

## Chapter 7 – Prayer Life

<b>Spiritual life and the quest for God</b>	<p>1. Christ's prayer, during his earthly life, flowed constantly from his intimacy with the Father. He invites his disciples to pray, too, without ceasing.</p> <p>The Brother seeks God in truth, in his prayer life and his apostolic activities, guided by the Spirit and following in Christ's footsteps. His vocation becomes a way to sanctification within a community that is, for him, a school of spiritual life and formation. He thus allows himself to be configured to Christ through an obedient listening to the Word of God and living a sacramental life which together gradually unify his whole being.</p>	<p>1 Th 5:17</p> <p>Jn 4:16</p>
	<b>A Life Listening to the Word of God</b>	
<b>Meditation</b>	<p>2. The Brother's whole life can be expressed as a listening to the Word which transforms and gives life. During the special time of meditation, the Brother seeks Christ by meditating on the Word of God and contemplating his mysteries. He thereby learns "to live in familiar and constant companionship with the Father, through his Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit".</p> <p>The Brothers devote thirty minutes in community each morning to this spiritual exercise, which "must not be cut short under any pretext whatsoever, for of all the exercises it is the most necessary".</p>	<p>OT 8a</p> <p>Rule 1825</p>
<b>Lectio divina</b>	<p>3. <i>Lectio divina</i>, a meditative, prayerful, and contemplative reading of Scriptures, opens up the Brother to the richness of the Word of God. It helps to develop a spiritual instinct that enables him to "discern God's will about what is good, perfect and pleasing to Him". Experienced in community, it contributes to the building of a fraternity where Christ is the center.</p>	<p>VD 86-87 VC 94 Rom 12:2</p>
<b>Liturgy of the hours</b>	<p>4. The celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours introduces the Brother to the official prayer of the Church which "offers incessantly to God the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name". His life is therefore marked by the rhythm of listening to the word of God and praying the Psalms. Every one of his activities thus finds meaning.</p> <p>In the morning, the Brothers celebrate Lauds either before or after their meditation. In the evening, they come together for 30 minutes prayer: Vespers, a time of adoration and lectio vitae. Their prayer joins that of the People of God, who intercede for the salvation of the world, and present to the Lord the hopes, joys, and anxieties of humanity.</p>	<p>VD, 62.</p> <p>1 Thes 5:17</p> <p>Heb 13:15</p>
<b>Lectio vitae</b>	<p><i>4.1 Daily lectio vitae opens the Brother to the presence of God and his promptings. It enables him to recognize the areas where he puts up resistance to the action of the Spirit. It helps him to unify all aspects of his life and renders him more open to the Lord working in him.</i></p>	
<b>Spiritual reading</b>	<p>5. To continuously nourish their spiritual life, Brothers set aside at least two hours a week for spiritual reading, giving priority to a more in-depth study</p>	

	<p>of Scripture, the principal documents of the Church and those of the Congregation.</p> <p>Each community is invited to determine times of common spiritual reading. These texts can then serve as excellent starting points for fruitful community discussion.</p>	
<b>Marian devotion</b>	<p>6. The Brothers express their great love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary, model of listening to the Word. In the Scriptures, they meditate on her role in salvation history, and, in the liturgy, they relive with her the mysteries of her Son's life.</p> <p>They entrust to her maternal care their religious and apostolic life. They do this in particular through the daily recitation of the rosary, a traditional prayer of the Institute.</p>	
	<b>A Life Nourished by Sacramental Grace</b>	
<b>Eucharist</b>	<p>7. The Eucharist, "sign of unity and bond of charity," is the source and summit of community life. It is "the source of divine love, zeal and devotion". Therein Brothers find inspiration and nourishment. They associate themselves with the offering of Christ and renew their consecration. In this way, they draw comfort and impetus from the Eucharist so as to be a sign of God's free and fruitful love for humanity.</p> <p>Each day, Brothers participate in the Mass. If this is not possible, they are invited to celebrate a liturgy of the Word, with communion to the Body of Christ, if permitted by the directives of their Bishops' Conference.</p>	<p>SC 47</p> <p>LG 11</p> <p>Rule 1876</p> <p>EV 82</p>
<b>Sacrament of reconciliation and fraternal forgiveness</b>	<p>8. For the conversion of his heart to God, the Brother frequently has recourse to the sacrament of reconciliation prepared by a daily review of life. Through this act of faith, he sincerely acknowledges his failings before God and gratefully receives the ecclesial sign of the Father's forgiveness. Community Superiors facilitate the reception of this sacrament.</p> <p>Similarly, with humility and trust, the Brother reaches out to his fellow Brothers to offer them forgiveness or to apologize for his faults in order to strengthen the bonds of fraternal charity.</p>	<p>CEC 1484</p> <p>Mt 6:14-15 1 Jn 2:9-11</p>
	<b>A Life of Unity and Perseverance</b>	
<b>Unity of life: prayer and action</b>	<p>9. The same Spirit that animates the Brother throughout his life invites him to praise God in prayer and serve him in apostolic action. Attentive to the demands of his various tasks, he maintains the daily rhythm of prayer essential for a relationship with Christ. Dealing with the twofold demands of his vocation sometimes means having to make difficult choices, and prayer can be more difficult on days when he is tired. Accepting this tension, the Brother remains faithful to his commitment, remembering that God never fails those who seek him.</p> <p><i>9.1 When circumstances prevent a Brother from participating in community prayer, he makes the effort to compensate privately. The community, for its part, includes absent Brothers in its intentions.</i></p>	<p>Rm 8:28</p>

