

# **Rule of the Monastery of St. John of San Francisco**

## **By-Laws filed with the State of California for Corp. No. 2799909**

### **Introduction**

This Rule is the underlying constitution for the Brotherhood of the Monastery of St. John of San Francisco. It reflects both traditional monastic rules of the past, as well as the contemporary context of the Monastery as an Orthodox religious community in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Northern California.

This Rule quotes and cites extensive passages from the Rules of St. Paisiy Velichkovsky and the Rule of Valaam Monastery, which echoes St. Paisiy's Rule. It is a simple rule, defining basic structures, but leaving details to the interpersonal dynamics of each situation. Thus, St. Paisiy's Rule has a timelessness and adaptability to it. It came from Mt. Athos to Moldavia, to Ukraine, then to Russia.

This Rule reflects the reality of this community: a community of Americans striving to work out their salvation as monastics in the Orthodox Church in America. We are deeply influenced by the Russian and Athonite traditions, with relationships with monasteries in both places, particularly Valaam in Russia. However, we are in Northern California, and our calling is to bear witness to Christ in dialogue with our own culture.

### **Preface**

Monastic life has one purpose: to work out one's salvation. A monastery is a spiritual hospital, which has as its goal the salvation of its members, and the cultivation of the Gospel of salvation of Jesus Christ. All the structures and disciplines of monastic life have this one purpose and goal.

A monastery is fundamentally a discipleship community, with all members striving to live out the Gospel to its fullest extent, which is discipleship to Christ, and thus work out their salvation. The essential defining relationship within a monastery is the relationship with the spiritual father. The spiritual father is the father of the monastic family, and all the monks are his children, united in a bond of trust, love and cooperation. The essence of monastic obedience is synergy with the spiritual father, and with the whole community, in unity of mind and heart.

The defining element of monastic community is the shared life—all things in common: common checkbook, common work, common prayer, common discipleship, common obedience. It is a family, with one father. It is shared discipleship to Christ. It is common striving for obedience to the will of God, each working out his salvation in a shared life. This koinobion, community, is the real core of the monastery as institution.

Central to the life of the brotherhood is the common rule of prayer, the daily cycle of services. At the core of this is the frequent celebration of the Divine Liturgy, insofar as it is possible, and constant communion of the Holy Mysteries. This daily liturgical common prayer is supported by personal rules of prayer (given by the spiritual father) and frequent or daily confession of thoughts. The monastery is a community constituted by prayer.

The spiritual father must be the one with full pastoral authority as Abbot of the community. The Abbot must be the spiritual father, and the spiritual father must be the Abbot. The very word “Abbot” means “father.” This is the ancient monastic tradition.

The authority of the spiritual father derives from the love and trust of the brethren, not some kind of institutional appointment. One cannot assign monastic obedience to a spiritual father. This can only grow organically as the fruit of the relationship of mutual trust and love, in constant interaction, in the context of a shared life and spiritual direction. If one does not want to be under the spiritual father of a particular community, he should go find his spiritual father and be in that monastery. Spiritual fatherhood/sonship, and the brotherhood arising from that, is the defining primary relationship for membership within the community.

The essential task of the spiritual father is to develop the talents and potentials of his spiritual children, to develop them as persons in communion with God and one another. The love, trust and synergy, along with patience and longsuffering, must be mutual between the spiritual father and the brethren, both individually and in relation to the whole community. It takes years to come into a mature relationship of authentic communion and synergy. Until that time, it is an exceedingly fragile complex of relationships. This relationship depends entirely on profound freedom. Authoritarianism is alien to the Christian and monastic life. Authentic monastic community arises from a communion of love, manifested by a unity of mind, heart, spirit and life.

The Brotherhood as community is constituted by the common work and resources of the brethren that are committed to it. The monastic koinobion must be able to acquire and own its own property. This is a major stabilizing element. It must be separately incorporated, and have full authority to use and dispose of its own resources, without any interference from outside the community.

There are multitudes of ways of living out the monastic life. There is a place for enclosed hesychast koinobitic monasticism, but there is also a place for active ministry and mission in the world by a monastic community. It depends on the particular individuals involved, and the particular situation of the community. It is a mutual seeking to actualize the gifts and talents of those persons, thus enabling them to grow and mature.

It all goes back to one thing: the monastery is community. Its vision and work is a reflection and embodiment of the shared vision and ministry of all the members, in a communion of love.

## **I. The Abbot**

A – The Abbot

*The Abbot of the monastery must be a member of the Community himself and must live with the Brothers in one mind, and want the salvation of their own souls and*

*have all in common. The Abbot must see the Brothers as his own beloved spiritual children and always teach them the Lord's commandments as a father must, along with the traditions of the holy fathers, strengthening them in their salvation from the Divine Scriptures.*

*As St. Paul wrote to Timothy in his 1st epistle, chapter 4:6-15:*

*"If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all."*

*And again, in the 2nd epistle, chapter 4: 1-2, he says:*

*"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be ready in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all."*

*The Abbot must humble and disclose the disobedient and self-willed before all the brothers, as says the same Apostle Paul in the 1st epistle to the same Timothy, chapter 5:20:*

*"Them that sin rebuke before all, so that others also may fear."*

*Also the Abbot must confer with the brothers on all things, and not start anything new without their advice, except what is necessary and good as concerns spiritual matters. He must oversee his flock with all care and attention, as says St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, chapter 12:9-17.*

*"Love is without dissimulation, (love) abhors (all) evil, (love) cleaves to that which is good, (love) minds not high things but follows that which is humble," and again: "Be not wise in your own self. Provide good things before all men. Do not forget hospitality."*

