



THE RULE OF SAINT AUGUSTINE
IN THE HISTORY OF THE
CANONS REGULAR OF THE
ORDER OF THE HOLY CROSS

BY

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“From 1100 on, Augustinian asceticism revived in the bishopric of Liege, and budded forth in new monastic families.”
(De Fisen)

Introduction

From the beginning of their organization as an independent monastic Order, the Brethren of the Cross based their religious life on the Rule of Saint Augustine. During the first decades, in fact, it was the only officially approved law for their community: the Statutes (or “Constitutions”) were not approved until 31 December 1248.

To understand the original spirit of the Order, one must trace the influence that Augustine’s rule has had upon the institution.

Studying the Exordia can be a great help in discovering the extent of this influence. These documents not only show that the Brethren of the Cross really followed Augustine’s Rule in the first years of their existence, but they help determine the reasons for the Brethren’s decision to use this Rule – which is of course extremely important in coming to understand the spirituality of the group. The objection may be raised that the Exordia were written to edify rather than to present an historically accurate picture of the Order; however, it is the fact that the brothers themselves considered the Exordia so important that they included them in one form or another in all the books of privilege of the various monasteries. This fact indicates that these documents are important sources for understanding the Brethren’s spirituality.

In this work, we will use several documents that confirm the canonical character of the Order, and various ascetical documents of the Brethren of the Cross that indicate the influence of Augustinian spirituality. Data derived from relicts of general and regional chapters and from surviving relicts of visitations of monasteries confirm that in changing circumstances the Order has attempted to keep faithful to the ideals of the first foundation. We make no claim to

completeness here: the evidence is so abundant that it has been necessary to make a selection from the sources available. The ascetical documents we have at hand will be described in due course; in this article, however, we shall consider chiefly *Vestis Nuptialis* by Petrus Pincharius. This work is important because of its antiquity and because it gives a nearly complete view of the religious life of the Brethren of the Cross. Other important ascetical authors of the Order (Van Lith, Hertzworms, de Vrese, Woestenraedt) will be considered in an associated article.

1. The “Exordia”

Carmen (MS.6.L.21, in the library of the Great Seminary in Liege, published by Fr. A. van Asseldonk OSC) is perhaps the oldest existing document of the origin of the Order. The basic story: Five clerics from the region of Liege go together to the Pope in order to get his approval for the monastic life they are practicing. The Pope approves their apostolic way of life and prescribes that they follow the Rule of Augustine to them. The text of this pericope is: “*Unde (Papa) sibi designavit et signando confirmavit regulam canonicam, iuxta quod pertitulavit Augustinus et locavit vitam apostolicam.*” “Hence he (the Pope) assigned and confirmed with a seal the canonic rule, in accordance with that which Augustine has called and established as the apostolic life.”¹

The oldest prose Exordium, which appears in the same manuscript, also tells the story of the group’s journey to Rome under the patronage of the Cardinal Legate, and adds that the Pope, together with the holy College, received the Brethren of the Cross with joy, and decided that “through the said canons, the Order of the Holy Cross in question should flourish again all over the world, and that they ought to live under

Augustine’s Rule as Canons Regular...in community, according to the Rule established during the apostolic time, and support themselves by their own resources.”²

These two accounts from the Exordia are found in a manuscript dating from the beginning of the 15th century. Drawing as they do on an existing older tradition, they give us some valuable insights. In the first place, it is clear that, according to the early tradition of the Order, Augustine's Rule was the norm for its religious life prior to the approval of the Constitutions of the Order on 31 December 1248.

Further, one may deduce from these accounts that Augustine's Rule was formally chosen at the prompting of Rome. This would be in keeping with the history of the Church: the Lateran Council permitted the formation of new orders only when they accepted an already existing monastic rule. Both Exordia also say that the Brethren of the Cross accepted this rule because it is a return to the apostolic life, the "*vita primitivae Ecclesiae*" (the life of the primitive Church), the "*vita apostolica* of the canons regular."³

The term "apostolic way of life" does not refer primarily to the Church's apostolate. Rather, it was what Jacob of Vitry has called the mode of life of the Apostles, the conduct of the primitive church as described in Acts (4, 32-35), to which Augustine refers explicitly in his Rule. This is why the Exordium mentions "the Rule laid down under the Apostles."⁴

"*Vita apostolica*" meant much the same as "*vita communis*", the life of a completely voluntary personal poverty combined with community of property, such as the earliest Christians practiced in the primitive church of Jerusalem (cf. Acts 4).

We do not want to deny the Brethren of the Cross an apostolate in the present meaning of the word; however, for them "*vita apostolica*" meant much the same as "*vita communis*", the life of a completely voluntary personal poverty combined with community of property, such as the earliest Christians practiced in the primitive church

of Jerusalem (cf. Acts 4). This ideal fascinated Augustine; he would have liked to live that model with his brothers, and later also with his clergy when he was bishop of Hippo: "One in heart and spirit together on their way to God". He appealed expressly to this ideal in defending his community at Hippo; he returns to it again and again in his writings and many times in his sermons.⁵

This image also fits perfectly into the history of the contemporary religious culture in which the Order came into being. In the beginning of the 13th century, the pious people in the Low Countries, and especially those in the region of Liege, aspired to this "*vita apostolica*", this "*vitae primitivae Ecclesiae*" with enthusiasm and persistence. Fisen writes, "From 1100 on, Augustinian asceticism revived in the bishopric of Liege, and bud forth in new monastic families." He believes that the ideas of Augustine influenced this movement toward apostolic poverty and encouraged the foundation of Augustinian monasteries.

Extensive studies by Alcantara Mens, OFM Cap., support this opinion. It seems significant that so many religious foundations were basing their community life on Augustine's Rule. Did the first Brethren of the Cross come to accept the Rule because it suited their ideal of the "*vita communis*," or did they come to their vision of the common life through the Rule chosen for them? It is impossible to answer the question. The lines from *Carmen* quoted above indicate that the Pope specified this Rule as the means for them to realize their ideal of community. Although the account in the prose Exordium seems to suggest that they might already have been living under Augustine's Rule, it does not rule out the *Carmen* version. It is entirely possible that as seculars the Brethren had already been attracted to the apostolic manner of life, then settled on the Rule of Augustine later because they found in it the model they were seeking. Dr. H. van Rooyen, OSC, and Father Mens have established the fact that there was at that time a yearning for a more simple existence: for simple personal

poverty and a more vital monastic life. And in the 12th century Augustine's Rule, notable for its clarity and brevity, had come to be considered the ideal model for the life of canons.⁶

Both the *Carmen* and the prose Exordium are important documents in helping us understand the spirituality of the first Brethren of the Cross: these men clearly practiced personal poverty, but did not adopt the Franciscan ideal. It is clear that they preferred to live the pattern of jointly-held property specified in Augustine's Rule.⁷

2. Documents

On 1 October 1248, Pope Innocent IV conferred upon the Order his protection and privileges, having determined “that this canonical order, founded for God and according to Augustine's Rule, does have reasons for existence” (*Ann.*, 2,64).

Documents of papal and episcopal curiae also refer to the Brethren of the Cross as followers of the Rule of Augustine. Often the Order is given the brief designation “*ordo canonicus*” or “*ordo sancti Augustini*”, indicating that they are canons regular. Several original documents of this nature still exist, as do many certified copies of others. For the sake of brevity we will limit ourselves to those which Hermans has included in his *Annales OSC*.

On 1 October 1248, Pope Innocent IV conferred upon the Order his protection and privileges, having determined “that this canonical order, founded for God and according to Augustine's Rule, does have reasons for existence” (*Ann.*, 2,64). On 23 October, the Pope instructed the Ordinary of Liege to approve the Order, writing that the Brethren of the Cross “want to serve the Lord according to Augustine's Rule and some regulations of the Dominican Friars.” Accordingly, the Bishop of Liege approved them on 31 December 1248 and granted them permission “to live as religious

according to the specified Statutes and the Rule of Saint Augustine” (*Ann.*, 2,68,71).

On 4 January 1249, the Cardinal Legate Petrus of San Giorgio in Velabro gave some faculties to “the beloved in Christ Prior and Brethren of the Cross of the Order of Saint Augustine” (*Ann.*, 2,72). The bishop of Liege used the same title for the Brethren of the Cross at Namur, when giving them title to a private cemetery (*Ann.*, 2, 74). These terms are used repeatedly in the papal documents of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries -- for instance, in the confirmation of the foundation of the Order at Namur on 1 July 1254 (*Ann.*, 2, 78), and conferred or confirmed by several popes in letters of privilege dated 4 July 1254, 13 April 1277, 11 October 1284, 29 March 1318, 25 October 1356, 19 May, 1413, 3 March 1432, 16 September 1464, 27 May 1475 and 16 February 1488 (*Ann.*, 2, 81, 83, 84, 105, 210, 229, 300, 379, 416).

In addition to the bishop in Liege, other officials and chapters were convinced that the Brethren of the Cross were canons regular following the Rule of Saint Augustine. The ordinary of Cologne named “Brother Johannes, called Novelan, of the Order of the Holy Cross of Saint Augustine, from the Paris monastery” (*Ann.*, 2, 87). In the bull of his approbation of the Virton monastery, on 10 May 1431, Balduinis, archbishop of Treves, called the Brethren of the Cross in the bull of approbation of the Virton Monastery, 10 May 1431, “*Ordinis Sti. Augustini*” (*Ann.*, 2, 11). The rector of the Julianus in Aix-la-Chapelle gave them the same title when he handed the chapel over to the Brethren of the Cross (*Ann.*, 2, 140), as did an official of Cologne when he confirmed the privileges of the Order (*Ann.*, 2, 160).

The Archdeacon of Kempen, confirming the donation of the chapel of Saint Agatha on 23 March 1379, identified them in the same way, as did Cardinal Legate Petrus, a friend of prior-general Pincharius, in 1380 (*Ann.*, 169-176). Even emperor Sigismund used the correct denomination when giving a letter of

patronage to the Order on 31 Dec. 1417 (*Ann.*, 2, 216). These examples are but a very small sampling of the numerous documents, which have been preserved.

Nevertheless, in 1341 and 1375 the Order was obliged to defend its right to the title “ordo canonicus” before the episcopal curia in Cologne. The surviving record provides us with an excellent argument for the lawful use of this title by the Brethren of the Cross.

“At Lyon, on the calends of October in the year of our Lord 1248, the Holy Father, Innocent IV, favored the Order of the Holy Cross with noble prerogatives and privileges, and determined that these Brethren should serve God everywhere in the world following the Rule of Saint Augustine...

Item: This Order is founded on proper religious observance – in obedience, profession and legitimate direction, it is a real monastic foundation following the Rule of St. Augustine.

Item: That the aforementioned Rule of St. Augustine is completely approved by the Holy See, therefore it must be considered lawful, true, sanctifying and religious.

Item: The Brethren of the monastery in Cologne and of all other communities of the Order are appointed by the Prior-General and profess to be submissive to him according to the above-mentioned Rule of St. Augustine, as to their Superior General” (*Ann.*, 2, 82-84).

These points are made for the court of justice of the curia of Cologne:

- 1) The Rule of St. Augustine has ecclesiastical approval.
- 2) All Brethren of the Cross have been directed to accept the Rule.
- 3) The Order makes a point of affirming that it keeps this Rule well.
- 4) Moreover, it stresses its uniformity in observing the “*vita communis*”.

