

The General Rule of the Society of St Anthony
(Anglican)

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OUR CHARISM

Servants of Jesus Christ in the Franciscan Tradition

In the tradition of our holy father St Francis of Assisi, the General Chapter of the Society of St Anthony (ASociety@ or ASSA@) seeks above all else to be servants of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Holy Catholic Church, yet doing so according to the charism of our patron and holy father, St Anthony of Padua. Following his example, members of the Society seek to balance in our individual and collective lives the four inseparable charisms that marked his life: prayer, penance, study, and service. No one charism should be emphasized, sacrificed, or minimized at the expense of another.

ARTICLE I

The Society and the Life of Prayer

1. Inasmuch as it is the mark of all Christians that they be a people of prayer, brothers and sisters of the Society commit themselves to a life of continual prayer (cf. I Th 5:17).
2. A life of prayer may take many forms, but at a minimum the brothers and sisters of the Society commit themselves to a life of intercessory prayer for themselves, the Church, the world, and for the advancement of Christ's kingdom throughout the world. To this end, and in our particular Anglican tradition, members of the Society commit themselves to the daily recitation of the Divine Offices of the Book of Common Prayer (Morning and Evening Prayer), as well as participation in the offering of the Holy Eucharist at every opportunity. At a minimum, and unless circumstances otherwise prohibit, this participation should include all Sundays of the year, all Holy Days as prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, the patronal feast day of St Anthony, as well as the feast days of St Francis and St Clare, as well as any other feasts as may be observed from time to time, giving particular attention to the Franciscan saints and blessed in the Calendar of the Church. If at all possible, participation in the daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist is strongly encouraged.
3. Any other forms and methods of individual or communal prayer are also encouraged (e.g. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Hour, recitation of the Rosary and/or Chaplet of Divine Mercy, etc.), however none of these practices may replace the daily recitation of the Divine Office or participation in the Holy Eucharist, as required.

ARTICLE II

The Society and the Life of Penance

1. In addition to a life dedicated to prayer, the brothers and sisters of the Society commit themselves to a life of penance (i.e., ongoing conversion) as modeled by our holy fathers St Francis and St Anthony. Among the many penitential practices in the history of the Church, those most associated with the tradition of our holy fathers are poverty, chastity, and obedience.
 - 1a *Poverty*: while not taking a vow of poverty in the same sense of our holy fathers, St Francis and St Anthony, brothers and sisters of the Society nevertheless seek to live simply in their lives, associating this simplicity with the poor and marginalized of society. Examples of this simplicity include simplicity in dress, simplicity in material possessions, and simplicity in food and drink. Through this simplicity, the brothers and sisters of the Society will endeavor to identify with the poor and marginalized of society in a deeper and more intimate level.
 - 1b *Chastity*: heeding the words of St Peter, every member of the Society vows to be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour@ (II Pt 5:8). It has been the shame of the Church throughout the ages that certain of her children have fallen into grievous sin in one form or another. In order to avoid this and set an example of the chaste life before all people, the brothers and sisters of the Society pledge self-control and temperance in all things, including

moderation in food and drink (Php 4:5), a guardedness of the words that proceed from the mouth (Eph 5:4), and fidelity and chastity in sexual relations (I Th 4:4-5). In all things the brothers and sisters of the Society pledge fidelity for the health of the soul, the integrity of his or her ministry in the Church, and for the witness of the Church in the world (cf. I Cor 9:27).

- 1c *Obedience*: the brothers and sisters of the Society vow obedience to their religious superiors in all matters pertaining to the administration of the Society. Nothing in this provision, however, should be construed to impinge on matters of conscience and/or legality, nor on those relationships as may exist outside of this Society.
2. Each member of the Society will also participate in the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Sacrament of Penance. Each member is expected to make his or her sacramental confession at least twice annually, once before the beginning of Lent (Ash Wednesday) and once before the First Sunday in Advent. More frequent use of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged.
3. Every member of the Society is also encouraged to receive ongoing spiritual direction from an experienced spiritual director. While the choice of director is not limited to another member of the Society, where possible this is more desirable based on a mutually shared charism.
4. In addition to the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, brothers and sisters of the Society further commit themselves to the observance of other counsels of perfection as outlined either in the Book of Common Prayer or in the traditions of the Anglican Church. At a minimum, these include the counsels of fasting and abstinence [cf. Book of Common Prayer (1928 ed.), page li], and the giving of alms.