*And St. Peter in his 1st epistle, chapter 5:2-4 says:*

*"Nourish the flock of God which is among you, overseeing it, not by constraint but willingly and in God, not for filthy lucre but readily: do not be lords over (God's) heritage but be examples to the flock. And*

*when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive the crown of glory which fades not away."*

*The Abbot must be ready to do any good deed. (Valaam Rule)*

*What are the obligations and responsibilities of an Abbot? He must study Sacred Scriptures and the teachings of the Spiritual Fathers. Besides witnessing to these things, he must not transmit any of his own teachings and commandments to his brethren, but must continually direct them according to the will of God. He must direct any obedience which he assigns according to the Sacred Scripture, always remembering that the Word of God was given to him and his brethren as a teacher and guide to salvation. He must be an example of humility, harmony and single-minded unity of spiritual love in all things. He may begin no action without the advice of the brethren who are experienced in spirituality and searching the Scriptures. If something happens which must be announced before an entire sobor of the community, the whole sobor acts upon it with common knowledge and consensus. In such a way, peace, unity of mind and an indestructible bond of love are maintained among the brethren. –St Paisiy Velichkovsky*

*The Brothers must be obedient to the Abbot in all things. Also, among each other they must live in love, humility, and submission, as teaches St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 13:17:*

*"Brethren, obey your guides and submit," etc. And again to the Romans, chapter 13:1-3: "Let every soul be obedient to the higher powers, for there is not a power that is not from God: the powers that are established are ordained by God. Therefore, those who resist the power, resist the ordinance of God and those who resist commit a sin."*

*And again in the 12th chapter (3-9-13), he says:*

*"Each among you must not think of himself more than he ought to think. Be kindly, affectionate one to another with brotherly love, honoring the other in preference to your self; fervent, not slothful, ardent of spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in love, being patient in tribulation, remaining in prayer. Distributing to the need of the saints, being hospitable."*

*And St. Peter again in his 1st epistle, chapter 2:16-18, says:*

*"As free, yet not using your liberty as a cloak for vice, but as servants of God. Honor all men. Love the Brotherhood. Fear God." (Valaam Rule)*

B - The Abbot is elected by the brethren by consensus and confirmed by the Bishop. The Abbot must be or become a Hieromonk.

*Concerning the election of Abbots, let not one be brought in from the outside upon the death of an incumbent. He should be chosen from the community through*

*unanimous election by the entire assembly of brethren and with the recommendation of the dying Abbot and the blessing of his eminence, the metropolitan. He would have to surpass all in spiritual wisdom and in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and the community statutes, as well as in obedience, self-detachment, love, humility, meekness and all virtues which can serve as a good example, honored by the priestly rank, to the brethren by word or deed. If such a leader will be placed from the outside and not from the assembly of brethren, and if by his very deeds he does not seek obedience and self-detachment of will and reasoning, not having undergone in community life the trials of reproach and dishonor, ignorant of the power of the Scriptures and community statutes, and, in addition, having his own particular possessions and accepting the leadership not for the goal of laying down his soul for the brethren but for the goal of the attainment of comfort and the enlargement of his estate --how can such a man direct satisfactorily a flock of God's sheep? And how could the community of brethren submit to such an instructor! And if something like this should ever occur (i.e. the appointment of a leader over the brethren without an election by the assembly) it could only be followed by the final and complete dissipation of the brethren and destruction of community life. The only exception to this would occur if it would be impossible to find in the assembly of the brethren anyone capable, through word and deed, of leading the brethren to salvation. But even in such a case, one taken from the outside due to such an extreme necessity should be appointed with the voluntary consent of all the brethren, with the promise to God in the presence of all the brethren not to possess or acquire any personal belongings even to his very death, and to have the same needs as the brethren. Only under such conditions can the life of the community avoid desolation. —St Paisiy Velichkovsky*

- C - The Abbot is the spiritual father of the brotherhood, and bears complete accountability to the Bishop for all activities of the Brotherhood. He is also accountable to the Brotherhood Council for his governance of the affairs of the Community.
- D - The Abbot bears responsibility for carrying out the decisions of the Council, and of the Bishop, as the pastor of the Brotherhood. He is the intermediary between the Bishop and the Community.

*The Abbot must have the same love for all the brethren. He must carefully observe that the brethren live in a relationship of sincere and real love for each other as a sign of their discipleship in Christ. Individual personal loves and isolated friendships are sources of envy and are destructive to real love. They should be eradicated by all means. The Abbot must suffer patiently and with paternal love all the falls and weaknesses of his spiritual children in hope of their correction and true repentance. He must correct them by word in the spirit of meekness. Such*

*brethren should not be estranged or removed from the body of the community, especially if they cause no harm to the rest of the community. The Abbot must not, however, endure the arbitrariness of those brethren, who by following the dictates of their own will and reasoning, refuse the blessed yoke of obedience and thereby cause harm to the rest of their brethren. But after sufficient admonition and private persuasion, in the presence of two or three brethren, and before the assembly of brethren, they should be separated and expelled from the community, even with many tears, regrets, and with spiritual malady, so, that others would not catch their fatal disease in turn. And those who come to their senses and turn to repentance ought to be welcomed back with joy and granted every charity, sympathy and forgiveness of sins by the Abbot, while he rejoices with the whole community. –St Paisiy Velichkovsky*

## **II. Brotherhood Council**

- A - All tonsured, permanently committed members of the Brotherhood resident in the monastery are members of the Council and also of the Brotherhood koinobion.
- B - The Council advises the Abbot in all matters affecting the life of the community, both spiritual and material. All major decisions except those regarding pastoral matters are referred by the Abbot to the Council. The Abbot's role is to seek and build the consensus of the council for all such decisions. The Abbot makes the final decision, based on the advice and consensus of the Council.
- C - Only resident members of the Brotherhood may vote on internal matters affecting the Monastery itself.

