

## **LEO XIII: RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS**

Promulgated May 30, 1883, by Pope Leo XIII. The English text of the rule is the text prescribed as the standard version by the Very Rev. Provincials of the United States at the Second National Congress of the Third Order, New York, October 3-6, 1926.

### **Chapter I: Reception, Novitiate, and Profession**

1. Only those may be received as members who have completed their fourteenth year, and are of good character, peace-loving, and above all the tried fidelity in the practice of the Catholic Faith and in loyalty to the Roman Church and the Apostolic See.
2. Married women may not be received without the husband's knowledge and consent, unless their confessor judges otherwise.
3. The members shall wear the small scapular and the cord as prescribed; if they do not, they deprive themselves of the rights and privileges of the Order.
4. All who enter the Order must pass the first year in probation; then they shall duly make their profession upon the Rule of the Order, pledging themselves to observe the Commandments of God and of the Church, and to render satisfaction if they have failed against their profession.

### **Chapter II: Rule of Life**

1. In all things let the members of the Third Order avoid extremes of cost and style, observing the golden mean suited to each one's station in life.
2. Let them with the utmost caution keep away from dances and shows which savor of license, as well as from all forms of dissipation.
3. Let them be temperate in eating and drinking, and devoutly say grace before and after meals.
4. They shall fast on the Vigil of the Immaculate Conception and on that of St. Francis; they are to be highly commended who, according to the original Rule of the Tertiaries, also either fast on Fridays or abstain from flesh meat on Wednesdays.
5. They shall approach the Sacraments of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist every month.
6. Tertiaries among the clergy, since they recite the Divine Office daily, shall be under no further obligation in this regard. Lay members who recite neither the Canonical Hours, nor the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, shall say daily twelve Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glorys, unless they are prevented by ill health.
7. Let those who are entitled to make a last will and testament, do so in good time.
8. In their daily life let them strive to lead others by good example and to promote practices of piety and good works. Let them not allow books or publications that are a menace to virtue, to be brought into their homes, or to be read by those under their care.
9. Let them earnestly maintain the spirit of charity among themselves and towards others. Let them strive to heal discord wherever they can.

10. Let them never take an oath except when necessary. Let them never use indecent language or vulgar jokes, Let them examine their conscience every night whether they have offended in this regard; if they have, let them repent and correct their fault.

11. Let those who can do so, attend Mass every day. Let them attend the monthly meetings called by the Prefect.

12. Let them contribute according to their means to a common fund, from which the poorer members may be aided, especially in time of sickness, or provision may be made for the dignity of Divine worship.

13. Let the officers either personally visit a sick member, or send someone to perform the services of charity. In case of serious illness let them remind and urge the sick person to arrange in time the affairs of his soul.

14. At the funeral of a deceased member the resident and visiting Tertiaries shall assemble and say in common five decades of the Rosary for the soul of the departed. Moreover, let the priests at the Holy Sacrifice and the lay members, if possible, having received Holy Communion, pray with fervent charity for the eternal rest of the deceased.

### **Chapter III: Offices, Visitation, and the Rule Itself**

1. The offices shall be conferred at a meeting of the members. The term of these offices shall be three years. Let no one without good reason refuse an office tendered him, and let no one discharge his office negligently.

2. The Visitor, who is charged with the supervision of the Order, shall diligently investigate whether the Rule is properly observed. Therefore it shall be his duty to visit the Fraternities every year, or oftener if need be, and hold a meeting, to which all the officers and members shall be summoned. Should the Visitor recall a member to his duty by admonition or command, or impose a salutary penance, let such member meekly accept the correction and not refuse to perform the penance.

3. The Visitors are to be chosen from the First Franciscan Order or from the Third Order Regular, and shall be appointed by the provincial or local superiors when requested. Laymen cannot hold the office of Visitor.

4. Disobedient and harmful members shall be admonished of their duty a second and a third time; if they do not submit, let them be dismissed from the Order.

5. Those who offend against any provision of this Rule, do not incur the guilt of sin, unless in so doing they also transgress the Commandments of God or of the Church.

6. Should a just and serious cause prevent a member from observing any provisions of the Rule, such person may be dispersed therefrom, or the purpose the ordinary superiors of the First and the Third Order Regular, as also the aforesaid Visitors, shall have full power.