

# BOOK of CUSTOMS



**SAINT BERNARD ABBEY**  
CULLMAN, ALABAMA

ST. BERNARD ABBEY

CONSTITUTIONS AND DIRECTORY

"Since the wholesome traditions and practices of each monastery are a fundamental expression of its own creative fidelity to the Benedictine monastic tradition, each monastery of the Congregation is encouraged to develop its own *Book of Customs*."

*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinense Congregation of Benedictine Monasteries, D63.1.*

Revised 2015

IN TRACT

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# 1. Organization

## A. Superiors

### Abbot

- i. The abbot holds the place of Christ in the monastery. As required by the **Rule** of Benedict and the **Constitutions and Directory of the American-Cassinense Congregation** (cf. Part 1, Chapter 2, Article 1), the abbot assumes the following duties and privileges.
  - a. The abbot is the spiritual father of the community. He is shepherd, teacher and pastor of souls in the community. The abbot is properly addressed by the title Abbot.
  - b. The abbot shall visit annually or as needed with each member of the community.
  - c. The abbot is steward of the patrimony of the abbey. He is the general administrator of the resources of the abbey. The abbot appoints all officials for the administration of the monastery.
  - d. The abbot convokes and chairs chapter meetings. In general, he is responsible for the agenda of chapter meetings. He posts the time and agenda of chapter meetings.
  - e. The abbot oversees the continuing education of the monks. The abbot gives conferences himself, and arranges for conferences by guest speakers. The abbot approves the studies of the monks. The abbot presents candidates for ordination to the bishop. The abbot approves the selections for public reading.
  - f. The abbot oversees the formation program. He gives classes to the novices. He oversees the training and formation of the juniors.
  - g. The abbot bears ultimate responsibility for and is the final arbiter of the liturgical life of the community.
  - h. The abbot has the powers and faculties granted to major superiors.
  - i. The abbot oversees the care of the infirm.
- ii. The abbot aids the Development Director in visits to benefactors whenever it seems appropriate to do so.

### Prior

- i. The prior is appointed by the abbot to assist him, especially to keep the community faithful to the vision of monastic life as lived by the community of Saint Bernard Abbey.
- ii. The prior shares the abbot's responsibilities for pastoral care of the monks, and assists the abbot in any way that the abbot requests. The prior meets with the abbot on a regular basis to provide dialog, information and support for the abbot.

- iii. In the absence of the abbot, the prior assumes the duties of the abbot according to the *Constitutions and Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* (C32.1.1) and according to the express wishes of the abbot.
- iv. The prior shall see to the disposal of goods of a member of the community who dies.
- v. The prior keeps the keys to the cars of the abbey fleet and dispenses them to monks as needed. Monks should return car keys promptly and never keep them overnight without express permission from the prior.
- vi. The prior keeps a supply of petty cash in his office from which he dispenses money to monks for minor expenses as needed.
- vii. The prior keeps several gasoline credit cards which are loaned to monks going on longer trips. Monks who use one of these cards should obtain a receipt, sign it, and turn it in to the prior. The prior likewise keeps a few cell phones for the purpose of loaning them to monks who travel.
- viii. The prior keeps a Walmart credit card which may be loaned to monks to make purchases for personal needs. Monks using the card should obtain a receipt, sign it, and turn it in to the prior.
- ix. The prior keeps the keys to the abbey's house at Smith Lake ("Chateau Clairvaux"). Monks who wish to use the lake house should make arrangements with the prior.
- x. The prior gives permissions for day-trips. Overnight trips must be approved by the abbot. Monks should never leave the abbey grounds without permission from the abbot or prior.
- xi. The prior maintains regular office hours, at least half-an-hour after breakfast and again after lunch, Monday through Saturday. The prior's office hours are posted on the main bulletin board in the Mail Room and outside the prior's office.
- xii. The prior assigns priests to weekend pastoral duties as needed. These assignments are posted each week on the main bulletin board in the Mail Room and in the Sacristy.
- xiii. The prior assigns the duties of Hebdomadarius and Acolyte for the Divine Office each week. These assignments are noted on the weekly "Pastoral Assignments" sheet.
- xiv. The prior arranges confessors for retreat groups and for parish penance services as requested.

### Sub-Prior

- i. The sub-prior assumes the duties of the prior in the absence of the prior or in the event that the prior is unable to fulfill his duties.
- ii. The sub-prior assumes the duties of the abbot in the event of the absence of both the abbot and the prior.
- iii. The sub-prior makes and posts the weekly kitchen service assignments.

## B. Monastic Chapter

- i. Those monks who make up the Chapter are specified by the ***Constitutions and Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation*** (C26), viz. those who have professed solemn vows.
- ii. New members of the Chapter are formally introduced to the assembly by the abbot at the next meeting of the Chapter following the profession of solemn vows.
- iii. The abbot draws up the agenda for Chapter meetings, and, during the meetings, he makes all motions unless he specifically calls for one from the floor.
- iv. At Chapter meetings, any member of the Chapter may speak upon recognition by the superior.
- v. As indicated in the ***Directory*** (D25.1), a matter proposed by any capitular or group of capitulars can be made a part of the agenda for a chapter meeting.
- vi. Voting is done by seniority. The two most junior members of the Chapter count the ballots. They report the results directly to the Chapter secretary, who announces to the assembly at the abbot's nod.
- vii. Provision must be made to notify absent chapter members of chapter meetings and to enable them to vote by absentee ballot.
- viii. Commemoration is made for deceased Chapter members in the next meeting following the death of a capitular.

## C. Council of Seniors

- i. In accord with the directives of the ***Constitutions and Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation*** (Part 1, Chapter 2, Article 3), the Council of Seniors consists of six members, half appointed by the abbot and half elected by the Chapter, serving for a term of one year.

To be elected, a member of the Chapter must receive a two-thirds majority on one of the first two ballots. If no one is elected after two ballots, a simple majority is sufficient to elect a Chapter member to the Council of Seniors.

ii. The Council of Seniors ordinarily meets once a month, usually on the third Saturday of the month. The abbot may call additional meetings of the Council as needed.

iii. The abbot draws up and posts the agenda for meetings of the Council of Seniors.