## **III. The Officers of the Brotherhood**

- A - To assist with the administration of the Brotherhood, and share responsibility for the life of the community with the brethren, the Abbot is to appoint officers for various responsibilities as the primary obediences of the designated brethren. These appointments are made with the consensus of the Council, and are for indefinite duration.
  - 1. Dean/Blagochiniy  
The Dean is responsible for the day-to-day obediences of the brethren, which are decided in consultation with the Abbot. The Dean also functions as vice-abbot when the abbot is absent from the Monastery.
  - 2. Treasurer/Economos  
The Treasurer is responsible for all the financial matters of the Monastery: keeping the books, buying and selling supplies and products of the Brotherhood,

and for collection and disbursement of funds. The Treasurer is assisted in these tasks by the bookkeeper and cellarer<sup>1</sup>, whose work he oversees.

3. The Board and the Council

The Board confers on all decisions affecting the Monastery, on a day-to-day basis, and submits its decisions and recommendations on major matters to the whole Monastery Brotherhood Council. The Abbot, Dean, and Treasurer comprise the Board.

B - The Koinobion: Corporate Status and Property Ownership

*The Abbot and all the Brothers of this monastery must have all in common with love. First of all, with the entire heart and soul, they must keep God's commandments and those of the holy Apostles, as St. John the Theologian say in his 1st letter, chapter 2:3-6:*

*"And by this we will know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. For he who says that he knows Him and keeps not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But he who keeps His word, verily in him is the love of God perfected and hereby we know that we are in Him. He who says that he abides in Him, ought himself to walk so, even as He walked."*

*And again in the 3rd letter, chapter 1:6, he says:*

*"This is love, if we keep His commandments."*

*And our Saviour Himself said to His disciples:*

*"If you love Me, you will keep my commandments. Who has My commandments and who keeps them, such loves Me, and the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father and I will love him and come to him... etc."*

*And about the keeping of the teaching of the Fathers, the Proverbs of Solomon say in the 23rd chapter:*

*"Do not add to that which does not stand adding unto: the things which your Fathers have established," and God-seer Moses says: "There is no possibility to add or take away from these."*

*And our Saviour said to His disciples:*

*"If My word they kept, they will keep yours (too)." "Rejecting you, they reject Me."*

*And St. Paul says:*

*"I beseech you, brothers, I who am a prisoner of the Lord, to live worthily of your calling into which you were called, with all humility of thought and meekness, bearing each other with love, striving to keep the oneness of the spirit in the union of peace one body, one Spirit, just*

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<sup>1</sup> The cellarer oversees the provisions

*as you were called into one hope of your calling (Ephesians 4,1-4).  
(Valaam Rule)*

The Monastery shall be incorporated in the State of California as a religious non-profit corporation, with its own corporate identity, tax identification number and legal status. The koinobion constitutes the Monastery corporation—the commonly held property and resources—which are the fruits of its own labors and donations received by benefactors, as well as the contributions of the members of the brotherhood.

*‘The Monastery shall be entirely free and unenslaved... being rather its own master, autonomous, governing and managing itself, not placed under any ecclesiastical authority... disposing of its own goods at its own discretion and enjoying them on its own authority.’ (from the Typicon of Pantocratoros, Archimandrite Aemilianos, The Authentic Seal, p. 71).*

*Autonomy does not, ipso facto, generate the spiritual life and monastic vigour. We can nevertheless say without fear of contradiction that no monastery has ever flourished without self-administration and autonomy and that wherever these have been lost the monastic life has quickly declined and grace has given way to ecclesiastical office.” (Arch. Aemilianos, The Authentic Seal, p. 71).*

- C - The Abbot, Dean and Treasurer constitute the Board of Directors of the Brotherhood Corporation as President, Secretary and Treasurer.
- D - The Monastery Corporation owns all the property of the brotherhood, and distributes to each according to need, by decision of the Abbot and consultation of the Board for any large distribution.
- E - The Monastery Corporation may own real and personal property, in its own name, and dispose of it at its own discretion. The Corporation may receive gifts of property as well as purchase, lease and sell both real and personal property.
- F - The Bishop is consulted in any acquisition or sale of real property.

#### **IV. Scope of Council and Board Decision**

- A - Membership in the Community
  - 1. The Abbot determines whether to accept a guest to stay as a postulant, or worker, by his blessing.
  - 2. The Abbot with the consensus of the Council gives the blessing for a novice to be accepted and clothed.



3. All requests for permanent admission to the Brotherhood by tonsure must have the consensus of the Council.

B - Economic/Material Matters

1. The day-to-day operations are conducted by the various officers of the Board. The Treasurer should inform the Abbot and Dean of the specific needs and their costs, and they must agree to the expenditures. The scope of spending is \$500 (2003). All expenditures over \$500.00 must be blessed by the Abbot, or Dean in his absence.
2. The consensus of the Council must be obtained for any capital expenditures over \$1,000.00.

**V. Relationship with the Bishop and Diocese**

A - The Brotherhood is an integral part of the Diocese of The West of the Orthodox Church in America, and is under the omophorion of its Bishop and under obedience to him.

B - The Bishop must be consulted on matters as defined in this rule, particularly:

1. blessing for tonsure into the Brotherhood;
2. acquisition or disposition of real property for the monastery;
3. canonical matters that might arise in relations with the parishes or other churches.

C - The Abbot is accountable to the Bishop for the property and actions of the Brotherhood. The Diocesan parochial administrative structures, including the Diocesan Council and Assembly, have no authority over the internal life of the Brotherhood.