<b>Fraternity and community prayer</b>	10. United in response to the Spirit's call and working together in the Father's vineyard, the Brothers strive to maintain an atmosphere of true fraternal charity that provides an indispensable framework for their individual and community prayer. Likewise, their faithful and regular participation in times of community prayer and the spiritual support and encouragement they offer each other contribute greatly to reinforcing their fraternal communion in Christ.	
<b>Personal responsibility</b>	<p>11. Each Brother assumes responsibility for his own fidelity, aware that his prayer is much more than just a matter of following a community timetable out of duty. It is rather a listening to the Word in love and a freely chosen devotion to the person of Christ. Amid a hectic world, where he is kept busy by tasks that require so much of his time and energy, the Brother centers his life on God alone who invites him to walk in His presence.</p> <p>He further deepens his prayer life beyond the prescribed times, seeking an ever closer union with Christ.</p>	Ph 3:12-14
<b>Ascesis and inner freedom</b>	<p>12. The Brother remembers that the spirit of prayer is nourished by inner calm and silence, by a self-discipline that promotes physical and mental health. To free himself from the obstacles which prevent him from hearing the voice of God within him, he integrates into his life the necessary ascesis that leads to an ongoing conversion of the heart. On this journey to inner liberation, the Brother becomes more able to enter into intimate union with his Lord and to give generously of himself to others.</p> <p><i>12.1 Everything that promotes self-control enables the Brother to attain, little by little, the inner liberation that the Lord asks of him: the daily effort to rise punctually; to pray authentically; to respect the community timetable; to be silent; to seek physical, psychological and spiritual well-being; to ensure appropriate use of information and communication technologies; to know and accept one's limits; to resist the constant temptations of comfort and selfishness; to ensure moderation in the use of tobacco and alcohol, and even abstention from them.</i></p>	1Cor 9:27
<b>Trust in Providence</b>	<p>13. The Brother, weighed down by age, illness, and the gradual loss of his faculties, does not become self-centered. Without losing his sense of profound joy, he opens himself up to God's grace, and to the help offered by his fellow Brothers and those around him. Through self-abandonment and trust in Providence, he unites himself in a new way with the suffering Christ for the salvation of the world, becoming with him "a spiritual offering pleasing to God".</p> <p><i>13.1 Superiors ensure, with the fraternal support of their fellow Brothers in community, that the elderly and suffering are offered the strength and comfort of the anointing of the sick.</i></p>	<p>CEC 2000</p> <p>Rom 12:1</p>
<b>Return to the Father</b>	14. The Brother welcomes with patience and hope his gradual decline in mind and body, since he bears within him a seed of immortality. In Jesus Christ, his death is no longer just an inevitable fate to which he is resigned:	<p>GS 22f</p> <p>Phil 1:21.23</p>

	it is considered “a gain”. Full of confidence, he “desires to depart and be with Christ”, to whom he is consecrated.	
<b>United beyond death</b>	<p>15. The Brothers faithfully keep alive the memory of their deceased confreres, especially those they knew and loved. In their daily prayer and the Eucharist, they remember them and express their communion with them. This prayer is an expression of the hope that inspires them: "We will strengthen more and more the bonds that unite us, bonds that are so dear to us that even death could not sever them."</p> <p><i>15.1 The death of a Brother or novice is announced promptly throughout the Institute. During the week that follows, the Brothers commend the deceased to the Lord in their community prayer. The congregation requests the celebration of thirty Masses for the repose of the soul of the deceased Brother, the stipends for which are paid by each Province or District.</i></p> <p><i>15.2 The Brothers regularly commend to the Lord their deceased confreres, family members, Lay Mennaisians, students and benefactors. During the annual retreat, a memorial Mass is celebrated for the repose of the souls of those who have died in the past year.</i></p>	S II, 493
	<b>A Life Renewed and Sustained</b>	
<b>Recollection</b>	<p>16. Periodically, the Brothers take the opportunity for renewal of their commitment to follow Christ, especially during the key celebrations of the Church's liturgical year.</p> <p><i>16.1 The local community, possibly in conjunction with the Lay Mennaisians, organizes its times of recollection in accordance with the guidelines of the Province or District.</i></p>	
<b>Annual retreat</b>	<p>17. The annual retreat gives the Brother an excellent opportunity to intensify his quest for God in solitude, silence, and prayer. In more intimate union with his Lord, he rekindles his spiritual life, draws lessons from the past and resumes his journey towards God with renewed hope in His grace.</p> <p>Setting aside his daily concerns and avoiding anything that might distract him, each Brother gives the retreat top priority. He attends "not only to be present in body but with a sincere desire to listen to God, to examine his conscience in the light of faith, and to profit from all the new graces that will be offered to him".</p> <p>Each year the Brothers make a six-day spiritual retreat.</p> <p><i>17.1 The Major Superiors oversee the material and spiritual organization of their Province or District retreats. They take particular care in proposing locations that are conducive to recollection and prayer, at times that are suitable for all.</i></p>	CG V, 201-202.
<b>Spiritual Accompaniment</b>	<p>18. Enlightened by faith, nourished daily by the Word, the Brother reviews his life and looks "attentively for the signs of God and the promptings of his grace amidst the varied events of life". Aware of his weaknesses and trusting in God's grace, he knows that he needs human intermediaries to</p>	PO, 18b EG 171.

	bring unity to his life, to grow in inner freedom and to remain docile to the Spirit. For this reason, he seeks spiritual accompaniment throughout his life.	
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