#### **D. Community Meetings**

To foster communication and to share responsibility, community meetings should be provided for on a regular basis.

#### **E. Proxy Vote**

A capitular unable to be present for a chapter vote may designate a proxy to cast a vote on his behalf, providing the absent capitular has been informed of the matter under consideration for vote; informs the proxy of his wishes; and informs the superior that he wishes the proxy to vote on his behalf. The capitular should provide written notice to the Abbot of the chosen proxy.

## **2. Officials of the Monastery**

If circumstances warrant, some official positions may be assumed by someone other than a monk.

#### **Archivist:**

The archivist is to see to the preservation of the more important documents of the community.

#### **Procurator/Business Manager:**

The Procurator/Business Manager is to oversee the financial operations of the monastery. He is to prepare budgets, collect income, and authorize expenditures.

#### **Choirmaster:**

The choirmaster is to train the choir and the *schola*. He shall appoint the organists and shall prepare the daily liturgy for the Mass and the Office. He will direct choir practices as needed.

**Farm Manager:**

The farm manager is responsible for farming operations involving monastic land. He is responsible for the care of the equipment used for farming.

**Grotto Director:**

The Grotto Director is to run the Ave Maria Grotto and gift shop, order materials, and oversee sales.

**Guestmaster:**

The Guestmaster is to see that all guests are "received as Christ." He is to arrange for the lodging of guests when needed. He is to keep the guest quarters clean and in order. (cf. 8.1.)

**Infirmarian:**

The Infirmarian is to see to the care of the sick and the infirm. He shall be responsible to procure needed medications and to arrange for appointments with doctors and dentists as needed.

**Stipendarius:**

The Stipendarius is to oversee, record, and distribute the Mass intentions to the priests of the community.

**Librarian:**

The librarian is to oversee the care of the books of the monastery, the neatness of the library, and to arrange for the acquisition of books.

**Master of Ceremonies:**

The Master of Ceremonies is to see to the proper and reverent performance of the liturgy for the community. He assigns the weekly liturgical duties (i.e. readers and servers at Mass). He also trains postulants in serving for Conventual Mass.

**Oblate Director:**

The oblate director is to function as leader of the oblates. He conducts meetings of the oblates, arranges for oblate retreats and oblate outings. He assists the oblates in social works of charity such as helping at food kitchens.

**Sacristan:**

The sacristan is to care for the sacred vessels of the altar and the vestments and other religious articles of the sacristy. He is to care for the cleanliness and good order of the chapel.

**Director of Development:**

The Director of Development maintains contact with the abbey's benefactors by mail, email, telephone, and personal visits. He also organizes and manages various fund drives for the benefit of the abbey (and prep school?).



**Alumni Director:**

The Alumni Director maintains contact with the alumni of college, seminary, and prep school by mail, email, telephone, and personal visits. He works closely with the Development Director in encouraging alumni to become benefactors and in thanking those who do. He organizes the annual Alumni Reunion that takes place each summer.

**Vocation Director:**

The vocation director is to foster vocations, especially by prayer and good example. He shall handle initial correspondence with and the screening of prospective vocations. He shall invite prospective vocations to the monastery to spend time to become acquainted with monastic life. He shall see to the publication of needed vocation brochures, newspaper ads, and presentations at schools and colleges. He shall be assisted by the Vocation Team. (cf. also 7.A.)

### 3. Committees

#### A. The Finance Committee:

The finance committee will be responsible for planning and arranging the financial affairs of the community.

#### B. The Liturgy Committee:

The liturgical committee shall make suggestions and recommendations to improve the liturgical life of the community.

#### C. The Education Committee

The Education Committee advises the abbot on matters pertaining to the education of monks. They also arrange educational opportunities for the entire community, e.g. workshops, guest speakers, and other programs, particularly during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

#### D. The Vocation/Formation Committee

The Vocation/Formation Committee assists the Vocation Director in fostering vocations to the monastic life. They likewise assist the Formation Director in the initial training of new members of the community. One of the special tasks of this committee is to consider applications to the postulancy and make recommendations to the abbot in their regard.

## 4. Prayer Life

### A. Conventual Mass:

- i. The Eucharist is celebrated according to the rubrics given in the *Roman Missal*. It is noted in the *Roman Missal* that no vested concelebrant be admitted to the Eucharist after it has begun. When the vested concelebrants are invited to speak the words with the main celebrant (e.g. words of consecration), these are said in an "inaudible voice."
- ii. A homily is given each Sunday at the Conventual Mass. Homilies are encouraged at the weekday Conventual Mass. During Lent, a homily should be given at all weekday Conventual Masses.
- iii. At all Conventual Masses, the monks sit in the sanctuary. The seats in front of the organ console are reserved for the chanters.
- iv. On Sundays, Solemnities, and Feast Days, Conventual Mass begins with an entrance procession in which the entire community takes part. On ordinary weekdays (including Memorials), there is no entrance procession. Monks take their seats in the sanctuary before Mass begins. The main celebrant (and assistant/deacon, if there is one) enters alone.
- v. At Sunday Mass, the gifts are brought to the main celebrant at the Offertory by two members of the congregation who have been prepared ahead of time by the sacristan. A collection is also taken up at all Sunday Masses.
- vi. Communion is offered under both species every day.
- vii. During the annual community retreat, Conventual Mass is celebrated facing the choir area. Monks and guests are seated in the choirstalls for the Liturgy of the Word. At the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the monks gather around the altar, with the vested concelebrants standing on the north and south sides of the altar and the rest forming a semi-circle on the east side of the altar. Guests remain in the choirstalls during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. At the conclusion of Mass, non-concelebrants exit first, two-by-two, followed by vested concelebrants, with the main celebrant coming last.
- viii. All monks are to participate in the Conventual Mass according to their participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ unless validly hindered or excused by the abbot. Even if one has attended some other Mass during the day (e.g. a school Mass), each monk should still

attend the Conventual Mass unless excused by the abbot. All priests are to concelebrate unless validly hindered or excused by the abbot.

