THE CONSTITUTIONS
OF
THE SOCIETY OF JESUS
AND THEIR
COMPLEMENTARY NORMS

A Complete English Translation
of the Official Latin Texts

THE INSTITUTE OF JESUIT SOURCES
Saint Louis 1996
service of God. If the person should think that he ought to give them to relatives, this should not be done unless one, two, or three persons, as was stated above, judge this to be more expedient and a greater service to God our Lord.

6. Since communications from friends or relatives, whether oral or written, generally tend to disturb rather than help those who attend to the spiritual life, especially in the beginning, the candidates should be asked whether they will be content not to converse with such persons and not to receive or write letters, unless on some occasions the superior judges otherwise; also whether during the whole time they stay in the house they will be willing to have all their letters seen, both those written to them and those which they send, leaving to the one charged with this matter the care of delivering or not delivering them as he will judge to be more expedient in our Lord.

7. Everyone who enters the Society, following the counsel of Christ that “everyone who has given up father” and so forth [Matt. 19:29], must make up his mind to leave his father, mother, brothers, sisters, and whatever he had in the world. Even more, he should take as made to himself the statement “If anyone comes to me without hating his father, mother, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” [Luke 14:26].

Consequently he should take care to put aside all merely natural affection for his relatives and convert it into spiritual, by loving them only with that love which rightly ordered charity requires. He should be as one who is dead to the world and to self-love and who lives only for Christ our Lord, while having him in place of parents, brothers, and all things.

8. That the manner of speaking may assist that of thinking, it is a holy counsel to adopt the practice of saying not that they have but that they did have parents or brothers and sisters, and so forth, thus indicating that they do not have what they forsook in order to have Christ in place of all things. However, this ought to be observed more by those who are in greater danger of some disorder in natural love, as novices might often be.

9. For the sake of his greater progress in his spiritual life, and especially for his greater lowliness and humility, he should be asked whether he will be willing to have all his errors and defects, and anything else which will be noticed or known about him, manifested to his superiors by anyone who knows them outside of confession; and further, whether he along with all the others will be willing to aid in correcting and being corrected, and to manifest one another with due love and charity, in order to help one another more in the spiritual life, especially when this will be requested of him by the superior who has charge of them for the greater glory of God.

10. Furthermore, before he enters the house or college, or after his entrance, six principal testing experiences are required, in addition to many others which will be treated in part later. When the superior approves, these experiences may be advanced, postponed, adapted, and in some case replaced by others, according to persons, times, and places, with their contingencies.

11. The first experience consists in making the Spiritual Exercises for one month, a little more or less; that is to say, in the person’s examining his conscience, thinking over his whole past life and making a general confession, meditating upon his sins, contemplating the events and mysteries of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ our Lord, exercising himself in praying verbally and mentally, according to the capacity of the persons, as he will be instructed in our Lord, and so on.

12. The second experience is to serve for another month in hospitals or one of them. The candidates take their meals and sleep in it or in them, or serve for one or several hours during the day, according to the times, places, and persons. They should help and serve all, the sick and the well, in conformity with the directions they receive, in order to lower and humble themselves more, thus giving clear proof of themselves to the effect that they are completely giving up the world with its pompous and vanities, so that in everything they may serve their Creator and Lord, crucified for them.

13. The third experience is to spend another month in making a pilgrimage without money, but begging from door to door.

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37 [See note 1 to [244].]
38 [See note 3 to [246].]
39 Abolished by GC 34. (According to the letter of the law, because this way of speaking is completely obsolete; but the underlying spirit is very important.)
40 Clarified by an authentic interpretation in CN 235.
41 Clarified by CN 46.
42 (See CN 46, §2.)
at times, for the love of God our Lord, in order to grow accustomed to discomfort in food and lodging. Thus too the candidate, through abandoning all the reliance which he could have in money or other created things, may with genuine faith and intense love place his reliance entirely in his Creator and Lord. Or both of these months may be spent in one or more hospitals, or both in making a pilgrimage, as may seem better to the candidate's superior.

[68] 13. The fourth experience consists in the candidate's employing himself, after entrance into the house, with all diligence and care in various low and humble offices, while giving a good example of himself in all of them.

[69] 14. The fifth experience is that of explaining the Christian doctrine or a part of it in public to boys and other simple persons, or of teaching it to individuals, as opportunity offers and what seems in our Lord more profitable and suitable to the persons.

[70] 15. In a sixth experience the candidate, who now has been tested and found edifying, will proceed farther by preaching or hearing confessions, or in both together, in accordance with the times, places, and capacity of each.

[71] 16. Before they enter the second year of their probation, which is made in the houses or colleges, all must spend six months in undergoing the six experiences just mentioned and six additional months in different ones. These experiences may be gone through in whole or in part throughout the entire previously stated time of a candidate's probation; the sequence may vary in accordance with what is found expedient in our Lord.

In the case of the scholastics, the sequence may be undergone during their studies or after their completion, according to persons, places, and times. But this must be observed in its entirety. Before the professed make their profession, and before the formed coadjutors take their three public though not solemn vows, two years of experiences and probations must be completed. In the case of the scholastics, when their studies have been finished, in addition to the time of probation required to become an approved scholastic, before one of them makes profession or is admitted as a formed coadjutor, a further third year must be

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43 Modified by CIC 647–48 and CCEO 456, §1. (In regard to the house where the canonical novitiate must be made and in regard to the time of living in it for the canonical validity of the same; see also CN 42.)

44 (See CN 46, §1.)

spent, in passing through various probations, especially those tests mentioned above [64] if he did not make them previously, and through some of them even if he did make them, for the greater glory of God.

[72] 17. During the time of these experiences and probations, no one ought to say that he is a member of the Society. Rather, when occasion arises, one who on the side of the Society has been examined to become a professed (even though on his own side he entered as a candidate still indifferent) ought to say that he is undergoing the probationary experiences while desiring to be admitted into the Society in whatsoever manner it may desire to make use of him for God's glory. If he has been examined to become a coadjutor, he should say that he is going through the testing experiences while desiring to be received into the Society as a coadjutor. The same method of replying is meant for the scholastics and the others who have been examined as candidates still indifferent, in conformity with the particular examen which each of them undergoes.

[73] 18. In regard to these probationary experiences, what follows should be diligently observed. That is to say, when someone has completed the first experience, the Exercises, the one who gave them should inform the superior of what he thinks of the exercitant in regard to the end which the Society seeks.

[74] 19. When he has finished the second experience, that of serving in hospitals, he should bring back the testimony of the directors or of the one who has charge of those who serve in that hospital, about the good example he gave.

[75] 20. When he has completed the third experience, the pilgrimage, he should bring from the farthest place he reached, or somewhere near it, testimony from one or several dependable persons that he arrived there while pursuing his devotion and without a complaint from anyone.

[76] 21. After the fourth experience, that of his doing humble chores in the house, his testimony will be the edification which he gave to all those in that house.

[77] 22. After the fifth experience, his teaching Christian doctrine, and the sixth, that of preaching or hearing confessions, his

45 (See note 15 to [16].)

46 (But see Examen c. 1, no. 7 [10], P. V. c. 1, A [511] and CN 6.)