**VI. The Life of the Community**

A - Entrance into the Community

*This concerns the acceptance of brethren into the monastic community, the infirmary, various crafts, and the hostel. A brother who is led by God into monasticism should first be examined in private by the Abbot, who should explain to him in scriptural terms the power of monastic communal living, of obedience according to God, and of the self-detachment of will and reasoning unto death. Should the Abbot find in him a sincere, unpretentious desire for monasticism and a zeal for God, he will admit him to the communal life, after once again revealing to him the power of communal living, and obedience in the presence of the entire*

*community of brethren. He should not be tonsured immediately, but after a period of time determined by regulations. One should be kept in lay clothing for six months, and another for three years, depending on the fruits of obedience and self-detachment. Tonsured to wear the riassa or the mantia, he should then join the brethren. If, however, at the end of the trial period the Abbot finds neither true obedience nor true self-detachment in him even after three years, he should not tonsure him but release him into the world, so that he would not serve as a temptation to the communal life. –St. Paisiy Velichkovsky*

Men come to the monastery as visitors, and may stay 3 days, or longer with the blessing of the Council. Guests and members as listed below are all expected to participate fully in the life of the community.

1. Worker. Must be or become at least a catechumen. The duration of worker status is limited to one year at which point the worker, according to the Council's consensus, must decide to become a postulant or leave the community.
2. Postulant. Must be Orthodox in good standing with the Church. With the consensus of the Council, after several weeks, they are received as postulants (clothed in a black shirt, belt, and skufia).
3. Novices. At the discretion of the Council, and after a life confession to the Abbot, a postulant may be clothed in a cassock, belt, and skufia. The bishop is informed of the clothing of a novice.
4. Rasophore. After at least one year, a novice may petition the Abbot to be considered to be tonsured as a rasophore. If the Abbot blesses the tonsure, the Abbot must then seek the blessing of the Bishop. The tonsure occurs with the blessing of the Bishop. At this time the rasophore surrenders all personal assets to the Monastic koinobion, and becomes a voting member of the community. The rasophore assumes equal responsibility for the life of the community with all other members.
5. Lesser Schema. After at least 3 years in the monastery, the rasophore monk may petition the Abbot, who would then petition the Bishop, to be tonsured into the mantia or small schema. This is a confirmation of his life commitment to the community.
6. Great Schema. According to the Russian tradition, this step marks the entrance of a monk of profound spiritual maturity into the solitary life.

*If anyone entering monasticism from the outside world brings any possessions with him into the monastery, the Abbot must keep these possessions intact in the monastery storehouse until the brother's tonsure. Upon the latter's tonsure the Abbot can use these possessions for the monastery's general needs. Should the brother wish to leave the monastery prior to his tonsure, then all the possessions which he had brought into the monastery should be returned to him intact, to avoid*

*any embarrassment both for the brother and for the monastery. –St Paisiiy Velichkovsky*

## B – Leaving the Community

1. Those who after living in the monastery with the brotherhood desire to leave, must seek the blessing of the Abbot. If they are not tonsured, they may take their own possessions which they have not donated to the community. They must surrender any monastic clothing and other items belonging to the community.
2. Tonsured monks desiring to leave the monastery, after consultation with the abbot, must petition the bishop for his blessing. They may not take any possessions that they have surrendered to the community. However, at the discretion of the Abbot and the Council, some items may be returned to them.
3. Those wishing to transfer to another community must seek the blessing of the Abbot and of the Bishop.

## **VII. Discipleship**

The monastery is a community composed by discipleship to Christ and the spiritual father of the Brotherhood. Each member embraces the following ideals as his personal commitment to that discipleship:

### A. Poverty

1. all possessions and property are held in common by the brotherhood.
2. at tonsure as rasophore, each surrenders any personal possessions.
3. particular personal items may be kept with the blessing of the Abbot.

### B. Chastity

1. integrity and wholeness of one's person
2. to strive for virginal purity in all aspects of life

### C. Obedience

1. to hear thoroughly, with love.
2. obedience is to Jesus Christ and the Gospel, and to the Abbot and the brethren.
3. the core of the monastic life is to deny oneself, and take up the cross.

### D. Stability

1. to remain in the monastic life and community of repentance until death, or to go where sent on obedience.

These ideals are the vows of monastic life, formally taken at tonsure to the mantia.

*The first rule and practice persistently observed by all in our monastery is that no monk may possess even the smallest object as his own personal property. All things are shared by all the monks. In order to preserve this practice, the Abbot must discern the material needs of his monks, as a father discerns the needs of his children, giving what is necessary to any monk who is in need, not on the basis of his own personal preference or dislike for him. Such is the obedience of the Abbot. Being founded upon this principle, the monastic community will grow in genuine love for God and man, humility, meekness, peace, singleness of mind and self-detachment. The monks are subjected to obedience not for the sake of temporary abstinence, glory, honor, carnal tranquility or human consideration, but solely for their salvation. The result of this is a unity of heart and mind so that worldly envy, hatred, pride, hostility and other evils have no place to lay their heads. Personal and private property in the community gives birth to every evil and violation of God's commandments. Emphasizing this rule, we make it known to every new monk according to the Sacred Scripture, that he may not have any personal possessions in any form or manner unto his very last breath. All the monks unanimously obey this rule. –St Paisiy Velichkovsky*

### **VIII. The Work of the Brotherhood**

\*\* "He who does not work shall not eat" (2Thess 3:10)

\*\* "that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, (1Thes 4:11)

\*\* "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matt 28:19-20)

#### A - Support

1. The monastic brotherhood shall support itself by its own work, and the fruit of its labors, not by donations or appeals for its daily expenses.
2. Donations will be gratefully accepted; but are solicited solely for projects such as construction and the purchase of land, buildings, equipment, and vehicles.
3. The work will consist of revenue generating enterprises that also have missionary value and ecclesiastical utility: publications, candles, vestments, etc. It should be of the highest quality possible.