- ix. During the course of the liturgical year, there are special activities associated with particular feasts that we have included with the celebration of that feast, e.g. the veneration of the Relic of the True Cross on September 14, the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday, the blessing of throats on the Memorial of St. Blaise, the blessing of candles at Candlemas, the blessing and distribution of palms on Palm Sunday, procession with the Blessed Sacrament on Corpus Christi, etc.
- x. Cucullas are worn by all solemnly professed monks (except for vested concelebrants and servers) at the Conventual Mass on all Sundays, Solemnities, and Feast Days.

#### B. The Divine Office:

- i. Habits are normally worn for all choir services. Black shirt with Roman collar and black trousers may be worn as the exception at Sext. Cucullas are worn for Matins/Lauds and Vespers on Sundays, Solemnities, and Feasts.
- ii. The Hebdomadarius leads prayers at Office for a week, beginning with Saturday Vespers, while the Acolyte does the long readings at Matins each morning. Any monk may serve as Acolyte as appointed by the prior, but only finally professed monks may serve as Hebdomadarius. If the assigned monk is not present, the duty of Hebdomadarius or Acolyte goes down the line by seniority to the next available person. The one assigned to be Hebdomadarius does not assume the duty of Acolyte at the same Office, nor vice versa.
- iii. Two chanters are assigned to lead the singing at all of the Offices for the week.
- iv. A Marian hymn is sung at the end of the last Office of the day (usually Compline). A Marian prayer for vocations is added at the end of Vespers each day, except for Sundays and Solemnities.
- v. Solemn Vespers is celebrated on Sundays and Solemnities. Cucullas are worn at Matins/Lauds and at Vespers on Sundays, Solemnities, and Feasts.
- vi. The superior gives the signal to begin the celebration of the Divine Office.
- vii. The *schola* is used as needed to facilitate the singing at Mass, especially on important feasts.
- viii. A bow is made toward the altar when entering choir.

- viii. A monk who comes late to the Office (i.e. after the invitatory at Matins, after the hymn at Sext, after the beginning of the first psalm at Vespers, after the short lesson at Compline) should kneel out in the center of the choir for the space of an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary" before going to his place in choir.
- ix. At the beginning of Matins, at the verse, "O Lord, open my lips," each monk shall trace a small sign of the cross on his lips the first time the verse is intoned. At the other Offices, when the verse, "O God, come to my assistance" is intoned, each monk makes a normal sign of the cross, as is the case also at the beginning of the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat*. A profound bow is made during the "Glory be" out of respect to the Trinity. A profound bow is likewise made during the "Our Father" and the oration at each Office.
- x. At the conclusion of Lauds on Saturday, there is a blessing rite for those monks who will be traveling away from the abbey for weekend assignments.
- xi. At the conclusion of each Office, the monks exit choir two-by-two, bowing first to each other before leaving the choir stalls, then bowing together toward the altar before turning to exit the chapel. The *asperges* is given by the superior (with nothing being said) at the conclusion of the last Office of the day. The *asperges* is given to each pair of monks as they exit the choir area. The monks pause and bow for the *asperges*.
- xii. When a mistake is made in the chanting of the Office, the offending monk acknowledges his fault by touching the wood of the stall or chair and then touching his lips.
- xiii. Anyone who is absent from the Office or Mass should make *culpa* to the abbot or prior as soon as possible afterwards.

#### C. *Lectio Divina*:

During the day, each monk should devote at least an hour to *Lectio Divina*. This time is devoted to meditation and mental prayer over an appropriate reading selection.

#### D. Private Prayer:

- i. Each monk is responsible for scheduling time for private prayer every day.
- ii. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in the abbey church are encouraged at any time of day (except, of course, when one is obligated to other duties).
- iii. An examination of conscience is made at the end of each day at the beginning of Compline. At other times, the examination of conscience is recommended so that one may render an account of himself and of his progress in virtue and of the lessening of his faults.

#### E. Devotions:

- i. Every year, there will be a retreat for the community for a period covering five days. The retreat is normally scheduled at the end of the school year. A monk may, with the permission of the abbot, make a private retreat if it is deemed necessary.
- ii. Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament shall be combined with Solemn Vespers on the first Sunday of each month as well as on the Feast of Corpus Christi.
- iii. The *Angelus* is prayed for vocations to the community at the conclusion of Vespers each day, except at Solemn Vespers or where Vespers is the last publicly celebrated Office of the day.
- iv. Recommended to the prayer life of each monk are the devotions approved by the Church.
- v. An optional celebration of the Stations of the Cross is available after Compline on Fridays during Lent.

#### F. Use of the Abbey Church

Weddings and Baptisms should normally take place at the parish church in Cullman. For a good reason and in cooperation with the pastor in the parish of Sacred Heart Church in Cullman, they may be allowed in the Abbey Church. The abbot is to judge the reasonableness of such a request.

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## 5. Monastic Asceticism

#### A. Night Silence:

Night silence begins at 10:30 pm each night and ends after breakfast. The discipline of silence is a gift that the monks give one another for rest and for developing one's relationship with God. Any speaking should be done by way of exception. Noise that might disturb others should cease after 10:30 pm. Permission for activities after 10:30 pm should be sought from the appropriate superior.

#### B. Day Silence:

The day silence is observed as the normal spirit in the monastery. Because monks ought to have a zeal for silence at all times, monks should strive to have a calm disposition. Day silence tries to eliminate all unnecessary noise and loud speaking. Talking, singing, humming, or whistling in the hallways should be avoided. Likewise running, stomping, or the slamming of doors. Special care and thoughtfulness should be given while conversing with guests. A reverential silence is to be kept always in the chapel and sacristy, unless speaking is necessary. Even then it should be done in a low voice. Silence is also to be observed at breakfast (except on Sundays) and supper (except at Haustus or on special occasions as determined by the superior).

#### C. *Culpa*:

*Culpa* is the individual practice of a monk who acknowledges to the abbot or prior his failures in external monastic discipline. This is beneficial for monastic asceticism and each monk is encouraged to do so before his superior. There is also a monk's obligation toward fraternal correction for the good of another. When necessary, this correction is to be given in a spirit of genuine love and concern.