In the documentation at hand, it should be noted, the titles “*ordo canonicus*” and/or

“*Ordo St. Augustini*” are used in curial papers from 1580; later documents speak of “*Ordo fratrum sanctae Crucis*” or “*Ordo cruciferorum*” until 1757, when a return to the older titles took place.

While it is not easy to find an explanation for this bicentennial change in style, it is possible that after 1750 a struggle between the Paris Brothers with the canons of Saint Genevieve made the Order more aware and insistent on its canonical character.

Whatever the reason, on March 26 1757, the Congregation of Rites in Rome gave the “canons regular of St. Augustine of the Order of the Holy Cross” the privilege of celebrating feasts of the Augustinian saints (*Ann.*, 3, 475). In 1767 the papal nuncio in Cologne addressed them by the same title, and on 20 January 1769 the General and his Council also used it in a petition concerning the Statutes which was addressed to the Roman Curia (*Ann.*, 3, 520).

I believe that this summary view of available documents makes it quite clear that the Order of the Holy Cross was accepted as an order of canons regular and a community living according to the Rule of St. Augustine.

3. Definitions of the General Chapters

Dr. A. van de Pasch, OSC, recently published a study on the influence of Augustine’s Rule evident in the relicts of the General Chapters of the Order. We will make references to this study.

Better observance of Augustine’s Rule was at the heart of the reform of the Order in 1410.

In 1410, as a part of the reform of the Order, it was decided that each monastery should destroy any copy it might have of the relicts of the General Chapters from 1248 onward. One copy of each of these relicts would be kept in Huy, in the general archives of the Order. Unfortunately, these copies

disappeared without a trace during the French Revolution.

Better observance of Augustine's Rule was at the heart of the reform of the Order in 1410. The 1410 "Decisions of the General Chapter of the Brethren of the Holy Cross of St. Augustine" were unequivocal.

Augustine's Rule is called "clear through its simplicity," and the Chapter affirmed "We have promised and sworn to live according to this Rule" (*Def.*, 25, 26). This heading ("Decisions of the General Chapter of the Brethren of the Holy Cross of St. Augustine") introduced the relicts of the general chapters until 1433, indicating the veneration in which Augustine was held (*Def.*, 32-64).

The General Chapter of 1414 decreed "that priors and brothers ought to live constantly in the observance of the Rule of St. Augustine and our Constitutions, and to reform their common life" (*Def.*, 39).

One of the principal points of the Augustinian Rule is that the observance of poverty should take the form of personal poverty, based on the community holding all property in common.

This veneration of St. Augustine is also evident in the liturgy of the order. The chapter of 1417 decided that daily there might be only three "memorials", those being of the Holy Cross, of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Blessed Augustine (*Def.*, 35). In 1421, the feast "*Translatio B. Augustini*" (recalling the date of his death) was raised to a "duplex" feast (*Def.*, 42). In 1496, it was decided that in Masses on the feasts of Saint Augustine the preface of the Most Holy Trinity should be sung because he had been such a defender of this mystery (*Def.*, 203).

In 1464, the Chapter directed the priors of Liege, Cologne and Paris to make up a volume containing the authentic text of the

Rule, Constitutions and the liturgical code of the Order ("*Ordinarium*") (*Def.*, 122, *Ann.*, 2, 305 ff). The project was completed by the following year, and the chapter of 1465 decided that all convents of the Order should adjust their own basic documents to this model which the visitators would present to them (*Def.*, 124). However, this directive for change did not go off very well, and it was at least 1470 before the convents had put it into effect (*Def.*, 127-134).

One of the principal points of the Augustinian Rule is that the observance of poverty should take the form of personal poverty, based on the community holding all property in common. This became an important part of the reform of the Order after 1410. The chapter of 1578, however, had to deal very sternly with certain Brethren of the Cross, who had kept their family inheritances under their own control so they could live a bit more luxuriously. The chapter admonished them with words from the Rule, "Those who possessed something in the world should want to bring this in the community with all their heart" (*Def.*, 396). But the admonition did not solve the problem completely: the relict of the 1588 chapter talks about "the disease of personal property, of which our blessed Father Augustine had such dislike, and of which he had written early in his Rule: "Do not call anything your own property, but possess everything in common." (*Def.*, 416).

The Order was clearly aiming at a Rule-centered life in community. The monasteries were to have a common depository for clothing ("*vestiarium*") and food ("*cellarium*") (*Def.*, 454, 458). In 1682 the Chapter fathers said this community of property urged by the Rule of Augustine ought to be introduced and observed everywhere (*Def.*, 507). But in 1780 the battle was still being fought: the Chapter insisted that "*communitas*" had to be observed in all the monasteries of the Order in conformity with the Order's Rule and the Statutes (*Def.*, 517). It said, "The enormous evil of private property referred to in the Chapter resolutions of 1606 and 1631, and

several times later, must be extirpated completely” (Def., 517). But however sincere the intentions of the Chapters, their directives did not meet with complete compliance: the chapters of 1721, 1724, 1727 and 1730 (Def., 518-526) repeated the resolution of 1718 to exterminate “the plague of the private property” (Def., 529).

After the middle of the 18th century, the relicts make it plain that the Brethren of the Cross considered themselves to be “canons regular”: they called their houses “canonries” (*canoniae*) (Def., 536-545). Beyond this indication of how they saw themselves, they continued to insist on following the common life specified by the Rule (Def., 537). The Chapter of 1769 wrote: “To all our religious we recommend peace, fraternal unanimity and life according to the Rule, and in the divine office the necessary good order and respect” (Def., 542). It was the desire of the chapter of 1706 “that in this way the true unity of the brothers may flourish – *ConCorDia fratrUM*” (Def., 539).

4. Pincharius on Life in Common

In the preceding sections we have seen that official documents show very clearly that the Brethren of the Cross originally were followers of Augustine’s Rule. How far the actual living of their common life was really influenced by the Rule deserves some attention, and here we turn to the writings of the members of the Order. As a beginning point, the *Vestis Nuptialis* by Petrus Pincharius is very useful. Written about 1360, the work presents Pincharius’ understanding of the complete religious life. The works of other authors of the order are more fragmentary, but offer important information, which we will bring together in a later article.⁸

A. The “vita communis” as religious ideal of the Brethren of the Cross

Possidius defines the religious ideal, which Augustine wanted to revive in his monasteries “a life lived according to the directives of the Apostles.” He was

profoundly moved by what he read about the manner of life of the first Christian community in Jerusalem, and intended to experience that life-style with his brothers.⁹ Their shared life was not a matter of merely living together: they formed a real brotherhood which prayed and worked together, ate and drank together, and acted forthrightly as a community. Everybody was accepted in the life of the community and received the necessities of life “according to need.” Augustine states the ideal in his Rule: “to be of one heart and one spirit in God”, or as some manuscripts say, “on the way to God”. Unity in love and friendship are to be shared mutually on the way to God.

Their shared life was not a matter of merely living together: they formed a real brotherhood, which prayed and worked together, ate and drank together, and acted forthrightly as a community.

For Augustine, the Eucharist was a mark and source of unity: “Because there is one Bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10: 17). In this, the first Christians provided the model: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2: 42). In this Augustinian spirit, the Brethren of the Cross were deeply committed to the veneration of the Blessed Sacrament. This devotion perfectly suited their ideal of a common life lived in the manner of the primitive Church. They took great care in the solemn performance of the liturgy, a fact of which the resolutions of the general chapters give evidence time and time again. In this connection we should also note that the “*Mandatum*” was observed every week as an integral part of Thursday night Compline.

Although life in community had lost some of its perfection by his time, Pincharius considers life in community as the ideal way to arrive at “the meeting with the

Bridegroom”. As Prior General, he had zealously worked for reform; evidence of this can be found in the “*Vestis Nuptialis*,” where he describes the perfection of community living and suggests how it can be achieved by reviving the practice of personal poverty and by communal striving for God rather than for temporal property.¹⁰

They want to be “*laudatores Crucis*,” glorifiers of the mystery of the Cross, which shows itself in cordial brotherly love and in the arrangements made to handle the affairs of the community.

The *vita communis* is evident in the equitable distribution of clothing, food and lodging, in docility to the power of the authorities, and in the arrangements made for the observation of the Rule and the Statutes. These practices are beacons marking a safe road to God; their observance affords ample opportunity for being brothers of the Cross indeed. But this outward community of life should proceed from unanimity of spirit and heart, from a communal effort to possess God. The center of this common direction is Christ Crucified. The brothers meet Him personally and as a community in the solemn celebration of the *divina mysteria* – the Eucharist and the ecclesiastical Prayer of the Hours, to which the life of these canons regular is tuned and around which the whole monastic cycle turns. They want to be “*laudatores Crucis*,” glorifiers of the mystery of the Cross, which shows itself in cordial brotherly love and in the arrangements made to handle the affairs of the community. They call themselves also “*Crucis servitores*,” servants of the Cross; in other words, they want to be servants of Christ, and also to be dedicated to continuing his work of Salvation.¹¹

Consequently, Pincharius holds that love towards one’s fellow-creatures is the most important characteristic of religious life. He offers twelve reasons to make the importance of this virtue clear for his

readers. One should love one’s neighbor as Christ has loved us (Jn.15), as much as oneself (Mt.22, Lc.12) and as members of Christ’s Body, the Church (Rom.12). In this he follows Saint Augustine, who considers belief in Christ’s Mystical Body the foundation for life in his monasteries, and alluding to it clearly several times in his Rule. It should be noted that in their role as canons regular, the Brethren of the Cross accomplish by their liturgical life a special responsibility in the Church. In the liturgy they associate continually with the praying Christ, and as a community constitute a unity in God, the ideal which Augustine kept in view for the monastic life. From unity during prayer originates friendship with Christ and with each other. Therefore, the Brother of the Cross has to do everything possible to prevent a “breaking away from Christ”, both for himself and for his colleagues. Whoever wins someone to this unity in the community gains a friend for Christ, who made himself one of us for the glory of the celestial Father (*V.N.*, 231-252).

B. The Attitude of Life of the Brethren of the Cross

1. Following St. Augustine, Pincharius teaches that the vocation to religious life involves a change in one’s attitude toward life, a “*conversio*”. One has to turn away from the world and cross over to the service of God. In order to undo the harm done in Paradise, one has to lay aside the “old man” little by little, and to clothe oneself with “the figure of Christ”, the “new man”. One has to try to make oneself familiar with a new manner of life so as to become a “free child of God”.