#### B - Obedience and Obediences

*Obedience is what we consider to be absolutely essential to the whole of monastic life. This means to scorn and turn away from one's own will, reasoning and arbitrariness; to strive wholeheartedly toward fulfilling the will, reasoning and commandments of God and to serve one's brethren as the Lord Himself, in agreement with the teachings of Sacred Scripture, in fear of God and humility, until death.*

*For the purpose of testing humility, obedience, and self-detachment from will and reasoning in all things, which is the very ladder leading to the Kingdom of Heaven, it is proper for the Abbot to assign the brethren to obedience in the kitchen, bakery, cell-chamber, refectory and to other jobs in the monastery. Ever looking to Christ as their example of obedience and humility, the brethren must not refuse any obedience, they must fulfill it, believing that if they serve each other not as man but as the Lord Himself, with humility and the fear of God, they will attain the Kingdom of Heaven. –St Paisiy Velichkovsky*

*The Abbot should also see to it that various crafts be practiced at the monastery, especially those necessary for human communal living, and that brethren be appointed for this. The unskilled should be taught skills so that in this manner the brethren themselves, in learning various skills for the common benefit, would enable the community to satisfy its needs without going to any trouble. And there would be no need to go out into the world because of them, thus avoiding spiritual harm. --St Paisiy Velichkovsky*

1. The work of the brethren consists of three types, called obediences: first, the daily tasks to keep the community (housekeeping and grounds keeping), and the liturgical life running. Second are income-generating obediences. Each member of the Brotherhood must be involved in both aspects, regardless of rank. Third is outreach work in missionary and charitable work.
2. These obediences are assigned by the Dean, in consultation with the Abbot, and overseen by him. They rotate within the Brotherhood.
3. Obedience is not only a means of cutting off the will, but is the actualization of the communion in love of the whole community, each fulfilling the responsibilities given him for the sake of the whole. There should be no coercion in obedience. Rather, it is the acceptance and manifestation of responsibility for the life of the community as a whole.
4. Spiritual obedience differs only in this, that it is “listening thoroughly” to the spiritual father, and is cooperation in communion and love.

## **IX. Missionary Work of the Monastery Brotherhood**

The most important missionary witness to the Orthodox Christian Faith given by a monastery is in the integrity of its own internal life. The witness of missionary monks

proceeds from the integrity of their lives of asceticism and sacrifice for the sake of Christ and the sanctification of their own lives.

The witness and mission of a monastery must first and foremost be internal: dedicated to providing a spiritual hospital for its own members, for their purification, illumination and deification. Those desiring the healing of their lives can then be healed through their participation in the life of the monastery, either as members or visitors.

The monastery exists for the sake of the monastic life of prayer, repentance and the sanctification of life, not for the sake of any particular work, whether ecclesiastical or otherwise. But by the very fact of its existence, it is missionary by nature. Hospitality is an essential element of monastic life.

Brethren of the Monastery may also be engaged by obedience in external missionary and charitable outreach activity, in obedience to the Lord's command, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18ff). Missionary monks should be sent at least two together, to support one another in the work and better serve the needs of the mission.

#### A - Charitable Activities of the Monastery

The Monastery will conduct charitable work as a fundamental aspect of its vocation and mission. Traditionally, monasteries have as a primary ministry to be sources of spiritual refreshment and guidance for people who come to them. They also have traditionally played a major role in the service of the poor. They are places of refuge for those in distress, hunger or poverty. Monasteries coordinate and mobilize the surrounding community to aid the poor. There should be a close relationship between the monastery and the surrounding community.

### **X. Prayer and Liturgical Life**

1. The monastery is a eucharistic community, whose life is structured by the liturgical cycles of the Orthodox Church. Services are to be served as fully as possible, at the discretion of the Abbot.
2. The Divine Liturgy should be celebrated as frequently as possible, and all members should partake of the mysteries as frequently as possible. All members of the community are expected to be at all services from beginning to end.
3. Spiritual life. Each member also has the obedience of a private rule of prayer. Each member is expected to confess frequently, and reveal his thoughts to the spiritual father. Obedience is a spiritual obligation.

*The brethren must live in their cells with the fear of God. According to the tradition of the Holy Fathers, they must prefer mental prayer over any other ascetical labor, as God's love, the source of virtue, is fulfilled in the heart by the mind. This is the teaching of many God-bearing Fathers. Besides prayer, they have psalmody and*

*guided reading of the Old and New Testaments and of instructive patristic writings. Not only in their cells but in all places, and during any activity, the brethren must remember death and their sins, the dread Judgment of Christ, eternal torments, the Kingdom of Heaven and self-reproach. The brethren must exercise themselves in the arts or handicrafts designated to them by their Abbot. Idleness is not permitted, for it is the source of every evil. Premature departure from one's cell and useless conversation must be avoided and fled from as one flees from poison. On mental prayer, the following Holy Fathers must be read: John Chrysostom, Patriarch Callistus II of Constantinople, Metropolitan Symeon of Thessalonica, Bishop Diodochus of Cotica, Hesychius of Jerusalem, Nilus of Sinai, John Climacus, Maximus the Confessor, Peter the Damascene, Symeon the New Theologian, and Gregory the Sinaite. –St. Paisiy Velichkovsky*

#### A - Liturgical Life

1. This Monastery follows the liturgical tradition of Russian Orthodox monasteries, informed by the usage of the Monasteries of Mount Athos.
2. The liturgical cycle of the Monastery is the core of its common life. The daily services must be attended by all, as an obedience, and not missed without a blessing.
3. The services must be done decently and with strict comportment of the brethren. Discipline in Church is an important element of self-denial.
4. Times and services will be adjusted according to the season and strength of the brethren, at the discretion of the Abbot.
5. All services should be sung, using traditional monastic chants and without reading of any stichera.