#### D. Fasting and Abstinence:

The practice of fasting and abstinence is determined according to *Sacrosanctum Consilium* #12 and the *Apostolic Constitution on Fast and Abstinence* issued by Pope Paul VI. Fasting by all, unless health or age determines otherwise, shall be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fridays outside of Easter season and Fridays which are not feast days should be treated as penitential days. Abstinence is encouraged for the monks on these days. Additional forms of self-denial are encouraged during the season of Lent. Personal fasting is always to be moderate according to one's own strength. If a monk is unable to fast because of health or age, he should perform other acts of penance.

#### E. Sacrament of Reconciliation

For monks, the sacrament of reconciliation is an integral part of spiritual formation. Each monk should have a regular confessor. The monk is free to choose any priest he wishes, not necessarily a member of the community.

## 6. Work and Apostolates

### A. Inside the Abbey:

- i. It is the responsibility of the abbot to assign various monks to the many duties that are required to keep the abbey operating in a clean, efficient, and fiscally sound manner.
- ii. The proper maintenance of the goods and property of the abbey is the responsibility of the entire community. Each member of the abbey is responsible in a corporate sense to care for the goods and possessions of the community.
- iii. Each monk is responsible for his own room, which is subject to periodic inspection by the abbot. All are to cooperate in keeping the common rooms neat and in order.
- iv. Retreats and days of recollection conducted by monks for layfolk will be fostered in order that those in the area might benefit spiritually from what the abbey has to offer, especially during Advent and Lent.
- v. Hospitality is a Benedictine charism. Hospitality is to be shown to all who come to the abbey. This hospitality takes effort and patience, but should be done in a manner which is Christ-like yet not disruptive to monastic observance. The Guestmaster is responsible for overseeing all activities dealing with guests.
- v. Because meals are an essential element of monastic life, monks should not habitually excuse themselves from meals.

### B. Outside the Abbey

- i. As the need may arise, pastoral assistance may be provided by the priests of the abbey. Such assistance includes regular weekly assignments to parishes, confessors for penance services or retreats, emergency substitution, or substitution for a brother priest who may be over-worked. The prior will make the regular pastoral assignments; requests for long-term pastoral assistance will be decided by the abbot.
- ii. The priests of the abbey regularly provide for the sacramental needs of the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman. While one priest may be appointed as principal chaplain for the Sisters, others will help in ministering to the sacramental needs of the Sisters.
- iii. Priests of the abbey may also serve as confessors for other communities of Sisters in the area.

- iv. A monk may be assigned to some form of pastoral duty outside of the abbey for a longer period of time. The abbot shall see that a monk so assigned is able to return to the abbey to stay in contact with the community. The monk assigned outside temporarily shall follow the diocesan regulations as to the management of property and funds. He shall give the abbot an accurate account of his personal income and expenditures.
- v. Requests for retreats or days of recollection outside the abbey will be considered and granted if deemed appropriate by the prior.
- vi. Monk-priests who work outside the monastery in a parish should be paid at the same rate and receive the same benefits as secular priests of the diocese.
- vii. Monks who work outside the monastery in the role of chaplain of some institution (e.g. hospitals) should be paid according to the scale that is offered to others in similar situations.
- viii. Monks who work outside the monastery in capacities other than priestly ministerial roles should negotiate a salary which is commensurate with others in their field.
- ix. The basic salary earned by the monk should be returned to the abbey. Monks in pastoral ministry should retain monies which are designated for their personal maintenance and daily expenses. These expenses should be met through Mass stipends and stole fees. Money for car allowance, if given, should be retained in order to replace the automobile at his disposal when the time comes to do so.
- x. Monks engaged in work or activity other than pastoral ministry outside the monastery should, upon consultation with the abbot, determine the amount of money needed for expenses and personal maintenance, and the remainder should be sent to the abbey.
- xi. Monks assigned to work outside the monastery may have a personal bank account which should be kept in good order. They are reminded that they should exercise good stewardship in the use of these monies and realize that, because of their monastic vows, these monies are truly the property of the monastery and subject to inspection by the abbot or prior or procurator. The name of the present abbot or prior or "Benedictine Society of Alabama" should also be included on all bank accounts.
- xii. Monks working and residing outside the monastery should maintain an accurate inventory of the things in their possession in order that there may be no dispute or discrepancy as a result of a sudden death.
- xiii. Monks living outside the monastery are expected to return to the abbey to make the annual monastic retreat and the Fall Chapter in October unless other arrangements are made with the abbot's approval.



- xiv. Following the current policy for priests in the Diocese of Birmingham, a monk-priest involved in an assignment to a post for the *cura animarum* will be subject to change after a period of six years. No other reason is needed for this change. With the agreement of the individual monk-priest himself, the bishop, the abbot and the Council of Seniors, and the local parish council concerned, an extension to this term may be granted.
- xv. Serious consideration should be given to periodic return the abbey for renewal by monks assigned to external ministry.

## 7. Formation

### A. Vocations:

- i. While all monks share in the work of fostering vocations to the monastic life, responsibility for this endeavor rests especially on the shoulders of the Vocation Director, who is assisted by the Vocations Team, made up of two or three monks who are especially tasked with vocation work, and by the Vocation/Formation Committee (cf. 3.D).
- ii. The Vocation Director and his Team will put into action programs intended to promote vocations in the media and parishes and schools. They will occasionally organize vocation retreats at the monastery and will host vocation guests who come to visit the abbey.
- iii. A vocation guest who is serious about entering the monastery and has shown himself over time to be a promising candidate may make formal application to enter the postulancy. This process of application will involve submitting the requisite paperwork (application form, autobiography, letters of recommendation, birth certificate, Baptismal & Confirmation certificates, health report, school transcripts, etc.) and being interviewed by each member of the Vocation/Formation Committee.
- iv. Completed applications will be considered by the Vocation/Formation Committee, which then makes a recommendation to the abbot regarding the acceptance or rejection of the application. It is the abbot who makes the final decision about each application (cf. *Constitutions & Directory* D32.6.1).