Forsaking of the world (*contemptus mundi*) and self-denial (*abnegatio sui*) can be perceived as negative elements of the monastic life, but Pincharius considers them to be positive means to a truly religious life because they disconnect the religious from all entangling connections so that he can become completely free for the service of God. Pincharius is profoundly convinced that a life without God is an empty life, and

he finds several texts in which Saint Augustine puts this into words. Worldly fortune is uncertain and risky, and terrestrial gladness is shallow. Uncertainty and suffering make life difficult to endure. Man is only happy when he loves God (*V.N.*, 14-21).¹²

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But even inside the monastery one is not completely protected from temptations of the world. Augustine says that an army stands ready to wage a two-pronged battle against anyone who would imitate Christ: the enemy tries to seduce and deceive, and to alarm and discourage in order to weaken the determination of Christ's friends (*V.N.*, 136). And life in a monastery can bring its own problems with it. With Augustine, Pincharius understands that both superiors and confreres can make monastic life difficult (*V.N.*, 165-166). The superior may fail to be a father, and also colleagues may fall short in the love and friendship they owe each other. Pincharius says: Try to see these shortcomings as nothing more than a weakness in the love of your fellow-creatures. Try to accept these persons in love, this will give them spiritual joy. Stick to a good opinion of others, for this determines the value of your religious life. According to Augustine, the strength needed for this comes from the charity, which tolerates everything, out of love for the Beloved Bridegroom. The wise sage is not broken by fear, does not become proud when everything is going well, and does not collapse when there is reason for sorrow (*V.N.*, 125, 355, 359).

The life of penitence, which underpins the monastic life (*crux religionis*), is important in maintaining a spirit of self-denial. According to the practice of the Brethren of the Cross – adopted from the “*Consuetudines of Citeaux*” – the “cross of

repentance” (*crux penitentiae*) includes four things: the life of prayer (see further under D), the practices of fast and abstinence, the night watch connected with the midnight choir service, and religious discipline.¹³

The wise sage is not broken by fear, does not become proud when everything is going well, and does not collapse when there is reason for sorrow (*V.N.*, 125, 355, 359).

2. *Discretio*: the word means “wise moderation” (which has nothing to do with timidity). It stands for “good, practical judgment,” and implies moderation in the application of monastic discipline – in the matter of fasting, for example. In observing *discretio*, both the Prior and the brothers will be following the model given by Christ. In this, Pincharius adopts Augustine's doctrine, notably with regard to food and beverage (*V.N.*, 46). He teaches that in these matters neither abstinence nor enjoyment have any value in themselves; merit is found in moderation in use and in the serenity with which one does without. It is good to partake of these gifts of God, but it is also meritorious to abstain from them sometimes – not because they are bad, but because they are not necessary.

With Augustine, Pincharius recommends fasting: it purifies the mind, subordinates the flesh to the spirit, moves the heart to remorse, and encourages humility. It disperses the haze of greed, puts out the fire of the libido, and kindles the pure light of chastity. Those who fast avoid needless talk, consider wealth unnecessary, despise haughtiness, practice humility, and get to know themselves as weak and frail (*V.N.* 65). That is why the Rule says, “Bridle your flesh through fast and abstinence of food and drink, as far as your health allows.” One should abide by the hours fixed for meals; according to the Rule, “Outside the [fixed] hour of the meal nobody should eat

anything, unless he is ill.” But even then moderation is recommended: Augustine teaches us that if we let ourselves go, our mind immediately loses its energy to pray (*V.N.*,74).

Fasting should be an integral part of the *disciplina regularis*: St. Augustine teaches that just as the fast controls the flesh and idle talk, and holds in check all other forms of unacceptable spiritual activity, so monastic discipline should vitalize and confirm the fast. Pincharius follows the definition of the “alter-Augustine”, Hugo of St. Victor: “Monastic discipline is the adjustment and dignified arrangement of all our parts in all our doings”. But Pincharius adds that this agrees with the Rule, which says, “In your going and staying, your bearing and all your stirring, nothing should offend other people who are looking on, but should always be such as befits your holy status” (*V.N.*,78-80).

3. *Humility* is the necessary foundation for any good religious life. St. Augustine stressed the importance of the virtue so much that an “ambition for humility” developed within the Church (Harnack). Religious humility fosters obedience and points the way to gentleness and patience. It leads to the subordination of the personal will. That is why Pincharius says that the example for us in this is Jesus Christ, God who became human. He is not only example, but also grace; as Augustine says, “Walk through Christ’s humility to arrive at His eternity; God-Chris is; the fatherland where we go, Man-Chris is the way which we have to walk.” This religious humility is the key to true wisdom, according to Augustine: “The greater the humility with which Mary sat at Jesus’ feet, the more she understood Him.” (*V.N.*, 258-261).

Pincharius – like St. Augustine – attacks pride resolutely. He is able to picture this vice in a masterly fashion, and he knows the cunning way in which it can infect the best actions of one’s life. Pride – a false self-aggrandizement and self-centeredness – is an attitude which makes it impossible to

submit to the authority of the prior or to respect one’s confreres (*V.N.*,152). In this matter, accordingly, both superiors and subjects must be prudently watchful. Every religious is bound to cherish humility, for perfection lies in that direction, not in human praise. The struggle against vainglory is a continuing war. In many ways, and sometimes very subtly, pride lays snares for the unwary; even a victory over temptation can become an opportunity for pride to enter the soul. Pride attacks from all sides; it will use anything – our dress, manners, learning, silence, obedience, even our humility itself – to gain entrance to the soul and poison it. As the Rule says: “Every other vice shows itself in bad actions, but pride always lies in wait for good deeds, to destroy them” (*V.N.*,157-159). Envy, pride’s daughter, produces bad actions continuously. For that reason Pincharius reminds us of St. Augustine’s advice: Do away with the mother, then the daughter too will disappear (*V.N.*,162). The proud and jealous must come to understand how rewarding genuine mutual love is: it turns the good of others into one’s own good. Loving the brothers from the heart will bring into being that true unity of heart and mind, directed at God, which St. Augustine sees as the ideal of the “*vita communis*” (*V.N.*,218).

4. *Devotion*: devotedness to God. Does the word bring to your mind devotion in prayer? To the people of the Middle Ages, “devotion” meant abandoning oneself to God, having the courage to depend upon God, committing oneself completely to God. One comes to that devotion through the virtues of faith, hope and love; moreover, this devotion is the purpose behind the vows made by religious. One wants to be totally God’s, in body and mind, with faculties and talents. Here, too, Pincharius follows St. Augustine, who wrote in his book *About Virginity*, “A soul devoted to God disposes of himself and his habits in such a manner that he – supposing he wanted this – would not know any longer how to take them again” (*V.N.*,339). In the 14th century another Brother of the Cross wrote in his

Booklet about the Perfection of the Brethren of the Cross that this total devotion must be attained by the willingness to make sacrifices: “Sacrifice your body by privation and work, your heart by obedience... not only to the superior, but also to the divine commandments and counsels, and to the dictates of grace.” He also uses “devotion” in the medieval sense: “Devotion is a continuous thinking of God, a continuous orientation of our attention toward knowing Him, a tireless inclination toward His love, lest there be only one – I will not say day, but hour – that you find yourself either in strenuously exercising a zeal to thrive, or in the sweetness of experience, or in the joy of possession.” Pincharius calls this open-handed self-denial “*denudatio*.”¹⁴

Augustine maintains that keeping God constantly in one’s thoughts makes it possible for man to preserve purity in his perishable body. Pincharius defines the virtue of *castitas* as “the virtue which bridles the violence of the libido by the yoke of reason”, a definition which he derives from Augustine’s writings. From Augustine also comes the advice to find peace in a variety of activities: through fasting and abstinence, through reading, manual labor or prayer. One of the means to live chastely is to practice religious soberness in clothing, lodging and covering because excess in this only fans the hearth of the libido (*V.N.*,334-336).

“Follow the Lamb, achieving in tenacity what you have promised in your first ardor; do what is possible to preserve virginity because nothing can be done to make it come back. It is as irreparable as a broken lamp.”

Several dangers threaten those who want to live as celibates - who, in other words, want to live totally in God and for God. The first is pride, which is able to mislead even a celibate. St. Augustine says that chastity and humility ought to co-exist. The Almighty is

pleased when humility recommends virginity and virginity adorns humility (*V.N.*,343-345).

A second trap is *fatuitas* – the lack of love – as the parable affirms by saying that the foolish virgins had not brought with them oil for their lamps.

The third snare is *tepiditas*, laid for those who think that they have sinned only a little. St. Augustine says, “You have to love God more ardently because He did not permit you to commit a sin. So do not love less because you were forgiven little only, but rather love much because you were given much.”

The fourth trap is the *separation of the heart and its source of salvation*. In his heart the Brother of the Cross ought to become attached to the One who was fastened to the cross for him.

Finally, *tenacity* is required: “Follow the Lamb, achieving in tenacity what you have promised in your first ardor; do what is possible to preserve virginity because nothing can be done to make it come back. It is as irreparable as a broken lamp.”

C. A Rule of Life for the Brethren of the Cross

That the Apostles took their commitment to heart is evident in the organization of the first Christian community in Jerusalem. Their life-in-common was completely voluntary (Acts 4, 32-35; 5, 4). This community charmed Augustine so much that he based his own foundation upon it. He proposed a rule of life grounded on this “*vita apostolica*”, this “*vita primitivae ecclesiae*”. This was more than merely words: he himself once summed up the rule of life for this community, “The religious must be free from desire of possession, ought to contribute to the maintenance of the community and obey his superiors.”¹⁵

1. *Poverty*.¹⁶ In the biblical sense, obedience and poverty belong together. At the time of the founding of the Order of the Holy Cross,

the practice of poverty was attracting renewed attention everywhere in the Church. It was seen as an imitation of the Poor Man of Nazareth, who practiced his love for people in perfect self-denial. This predilection for Christ's *humanitas*, which St. Bernard had awakened in the medieval monasteries, clearly shaped the spirituality of *Vestis Nuptialis* as well. There is no doubt that St. Bernard found his inspiration in Augustine's writings. In Pincharius, too, we find various quotations from the Father of the Rule, who, according to Fisen, had a strong influence in the neighborhood of Liege. Pincharius was well-informed on the currents in the Church and in the surrounding areas, and he was aware of the abuses which had crept into the practice of obedience. This is obvious from the descriptions in his *Vestis Nuptialis*.¹⁷ It is important to understand that he borrows his principles for the observance of religious poverty from St. Augustine's Rule: "How distinctly our Holy Father Augustine warns us in the Rule, according to which we dedicate ourselves to God: 'Those who did not possess anything in the world must not look inside the monastery for that which they could not have outside of it, nor must they consider themselves lucky because they have found food and clothing which they were not able to find outside; nor must they feel proud because now they are associating with people whom they were not bold enough to approach outside, but they ought to lift up their heart to God, and not to look for worldly vanities.'" (V.N.,118).

"A good conscience, righteousness, mercifulness, purity and soberness – whoever abounds in these is really rich, even if he turns up stark naked from a shipwreck" (V.N.,122).

Real richness and true joy proceed finally from the possession of God. According to Augustine, the virtues which people practice are the true wealth enriching humankind: "A good conscience, righteousness, mercifulness, purity and soberness – whoever abounds in these is really rich, even

if he turns up stark naked from a shipwreck" (V.N.,122).

True joy exists in actual good, according to St. Augustine: "[However,] this is true and unique joy, which is obtained not from creatures, but from God; in comparison with this, all gladness is sorrow, all sweetness pain, all delight bitter, all splendor repugnant, and all that may please, ugly" (V.N.,395).

Pincharius calls his readers' attention not only to the Rule and other writings of St. Augustine, but to the bishop's way of life. For this he has consulted Possidius's *Vita*: "...about our Father the Law-giver...his clothing and shoes were neither inadequate nor too good, and he wished that this would become his followers' standards. Therefore he writes in his Rule, 'When asked for, clothing and shoes must be given to those who are in need of them by the person who has been appointed to that task.' And in another place: "Your clothes are to be washed as the superior directs, either by yourself or by a launderer, so that an excessive concern for clean clothing would not stain the inner garment of the soul."