ARTICLE III

The Society and the Life of Study

To Brother Anthony, my Bishop, I Brother Francis send greetings. It pleases me that you should teach the friars sacred theology, provided that in such studies they do not destroy the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, as is contained in the rule. Farewell.

B Letter of St Francis to St Anthony

1. Following the example of our holy father St Anthony, each member of the Society is expected to engage in a lifetime of learning, the end of which is not knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself, but knowledge in order to advance the kingdom of Jesus Christ and his Church.
2. Our learning should manifest itself in an apostolate of preaching (where licensed to do so) and teaching, whether within the parish environment or without. To this end, members must be committed to the study of God=s Holy Word, and to the propagation of the Afaith once delivered to the saints@ as anciently and universally understood, in order to bring about spiritual renewal in the lives of all members of our Lord=s One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. This is in keeping with our Lord=s admonition to our holy father St Francis to Arebuild My house.@
3. It is with this emphasis upon learning and the promotion of knowledge within the Anglican jurisdiction of Christ=s Church that the Society seeks to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to go into the world and make disciples of all nations (cf. Mt 28:18-20).
4. As our holy father St Francis reminded our holy father St Anthony, each brother and sister of the Society is reminded that our commitment to a life of study and teaching must not dampen the spirit of prayer and devotion that was foundational to the life of our holy father St Anthony and to the entire Franciscan charism itself.

ARTICLE IV

The Society and Service

1. Following the examples of our holy fathers St Francis and St Anthony, the Society desires to bring the person of Jesus Christ into a world that is fallen and tainted by sin. The aim of this incarnational ministry is to not only change the lives of those inhabiting that world (cf. Gl 2:20) but renew and redeem the very world in which we live.
2. As such, the Society is committed to the advancement of the Kingdom of God through evangelism in obedience to the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our fulfillment of this Great Commission may occur in various ways and on various levels, whether through our ministries of preaching and teaching, through our ministries to the poor and marginalized of society, through faithfulness in our various parish ministries, and so forth. Although no one method of evangelism is encouraged, the urgency of the task is nevertheless recognized in Christ's command to go into all the world and make disciples (Mt 28:18-20). Each member of the Society, therefore, vows to act in loving obedience to this command, heralding the Good News of salvation at every opportunity.
3. Each member of the Society will endeavor to be an integral part of the local Body of Christ of which he or she is a member, living his or her life according to the Rule of this Society.
4. Those who have been set apart in Holy Orders will perform their sacramental functions within the local parish to which he has been assigned by his Diocesan Bishop.
5. It was the special charism of our holy father St Francis to care for the poor. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself observed "for the poor always ye have with you" (Jn 2:8), and while his blessing was directed to the poor, it was directed to the institution of poverty. Our Lord's ministry was continually directed towards those who were not only poor in the material sense, but who were also poor in spirit (cf. Mt 5:3). Inasmuch as the poor were a special focus of both our Lord's earthly ministry and the special charism of our holy fathers St Francis and St Anthony, so must each member of the Society always be mindful of those in need. To alleviate the suffering of every human being, as far as he or she is able, is to be one of the focal points of the ministry and mission of each member of this Society. To this end, every member of the Society pledges to offer assistance to those in need through the distribution of alms and offerings as the occasion arises, yet always doing so with an eye towards both stewardship and the deeper pastoral issues involved.
6. In all things and above all things, each member of this Society must focus his or her ministry on the love of Jesus Christ, thereby fulfilling the commandment of our Lord that we love one another in true Christian love and charity (cf. I Cor 13). A brother or sister must, therefore, strive to fulfill the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt 22:37-40). By fulfilling these two great commandments the world sees Jesus Christ in the life and ministry of every member of the Society: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jn 13:35).

