

THE WRITINGS OF ST ANGELA MERICI

COUNSELS ADDRESSED TO THE LEADERS

Prologue

1 Sister Angela, unworthy servant of Jesus Christ, 2 to her beloved daughters and sisters, the leaders of the Company of Saint Ursula.

3 May the strength and true consolation of the Holy Spirit be in you all, 4 so that you can sustain and carry out vigorously and faithfully the charge laid upon you, 5 and at the same time look forward to the great reward which God has prepared for you if you strive, each one for her part, to be faithful and full of concern for his spouses 6 who have been entrusted to you, to guard them and watch over them as most vigilant shepherds and good servants.

7 How much, therefore, must you pray God to enlighten you, and direct you, and teach you what you have to do for love of him in this task 8 and there cannot be another more worthy than to be guardians of the spouses of the Most High.

9 So also, you must consider in what manner you must esteem them, 10 For the more you esteem them, the more you will love them; the more you love them, the more you will care for and watch over them.

11 And it will be impossible for you not to cherish them day and night, and to have them all engraved in your heart, one by one, for this is how real love acts and works.

12 And this charge must not be a burden for you; on the contrary, you have to thank God most greatly that he has deigned to see to it that you are among those he wants to spend themselves in governing and safe guarding such a treasure, his own.

13 Grace is certainly great and destiny is inestimable, if you are willing to recognize it.

14 Do not be afraid of not knowing and not being able to do what is rightly required in such a singular government.

15 Have hope and firm faith in God, for he will help you in everything.

16 Pray to him, humble yourselves under his great power, because, without doubt, as he has given you this charge, so he will give you also the strength to be able to carry it out, provided you do not fail for your part.

17 Act, move, believe, strive, hope, cry out to him with all your heart,

18 For without doubt you will see marvellous things, if you direct everything to the praise and glory of his Majesty and the good of souls.

19 And among the other things which, with the grace of God, you have to do,

20 I ask you all, or rather I beg you for love of the Passion of Jesus Christ and of our Lady, that you strive to put into practice these few counsels

21 which I am leaving you now to carry out after my death; they will be for you a reminder of at least a part of my will and desire.

22 And by this I shall know whether you are really eager to please me.



23 For understand that now I am more alive than I was when I lived on earth, 24 and I see better and hold more dear and pleasing the good things which I see you constantly doing, 25 and now, even more, I want and am able to help you and do you good in every way.

First Counsel

1 In the first place then, my daughters and sisters most dear in the Blood of Jesus Christ,
2 I remind you to strive, with the help of God, to take hold of and plant within you this right conviction and humble sentiment: do not consider yourselves worthy to be superiors and leaders.
3 Rather, regard yourselves as ministers and servants, reflecting that you have more need to serve than them than they have to be served by you, or governed,
4 and that God could very well provide for them by other means even better than you.
5 But in his mercy he has wanted to use you as his means for your greater good, so that you could merit more from his infinite goodness, and that he would have reason for rewarding you.
6 Learn from Our Lord who, while he was in this world, was as a servant, obeying the Eternal Father even unto death.
7 And this is why he says: "Ego fui in vobis non tam quam qui recumbit, sed ut qui ministrat"; that is, I have been among you not as the one who is served, but as the one who serves.
8 And St Gregory, even though he was Pope, still called himself servant of the servants of God.
9 Thus he fulfilled the office of superior and Pope, but in his heart he regarded himself as less than the others, and servant of the servants of God, mindful of the evangelical saying: "Qui maior est inter vos, fiat sicut minor".
10 In like manner, you also be superiors in the same way, that is, know and consider yourselves less than they. 11 Because if you do this, then God himself will exalt you as much as you have humbled yourselves. 12 For not in vain, and not without reason, a true ^{and} prudent servant of God humbles himself in his heart, and annihilates in himself his own feelings, and delight in his own reputation, 13 because he hopes and expects from God another delight and truer glory and honour. 14 For he firmly believes what the Gospel says: "Qui se humiliat exaltabitur"; that is, he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

