her) from Sion.

V. Let not the enemy prevail against him,

R. Nor the son of iniquity have power to hurt him.

V. Be unto him, O Lord, a tower of strength.

R. From the face of the enemy.

V. O Lord, hear my prayer,

R. And let my cry come unto Thee.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

Let us pray. O God, Father of mercy, Who, moderating the severity of Thy judgment, hast mercifully granted that the son should not bear the iniquity of his father, and Who, in a wonderful way, makest use of wicked men, and dispensest the grace of Thy mercy through them, we beseech Thy clemency that it be no hindrance to Thy servant to receive the habit of

religion from us, who are unworthy of so great a ministry, but that Thou Thyself inwardly fulfil, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the ministry which is outwardly performed by us. Through Christ Our Lord. R. Amen.

Let us pray. Grant to Thy servant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, constancy in Thy faith and service, that, rooted in Divine charity, he may not be conquered by any temptation. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ. R. Amen.

May the almighty and merciful God bless you and keep you, the Father, + and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. R. Amen.