### **XI. Hieromonks and Hierodeacons**

In the Orthodox monastic tradition, only those monks are ordained who are needed to serve the particular needs of the monastery. Ordination implies certain obediences within the life of the monastery, but does not exclude any.

#### A - Preparation for Ordination

In accordance with the canons of the Orthodox Church, a candidate for ordination must have lived a clean life from baptism, and be without canonical impediments. In accordance with the Russian Tradition, if a monk has been granted the second baptism of the lesser Schema, and having demonstrated the integrity of his vows by his life and stability, he may also be considered for ordination, subject to the granting of *economia* by the Bishop, should there be any impediments from the past. Should the need arise as

determined by the Abbot and the Monastery Council, and a monk be deemed suitable for ordination, he is to be presented to the Bishop by the Abbot for ordination after fulfilling the necessary educational requirements within the monastery by tutoring and private study.

The Abbot will oversee the program of study for those monks who are preparing for ordination. They will study within the Monastery, and not be sent out for long periods of time, except for day classes at a local institution, should that need arise. The cycles of monastic worship and the reading of the Fathers, the constant confession and spiritual guidance, are all central elements of that monastic formation, and preparation for the service of the Altar.

A monk of this Monastery is ordained for this Monastery, and is assigned to serve its altar. He may be given an obedience to serve elsewhere, such as a Monastery Podvorye or related monastic institution, or a missionary outreach of the Monastery, only with the consent of and in obedience to the Abbot and Monastic Council.

A monk may be presented for ordination to the Bishop as a hierodeacon when he has been in the monastery for a suitable period of time, as determined by the Abbot and Council, and has been tonsured as rasophore. A hierodeacon may be presented to the Bishop for ordination as hieromonk after his tonsure to the Lesser Schema.

Parish priests who are celibate or widowed (or divorced), with the blessing of the Bishop, may be tonsured as monks and enrolled in the Brotherhood of Monastery, with the concurrence of the Abbot and Monastery Council. They will enter as novices, though the time of probationary status may be reduced before their tonsure. They will not, however, have a seat on the Monastery Council unless they actually live in the Monastery, one of its podvoryes, or sketes. If they live in the Monastery, they have equal rights and responsibilities with all other members of the Brotherhood. If they live on assignment outside the Monastery, they should contribute financially to the Monastery, and visit it as often as possible.

## B - External Brothers

1. Associated Hieromonks as Parish/Mission Pastors
  - a. Hieromonks may be tonsured at or attached to the Monastery by the Bishop, with the consent of the Council, but function as parish/mission pastors and live outside the Monastery.
  - b. These external brethren are welcome to visit the Monastery, but have no vote on the Monastery Council. They are financially independent from the Monastery, and the Monastery has no financial/legal obligations to them.
  - c. They may join the community at any time, and be included in the order of seniority according to their date of tonsure.
  - d. Non-ordained monks and novices who function and live in a parish may also be attached as external brethren.



- e. Monks may switch from the life of the Monastery to external status only with the consent of the Council and the Bishop.
  - f. External brothers will be expected to contribute materially to the Monastery and life of the Brotherhood.
  - g. External brothers are expected to be in obedience to the Abbot, and have their spiritual direction from the Monastery.
2. Married clergy attached to the monastery (or to its temple) are to be under obedience to the Abbot.

**Future Amendments to the Rule**

These bylaws can be amended as needed with the consensus of the Brotherhood Council.

**Addendum on Admission to the Brotherhood**

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**Admission to the Monastery**

*“Do not grant newcomers to the monastic life an easy entry, but, as the Apostle says, Test the spirits to see if they are from God (1 John 4:1). Therefore, if someone comes and keeps knocking at the door, and if at the end of four or five days he has shown himself patient in bearing his harsh treatment and difficulty of entry, and has persisted in his request, then he should be allowed to enter and stay in the guest quarters for a few days. After that, he should live in the novitiate, where the Novices study, eat and sleep.”*

## **I. Discernment Process**

1. The Abbot should ensure that all inquirers are given information about the nature and purpose of the monastic life, and the details of that life as lived in our Monastery. A packet will be prepared and given to all serious inquirers. The Abbot should give at least some of this information orally.
2. The Abbot should also question a man as to his past life and the reasons for seeking the monastic life.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ questioned the youth who came to Him as to his previous life and, learning that he had practiced virtue, bade him fulfill that which was still wanting to his perfection; only then did he offer him the opportunity of following Him. Thus, it is clearly our duty to inquire into the past life of Candidates, and to those who have already in the past led a good life we should impart the more advanced training in perfection; those, on the other hand, who are turning from an evil life or have set out from a state of indifference toward the strict life of the knowledge of God should be carefully examined to make sure that they are not of unstable character and easily swayed in their decisions.*  
*-The Long Rules [of St. Basil] (p.260)*

3. The initial visit should be the standard three days given to all guests, which then could be extended to a week or two with the blessing of the Abbot. The inquirer should especially be given ample opportunity of speaking to the Abbot during his visit(s) to the Monastery. The guest master or person booking their stay should try to coordinate the guest's stay with the Abbot's schedule. By no means should any decision be made or any promises given or implied to a visitor.
4. During the preliminary visits, a vocation inquirer lives in the quarters set aside for guests. There is no allowance for motor-home guests.<sup>3</sup> No pets are allowed without the prior discussion and agreement of the Council. Possible Candidates should have a place to go to in between visits and finally if it turns out they have no vocation. Visiting guests should have the means to get home (either their own transportation or a round-trip ticket etc.).
5. Prospective vocations should participate as much as possible in all aspects of the community life—praying with the monks at the services, dining with the monks at

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<sup>2</sup> Note: Quotes are given in italics for historic reference and to convey a certain monastic spirit in which these rules are meant to express the Tradition handed to us by our spiritual forebears. They are by no means to be taken literally as explicit rules of the Monastery of St. John.