Second Precept

1 Be gentle and compassionate towards your dear daughters.
2 And strive to act solely out of the sole love of God and out of the sole zeal for souls when you admonish and advise them, or exhort them to some good and dissuade them from some evil.
3 For you will achieve more with kindness and gentleness than with harshness and sharp rebukes, 4 which should be reserved only for cases of necessity, 5 and even then, at the right place and time, and according to the persons.
6 But charity, which directs everything to the honour of God and the good of souls, charity indeed teaches such discretion, 7 and moves the heart to be, according to place and time, now gentle and now severe, and little or much as there is need.
8 If you see one faint-hearted and timid and inclined to despondency, comfort her, encourage her, promise her the blessing of the mercy of God, lift her heart with every consolation.
9 And on the contrary, if you see another presumptuous, and who has a lax conscience and little fear of anything, into this one instil some fear; 10 remind her of the rigour of the justice of

God, 11 and how sin is an insidious thing, and how we are in the midst of snares, and how we always have reason to stand in fear, as Scripture says: `Beatus qui semper est pavidus"; that is, blessed is he who always stands in fear.

Third Precept

1 Remain obedient to the principal mothers whom I leave in my place, since this is just.
2 And what you do, do it as obeying them, and not as following your own judgement.
3 For obeying them, you will be obeying me; obeying me, you will be obeying Jesus Christ,
4 Who, in his immense goodness, has chosen me to be mother, both alive and dead, of such a noble Company, even though, for my part, I am most unworthy of it;
5 and having chosen me, he has also given me the grace to be able to govern it according to his will.
6 Now, if it should happen that you have some just reason to contradict or reproach them, do it with discretion and respect.
7 And if they do not want to pay you heed, have patience.
8 And know that it is right to love the mothers if they are good, and bear with them if they are eccentric. 9 And be very careful never to complain, or grumble, or speak ill of them, whether with others or with your daughters.
10 But always and everywhere preserve the honour and respect due to your mothers, seeing that if God commands us to honour our natural fathers and mothers, how much more our spiritual [mothers] should be esteemed.
11 And so, make sure that they are always held in esteem and respect, especially among your daughters. 12 And remember, if they are good you do not deserve them, and if they are bad you deserve even worse. 13 Still, if you have something in your heart that disturbs you in them, you may rightly and without scruple talk about it in confidence with some person who is good and faithful in many respects and ways. 14 Know, however, that where you see clearly that the salvation and honour of your daughters are in danger, you must on no account consent to it, nor tolerate it, nor have any hesitation. 15 Yet, all this always with discernment and maturity of judgement.

Fourth Counsel

1 You will be careful and vigilant to know and understand the behaviour of your daughters, and to be aware of their spiritual and temporal needs.
2 And then, as far as possible, you yourselves provide for them if you can, because you must give the matrons * as little trouble and bother as possible.
3 But if you cannot provide for them yourselves, go to the principal mothers, and quickly, and without any hesitation explain to them the needs of your lambs.
4 And if you see them slow to provide, be insistent; 5 and in that case, in my name even be importunate and troublesome.
6 For if ever, through your fault and negligence, one of them were lost, God would demand from you a strict account of it on the day of judgement. 7 For you must know this and hold it for certain: that he will never fail to provide for their needs, material as well as spiritual, so long as nothing is lacking on your part. 8 For if God has planted this Company, he will never abandon it, 9 because as Scripture says: "Nunquam vidi iustum derelictum nec semen eius quaerens panem"; that is, never have I seen the just abandoned, nor his children go begging.

Fifth Counsel

1 Please go often, as you have time and opportunity, especially on feast days, and visit your dear daughters and sisters, 2 and greet them; see how they are, comfort them; encourage them to stand firm in the life begun; 3 invite them to desire the celestial joys and treasures, to long for those joyful and new feasts of heaven, those blessed and everlasting triumphs, 4 and henceforward to abandon totally all love for this miserable and treacherous world, where there is never either rest or any true contentment, 5 but only empty dreams, or bitter hardships, and every kind of misery and wretchedness.

6 Remind them to behave well in homes [they go to], with good judgement, with prudence and modesty, 7 and to be reserved and moderate in all things. 8 Let them eat and drink, not for pleasure and to satisfy their appetite, but only out of the need to sustain nature in order to serve God better.