## B. Postulancy:

- i. The postulancy is a period of time before the novitiate during which the candidate begins to live the monastic life. It is a time when the postulant and the monks of St. Bernard Abbey come to know one another by the common experience of the *Rule of St. Benedict*.
- ii. Postulancy usually begins in mid-June and runs until mid-August.
- iii. Candidates are received into the postulancy in a simple ceremony at Vespers during which they are given the monastic habit (tunic and leather belt) and take their assigned place in choir.
- iv. Postulants wear the tunic and belt to community functions throughout their postulancy.
- v. Postulants are under the care of the Novice Master.
- vi. Postulants live in the novitiate wing of the monastery (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, west wing). Other than postulants and novices, the Novice Master and the *Socius*, no one is to enter the novitiate wing of the monastery without the permission of the Novice Master (or abbot).
- vii. Postulants receive instruction from various monks in subjects that will help them to live the monastic life, e.g. monastic history, spirituality, psalmody, liturgy, etc. It is the responsibility of the Novice Master to arrange these classes.
- vii. Postulants will also be assigned daily work.
- viii. The *Socius* will assist the Novice Master particularly in overseeing the postulants' work.
- ix. The postulants will have occasional days of recollection, during which their classes and regular work assignments are suspended. These days of recollection will be directed by different monks as arranged by the Novice Master. Days of recollection may take place either on the abbey grounds or elsewhere (e.g. the lake house).
- x. The postulants will also take occasional outings together under the direction of the Novice Master and/or the *Socius*.
- xi. Postulants will meet individually with the Formation Director on a monthly basis.
- x. In consultation with the Formation Director, each postulant will choose a spiritual director/confessor with whom he will meet regularly. It is the responsibility of the postulant to arrange these meetings.
- xi. No one is to impose jobs on the postulants or novices apart from the Novice Master or the *Socius*.

- xii. A postulant is free to leave at any time. He may also be dismissed by the abbot.
- xiii. Toward the end of the postulancy, a postulant may make formal application to enter the novitiate by writing a letter to the abbot. This petition is to be considered by the Council of Seniors, whose consent the abbot must have in order to accept the candidate into the novitiate (*Constitutions & Directory* C38).

#### C. Novitiate:

- i. According to the *Rule of St. Benedict* (RB 58), the novitiate is a period of testing prior to one's assuming any formal obligation to lead the monastic life. During this time, the novice will have all the elements of the monastic life fully explained to him. This is meant to be something more than a mere imparting of information, rather it is to be a true process of formation. Under the guidance of the Novice Master, the novice will attempt to incorporate the elements of the monastic life into his own life and living.
- ii. Only those who have completed the postulancy and who meet the requirements of Church law and the norms of the *Constitutions and Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* (C38.2) may be admitted to the novitiate.
- iii. The novitiate will be conducted in accord with the *Code of Canon Law* and *Constitutions and Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation*.
- iv. Ordinarily, the novitiate begins in mid-August. The candidate is admitted to the novitiate in a simple ceremony at Vespers where he receives the scapular (in addition to the tunic and belt already received in postulancy), the tonsure, and his religious name.
- v. The novices continue to have daily classes and work assignments as in the postulancy. They also continue to reside in the novitiate wing of the monastery.
- vi. As in the postulancy, the novices will have regular days of recollection and outings.
- vii. The Novice Master will meet at least once a month with each novice to discuss his progress and to assist him in his particular needs.
- viii. Each novice should meet monthly with a spiritual director/confessor.
- ix. The Novice Master is responsible for maintaining good order in the novitiate. Other monks are not to take it upon themselves to correct or instruct the novices. However, all are encouraged to report to the Novice Master any issues with the novices or postulants that come to their notice. In this way, all contribute to the formation of the novices and postulants, each in accord with his proper role.

- x. Given normal circumstances, the novice will not be permitted to make overnight home visits. The novice may receive visits from his immediate family about once a month. Discretion should be used in regard to other visitors. Mail, telephone calls, and use of the internet are to be prudently regulated. A novice is not permitted to have a cell phone.
- xi. The Novice Master shall make regular reports to the abbot on the progress of novices.
- xii. The Abbey will provide medical insurance coverage for the novice as it does for a professed member. However, it assumes no obligation for extraordinary medical or legal expenses.
- xiii. Before profession, the novice should make a living will and assign power of attorney.
- xiv. Toward the end of novitiate, the novice may petition the abbot for admission to vows.
- xv. The novice is to make a retreat prior to professing simple vows as arranged by the Novice Master.
- xvi. A novice is free to leave at any time. He may also be dismissed by the abbot.

#### D. Juniorate:

- i. The term "juniorate" designates an additional trial period for one who has completed the novitiate and has been permitted to make a temporary profession of vows to the monastic life. This period lasts for the individual until he professes solemn vows. Normally, this will be at least three years but no more than six years (*Constitutions* C 45).
- ii. The juniorate will accord with the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Constitutions and Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* (C43.2).
- iii. During the juniorate, the junior monk is under the care of the Junior Master. Permissions are to be sought from him or, in his absence, from the prior.
- iv. There is no common schedule for the juniorate apart from that which regulates the entire community. Each junior will present a personal schedule for the Junior Master's approval. It should include times for private prayer and spiritual reading as well as the times for work and/or study. This personal schedule should be periodically examined and revised as necessary. Even if the junior is engaged in full-time studies, he should nonetheless be given a regular job to do. The junior is also expected to participate in common projects and work so long as these do not interfere with the responsible execution of his program of studies.

- v. A junior monk retains his monies and possessions until solemn profession, although he is not free to use them during his juniorate.
- vi. The Junior Master should meet with each junior at least once a month to discuss his progress and to assist him in his particular needs.
- vii. Each junior monk should meet monthly with a spiritual director/confessor.
- viii. The Junior Master will make regular reports to the abbot on the progress of juniors and an annual report to the Chapter. The Vocation/Formation Committee will also be asked to evaluate the junior's progress.
- ix. Permission for a junior to attend an institution for the completion of his studies or to learn a trade is to come from the abbot in consultation with the Council of Seniors and the Junior Master.
- x. After three years in temporary vows, a junior may petition the abbot for admission to solemn vows. Consent of the Chapter is required for acceptance of this petition (*Constitutions C 47*).
- xi. Before profession of solemn vows, the junior is to make a retreat as arranged by the Junior Master.
- xii. Before solemn profession, the monk is to make out a will, valid in civil law, in which he disposes of all he possesses as he chooses.