<sup>3</sup> Exceptions can be made for guests who are truly just passing through.

trapeza, and sharing in the work of the monastery. The extent to which they participate in these and other aspects of the common life should be determined in each case by the Abbot.

*A God-pleasing life in the world is the best preparation for monastic life—St. Ignaty, The Arena*

## **II. Candidacy**

6. If after a prolonged period of prayerful discernment, combined with several visits to the Monastery, a prospective vocation still feels called to the life, he may—at the discretion of the Abbot and Council—come to the Monastery as a Candidate.
7. The period of Candidacy should not be fewer than three weeks, and not more than six. After 6 weeks (if not earlier) an evaluation will be made and with the agreement of the Council, a decision will be made whether to pursue a vocation or send the Candidate back home. If the Candidate cannot, for good reason, physically be present at the Monastery for so many weeks taken contiguously, the Abbot may allow the Candidate to stay a week or two at a time, until the required time is fulfilled. This arrangement is made by the Abbot, and must be made clear at the beginning of a person’s Candidacy.
8. A Candidate should, if possible, be given a cell in the monk’s quarters, and should participate in their common work and recreation. He does not, however, wear any part of the habit. The tentative status of “Candidate” should be made very clear. At no point during this stage should the Candidate feel he has joined the Brotherhood but that this is a probationary time of seeking God’s discernment—both for the individual as well as the Brotherhood.

### ***Documents Required***

9. During the period of candidacy, the following documents are required:
  - a. A letter requesting admission to the Monastery, together with an essay explaining the Candidate’s reasons for wanting to be a monk.
  - b. Copies of certificates proving the Candidate is an Orthodox Christian (i.e. Baptism, Chrismation.), or any other documentation necessary to show that the Candidate is a member of the Orthodox Church (i.e. Reception into the Church)
  - c. A letter of recommendation from the Candidate’s priest or other spiritual father acceptable to the Abbot, and at least one other letter of

recommendation from another person who knows the Candidate well.

*Issues that would have to be resolved before candidacy include but are not limited to the following:*

- a. not being Orthodox;
- b. being in other jurisdictions not in communion with the Orthodox Church in America;
- c. special epitimia or bans;
- d. being under imminent threat of a serious penalty on account of a crime of which they are legitimately accused;
- e. being under 18 years of age;
- f. being induced by force, grave fear or fraud to enter the Monastery;
- g. being bound by a serious moral obligation to support children, parents or other family members;
- h. having vows to another religious institute, or clergy enrolled in a diocese, without the proper permission of the relevant Church authority.
- i. certain psychological disorders such as *borderline personality, schizophrenia, etc.*
- j. major life-threatening physical ailments
- k. addictions, problems or convictions of a sex-offending nature

10. As part of the application process, the Abbot shall require a Candidate to undergo such physical and psychological testing as the Abbot determines to be necessary.

*For the rest, there is a general method of trying all Candidates to see whether they are prepared to undergo without false shame all humiliations, so that they accept even the most menial work if reason sanctions the performance of these tasks as good and useful. After each Candidate has been proved a useful instrument for the Lord, so to speak, and ready for every good work by exhaustive scrutiny on the part of those competent to study such matters, let him be enrolled among those who have consecrated themselves to the Lord. To one, moreover, who has enjoyed any of the higher positions in society, and who aspires to imitate the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ, should be given tasks which may appear extremely humiliating to worldlings, to see whether he will prove himself to be a worker for God, wholeheartedly and unashamed.*

*-The Long Rules [of St. Basil] (p. 261)*

### **III. Admission as a Postulant**

11. With the consensus of the Council, the Abbot may admit a Candidate to live in the Monastery as a Postulant. Postulancy can be seen as a lengthier trial period of

living the monastic life. The period of Postulancy, combined with Candidacy, shall last at least four months, or longer at the discretion of the Council.

12. The Postulant ordinarily wears black, and is given a work shirt, belt, and skufia. Readers and sub-deacons wear a cassock in church without a belt. At the end of services, readers and subdeacons must take their cassocks off. All Postulants and Novices should take off their skufia inside the church. Taking off the cassock or skufia does not apply to ordained deacons and priests.
13. The Postulant should be serious in his commitment to the life of the Monastery. He must attend the services, meals, classes and other elements of the common life just as the other members of the community. He must be obedient to the Abbot and any other monk placed in authority over him by the Abbot.
14. Each Postulant is under the guidance of the Novice master or directly under the Abbot.
15. After four months in the context of spiritual discipleship and guidance, should the spiritual father discern that the Postulant is ready, he may suggest to him that he become a Novice. And if he of his own free will desires to become a Novice he may so petition. It is the Abbot alone who determines the suitability of a Postulant for admission to the novitiate, with the consensus of the Council.

#### ***Petition to the Monastery of St. John***

16. The Monastery accepts petitions to join the Brotherhood only from men who have been first admitted as Postulants, and have been under the care of the Abbot and/or the Novice Master.
17. The Council is to consider the Postulant's petition in as timely a manner as possible. In each case the Postulant must be accepted or refused within thirty days of his formal petition.