9 Let them be moderate also in sleep, sleeping only as much as necessity requires.

10 Similarly in laughing, let them be reserved and moderate.

11 In listening, not taking pleasure except in hearing modest, and licit, and necessary things.

12 In speaking, that their words be wise and reserved, not harsh, not rude, but compassionate and leading to concord and charity.

13 Tell them that, wherever they are, they should give good example. 14 And be to all a good odour of virtue. 15 And be obedient and submissive to their superiors. 16 And seek to spread peace and concord where they are.

17 Above all let them be humble and gentle. 18 And let all their behaviour, their actions and their words be with charity; and let them bear everything with patience, for with these two virtues especially, one crushes the head of the devil.

19 And when you visit them, I give you this charge, to greet them, and shake hands with them, also on my behalf.

20 And tell them that they should want to be united and in concord together, all being of one will, remaining under obedience to the Rule, for in this is everything.

21 That they should do honour to Jesus Christ, to whom they have promised their virginity and their very self. 22 That they should place their hope and love in God alone, and not in any living person.

23 Comfort them, encourage them, let them go forward willingly.

24 And tell them this good news which I announce to them on behalf of Jesus Christ and of our Lady: 25 how much they have to exult and rejoice, for in heaven a new crown of glory and joy is prepared for all of them, one by one, 26 provided they stand firm and steady in their resolve, 27 and strive to observe the Rule. 28 And they should never ever doubt this.

29 Although at times they will have troubles or anxieties, nevertheless this will soon pass away and be turned into gladness and joy.

30 And then, the suffering of this world is nothing in comparison with the blessings which are in Paradise.

31 Also, let them hold this as most certain: that they will never be abandoned in their needs. God will provide for them wonderfully. 32 They must not lose hope.

33 How many lords, queens and other great persons there are who, with the many riches and possessions they have, will not be able to find true relief in some extreme need; 34 and yet these little ones, poor as they are, will find consolation and comfort. 35 Also, tell them that now I am more alive than I was when they saw me in the flesh, 36 and now I see them and know them better. 37 And can and want to help them more.

38 And that I am continually among them with my Lover, or rather ours, the Lover of us all,
39 provided they believe and do not lose heart and hope.

40 And so, especially for those you see disconsolate, doubtful and faint-hearted, enlarge the scope of the promises, which will not go unfulfilled.

41 Tell them that they should long to see me not on earth, but in heaven, where our love is.

42 Let them set their hopes on high and not on earth. 43 Let them have Jesus Christ for their only treasure, for there also will be love, 44 il quai se ha cercare non qui in questo mondo, ma su nel alto Cielo alla destra del Padre, come dice l'Apostolo: "Si consurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite, quae sursum sunt sapite, et non quae super terram".

44 which is to be sought not here in this world, but above, in the high heaven at the right hand of the Father, as the Apostle says: "Si consurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite, quae sursum sunt sapite, et non quae super terram".

Sixth Precept

1 As for you, live and behave in such a way that your daughters may see in you a model.

2 And what you want them to do, do it yourselves first.

3 How will you reprove or admonish them for some defect if it is still in you? 4 Or counsel them, and urge them to any virtue which you do not first possess, 5 Or at least, do not then begin to practise yourselves, together with them?

6 Act therefore in such a way that, also following your example, they may stir and spur themselves to virtuous living.

7 And willingly do, as they do, every act of integrity and virtue appropriate and possible for you, especially with regard to behaviour, to going frequently to confession and communion, and other similar good works.

8 For it is right and fitting that the mothers be an example and a mirror for their daughters, especially in modesty, and in behaviour, and other actions, ordinary and extraordinary.

Seventh Counsel

1 Know that you have to defend and protect your lambs from wolves and robbers, that is, from two kinds of pestilential people: worldly persons or false religious with their deceits, and heretics. 2 Firstly then, concerning worldly relationships, take care especially that they do not become familiar with young men, and other men too, even if they are spiritual,

3 because too great a spiritual familiarity with men nearly always degenerates into carnal familiarity. 4 Neither let them, as far as you can, associate with idle women who do not like to live chastely, 5 and who willingly enjoy hearing about vanities and worldly pleasures.

6 Be on your guard lest a confessor, or some other religious, turn them away from some good inspiration, 7 or from fasting, 8 or from the firm purpose of virginity, 9 or from esteem for this holy Rule divinely ordained, 10 or other similar good things.

