

The Rule of Saint Albert

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Albert by the grace of God called to be Patriarch of the Church of Jerusalem, to his beloved sons in Christ, B. and the other hermits who are living under obedience to him at the spring on Mount Carmel: salvation in the Lord and the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

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In many and various ways the holy fathers have laid down how everyone, whatever their state of life or whatever kind of religious life he has chosen, should live in allegiance to Jesus Christ and serve him faithfully from a pure heart and a good conscience.

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However, because you desire us to give you a formula of life in keeping with your purpose, to which you may hold fast in the future:

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We establish first of all that you shall have one of you as prior, to be chosen for that office by the unanimous assent of all, or of the greater and wiser part, to whom each of the others shall promise obedience and strive to fulfil his promise by the reality of his deeds, *along with chastity and the renunciation of property.*

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You may have places in solitary areas, or where you are given a site that is suitable and convenient for the observance of your religious life, as the prior and the brothers see fit.

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Next, according to the site of the place where you propose to dwell, each of you shall have a separate cell of his own, to be assigned to him by the disposition of the prior himself, with the assent of the other brothers or the wiser part of them.

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However, you shall eat whatever may have been given you in a common refectory, listening together to some reading from Sacred Scripture, where this can be done conveniently.

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None of the brothers may change the place assigned to him, or exchange it with another, except with the permission of whoever is prior at the time.

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The prior's cell shall be near the entrance to the place, so that he may be the first to meet those who come to this place, and so that whatever needs to be done subsequently may all be carried out according to his judgement and disposition.

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Let each remain in his cell or near it, meditating day and night on the Word of the Lord and keeping vigil in prayer, unless he is occupied with other lawful activities.

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Those who know *how to say the canonical hours with the clerics* shall say *them according to* the institution of the Holy Fathers and the approved custom of the Church. Those who do not know their letters shall say twenty-five Our Fathers for the night vigil, except on Sundays and feastsdays, for the vigils of which we establish that the stated number be doubled, so that the Our Father is said fifty times. The same prayer is to be said seven times for the morning lauds. For the other hours the same prayer is to be said seven times, except for the evening office, for which you shall say it fifteen times.

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Let none of the brothers say that anything is his property, but let everything be held in common among you; to each one shall be distributed what he needs from the hand of the prior - that is from the brother he appoints to this task - taking into account the age and needs of each one.

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You may, moreover, have asses or mules as your needs require, and some livestock or poultry for your nourishment.

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An oratory, as far as it can be done conveniently, shall be built in the midst of the cells, where you shall come together every day early in the morning to hear Mass, where this can be done conveniently.

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On Sundays too, or on other days when necessary, you shall discuss the preservation of order and the salvation of your souls. At this time also the excesses and faults of the brothers, if such should be found in anyone, should be corrected in the midst of love.

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You shall observe the fast every day except Sunday from the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross until Easter Sunday, unless sickness or bodily weakness or some other good reason shall make it advisable to break the fast; for necessity knows no law.

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You shall abstain from meat, unless it be taken as a remedy for sickness or weakness. *And since you may have to beg more frequently while travelling, outside your own houses you may eat food cooked with meat, so as not to be*

a burden to your hosts. But meat may even be eaten at sea.

[18]

However, because human life on earth is a trial, and all who wish to live devotedly in Christ must suffer persecution, and moreover since your adversary the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, you shall use every care and diligence to put on the armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand the deceits of the enemy.

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The loins are to be girt with the cincture of chastity. Your breast is to be fortified with holy ponderings, for it is written: Holy ponderings will save you. The breastplate of justice is to be put on, that you may love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength, and your neighbour as yourself. In all things is to be taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the wicked one, for without faith it is impossible to please God. On your head is to be put the helmet of salvation, that you may hope for salvation from the only Saviour who saves his people from their sins. And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, should dwell abundantly in your mouth and in your hearts. And whatever you have to do, let it all be done in the Word of the Lord.

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Some work has to be done by you, so that the devil may always find you occupied, lest on account of your idleness he manage to find some opportunity to enter into your souls. In this matter you have both the teaching and example of the blessed apostle Paul, in whose mouth Christ spoke, who was appointed and given by God as preacher and teacher of the nations in faith and truth; if you follow him you cannot go astray. Labouring and weary we lived among you, he says, working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you; not that we had no right to do otherwise, but so as to give you ourselves as an example, that you might imitate us. For when we were with you we used to tell you, if someone is unwilling to work, let him not eat. For we have heard that there are certain people among you going about restlessly and doing no work. We urge people of this kind and beseech them in the Lord Jesus Christ to earn their bread, working in silence. *This way is holy and good: follow it.*

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The apostle recommends silence, when he tells us to work in it. As the prophet also testifies, Silence is the cultivation of justice; and again, in silence and hope will be your strength. Therefore we direct that you keep silence from after *compline* until *prime* of the following day. At other times, however, although you need not observe silence so strictly, you should nevertheless be all the more careful to avoid much talking, for as it is written-and experience teaches no less- where there is much talk sin will not be lacking; and, he who is careless in speech will come to harm; and elsewhere, he who uses many words injures his soul. And the Lord says in the gospel: For every idle word that people speak they will render account on judgement day. Let each one, therefore, measure his words and keep a tight rein on his mouth, lest he stumble and fall by his talking and his fall be irreparable and prove fatal. With the prophet let him watch his ways lest he sin with his tongue; let him try attentively and carefully to practice the silence in which is the cultivation of justice.

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And you, brother B., and whoever may be appointed prior after you, should always have in mind and observe in practice what the Lord says in the gospel: Whoever wishes to be the greatest among you will be your servant, and whoever wishes to be the first will be your slave.

[23]

You other brothers too, hold your prior humbly in honour, thinking not so much of him as of Christ who placed him over you, and who said to the leaders of the churches, Who hears you hears me; who rejects you rejects me. In this way you will not come into judgement for contempt, but through obedience will merit the reward of eternal life.

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We have written these things briefly for you, thus establishing a formula for your way of life, according to which you are to live. If anyone will have spent more, the Lord himself will reward him, when he returns. Use discernment, however, the guide of the virtues.

Translation: Kees Waaijman, O.Carm