#### **IV. Admission as a Novice**

18. A Novice monk is one who has been accepted in the Monastery Brotherhood, and has received the Novice's habit as a sign of his commitment to advance in the monastic life. The novitiate carries with it a degree of commitment to remain in the Monastery

### ***Length of Novitiate***

19. The novitiate lasts at least one year. Should the spiritual father discern that the Novice is ready to proceed with tonsure to the riassa, he may suggest to the Novice that he become a rasophore monk. And if the Novice of his free will desires to do so, he may then petition to become a rasophore monk. If he does not feel ready, let him remain a Novice. If a Novice leaves the monastery, and returns desiring to pursue a vocation, the period of a year will commence again from the date of his return.

### **V. Leaving the Monastery While in Formation**

20. Candidates, Postulants, and Novices, as a matter of Church law, have no canonical status and are free to leave the Monastery at any time. Before leaving, they should write a letter explaining the reasons for their desire to leave, and seek the Abbot's blessing. The Abbot may give them an exit interview, for the benefit of their salvation.
21. The Abbot, with the consensus of the Council may dismiss a Candidate, Postulant or Novice at any time without a stated reason.

### **VI. Formation of Postulants and Novices**

22. The Abbot will see to it that the Postulants and Novices have a foundation in:
  - a. the daily cycle of services, especially in their structure and the manner in which they are celebrated;
  - b. The history and customs of Orthodox monasticism, and of this Monastery in particular;
  - c. Prayer and monastic spirituality handed down from the fathers of the Orthodox Church;
  - d. Scripture, Church history, Apologetics, and Dogmatic Theology.
23. The Abbot is responsible for seeing that each Postulant and Novice develops well spiritually, morally, physically, psychologically and emotionally.

### **VII. Novice Master**

*“A senior chosen for his skill in winning souls should be appointed to look after them with careful attention. The concern must be whether the Novice truly seeks God and*

*whether he shows eagerness for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials. The Novice should be clearly told all the hardships and difficulties that will lead him to God.” Rule 58 of St. Benedict.*

24. The Abbot may appoint an experienced monk to take charge of the day-to-day formation and education of the Postulants and Novices. This monk must be distinguished by prudence, charity, piety, knowledge and experience in the observance of the monastic life, ideally a stavrophore monk with at least ten years experience. He must at the very least be a rasophore monk on the Council
25. The Novice Master’s main duties are the coordination of the Novices’ training in the monastic life. This includes the powers of discipline as the Abbot’s deputy over the Novices. The Novice Master should see the Novices daily. He should monitor their progress closely, curing problems and rejoicing in growth. It is the Novice Master who is primarily responsible for coordinating the physical and academic work of the Novices, together with the Dean, so as best to balance their formation.
26. The Novice Master should report frequently to the Abbot and to the Council as to the progress of the Novices as often as required, at least monthly.

#### **VIII. Reception of Monks from Other Communities**

27. Orthodox monks from canonically recognized jurisdictions who are in good standing with the Church must have a blessing from their Abbot/Superior if they wish to visit. This includes *external* brethren who were tonsured here but have been living elsewhere. [*Note: more guidelines concerning external brothers are given in the Ustav*]. If they wish to pursue a transfer of membership to our brotherhood, a letter from their former Abbot/Superior as well as their former bishop is required. After a preliminary stay of at least a week, and with the approval of the Council there will be a trial period of three consecutive months in order to discern the compatibility of the monk with our community. After each month, the Council will review the situation and decide whether to continue the process of entry or terminate it.
28. Monks who wish to join us from jurisdictions of questionable canonicity (including Roman Catholics of either rite) will be handled by the Council case by case. The first step would be to regularize their status with the Orthodox Church.
29. Monks from other jurisdictions who are received, enter according to their orders (rank) or the rough equivalent thereof, pending the blessing of the bishop (e.g.: a Byzantine Catholic rasophore would become a rasophore among us.)

## **IX. Reception of Secular Clergy**

30. Secular priests and deacons who wish to join the community will not immediately be tonsured but will live in the community under obedience to the Abbot for a trial period of at least one year. Tonsure and reception into the brotherhood will require the consensus of the Council. Reception of clergy is according to the decision of the Bishop.

## **X. Long-Term Guests & Workers**

31. Men who desire to live among the Brotherhood as long-term guests or workers will start as short-term guests, i.e. three days or up to a week with the blessing of the Abbot. Each will be handled case by case after an inquiry as to the purpose of their sojourn, and the desired length thereof. Requests to stay longer than three weeks will require the consensus of the Council.
32. All guests regardless of length of stay are required to live according to the House Rules.
33. Generally there is no provision for a guest to reside at the monastery and be employed elsewhere. However in special cases, after discussion and with the consensus of the Council, exceptions may be made.

## **XI. Financial Arrangements**

34. The Monastery will assume responsibility to feed, clothe, and house a monk upon his reception as a Postulant. This obligation ends immediately upon his departure from the Monastery, whether he communicates in writing his own desire to leave the Monastery, or by the Abbot's dismissal of him from the Monastery.
35. Normally, a Postulant should have no outstanding financial debts.
36. Candidates, Postulants, and Novices will be responsible for their own medical care costs or coverage.
37. At no time does there arise an employer/employee relationship between a prospective vocation or a tonsured monk and the Monastery, or the corporation which serves the monastic community. If the Monastery chooses to give a monk, potential monk, or former monk any money or other benefit (such as payments for medical care, study or transportation costs), it does so as a simple gratuity and without any obligation whatsoever. The Abbot must ensure that, so far as possible, all this is effected from the point of view of the civil law.