OUR GOVERNMENT

ARTICLE V

The Structures of Government

1. The Society will draw its membership from those individuals who are affiliated with, or are in jurisdictions in communion with, the Anglican Province of America (or its successor). Membership will be limited to those men and women who are active communicant members of their individual ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Admission into the Society will be by a simple majority vote of the current membership.

2. Membership may also be opened to those individuals not affiliated with or in communion with the Anglican Province of America (or its successor) at the discretion of a simple majority vote of the current membership.
3. There will be elected by the members of the Society, by a simple majority vote, a Minister General who will serve as the head of the Society. This person will be a clergy member in good standing of the Society and the Anglican Province of America. The Minister General will be elected at a General Chapter held in conjunction with the Provincial Synod of the Anglican Province of America (or its successor) and will serve for a term not to exceed three years. The Minister General will be responsible for the oversight of all members and functions of the Society. Upon the expiration of the three-year term, a member has filled the office of Minister General may be re-elected by a simple majority vote of the members. If a member who has been elected to the office of Minister General is unable or unwilling to fulfill the term of his office, there will be elected by a simple majority vote of the members an interim Minister General who will fulfill the unexpired term.
4. Should the occasion arise, the discipline of a member of the Society shall be in accordance with the instructions of our Lord Jesus Christ found in St Matthew=s Gospel, 18:15-20, the end of which being the restoration of an errant brother or sister to full communion within the Society.
5. Outside of the membership of the Society in general, the Minister General, as the elected representative of the Society, will be responsible and answerable only to the Presiding Bishop of the Anglican Province of America (or its successor). There shall not be any other committees or boards within or without the Anglican Province of America (or its successor) to which the Society is held accountable, nor shall any other committees or boards have any jurisdiction over it. While recognizing that the Society is a part of Christ=s One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and while recognizing that it is developed within the jurisdiction of the Anglican Province of America, the jurisdiction of the Society comes only and specifically under the Presiding Bishop of the Anglican Province of America (or its successor). This does not, however, preclude those members of the Society individually from remaining under the oversight of the various boards and committees of the various jurisdictions in which they canonically reside (i.e., in all matters not specifically related to or dealing with the Society, each member of the Society will remain subject to his or her own ecclesiastical authorities).
6. The contents of this Document may be amended from time to time by a simple two-thirds majority vote of the members in good standing of the Society. A member in good standing is any individual who has taken an active role in the life of the Society as outlined in this Rule and who is not under sentence of discipline.

ADDENDUM

The Society and Spiritual Formation

1. The chief end of spiritual formation is glorification of God in one=s personal life and in the spiritual communities of which one is a part. These communities include the communities of the Society, the local congregation of Christ=s Church, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of which a brother or sister is a member, and the greater body of the Church Catholic. It is the desire of a member that he or she be a light in the community of Christ and unto the world (cf. Mt 5:16), not bringing attention to oneself but to Jesus Christ alone and for his honor and glory (cf. Mt 6; Gl 2:20).
2. To this end, a member of the Society will endeavor to conform his or her life according to the spiritual traditions of the Church through prayer, penance, study, and service, focusing on those things which St Paul admonishes all Christians to desire: AYlove, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law@ (Gl 5:22-23).
3. A member of the Society of St Anthony seeks above all to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ in both life and mind. It is primarily in the pages of Holy Scripture that this image is revealed, and it is through the study of and meditation upon Holy Scripture and the outworking of that study and meditation in life, that one is conformed to His image, as St Paul writes, AAnd be not conformed to the image of this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God@ (Rm 12:2). Every member of the Society, therefore, pledges to live his or her life in the study of Sacred Scripture in order that God=s transforming grace might be manifested through him or her into the communities which he or she serves.