#### E. Ongoing Formation

- i. Each monk should have a spiritual director. The spiritual director need not be a monk.
- ii. Monks are expected to grow intellectually and spiritually by taking advantage of special classes, training programs, and workshops.
- iii. The Education Committee should periodically arrange for workshops, guest speakers, or other programs for the edification of the brethren.
- iv. Use of the monastic library for the furtherance of one's ongoing education is encouraged. The librarian should see to it that a selection of useful and edifying periodicals is readily available and that new additions are regularly made to the collection of books.

#### F. Departure or Dismissal

- i. Should a monk be dispensed from solemn vows or be in the process of incardination, he will be given a sum of money sufficient to help him with the transition to life outside the monastery. He will also be retained on the health insurance policy of the community for some period of time until he can reasonably have been expected to provide for his own insurance.
- ii. Should a monk be dispensed from simple vows, he will be given a sum of money sufficient to help him with the transition to life outside the monastery. He will also be retained on the health insurance policy of the community for some period of time until he can reasonably have been expected to provide for his own insurance.

## 8. Interior Life and Practicalities

#### A. Monastic Cloister:

The monastic cloister consists of the abbey building, except for the first floor entrance area and the hallway leading to the church and the third floor guest wing. Outsiders are not permitted in the monastic cloister without permission of the appropriate superior.

#### B. Monastic Rooms:

- i. Monastic rooms should be a place into which the monk may retire to seek God. They should be furnished in such a way as to be pleasant, attractive and uplifting to the spirit. The rooms should be kept uncluttered and neat.
- ii. Normally anyone who is not a member of the community is excluded from monastic rooms.
- iii. No major remodeling of the physical structure of a room should be done without the permission of the appropriate superior.
- iv. Room furnishings needed for the personal use of the monk are requested from the prior. Monks are to take responsible care of their rooms and furnishings. When a monk moves from one room to another, he must see that the room he leaves has all of the proper essential furniture and is left in good order. Monks should not scavenge furnishings from unoccupied rooms, but, as indicated above, consult the prior regarding the acquisition of needed furnishings.

### C. Monastic Refectory:

- i. Meals are a continuation of the fellowship found in the Eucharistic banquet. The demeanor of monks in the refectory should reflect this principle. Formal meals begin with traditional monastic meal prayers. At meals at which there is reading, the meal will also conclude with a traditional monastic meal prayer.
- ii. The Evening Meal.
  - a. The evening meal is eaten in silence with appropriate reading. Table readers are assigned for one week of service at a time. Those assigned should take time to prepare for the reading each day. The reading begins with any newly received death notices from other communities within the Congregation, selections from the Abbey Necrology for those whose anniversary is the next day, and then a book selected or approved by the abbot. At the abbot's signal, the reader stops reading from the book and reads the assigned passage from the *Rule* for that day, followed by a commemoration of the recently deceased of the community and Congregation, as well as those of the community or of Sacred Heart Monastery whose anniversary is the following day. Then all rise for the final blessing.
  - b. On occasion, the superior may allow speaking at the evening meal. In such a case, the abbot rings the bell and all respond, "Deo gratias."
  - c. Beginning on Holy Thursday, the Passion is read from one or another of the Gospels. The abbot, prior, and sub-prior wait on tables on Holy Thursday.
  - c. Monks are expected to remain for the entire meal. Dishes and utensils should not be stacked on the cart until after the final blessing.
  - d. Guests may be invited to share the community meal. Arrangements can be made with the Guestmaster for a meal outside the monastic refectory.
  - e. Wine is served with the evening meal (or occasionally the midday meal) on Solemnities and Feasts.
- iii. The dress proper for meals is the same as that which is appropriate for prayers. A monk who shows up for a meal without his habit (or black clergy shirt and trousers at lunch) should not sit with the monastic community; rather, he should sit at one of the vacant guest tables.
- iv. The hours of the meals are determined by the *horarium* of the monastery (cf. Appendix 1).

- v. Every monk is expected to attend meals since eating together is an important part of community life. Absence should be explained to the abbot.
- vi. Monks are assigned to supper clean-up or breakfast set-up for one week at a time. These assignments are made by the sub-prior and are posted on the main bulletin board in the abbey mail room. If a monk is unable to fulfill one of these assigned duties on any occasion, it is his responsibility to arrange for a substitute.
- vii. The refectory is decorated appropriately at Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and other special occasions.
- viii. The *Ultima* is sung at the conclusion of supper on special occasions.

#### D. Monastic Clothing:

- i. Our normal clothing for all community functions is the habit. Less formal attire may be worn for *Haustus* and for community outings to the lake. Shorts are not appropriate attire for any community gatherings, nor should they be worn outside one's room in the monastery except, perhaps, when engaging in physical exercise.
- ii. If a monk has need of clothes or shoes, he should consult the prior.
- iii. Regarding proper attire at the Divine Office, cf. 5.B.i.; regarding proper attire in the refectory, cf. 9.C.iii.

#### E. Monastic Courtesy

- i. In formal situations or when those other than monks are present, the proper title is always used when addressing one another, that is, "Father" or "Brother." An abbot is called "Abbot" or "Father Abbot." In informal situations inside the monastery, use of first names only may be appropriate.
- ii. A monk must always strive to use language that is charitable, correct, and unaffected.
- iii. Good table manners are to be shown in the monastic refectory at all times.
- iv. For reasons of poverty and good health, monks should not use tobacco or recreational drugs.
- v. Drugs taken for reasons of health should be prescribed by a monk's doctor.



- vi. Use of tobacco is not permitted in any abbey or school building, nor in any abbey or school vehicle.