The brother of the Cross also should practice repentance in the quality and the use of his bed, imitating the God-man who had to rest in such agony on the cross. About this St. Augustine said so beautifully, "Christ left that bed behind for his disciples. Everyone who wants to rest with Him in heaven, has to stretch himself on that bed now, he has to die on his cross of repentance if he ever wants to behold his Leader in gladness." By this "*crux poenitentiae*" Pincharius means the monastic life of the Brethren of the Cross, as set down in the Rule and the Constitutions. "The very praiseworthy religious sense of our fathers prescribes with serious anxiety in the Constitutions of the Order that their followers should practice simplicity, severity and humility in matters of lodging and clothing. [Clothing] should be cleaned at a convenient time and place – by the brothers themselves or by launderers, but according to the superior's directives.

For the life to which we are committed should not take pleasure in or be covetous of clothing, but concerned with the conduct of life. And the Brother of the Cross would break the Rule and will not find pleasure in good conduct, should he aspire after precious, beautiful, soft, idle, exotic, worldly and plentiful things, which stir up the flame of the libido” (*V.N.*,85-91; 337-338).

2. *Brotherly Love.* For Augustine, brotherly love means loving people because they are righteous, or in order that they may become righteous. In all his considerations about brotherly love, his starting point is the fundamental idea of the faith: all Christians form one body, whose Head is Christ.

Pincharius, too, sees the Church (and equally the Order and the community) as one unity of redeemed souls, with Christ, the only possible Redeemer and Head, as Mediator of all grace and all glory. In the soul of each redeemed person dwells – according to the word of the Rule – “the Holy Spirit, whose temples we have become.” This is also the most profound reason for our unity and love for each other (*V.N.*,213).

“But,” says our holy father Augustine, “you are not loving your neighbor as yourself if you do not help him reach the good for which you yourself strive. Whoever loves his neighbor should love him because he is holy, or so that he may become holy.”

“Lastly, the principle evidence for the presence of divine love in the soul is that one manifests the required love, not only toward the superior as Christ’s *locum tenens* or towards the elder brothers, but also equally toward his substitutes and eternal servants. He who honors them in this way honors God – who despises them despises God” (*V.N.*,230-231).

This brotherly love, then, does not rest upon a kind of good will or humane-ness, but

upon a supernatural base. “Not only brotherly love according to the flesh, but specially love in the spirit arouses mutual love: the same grace of the Holy Spirit, the same vocation for community and order. Our holy father Augustine says, “We are all brothers because we are all people; how much more, however, because we are Christians. Because we are human, one man is our father, namely Adam, and one woman our mother, namely Eve; however, because we are Christians, Christ’s very brothers, our common Father is God and our common Mother the holy Church.” Nevertheless, we should take the initiative in showing love, for according to Augustine, “There is no greater invitation to love than to be under obligation by loving first (*V.N.*,239).

The standard for measuring brotherly love should be this: that one loves one’s neighbor as oneself. “But,” says our holy father Augustine, “you are not loving your neighbor as yourself if you do not help him reach the good for which you yourself strive. Whoever loves his neighbor should love him because he is holy, or so that he may become holy. That is the danger-free way to love one’s neighbor as oneself.” Listen to the words of gold addressed to the Lord by our holy father Augustine: “Lord, blessed is he who loves you, and who loves his friend in you, and who loves his enemy because of you.” Indeed, nothing in God’s commandments is more astounding than that we are ordered to love our enemies. Listen, sons, to our holy father Augustine, who urges us to love our enemies: “I urge you to love your enemies, because I do not know a better way to heal the wounds inflicted by sin.” And in another place he says, “It is a lovely kindness to love your enemy, to be kindly disposed toward him always, and if possible, to do good to him who is ill-disposed towards you and harms you when he can.” He says further, “Who loves his enemies will be God’s friend.” And not only his friend, but even son of the Most High: “No matter how much grace we have gained, we are no more than undeserving servants; it is through love for our enemies

that we become God's children" (*V.N.*,242-250).

The love of God is unavoidably associated with *the fear of the Lord*. Augustine defines fear as "spiritual flight from evil, so as not to lose what one loves." Elsewhere he says, "Fear is love which flees from what resists it." "Fear may be slavish," Augustine says, "when somebody flees from the sin for fear of hell. This fear is not associated with love. When one does good for fear of punishment rather than out of love for what is right, the good is flawed. What seems to be done well does not proceed from a good motive: it would not have been done if it could have been omitted with impunity." What good we do should proceed from a good heart which loves God sincerely (*V.N.*,269-273).¹⁸

Spiritual love is, after all – according to the Rule – also forgiving. The daily celebration of the Eucharist in itself invokes this sense, because Christ made this connection between Sacrifice and love for one another. However, where there are people, there too are human failings and tensions, in which case one first of all must forgive one's neighbor from one's heart. "If he isn't at home, go and throw yourself not at his feet, but in the humility of your heart before the face of the Lord, to whom you bring your offering. If he is at home, invite him back into love for one another, by asking his forgiveness if you have offended him, or by ridding yourself of the poisonous feelings in your heart if he has offended you. There are many kinds of alms which help us to obtain forgiveness for our sins, but nothing is as helpful and effective as when we forgive others their faults, from our heart" (*V.N.*, 378; 409).¹⁹

3. *Obedience*. Obedience is sacred and wholesome, and St. Augustine invites us to it, "My most beloved brothers, call attention to and be willing to obey God's commandments, your ears always open to hear Him, your voice ready to speak, your feet quick to go, your hands prepared to do his work without hesitation, with happiness in the heart, a smile on the face and around

the mouth, and with eyes shining from holiness. However, I want to see you practice holy obedience out of love, not out of slavish fear or terror. If we are obedient, we shall never fall short of the mark" (*V.N.*,98).

Obedience should also be shown to the superior, who stands in God's place here on earth. The Rule under which we have been professed tells us, "You should obey your superior as a father, because it is he who takes God's place among you." We should not try to make our superior command what we like most, because that is very defective obedience. St. Augustine puts it well: "Your best servant is that one who is not intent on hearing from you what he himself lives, but rather upon liking what he hears from you." Obedience does not suffer when something less difficult is ordered, because "In paradise obedience was all the greater when what was ordered was not difficult at all." Therefore the opposite must also be true (*V.N.*,104-105).²⁰

"One prayer of the obedient person is heard quicker than ten thousand sighs of the disobedient one," Augustine teaches.

Through our profession our personality has been taken over completely by our union with Christ. Through this turning to God we assumed the correct and only possible attitude towards God, and God became completely our property and possession. Thus disobedience is also, as our Rule-maker St. Augustine affirms, a kind of robbery committed against God. "Not only by bad will, but also by ambition for power does a person become bad, because by this desire something with its roots in a bad will is satisfied." And even more explicitly in another place: "If the will turns toward the inferior by leaving the superior, it becomes worse, not so much because the object toward which it turns is bad or an act of theft, but the turning itself is an act of theft."

Because God desires the right attitude of mind and heart, every irregularity of the soul punishes itself. In the spiritual life, retribution is immediate: “One prayer of the obedient person is heard quicker than ten thousand sighs of the disobedient one,” Augustine teaches.²¹

3. *Murmur (grumbling)* is for that reason one of the serious evils in a religious attitude of life. Among other faults, the religious must be specially on his guard against grumbling and must keep this rather completely out of the monastery. He must not grumble quickly for any light reason - when something does not suit him, perhaps, or something goes a bit against his wishes or is difficult. This is sometimes punished severely by God, as St. Augustine tells us, “The Jewish people had sinned in nothing more than in murmuring against God.” Consequently, the Brother of the Cross must learn not to grumble, even if he does not understand why he has to endure something; he already knows he has to suffer justly because he is being judged by God, whose verdict is always righteous. Moreover, in his Rule Augustine warns repeatedly that grumbling is a menace to a good monastic spirit.²²

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D. The Community’s Way of Life

Since Panchomius’s days, religious have lived in their monasteries according to a certain, fixed day order. Besides hours designated for prayer, there were fixed hours for reading, for work and for the apostolate. St. Augustine imitates this plan, which includes a balance of contemplation and action, in order to encourage quiet and to help make the monastic life with God more vital.²³

1. *The Life of Prayer.* Prayer has the most important place in the form of monastic life, especially for canons regular, who are committed to prayer by profession and by their responsibility to care for community prayer and liturgy, on behalf of the Holy Church. It is not surprising, then, that Pincharius has written so much about the life of prayer. What does catch the attention, however, is that he looks to the Rule so much for support. Although the Rule does not devote much space to prayer, it does contain points so important that Pincharius could draw on it as a main source.

The need for prayer is accepted rather than argued. Like Christ, Augustine says that we have to pray always, but as a community especially at the fixed times and hours.

The Liturgy of the Hours is a primary communal activity for canons regular; but beyond these fixed hours, the daily schedule should provide opportunities for each religious to meet God easily and personally. Although the Rule affirms this explicitly, Pincharius goes a step further: he thinks that the privacy of the convent cell is the proper place for meditation and that this accords with a tradition of the Order, a desire for seclusion, which is mentioned as a characteristic of the new foundation in the oldest Exordia, where the Brethren of the Cross are called “*eremi cultures*” (*V.N.*,48).

According to Pincharius, the ideal of continuous prayer should be reached first of all by praying often. Writing about the cultivation of *solitudo* in his third book of the *V.N.*, he raises the question, “Is it possible for a man with so many cares and activities, his attention distracted by so many occupations, to pray without interruption?” Listen to the comforting words of our holy father Augustine, who says, “To pray without interruption? Are we able to kneel without interruption, or to throw ourselves flat on the earth, or to raise our hands to heaven? That is impossible, isn’t it? But there is an inner prayer that has no interruption. That prayer is desire: if you want to pray, you pray without ceasing,

whatever you are doing. If you do not want to break your prayer off, do not stop wanting to pray; then your unbroken desire is for you a constant praying and calling”. This should make for a good life which endures, because “The saint never stops praying unless he stops being a saint; who always does well, always prays” (V.N.,384-385).

In this way the life of the Brother of the Cross becomes a constant praising of God. It is noteworthy that Pincharius, in this matter too, goes back to the oldest stories about the origin of the Order. These accounts indicate that the most important purpose of the Order was considered to be *Crucem laudare* – to praise God because of the Redemption, and so to praise the symbol and tool of the Redemption – the Cross, through which all the fruits of the redemption are applied to us.

Prayer has the most important place in the form of monastic life, especially for canons regular, who are committed to prayer by profession and by their responsibility to care for community prayer and liturgy, on behalf of the Holy Church.

“*In Deo laudabitur tota die*” (Ps. 43). St. Augustine explains the passage in this way: “Of whom might we say that he loves God the whole day? If you like, I will show you how to praise God all day long. Whatever you do, do it well and you praise God. If you sing hymns, you praise God: What does your voice do that your heart does not? You stop singing hymns and leave the church in order to refresh yourself: stay sober and you praise God. You do business: do it honestly and you praise God. You cultivate a field: do not shift the boundary-stones and you praise God. Through the innocence of your actions you prepare your soul to praise God all day long.”