11 Because many, under the pretext of good advice, are accustomed to turn the minds of many poor girls from their good intentions and purposes.

12 Now, as for protecting them from the pestilential opinions of heretics, when you hear that some preacher, or other person, has a reputation for heresy, 13 or preaches new things outside the common practice of the Church, 14 and contrary to what you have received from us, 15 then, tactfully, prevent your dear daughterS from listening to such a person.

16 For it often happens that certain bad seeds are planted in the mind, which cannot then be uprooted except with great difficulty.
17 Therefore, do not yourselves be on familiar terms with them either.
18 Leave them alone.
19 Consider each one as good, 20 but be prudent for your own good.
21 For it is better to follow what is certain, without danger, than what is uncertain, with danger.
22 Keep to the ancient way and custom of the Church, established and confirmed by so many Saints under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And live a new life.
23 As for the other opinions that are arising now, and will arise, leave them aside as not concerning you. 24 But pray, and get others to pray, that God not abandon his Church, but reform it as he pleases, 25 and as he sees best for us, 26 and more to his honour and glory.
27 For in these perilous and pestilential times, you will find no other recourse than to take refuge at the feet of Jesus Christ.
28 Because if he directs and teaches you, you will be [well] taught, as the Prophet also says: "Beatus quem tu erudieris, Domine"; that is, blessed is the one whom you, Lord, have taught.
29 Therefore humble yourselves under his powerful hand, crying out with the Prophet: "Illumina oculos meos ne unquam obdormiam in morte" and you will be enlightened.

Eighth Counsel

1 Love your dear daughters equally; and do not prefer one more than another, 2 because they are all creatures of God. And you do not know what he wants to make of them.
3 For how do you know, you, that those who seem to you to be the least and lowest are not to become the most generous and most pleasing to his Majesty? 4 And then, who can judge the heart and the innermost secret thoughts of any creature?
5 And so, hold them all in your love and bear with them all equally, for it is not up to you to judge the handmaids of God; he well knows what he wants to make of them, 6 Who (as Scripture says) can turn stones into children of heaven. 7 As for you, do your duty, correcting them with love and charity if you see them fall into some fault through human frailty, 8 And thus you will not cease to prune this vine which has been entrusted to you.
9 And after that, leave it to God; he will do marvellous things in his own time, and when it pleases him.

Last Counsel

1 My last word to you, by which I implore you even with my blood, is that you live in harmony, united together, all of one heart and one will. 2 Be bound to one another by the bond of charity, esteeming each other, helping each other, bearing with each other in Jesus Christ.
3 For if you strive to be like this, without any doubt, the Lord God will be in your midst.
4 You will have in your favour our Lady, 5 the apostles, 6 all the saints, 7 the angels, 8 and finally all heaven and all the universe. 9 Because God has so ordained from all eternity, that those who for his honour are united in doing good enjoy every prosperity, and that what they do turns out well, because they have God himself and every one of his creatures in their favour.
10 See then how important is this union and concord. 11 So, long for it, 12 pursue it, 13 embrace it, 14 hold on to it with all your strength; 15 for I tell you, living all together thus united in heart, you will be like a mighty fortress, or a tower impregnable 16 against all adversities, 17 and persecutions, 18 and deceits of the devil.

19 And moreover I assure you that every grace you ask from God will infallibly be granted to you. 20 And I shall always be in your midst, helping your prayers.
21 Therefore encourage them to continue courageously the task they have begun.
22 And at the same time rejoice, because, without doubt, what I say to you will be so.
23 Not to mention the immense and inestimable grace that my Lover, or rather ours, will grant you at the supreme moment of death, 24 for in times of great need, true friendship is recognized.
25 And believe firmly that then, especially, you will recognize me to be your faithful friend.
26 Now I leave you; be consoled, and have a lively faith and hope. 27 But first I want you to be blessed, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