#### F. Monastic Recreation

- i. Solemnly professed monks shall receive an annual two-week vacation; junior monks shall receive an annual vacation of one week. An extra "travel day" may be added when necessary. The abbot must approve all vacation plans. When making vacation plans, a monk should fill out a Travel Form (Appendix 2), have it signed by the abbot, and distribute it as indicated on the Form. Monks going on vacation will receive a modest vacation stipend in the form of a check from the business office. If greater funds are required, the monk must seek the abbot's approval. A monk may take an abbey car on his vacation if one is available. Arrangements for use of an abbey car should be made with the prior. If by way of exception, and for a good reason, a monk in final vows desires to take a three-week vacation in a given year, then his vacation will be restricted to one week the following year.
- ii. Trips outside the continental United States of America for vacations are ordinarily permitted only at the times of the 25<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, and 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilees (profession or ordination). Special arrangements and planning for these trips are made with the abbot. These trips should not extend beyond a month nor incur excessive cost.
- iii. The abbey's house at Smith Lake ("Chateau Clairvaux") is available for monks to use for their vacation or for an occasional getaway or retreat. Use of the house should be coordinated with the prior, who keeps the keys. Permission for a daytrip to the house may be obtained from the prior, but the abbot must approve any overnight outings. The community uses the house for outings on national holidays, such as Independence Day or Labor Day.
- iv. In addition to his annual vacation, a professed monk may take up to four days a year for home visits.
- v. In the daily *horarium*, recreation time is set aside. Special attention is to be given to common recreation between supper and Compline each evening and to *Haustus* on Sunday and Wednesday nights (except during Lent, when *Haustus* occurs only on Sunday; cf. 8.M.). Monks should not excuse themselves from common recreation.
- vi. Appropriate exercise for physical and mental health is encouraged for all. Exercise equipment is available for the monks' use in the exercise room of the infirmary and in the kitchen basement.
- vii. Common outings for the community may be arranged on certain occasions.

- viii. There are two televisions available for use of the community in the basement of the monastery. Television may be watched on weekday evenings until 10:30 p.m. and also during the day on Saturday and Sunday. Watching television during the day on weekdays is not permitted (except for those in the infirmary).
- ix. Outside of Lent, Friday night is "Movie Night": a DVD movie is presented in the basement TV room after Compline. Attendance is optional.
- x. Televisions and personal computers are not allowed in the monks' rooms without express permission of the abbot. By way of exception, infirmary residents may have a television in their room.
- xi. A monk may have a modest stereo, radio, or CD player in his room but not an elaborate sound system or entertainment center. Music (or the radio) may be played softly in the monks' rooms. Headphones are recommended.
- xii. A monk should use discretion in his choice of entertainment, whether in public at shows or movies or in private such as choice of television programming.
- xiii. The stone recreation house is available for monks to use at appropriate times.

#### G. Jubilees:

The twenty-fifth, the fiftieth, the sixtieth and the seventieth monastic and priestly jubilees are celebrated at the conclusion of the annual community retreat.

#### H. Prudence

- i. Monks need to exercise prudence in discussing internal affairs of the community with those who are not monks.
- ii. Monks need to exercise prudence in relationships outside the community. This will help preclude the monk from turning to those outside to satisfy the needs of relationship through excessive contact. Healthy relationships are to be fostered within the community, and no one should be excluded.

#### I. Guests:

- i. The Guestmaster is responsible for guests of the monastery. He should instruct guests in matters pertaining to conduct and propriety in the monastery, e.g. silence and appropriate dress.

- ii. The Guestmaster, or his assistant, should always sit with the guests at the Divine Office and at meals. At Mass, however, the Guestmaster sits with the monastic community.
- iii. Guests may join the monastic community for meals in the refectory, sitting at the assigned guest tables under the supervision of the Guestmaster or his assistant. It is the Guestmaster's responsibility to see that guests abide by the rules and customs of the monastery with regard to meals, e.g. keeping silence at appropriate times, wearing proper attire to meals, etc.
- iv. If any monk other than the Guestmaster or his assistant wishes to sit with guests at a meal, he should first obtain permission from the abbot or prior. An exception to this general rule is the case of a vocation guest: members of the Vocation Team do not need to request permission to sit with a vocation guest at meals.
- v. Guest quarters are available in the monastery, in the Retreat & Conference Center, and in the "Grotto House." The monastery has a few rooms for male or female guests on the first floor and more rooms for male guests only on the third floor. Clergy or religious may be permitted to stay in vacant rooms within the cloister. The Guestmaster assigns guests to appropriate quarters and posts a list of guests in the first floor hallway of the monastery.
- vi. Whenever a guest arrives, the Guestmaster or his assistant should be notified. No one else should show a guest to his/her room upon arrival without permission from the superior or the Guestmaster.
- vii. Normally, guests are allowed to stay at the monastery for up to three days. A stay of more than three days must be approved by the abbot (the exception to this rule being vocation guests, who may stay for longer periods without express permission from the abbot). Any guest staying at the abbey for more than three days will be expected to help with some kind of work for the community.

#### J. Care of the Sick

- i. Generally, each monk is encouraged to be responsible for his own health care. He may choose his own physician and dentist within reasonable distance from the abbey. Monks should check with the business office about insurance, etc. before receiving non-emergency medical care.
- ii. The abbey infirmarian provides medical care within the area of his competence. For those requiring greater care, the infirmarian will refer the individual monk to a physician.

- iii. Monks confined to the infirmary, or to nursing facilities outside the monastery, should be visited often by members of the community and often remembered in the community's prayers.
- iv. Dealing with our infirm brethren should not be viewed as a burden but as a welcome opportunity to exercise charity and patience.
- v. The infirmary kitchen and laundry room are exclusively for the use of those in the infirmary and those charged with their care. Others should not make use of those facilities without the permission of the abbot or prior.
- vi. The exercise room in the infirmary is available for any monk to use; it is not restricted to use by infirmary residents.
- vii. The superior, or someone designated by him, should check on any community member who is absent from common functions.