Was the *instantia in frequentando* the most condition for the life of prayer? The Rule insists that what the mouth pronounces

should arise from what the heart intends. A good intention is the primary condition: the Liturgy of the Hours must include *intentio in cogitando* and *maturitas in promuntiando*. Clearly, a proper intention is the most important condition. Further, during the Liturgy of the Hours, one should not follow one’s own whims and moods, but stick to what is prescribed. The Liturgy of the Hours is an obligation for the Brother of the Cross as a canon regular: it is prescribed by the Rule on which he emits his profession in an “*Ordo canonicus Augustini*”, and the specific times for that are further appointed by the statutes and customs of his Order. This serious obligation develops from the Order’s affiliation to the Augustinian spirituality. “The more frequently he is called on to pray, the more serious his devotion should be” (V.N.,48-50).

The most important purpose of the Order was considered to be *Crucem laudare* – to praise God because of the Redemption, and so to praise the symbol and tool of the Redemption – the Cross, through which all the fruits of the redemption are applied to us.

Consequently, perseverance in his state, *stabilitas in ordine*, is also indispensable. “Many people”, says our holy father Augustine, “gradually slacken in prayer. As long as their “conversion” is a new thing, they pray fervently for a short time, but later more and more weakly, still later coldly, and finally very carelessly. They seem to be confident in prayer as long as they think that it may accomplish something, or as long as they get some personal satisfaction from this kind of neglectful and frigid prayer. But they are greatly mistaken. They cannot have any merit before God, for whom every heart is like an open book and by whom every desire is clearly heard; instead, they should realize that they deserve punishment for such conduct.” That is why inner attention and dedication should accompany the outward forms of prayer and give them their proper

value. Augustine says, “What is the use of noisy lips when the heart is mute? The difference between the animal’s skin and the animal itself -- that is the difference between the sound of the voice and the devotion of the heart when praying” (*V.N.*, 51-52).

The “night-watch” is an unavoidable mortification connected with the midnight Liturgy of Hours. Observing this austerity of the order even for years does not accustom human nature to this interruption of sleep. Because of this, there is the danger that the religious will try to escape from this burden by offering false excuses – false, even if not entirely imaginary. Only a continuous, pure orientation towards the purpose of monastic life will make the religious bear this cross with love, for neither the sleepers nor idlers gain the Kingdom of Heaven. Our holy father Augustine tells us, “Such people always imagine that they are being guided by a spirit of prudent moderation. They say: ‘If you are always reading and studying, your sight begins to fail, and if you are always shedding tears, you will lose your eyes. If you sing psalms in long night-watches, you will become crazy.’ But, if you are so afraid of exerting yourself for the work of the day, when then will you start your spiritual task?” (*V.N.*, 63-64)

Study was not an end in itself, nor the means to intellectual pleasure or scientific satisfaction: it was the means by which humankind discovered the way to life’s real objective – God (*V.N.*, 317-332).

2. *Study and Reflection on the Holy Scripture and the Lord’s Passion.* The seclusion in which the Brother of the Cross lives is meant to promote the regularity of life necessary for the canonical life of prayer. For this reason also this life is filled with reading and study, the “*Lectio divina*”, as it has been called through the centuries. Saint Augustine was a man of study and knowledge before he began his monastic life, and although his interests may have

taken a slightly different direction after his conversion, his natural bent for study became a force which shaped his daily schedule of study and reflection. A word of caution is necessary here. We should not see “study” as the strictly rationalistic thing it has become in our time. In Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages, faith was the solid underpinning of study, which included both intellectual activity and contemplation. Study involved the whole human personality – mind, heart and will. Study was not an end in itself, nor the means to intellectual pleasure or scientific satisfaction: it was the means by which humankind discovered the way to life’s real objective – God (*V.N.*, 317-332).

This is what “study” meant to the medieval Pincharius. He stresses the directions given by the Statutes of the Order: day and night, indoors or out, wherever he may be, the brother of the Cross should always be (spiritually) occupied with the study of Holy Scripture and the reflection that will enable him to put into practice what he has learned. Accordingly, Pincharius emphasizes two points. First, a tireless study of the holy books: nothing better restrains the innate inclination to sin or helps keep body and soul pure. We learn from St. Bernard the manner in which the Brother of the Cross will go about his study, and the intention which should shape it: to study in order to gather true wisdom, to be edified oneself, and to be able to help other people on their ascent to God. We should pursue knowledge in order to do good. Whoever approaches Holy Scripture in this manner finds much pleasure in it: the allegory hidden in the surface story can give much comfort. Written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Holy Scripture teaches certain things clearly and lucidly, others in a more mysterious manner. It is like a fertile garden, which produces some things, which one can eat without further preparation, and others which can be made edible only by cooking them over the fire. The more one learns to draw from this rich well by zealous study, however, the more one comes to like it,

because nothing is better than the frequent study of Holy Scripture: nothing is seized on with more enthusiasm, nothing calls the mind back from love for the world or strengthens the spirit so much against temptation, nothing stimulates us so much and supports us in all our work, in all good actions.

In his Rule, St. Augustine urges us to daily study: “Every day one should ask for books at the fixed time.” Our predecessors, very pious and very fond of study, spelled out this Rule further, decreeing that the Brothers of the Cross should read books of theology only. They nearly forbade books on liberal arts and philosophy (in which foolish people see their highest good) allowing only minimal use of them, in order to draw from these sources something that might be useful for the sacred studies.

Knowledge should not make the Brother of the Cross proud. It should be a step on his ascent to God; therefore, growth of knowledge must involve growth in humility and love. True or divine wisdom consists of three things: *True knowledge of God*, because as our holy father Augustine tells us, “The person who knows everything, but does not know God, is unhappy”. Further, *obedience of God’s commandments*, because according to Augustine, “True wisdom is not to know God’s word, but to live according to God’s word.” Finally, wisdom consists in *love for neighbor*, because, again according to Augustine, “One practices what is hidden in and is evident from God’s word if one practices love in his behavior.”²⁴

The Brother of the Cross will gladly study and reflect on the Passion of our Lord. This is his duty as a Christian, but more especially as a *Crucifer* – a Cross-bearer who bears the *stigmata*, or “Christ’s coat of arms” upon his habit and in his name. Let us listen to our holy father. Augustine, who says, “You are bearing his name of Christian in vain if you do not follow Christ: What profit do you get from being called what you are not? But if you are a committed Christian, act as a Christian and accept the

name of Christian rightly.” Pincharius concludes, “If you want to be a Brother of the Cross, be satisfied with what belongs to the Cross.” From his points for reflection, which follow a few pages later, it becomes clear that he has investigated assiduously the Scripture and the Fathers’ commentaries on it. He arrives at the conclusion that Christ crucified is a model for all virtues and a source of consolation and encouragement, and that Christ, here, is the Mediator of all grace and glory. This is an Augustinian thought that returns again and again, so it is not surprising that it is quoted by Augustine’s disciple. Consider the *Liber de Virginitate*: “Look at the wounds of the one hanging there, at the blood of that dying Person, at the ransom of that Redeemer, of the scars of the Risen Man. He bends his head for the kiss; his heart is opened to love, his arms spread widely to embrace. Meditate on what this signifies and consider it in your heart, that he may be anchored wholly in that heart, he who has been nailed on the Cross entirely for you” (*V.N.*,332).

“As a fish out of water dies soon, so away from solitude, the religious spirit quickly disappears.”

Studying and reflecting on Christ’s Passion bring Pincharius to a form of asceticism which may be called “the asceticism of the Cross”. But, however sublime this insight, this bearing-of-the-cross-with-Christ is only a means to becoming his disciple and friend. This friendship brings Pincharius to a mysticism of the Cross which can fill life with love and joy in the Holy Spirit, and which is a foretaste of the contemplation of the Risen Lord in the glory of the Father.

3. *Apostolate*. When the first five Brethren of the Cross withdrew into solitude at the beginning of the 13th century, they lived the “*vita apostolica*” strictly, without any doubt. The ideal was “to follow naked the naked Christ”. Because of this Pincharius still talks of “*denudatio*”, and Funk writes about “the

literal imitation of Jesus' poverty". Jacob of Vitry calls it "*vita apostolica*" or also "*vita primitivae ecclesiae*". Even so we may not exclude completely the practice of apostolate in one or another modern sense.²⁵

Pincharius likes to keep the Brethren of the Cross within the walls of the monastery. Who leaves the monastery for some other reason than love for his fellow-creatures, or out of obedience or necessity, exposes himself to many kinds of perils and will come to all sorts of misdeeds. He quotes a medieval saying, "As a fish out of water dies soon, so away from solitude, the religious spirit quickly disappears." However he does understand that obedience and love may call the Brothers to work outside the walls. For the apostolate of preaching and administration of the sacraments he demands an exceptional purity of morals: a total *denudatio* is required in order to preach God's word to others. In this he affirms a centuries-old tradition of the Order, exemplified by the itinerant preacher and Jacob of Vitry, who combined the ambulant preaching with extremely severe self-denial. This practice was applied especially against the Albigenses (Fulco, Dominicus) (*V.N.*,405).

It is clear, too, that it was assumed that priests would administer the sacraments. Pure conduct of life is required of all religious, because their life is a mirror for the laity; but it is required more especially of priests, who in virtue of their office must cleanse souls through the administration of Baptism and Confession. Confessions must have been heard frequently in the conventual churches, and Baptism administered where these were parish churches as well, and also in churches served from the monastery (French convents, Beyenburg) (*V.N.*,412).

The principal form of apostolate of the Brethren of the Cross was their careful concern for liturgical services. For this apostolic work, which they practiced as a form of pastoral care, they were called and deputed by the Church. Because their ambition was to awaken people of faith to a

greater devotion to God, they were often summoned to this task by the nobility and the guilds. Not least among their activities, they practiced an extremely useful apostolate by providing for the wants of poor people, and for travelers and pilgrims, who found food and shelter in their hospices when the town gate was closed. In addition, during times of pestilence there was a real love-inspired need to work outside the walls assisting the victims of plague spiritually and corporally (*V.N.*,366).

5. Pincharius's Term of Office (1363-1382)

During his term of office as Prior General of the Order, Petrus Pincharius exerted himself to the utmost to revive the original observance "by restraining excessive freedom and restoring obedience."²⁶ It is a pity that the resolutions of the General Chapters during his term of administration have been lost; however, we still do possess two small tracts which most probably date from this period, and which show us something of that reform movement. Both texts have reached us through early fifteenth-century copies, each transcribed from an older model. The vigor with which Pincharius emphasizes the observance of poverty and a positive return to the Augustine's Rule and spirituality in his *Vestis nuptialis* increase the likelihood that the *De mysteriis* came into being under the influence of this reform movement.