#### K. Money

- i. In accordance with monastic poverty, monks should possess neither money nor bank accounts nor personal credit cards.
- ii. Petty cash for minor expenses may be requested from the prior. The prior dispenses money as needed to those sent out on weekend ministry. Whatever of this money is not used should be returned to the prior along with signed receipts for the money that was used.
- iii. Greater expenses requiring use of an abbey credit card must be approved in writing by the abbot or prior. A form for making such requests can be obtained from the prior or the business office (cf. Appendix 3). A receipt for such purchases should be signed and turned in to the prior or business office.
- iv. Purchases associated with the operation and maintenance of the abbey made by monks within the normal responsibilities of their job or position must be approved by the abbot or prior.
- v. All money received by a monk should be turned in to the abbot or prior.

#### L. Gifts:

Any monk who receives a singular gift needs permission from the abbot to accept the gift.

#### M. Season of Lent:

- i. The season of Lent has a monastic character. Monks are encouraged to perform extra practices of prayer, fasting, and charity during Lent.
- ii. At the beginning of Lent, each monk is given a *Bona Opera* form which he is to fill out and return to the abbot within the designated time period. This form should be presented to the abbot personally, not simply left at his door or in his mailbox.
- iii. The abbot will post a list of common observances for Lent on the main bulletin board in the mail room.
- iv. Ordinarily, there will be a conference or other presentation on each Wednesday evening during Lent.

#### N. Duties:

- i. Jobs or regular positions within the monastery are assigned by the abbot.
- ii. Weekly pastoral assignments to parishes are made by the prior.
- iii. Weekly assignments to the duties of Hebdomadarius and Acolyte at the Divine Office are made by the prior.
- iv. The celebrant for the weekday Conventual Mass is assigned each week by the prior.
- v. Readers for Mass, both for Sunday and for weekdays, are assigned by the Master of Ceremonies.
- vi. Servers for Mass on Sunday, as well as for Solemnities and Feasts, are made by the Master of Ceremonies.
- vii. Weekly chanters for the Divine Office and the Mass are assigned by the Choirmaster.
- viii. Weekly kitchen duties, such as table reader or supper clean-up, are assigned by the sub-prior and posted on the main bulletin board in the mail room.

#### O. Alcoholic Beverages:

- i. Though total abstinence from alcoholic beverages is still to be admired and encouraged, at least let everyone endorse St. Benedict's principle and be convinced that moderation is necessary and that only the foolish and immature will give themselves to excess.

- ii. Alcoholic beverages should not be kept in monks' rooms.

P. Travel:

- i. All travel off monastic grounds or the school campus requires the permission of the abbot or prior. The prior may give permission for day-trips, but the permission of the abbot is required for any overnight trip. If the abbot or a superior is unavailable, the monk should leave a note that he has traveled away from the abbey.
- ii. For any overnight trip (other than pastoral assignments), the monk should fill out a Travel Form and have it signed by the abbot. Copies of this form are to be distributed as indicated on the form (e.g. to the prior, sub-prior, etc.). Travel Forms can be obtained from the prior or the business office. (cf. Appendix 2)
- iii. Whenever a monk is traveling out of the county, he should receive a special blessing from the superior before his departure and after his return.

## 9. Death of a Confrere

- i. Each monk is entitled to a proper Funeral Mass and burial in our monastic cemetery. In addition to the prescriptions in the *Constitutions and Directory of the American-Cassinense Congregation* (C 71; D71.1-5), each monk will offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass, according to his own participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, three times for each member of the community who dies. There will be a daily remembrance of the deceased confrere at the evening meal for one month and on each anniversary thereafter. Upon the death of a confrere, a black cross and two candles are set at his place at table in the refectory and remain there for one month. The candles are lit each evening at supper.
- ii. The abbot notifies the relatives of the family in the event of the death of a member of the community. The prior notifies externs and other monasteries of the death of the community member.
- iii. In compliance with the prescriptions of the *Constitutions*, once a month or twelve times a year each monk offers a Mass according to his participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ for all the deceased monks of the American-Cassinense Congregation.
- iv. Upon notification of the death of an oblate, the Stipendarius will see that a Mass is offered for the repose of the soul of the deceased oblate.

## Appendix 1: Horarium

### Sunday

6:40 am Rise

7:00 am Matins/Lauds

8:15 am Breakfast

10:00 am Sext

10:30 am Conventual Mass

12:00 noon Lunch

5:30 pm Solemn Vespers

6:00 pm Haustus

7:15 pm Compline (in community room)

10:30 pm Night Silence

### Monday through Friday

5:40 am Rise

6:00 am Matins/Lauds

7:15 am Breakfast

11:55 am Sext

12:05 pm Lunch

5:00 pm Conventual Mass

5:30 pm Vespers

6:00 pm Supper\*

7:15 pm Compline\*

10:30 pm Night Silence

*\*On Wednesdays outside of Lent: Haustus followed by Compline in the community room.*

### Saturday

5:40 am Rise

6:00 am Matins/Lauds

7:00 am Conventual Mass

8:00 am Breakfast

11:55 am Sext

12:05 pm Lunch

5:30 pm Vespers

6:00 pm Supper

7:15 pm Compline

10:30 pm Night Silence

### Appendix 3: Credit Card Request

# REQUISITION FOR ABBEY CREDIT CARD

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Cost: \_\_\_\_\_

For/Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Signature of Abbot or Prior)*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 2: Monk's Travel Form

### MONK'S TRAVEL FORM

*(Overnight or longer, other than pastoral assignments)*

NAME : \_\_\_\_\_

Category of Trip *(Monastery/school business, vacation, meeting, etc.)* : \_\_\_\_\_

Destination *(Address & telephone # where you can be reached)* :

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Departure: \_\_\_\_\_  
Day \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Return: \_\_\_\_\_  
Day \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### Means of Transportation

Commercial:

Departure: \_\_\_\_\_  
Carrier & Flight # \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Return: \_\_\_\_\_  
Carrier & Flight # \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Abbey Car

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make copies for the following:**

- |                                   |  |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Abbot | 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Subprior <i>(for weekly assignments)</i> | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Fr. Joel <i>(Choir Master)</i> |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Prior | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Br. Augustine <i>(for Mass reading)</i>  |  |