A. *Devotus libellus de perfectione fratrum sanctae cruces*²⁷

This small work was published in this periodical by Dr. A. van de Pasch in 1953. He found it in a manuscript coming from the Brethren of the Cross in Cologne (Ms. GB4, 192, pag. 22r-34v). The manuscript dates from before 1439, and the little tract is surely copied from an older model. Even though this opinion is not strictly provable, it is in my view highly probable that the work was influenced by Pincharius's reform activity. Van de Pasch supposes that it originated in instruction or spiritual direction. It strongly emphasizes *denudatio*,

the acceptance of poverty in both body and mind. The adage “*nudus nudum Christum sequi*” developed in detail, also indicates an early dating. In his efforts to restore the original observance, Pincharius also strongly stressed the practice of poverty.²⁸

Beyond quotations (literal and otherwise) from the Old Testament (Prophets, Psalms), only a few references to an Augustinian spirituality are found. Since the base of religious life is poverty, the author calls the Brother of the Cross “Brother of the poor Crucified Man”, and calls him especially to simplicity of life. That is certainly in accord with Augustine’s ideas, though his name is not mentioned in this context. Also the simplicity and severity of the cell, as he describes it, is in harmony with the early ideal of the Canons Regular, among others, who practiced personal poverty in that way. Finally, one ought to persevere “in searching, finding, knowing and duly despising your frailties, deficiencies, faults, of this one thing in you that – according to Augustine – can be directed towards God alone.” Perhaps in this “*in Deum*”, however faintly, the “search for God” of Augustine’s Rule rings through.

B. “*De Mysteriis allegorice cruces habitus nostri*”²⁹

Augustine’s influence is more clearly recognizable in another little work in the monastery of the Brethren of the Cross at Huy. The manuscript is a copy which dates from the early fifteenth century, although the original must have been produced in the second part of the 14th century. The author is unknown.

The little work is translated into Dutch as *Allegorische beschouwingen over het kruis op het Ordekleeid*. It contains an extensive reflection on the red and white cross which is worn on the Order’s scapular and choir mantle. The author’s summary of religious life makes use of a medieval numerical symbolism, which no longer means anything to us. However, the work does contain profound views, born of Augustinian

spirituality, about important elements of the spiritual life.

The Order’s various attempts at reform were linked to movements of renewal within the Church, and led again and again to periods of flourishing evangelical life based on the Rule of Augustine.

Wearing the distinctive mark of the Order is valuable only when one bears it in the heart also. Out of love, Christ has loved and redeemed us in His Blood “that we also should love each other.” This love is so necessary that without it neither virtue nor salvation is possible “Because love is the only form of all virtues, and it is the form which gives each thing its reason for existence.” Therefore Augustine says, “Wherever there is love, what can be missing? And where love is wanting, what can be useful still there? One ought to carry this love for God and the neighbor inside and show it outside.”

Moreover, the author quotes the prologue of Augustine’s Rule, “Before all else, dear brethren, love God and then your neighbor because these are the chief commandments given us. The following are the precepts we order you who live in the monastery to observe.” As in the Rule, the author’s starting-point is the priority of love. From this position he considers all other virtues: soberness, obedience, humility, etc. In considering chastity, he even quotes the Rule twice: “The unchaste eye carries the message of an impure heart” and “Although your eyes may chance to rest on some woman or other, you must not fix your gaze on any woman.”

The anonymous Brother of the Cross repeatedly and principally cites the New Testament (Gospel and Revelations of St. John, and also his Epistles and several Epistles of St. Paul). Occasionally he quotes a saying of Bernard or Jerome, but his spirituality is obviously Augustinian. Love

is the source, form and norm of the religious life.

6. The Seventeenth Century³⁰

There can be no doubt about the intrinsic value of Augustine's Rule, which has been approved and recommended as an authentic and sure way to practice the Gospel. Every time that the Order sets out to reform itself and return to the original observance, it turns to the Rule as the source, form and norm of religious life.

The Order's various attempts at reform were linked to movements of renewal within the Church, and led again and again to periods of flourishing evangelical life based on the Rule of Augustine. At its beginning, the Order was involved in the Gregorian Reformation of the Church, which, among other things, gave rise to canons regular, who "again live in the Gospel". In this they met the "Man Jesus Christ", and wanted to be "*pauperes Christi*", who "naked want to follow the naked Christ" – "*nudus nudum Christum sequi*". They consciously chose the "*vita apostolica*," the "*vita primitivae ecclesiae*," which they found described in Augustine's Rule.

During the 14th and 15th centuries – Pincharius's time – the Western Schism undermined the Church, which divided in two, later three obediences. It was the time of rising Individualism, which would develop into the Renaissance. Against it, the "Modern Devotion", which advocated a renewal of life in community to resist the rise of individualism, took its stand. Within the Order, this brought a renewed attention to the *communio* advocated by the Rule, and to the practice of personal poverty. In the Order, the Reform of 1410 moved in the same direction and preceded in time even the movement of Geert Groote.

The 16th and 17th centuries were the time of the Counter-Reformation. This reform movement, which began independently of Protestantism, manifested itself in the foundation of new associations of

monasteries and the renewal of older Orders. The Council of Trent, which closed on 4 Dec. 1563, not only defined church doctrine, but also drew up a plan for reform of the whole Church. Before long, this appeared in the revival of Mysticism and ecclesiastical study. Without doubt, the vitality of the church undergirded this reform, but the spirit of the age certainly made it prosper. Humanism awakened a strong desire to return to the sources of Scripture and the Fathers, to the sources of the original spirituality of monastic orders. The Counter-Reformation brought a new revival to the Brethren of the Cross – a revival which benefited from the energetic leadership of three excellent Priors-General: Georgius Constantini (1587-1602), Hermannus Hasius Stralensis (1602-1618) and Augustinus Neaerius (1619-1648).

The monastery of the Brethren of the Cross at Venlo demonstrated striking influence in the important contribution it made to the reform of 1410 and to the Counter-Reformation generally. At the general chapter of 1410, Jan de Merode of Venlo, supported by his brother in Liege and many confreres, took a far-reaching initiative. The coalition succeeded in inducing prior-general Jean d'Avins to resign, so the way was left clear for a needed "reform in head and limbs". Libertus Janssen van Bommel, the former prior of St. Agatha-Cuyk, was elected Prior-General.

The influence of the monastery of St. Nicholas in Venlo³¹ in renewing the Order in the direction which the Council of Trent would take may be deduced from the writings of two of its members: Rutger of Nijmegen and Godefridus of Lit. Their writings demonstrate an obvious desire to go back to original sources. Both were idealists with a great understanding of reality; they understood that the Rule of Augustine as the source, form and norm of the life of the Brethren of the Cross.

Before 1566, Rutger of Nijmegen, then subprior at Venlo, was forced by religious and political disturbances to "go into exile"

to a safer convent at Huy. There, around 1575, he wrote his *Monita*. [This work was reviewed by Maurice Helin in this periodical in 1951; besides an insight in the contents, several interesting quotations from the manuscript were given.]³²

Rutger's work bespeaks a very special esteem for the Rule of Augustine and the traditional concepts of the Order about the canonical life, especially about choral prayer.

Although Rutger is an idealist, he is a very practical one. Parts of his small work derive from giving individual spiritual direction, others from directing groups of young confreres, and several from lecturing to the whole community. He is distinctly partial to aphorisms, sometimes derived from various authors, but often his own discoveries. While his tone is severe, his approach is strikingly friendly and shows respect for the other person. The often repeated expressions "*filioli*" and "*fili mi*" remind one of the scriptural works of the Apostle John.

The quotations published by Helin show that Rutger's starting point is the Rule of Augustine. Since this Rule was read aloud in the refectory "*semel in septimana*", together with other spiritual works, one ought to "listen eagerly to the reading, filling one's mind more than one's stomach." In this one can hear the words of the Rule, "*Nec solae vobis faucis sumant cibum, sed et aures esurient Dei verbum*." The respect which Augustine demands during choral prayer ("*Psalmis et hymnis cum orates Deum, hoc versetur in corde, quod profertur in voce*") is insisted on by Rutger for the day-by-day communal prayer services. He demands respect in posture and demeanor appropriate to the function one is performing in choir. In speaking of this, he is extremely concrete and flexible in his usage of language.

Following the Rule, Rutger stresses simplicity and soberness – in other words, he insists on the observance of personal poverty which is required by love, and on caring for life-in-common, the *communio*. Whatever an individual receives should

gladly be put at the disposal of the community, as the Rule insists. People going out of the monastery should go in twos, as the Rule directs. We should not be alarmed by troubled times (this reminds us of the religious and political disturbances of the era) nor by the malevolence of others, but one should be steadfast in God.

This entire pithy work is clearly aimed at the recovery, i.e., the preservation of the religious life: it breathes the spirit of the Counter-Reformation. It aims to achieve its purpose through renewal of the best traditions of the Order, especially through the revival of Augustine's Rule, with an emphasis on personal poverty, the *communio* and the *vita apostolica*, practiced in communal prayer, and also through firmness in the face of temptation. In this, Rutger of Nijmegen anticipated the directives which we find again in van Lit, and later in Hertzworms, as the basis for the post-Tridentine reform of the Order, which – in difficult and uncertain times – rang in a new period of well-being for the Brethren of the Cross.

In the very turbulent century between 1540 and 1642, Venlo belonged in turn to Holland and to Spain. Godefridus van Lit³³ succeeded Paulus Reiniers as a prior in 1614, and held this office till his death in 1642. He was born at Venlo and he became a Brother of the Cross in St. Nicholas' monastery. In 1581 and around 1600 he was the procurator there. Later he entered studies in Louvain, and became a celebrated preacher after 1606. From 1621 until 1642 he was prior of his *domus nativa*, where he founded a Latin School around 1619. Elected Definitior in 1627, he played an especially important role in the Meuse province of the Order, first as *Discretus* (1630-1632) and later (1634) as Vicar-General.

While prior of Venlo, van Lit wrote his *Lucerna splendens*, a commentary on the Constitutions of the Brethren of the Cross, which was printed and published in 1632. While a few juridical matters are touched on

in the book, the purpose of the work is to describe the life of the Order and to promote the religious life of the brethren of the Order. As he writes in the Prologue of his work, he composed this commentary “so as to form the attitude of life of the religious” (*L.S.*, 1).

Although he quotes several papal documents, among them those of the Council of Trent, van Lit argues principally from the scripture – from the Old Testament (Psalms, Books of Wisdom) as well as New (the Gospels, Epistles of John, Paul and Acts). He also cites several (especially Latin) Fathers and spiritual authors in order to trace the influence of Augustine’s Rule and spirituality on his work.

“Our legislators want very much to impress on our mind union and unity of life...because they are convinced that in religious communities nothing is as useful and nothing effects more joy than oneness of souls.”

Van Lit’s starting-point is totally Augustinian: Our principal motivation should be love for God and neighbor. He certainly makes demands on the religious, but proceeds in a manner more constructive than moralizing. He is idealistic and at the same time practical, matter-of-fact, and skilled enough to know that the ideal is seldom totally achieved.

According to van Lit, the Constitutions of the Order do nothing more than further explain the Rule of Augustine and direct the Brethren of the Cross how to practice the Rule (*L.S.*, 1). With rightful pride, he describes how truly good this Rule is. Again and again in his commentary, he holds the Rule up as the norm for the life of the Brethren of the Cross. He writes (*L.S.* 125-126), “We make our profession on the Rule of St. Augustine, which among all the Rules under which religious serve God in the Western Church, excels for various reasons:

“First, because of the model from which it is adopted: the life of the Apostles. That is why the Church sings of Augustine, ‘He started living according to the Rule instituted by the holy Apostles.’ And in one of his sermons Augustine himself says, ‘We wanted to live an apostolic life.’ Who has any doubt about the fact that one should prefer the apostolic life to that of all living people? How highly we should esteem the Rule which is based on such a model.

“Secondly, because of its compiler. Because our holy father Augustine was a bishop with authority, very holy of life and highly educated. Other compilers of monastic rules may have been holy, but they were not scholars; and even if they were educated, they were not bishops.

“Thirdly, because of its antiquity. Among the older Rules, that of St. Benedict is often quoted, but Augustine’s Rule is older: he died in 430 A.D., Benedict in 509 A.D.

“Fourthly, because of its moderation. Other rules needed explanation, even moderation because they were too obscure or susceptible to several explanations, or too rigorous or dangerous. Our Rule maintains a healthy moderation. It does not have too many or too few regulations; the regulations we have are not obscure or overly severe, nor have they needed moderating or further explanation by the Holy See.

“Fifthly, because of the direction it takes. The Rule defines the spiritual life as love for God and for one’s neighbor, which leads to unity of hearts, similarity of behavior, purity of the body, community of goods, study of the Holy Scripture, correction of errors and obedience to one’s superiors.

“Sixthly, because of its wide acceptance. More than thirty monastic Orders serve the Lord under this Rule, etc.”

In his Commentary on the publication of the Rule and Constitutions of the Order in 1868, Master General H. van den Wijmelenberg presented literally the same arguments for the eminence of the Rule, without mentioning van Lit’s commentary. Since he

is usually very precise in indicating his sources, this omission makes for some confusion. Van Lit, too, is careful in crediting his sources, but he does not list any specific source for the rather lengthy passage we have quoted above. Although there is the possibility that both have drawn upon a common source, I believe that the passage is van Lit's.³⁴

The arguments advanced by van Lit may not appeal to the modern Brother of the Cross as strongly as they did to his 17th century readers. However, it is as clear as daylight that Augustine's Rule was esteemed very highly as norm of life for the Order: in his commentary, van Lit uses 24 quotations from Augustine's Rule to point out the importance of love and a sense of community in the practice of religious poverty.

The Constitutions support the main objective of the Rule: "to be one heart and one mind in the Lord." "Our legislators want very much to impress on our mind union and unity of life...because they are convinced that in religious communities nothing is as useful and nothing effects more joy than oneness of souls." Since the Rule aims at guiding us to that, it is to be read aloud once a week (*L.S.*, 7).

Negligence in supervision has to be corrected (*L.S.*,8). One concern is the matter of eating outside the regular time of meals (*L.S.*,56); this also touches on the care of the sick, who certainly should not be unnecessarily spoiled (*L.S.*, 60,62). Van Lit emphasizes the simplicity and soberness of clothing and nourishment called for in the Rule (*LS*, 72). Personal possession is not allowed – all should be held in common (*L.S.*, 140). Everyone brings in whatever he acquires, and from the common store everyone receives "according to need." (*L.S.*, 140). With that one ought to be content (*L.S.*, 138).

The Rule rules the religious life: how this must be kept pure and how we must behave worthily (*L.S.*, 14, 146). Without necessity one should not go out and not receive

secretly letters from outsiders (*LS*, 172, 178). If one needs to go out, one should go out together with a confrere: both out and back home together (*L.S.*, 233). It is possible that a brother makes mistakes, but these may not pass unnoticed. They should be discussed with him and, if need be, denounced (*L.S.*, 183). This may bring on a quarrel, one may even become angry, but "this wrath may never deteriorate into hatred" (*L.S.*, 161). The leader of the community plays an important role in all this: he ought to be a model for his confreres and so be worthy of the respect of all (*L.S.*, 205).

Beside the great number of quotations from the Rule, van Lit cites also other works of St. Augustine, his letters (19, 45, 86, 137, 143, 174), sermons (10, 18, 30) and Commentary on the Psalms (39, 71, 100). His *Confessiones* are referred to four times, *De Civitate Dei* twice, along with the *Euchiridion*, the *Liber de amicitia* and *De opere monachorum*. But the quotations from the Rule define van Lit's train of thought; those from other works of Augustine have a supplementary role only.

It is extremely difficult to fathom the influence of *Lucerna Splendens* on the Order. That van Lit was esteemed by leading personalities of the Order is evident from several written testimonials, that of Arnoldus Hertzworms among others. That later leaders in the Order borrowed his commentary as if it were their own (see above) is a fact. Undoubtedly, many a Brother of the Cross gave serious attention to van Lit's attempt to renew the observance of the Order along the lines set by the Council of Trent. L. Heere³⁵ says that the convent at Venlo, where he was a prior, knew a healthy religious life under difficult circumstances. That is certainly an important consideration in assessing the influence of this Counter-Reformation author.

Arnoldus Hertzworms,³⁶ born at Weisweiler (Rhineland) about 1625, entered the Order at Schwarzenbroich, probably before 1650, since he was mentioned as being a reader in

theology in 1655. After a short period as vicar at Wegberg, he was elected Prior of his *domus nativa* and appeared as Prior-Definitor at the general chapter of the Order in 1669. Elected Prior by the Brethren of the Cross at Maaseik in 1671, he remained in that position until 1691. In that year he became Prior at Venlo, dying in 1693. He was a Definitor in 1669, 1677, 1682, and a Visitator in 1673.

From this sketchy information it is evident that he was a respected person in the Order. Although Maaseik was not a big community – L. Heere estimates the house averaged thirteen members between 1644 and 1670 – it enjoyed a healthy spiritual life. The common-prayer tradition of the Order was especially honored, and several brethren of the Order performed well in the field of grammar-school education.

Hertzworms wrote easily in Latin, but also published a few small works in his mother tongue. He was already doing this while Prior at Schwarzenbroich. This is another example of the positive influence of Humanism on the Counter-Reformation.³⁷

After 1620 the general chapters of the Order insisted that its members engage in daily meditation and observe an annual retreat. By order of his provincial chapter, Hertzworms compiled a small book, entitled *Vacantia sacra* (1684) as a guide for this retreat.³⁸ The book was also intended for the use of the secular clergy of the diocese of Roermond, who at that time were also obliged to make an annual retreat. As a writer, Hertzworms worked in the religious-devotional domain, aiming at the pastoral. This pastoral orientation prompted him twice to publish a “devout” history of the Order, entitled *Religio SS Crucis* (1661 and 1686). This tendency is evident not only in the way in which he tells the story, but also in his inclusion of “Short hours of the Holy Cross” and of a guide to visiting the seven Station Churches at Roermond, both composed by his confrere Albertus Tonsorius. However admirable this pastoral concern, historically the *Chronicon* of his contemporary,

Henricus Russelius, is more balanced, adheres to fact, and – according to Haas – is more trustworthy.

Augustine calls obedience unwise and patience absurd if their purpose is not God.

From his days at Schwarzenbroich on, Hertzworms was a zealous supporter of the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity and “Mary of Help,” founded in order to assist, through prayer and good actions, the redemption of Christians groaning as slaves under Turkish tyranny. In 1663 Hertzworms wrote *Oeffeninghe*, and added to it the history of this Brotherhood. His *Alter Joseph Accrescens* (1670) was also a pastoral aid to devotion.³⁹

Today, Hertzworms’ *Vacantia Sacra* and both editions of his *Religio SS Crucis* are viewed now as evidence of Augustine’s influence. He calls his *Vacantia Sacra* a “*methodus bene orandi et vivendi*.” Although he says interesting things about the religious life, his emphasis is clearly on the act of praying. For both prayer and the religious life as a whole, the basis must be a live faith in God’s presence. “He knows how to live well who knows how to pray well, according to Augustine” (*V.S.* 5). Meditating about humanity’s final purpose, he quotes from the first book of the *Confessiones*: “You have created us for Yourself, Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in You” (*V.S.*, 21). Commenting on the words of Scripture that we ought to pray unceasingly and accomplish everything for the glory of God (1 Th. 5:17), he writes, “By these words our holy father Augustine points out that the apostle commands that everything must be done in love. In another place Augustine says: “You should pray till the end – if you do it to be glorified, I forbid it; if you do it to glorify God, I command it.” And elsewhere Augustine calls ‘obedience unwise and patience absurd if their purpose is not God’ ” (*V.S.*, 23).

In a meditation about the last things, Hertzworms points out Jesus' warning, "Be watchful because you know neither day nor hour" (Mt 25, 13). One ought to think about the valuable advice of our holy father Augustine, "Because death waits for you every moment, at every place and in every manner, you will be wise to expect death in the same way" (*V.S.*, 44). "I die in order not to die," said St. Augustine (*V.S.*, 47).

What Hertzworms says about steadfastness is for the greater part borrowed from Augustine (Tract. 27 in Jn.), "May you remain in God and God in you. Augustine asks then how St. Lawrence remained in God, and he answers: he remained in God even in the temptation, in the tyrannical interrogation, in the cruelest threat; he remained in God until the very last" (*V.S.*, 97). Love for the cross is the glorification of God because "It is not important to boast of Christ's Wisdom; it is important to boast of His Cross, says our holy father Augustine" (*V.S.*, 100).

The number of quotations from Augustine's works is rather small, and Hertzworms does not mention the Rule explicitly anywhere. Only the recurrent term "Our holy father Augustine" indicates indirect references to his Rule. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that he composed his *Vacantia Sacra* for the secular clergy of Roermond as well as for his own community – and quite possibly delivered it before the diocesan priests himself. It is possible that under the circumstances he considered it less suitable to make direct, explicit references to the Rule. That he found a source of inspiration in the Rule is evident from the fact that later in the work (*VS*, 112, 113) he borrows ideas from Augustine, without giving credit to his source. An attentive colleague wrote in pencil in the margin: "*docet S. Aug.*". His ideas are based precisely upon the main objective of the Rule: mutual love and *communio*. He writes, "There are two rules for love: Do to others as you would have done to you, and treat others as you want them to treat you" (*V.S.*, 112). "Just as from many grains of wheat the one bread is

prepared and from many grapes the one wine, so the unity of love mingles and flows between Christ and Christians, as it does among the Christians themselves, who must love each other as brothers. So they loved each other in the primitive Church. The religious are called brothers – brothers, I say, in Christ: limbs of one Body, whose Head is Christ" (*V.S.*, 113).

It is also wholly in the traditions of the Order that Hertzworms strongly emphasizes "hospitality and pity on the poor and oppressed." He concludes with Augustine's words: "Love, and do what you like" (*V.S.*, 118).⁴⁰

Of necessity, Hertzworms pays greater attention to the Rule in both editions of his *Religio SS Crucis* (1661 – 1668). Although the sub-title makes the claim of "brevis ac solida informatio," one should not understand this in the modern, scientific sense. He wrote this small work from pastoral, devotional motives, too, not primarily as a historiographer of the Order. This little work, in which he clearly expresses a great affection for his Order, focuses on the "*staurophilos*" (lover of the cross): that is his spirituality.

The sincerity of this affection shows itself in the dedication in the edition of 1661, which is dedicated to "Jesus Christ, Peter, Philip, Andrew and the other crucified Apostles and martyrs; to Cletus Quiriacus and Helen, establishers of the Order of the Holy Cross and highly venerated among the Brethren of the Cross; to Blessed Augustine, law-giver of the Order; to Odilia, virgin and martyr in the company of St. Ursula and the God-granted Patroness of the Order, to Theodore of Celles, restorer of the Order, and all *Staurophili* (Lovers of the Cross) (*R.* 1, 4-6).

The dedication in the second edition is less edifying, and seems to have been made with an eye for the influence offered by important people. To begin with Johann Philip Eugen, count of Merode and Olen, Marshal of Waterloo, vice-count of Odekirchen, baron of Petersem, Steen, and so on. Further, to Walther Byll, oldest Definitor and Prior at

Hohenbusch, related to the Puteani, an important family at Venlo, with whom the Brethren of the Cross maintained good relations.

Hertzworms thinks that the Order originated with Christ and the Apostles (*R. 1, 7-10; 2, 17*), but as a religious institution went back to Pope Cletus (79-90 or 92 A.D.), Peter's second successor, and in this way was spread widely in Italy. These Brethren of the Cross dedicated themselves to hospitality (*R. 1, 10*). The institution was taken over by St. Quiriacus later, then came to new growth in the reign of Pope Innocent III (*R. 2, 23*). These Italian Brethren of the Cross obeyed the Rule of Augustine and everywhere practiced the hospitality St. Cletus had made their special care (*R. 1, 11-12*). This activity was engaged in by all the Brethren of the Cross, and Hertzworms cites as a model of this for his Order Brother Lubertus of Bentlage, who during his last illness, "was visited by angels because of his hospitality." From old documents "a great observance of this virtue" is evident (*R. 1, 12*).

From *De origine Ordinis S. Crucis*, a manuscript by John Heijnsberg, a Brother of the Cross, Hertzworms borrows several times for his history of the Order's origin. He records that around 326 St. Helen re-discovered the relics of the Holy Cross, and that she organized a guard of twelve men, whom he considers the first community of Brethren of the Cross (*R. 1, 13-15*). The various groups of Brethren of the Cross all go back to this foundation in Jerusalem and "all live according to the Rule of our holy father Augustine." He mentions those from Coimbra, from Italy, the Brethren of the Cross-with-the-star, and those from Poland (*R. 2, 27-33*), all of them recognizing St. Augustine as "Father", just as all Franciscans, Conventuals and Capuchins recognize St. Francis as theirs (*R. 1, 30*).⁴¹

Also, Theodore of Celles would have become acquainted with the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem during the Crusade of 1187. Later he abdicated his prebend in order to live as a canon regular

near the chapel of St. Theobald at Huy. Soon he had four companions there, and together they constituted the first community of Brethren of the Cross (*R. 1, 17-20*); living according to Augustine's Rule, they nursed sick people in "xenodochiis", in other words, they practiced hospitality (*R. 1, 21-22*). Bishop Hugo of Liege sent them to Rome in the company of the returning Apostolic Delegate to ask Pope Innocent III for his approbation of their foundation (1215). For this fact too Hertzworms refers emphatically to J. Heijnsberg's manuscript. Pierre de Walcourt, elected prior in 1236, composed the first Constitutions in 1245, which received the papal approbation in 1248.

From this review it may be evident that Hertzworms will confirm the existence of the Order from the Gospel and the tradition of the Church. Beyond all doubt is the importance attached to the following of Augustine's Rule as source, form and norm of the life of the Order, but also as binding element among all spread branches of the Brethren of the Cross. Looking at his spectacles and reading carefully what he writes, we, just as the readers of his time, shall respect and admire his deep affection for his Order.

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Petrus Pincharius, *Vestis Nuptialis*, ed. Aeg de Vrese, Keulen, 1639.

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Endnotes:

¹ *Clairlieu*, 3 (1945) under "Teksten," pp. 32-45.

² Ramaekers o.c. has surveyed the arguments for the canonical character of the Order (pp. 54-60) and indicated, in detail, what the content of the canonical ideal was at the time of the Order's origin (pp. 60-84), also making use of the "Exordia". It is strange therefore that M. Vinken OSC, *De Spiritualiteit der Kruisheren*, Antwerp, 1953, has not utilized them.

³ Cf. Dr. A. van Asseldonk OSC, "Handschriften...over het ontstaan", in *Clairlieu*,

I (1943), 84-102. Dr. J. de Jong, *Handboek der Kerkgeschiedenis*, 1963, vol. I, p. 205.

⁴ Cf. Dr. P. van den Bosch OSC, *Sie teilten mit Jedermann*, Bonn, 1978.

⁵ Sermo 316, Migne, *PL*, 59, 1574. More detailed F. van de Meer, *Augustinus de zielzorger*, p. 179ff.

⁶ Fisen, *Flores sccl. leodiensi*. Cf. A. Mens, *Oorsprong en betekenis van de Nederlandse Begijnen en Begardenbeweging*, Antw., 1947, p. 65ff. Dr. H. van Rooyen OSC, *Theodorus van Celles*, 1936. Dr. J. de Jong, *Hbk.*, vol I, p. 209.

⁷ Dr. A. van de Pasch OSC, *De tekst van de Constituties der Kruisheren van 1248*, Brussels, 1925. Cf. also Ramaekers o.c.

⁸ C. van Dal OSC, "Rond V.N.", in *Clairlieu*, XI (1953), 3-29.

⁹ Migne *PL*, 32, 37. Cf. Ceyskens, who with quotations from various works of St. Augustine shows that "love" for God and the neighbor was the principal motive of his life, mainly p. 42-67.

¹⁰ *Clairlieu*, XI (1953) gives further quotations with regard to poverty.

¹¹ Pincharius, *V.N.*, mainly pp. 238-250.

¹² Cf. Moereels SJ, *Ruusbroec en het religieuze leven*, Tielt, 1962.

¹³ More detailed in C. van Dal OSC, *De poenitentia religiosa, Cruciferana*, NS, Nr. 17.

¹⁴ *Clairlieu*, XI (1953), pp. 71-73.

¹⁵ Cit: *De opere monachorum*, Migne, *PL*, 40, 564; Moereels, o.c., p. 251-52.

¹⁶ Cf. Moereels, o.c., p. 428.

¹⁷ C. van Dal OSC, "St. Bernaardus' invloed", *Citeaux in de Nederlanden*, (1957), 165-80.

¹⁸ Cit: *Confess.* IV, *De Trin.* XIV, *Contra Pelagium* II.

¹⁹ Cit: *Enchiridion de Fide, spe et charitate*.

²⁰ Cit: *Confess.* X, *De Civitate Dei* LV.

²¹ Cit: *De Trin.* XIII, *De Civ. Dei*, VII, *Confess.* I, *De opere monachorum*.

²² *V.N.*, pl. 304-05 cit: *In Joann. Evangelium*.

²³ "De opere monachorum", Migne, *PL*, 40, 566.

²⁴ Cf. Dr. A. van de Pasch, *Constituties...1248*, p. 92.

²⁵ Ramaekers has pointed to the "double content" of the idea "vita apostolica". Pincharius considers the celebration of the "divine officia" also a form of apostolate ("ad excitandam populi devotionem") although he saw them evidently as the first task of the canons regular. Cf. Ph. Funk, *Jacob von Vitry, Leben und Werke*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1909, and Mens.

²⁶ Hermans, *Ann. OSC*, I, 1, 74-76.

²⁷ A. van de Pasch, "Devotus Libellus", in *Clairlieu*, 1953, 56-84, and *De mysteriis, ibidem*,

1952, 63-75. According to Dr. J. Vennebusch, the librarian of the monastery of the Brethren of the Cross in Cologne, Conradus de Grunenberg, is the author of the *Devotus Libellus*. An even older manuscript of the Brethren of the Cross in Cologne has been preserved with excerpts from the *De Lib.* which also refers to the *Vita Jesu Christi* by Ludolphus of Saxen. His work and that of de Grunenberg are both allied to a common source, to be found in Vat. Lat. 1158, 45v.-48v., a manuscript of the 13th century. See *Clairlieu*, 36, 1978, 166; Hass o.c. 79.

²⁸ Hermans, l.c.; cf. C. van Dal, "Rond Vestise Nuptialis," in *Clairlieu*, 1953, 3-27.

²⁹ Dr. A. van de Pasch and C. van Dal, "Allegorische Beschouwingen", in *Clairlieu*, 1952, 63-75.

³⁰ Utilized for orientation: De Jong, *Hbk. Der Kerkgesch.* III, 106-07; G. Schnurer, *Kerk en beschaving tijdens de Barok*, 1951, 40-52; Dr. R. Haass, *Kreuzh.i.d.Rhein!*, Bonn 1932, 22-23; cf. C. van Dal. *De Kruisheren in de geschiedenis*, 1956, 40-46.

³¹ L. Heere, *Het Kruisherenklooster te Venlo*, PSHAL, 1956-57, 259-368.

³² M. Helin, "Le Journal de Roger de Nimegue", in *Clairlieu*, 1951, 49-66.

³³ Cf. L. Heere, o.c., 339-40. The complete title is *Lucerna splendens super candelabrum sanctum, id est solida ac dilucida explanatio constitutionum sacri ac canonici Ordinis FF Sanctae Crucis...Apparata et concinnata opere et studio R.P.F. Goderfridi a Lit Cruciferorum ad D. Nicolaum Vehnlonae Cenobiarchae, Coloniae Agrippinae, Apud Antonii Boetzeri Haeredes, sub signo rubri leonis, Anno 1632*. See also S. van de Ven, "Naar de levenswijze der Apostelen", in *Ons Geestelijk Leven*, 1977, 58-75.

³⁴ *Collationes et Dilucidationes*, 1872, 4-5.

³⁵ L. Heere, o.c. 309-315.

³⁶ L. Heere, *Kruisheren te Maaseik*, 33, and Haass o.c., 101-02.

³⁷ Hermans, o.c. III, 350.

³⁸ *Religio Sanctissimae Crucis seu Brevis ac solida informatio, de ortu ac progressu, necnon memorabilibus quibusdam gestis virisque Ord. S. Crucis vel Cruciferorum... Ruremundae, Apud Leonardum ab Ophoven MDCLXI*.

Vacantia vel vacatio sacra, sive hebdomadas sacrarum feriarum ad usum bene viventium et orantium, recens exarata per R.P. Arnoldum Hertsworms, sanctae Crucis priorem Mosaci. Leodii ex officina typographica Petri Dentrez ad

Insigne S. Augustini prope S. Dionysii, 1684.
Superiorum permissu.

³⁹ Hermans, c.p.

⁴⁰ Cf. T.J. van Bavel, *Christus totus. Het corporatieve denken van Augustinus*; and “Dilige et quod vis fac”, in *Pro nostris*, 1972, p. 30-39 and 40-52. Also: “De tweevoudige liefde”, in *Benedictijns Tijdschrift*, 1979, p. 58-75: “Liefde orienteert de mens”, in *Relief*, 1980, 7-8. Dr. A. Ceyskens wrote on this matter in 1957 already in *De geest van de Regel van St. Augustinus*, 51-72.

⁴¹ Crf. Dr. P. van den Bosch OSC, “Sancta Helena, nobilissima femina”, in *Clairlieu*, 1980, mainly pp. 83-88, where he surveyed the data on hand and justified the reliability of the tradition with lots of arguments. Is the said author of the quoted manuscript perhaps the same as Johannes Heinsberg who in 1500 signed as “presbyter et senior conventus Venlensis”? See Hermans, *Ann. OSC* II, 456.