TESTAMENT OF MOTHER SISTER ANGELA BEQUEATHED TO THE LADY-GOVERNORS

Prologue

1 Sister Angela, unworthy servant of Jesus Christ, 2 to Countess Lady Lucrecia, principal mother of the Company of Saint Ursula, and to the other lady governors and mothers, the noble matrons, Lady Genepra di Luciagi, Lady Maria di Avogadri, Lady Veronica di Bucci, Lady Orsolina di Gavardi, Lady Giovanna di Monti, Lady Isabetta da Prato, Lady Lionella di Pedeciocchi, Lady Caterina di Mei. 3 May the eternal benediction be on you all, granted by Almighty God in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. 4 My honourable sisters and mothers most loving in the Blood of Jesus Christ, God willing 5 in his eternal wisdom to call forth from the vanity of the world many women, especially virgins, that is, this our Company, 6 and being pleased in his infinite goodness to use me as his instrument for this great work of his, 7 even though for my part I am a most inadequate and useless servant, 8 he has also, in his usual goodness, given and granted me such grace and gift as to be able to govern them according to his will, 9 and to provide for their needs and wants, especially those concerned with directing them and sustaining them in the life for which they have been chosen. 10 And among the good and necessary means that God has granted me, you are one of the most important, 11 you, who are found worthy to be true and loving mothers of so noble a family, 12 confided to your hands 13 that you may have for them the same care and guardianship you would have if they had been born from your own body, and even more.
14 Now, on this point I would, a little, like you to open the eye of your mind to consider your great grace and good fortune, 15 that God has deigned to make you mothers of so many virgins, 16 and confided his own spouses to your hands, and entrusted them to your government. 17 Oh, how much you have to thank him for this, 18 and at the same time to pray to him, 19 that as he has deigned to place you at the head of so noble a flock, 20 so he would deign also to give you such knowledge and capacity that you may be able to do work worthy of praise in his sight, 21 and to put all your zeal and strength into carrying out your duty.



22 Therefore you must make a sound and firm resolution to submit yourselves totally to his will, 23 and with a lively and steadfast faith to receive from him what you have to do for love of him.

24 And in this (whatever may happen) to persevere with constancy to the very end. 25 But above all, I ask and entreat you all, by the Passion and Blood of Jesus Christ shed for love of us, 26 to willingly put into practice with every solicitude these few reminders 27 which, by the grace of God, you will find here, set out below one after the other.

28 Because as I am now about to let go of this life, 29 leaving you in my place as my heirs, 30 These recommendations will be to you like legacies which, as my greatest desire, I leave you to carry out faithfully.

First Legacy

1 First of all then, my most loving mothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, 2 strive, with the help of God, to grasp and keep in yourselves such conviction and good sentiment 3 that you are moved to this care and government solely by the sole love of God and by the sole zeal for the salvation of souls.

4 Because all your works and actions as governors, being thus rooted in this twofold charity, can bear nothing but good and salutary fruits.

5 For, as our Saviour says: "Bona arbor non potest malos fructus facere". The good tree, he says, that is, the heart and spirit imbued with charity, can do nothing but good and holy works.

6 That is why St Augustine also said: "Ama et fac quod vis"; that is, have love and charity, and then do what you please, 7 as if he said clearly: charity cannot sin.

Second Legacy

1. Next I beg you that you willingly hold in consideration and have engraved on your mind and heart all your dear daughters, one by one; 2 not only their names, 3 but also their condition, and character, and their every situation and state. 4 This will not be difficult for you if you embrace them with an ardent charity.

5 For you can see that natural mothers, even if they had a thousand sons and daughters, would have them wholly fixed in their hearts, all and each one separately, 6 because this is how real love works. 7 Indeed it seems that the more children they have, the more their love and care for each one grows. 8 How much more spiritual mothers can and should do this, 9 Since spiritual love is beyond comparison much more powerful than natural love.

10 Therefore, my most loving mothers, if you love these dear daughters of ours with a burning and passionate charity, 11 it will be impossible for you not to have them all depicted individually in your memory and in your heart.

Third Legacy

1 Third: please, I beg you, willingly strive to lead them with love and with a mild and kindly hand, 2 and not imperiously, not harshly, 3 but in everything, willingly be gentle.

4 Pay attention to Jesus Christ who says: "Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde"; learn from me, he says, that I am gentle and meek of heart. 5 And about God we read: "Disponit omnia suaviter"; that is, he orders and governs all things with mildness.

6 And again Jesus Christ says: "Jugum meum suave et onus meum leve"; that is, my yoke and service is light and sweet.

7 So you also must strive to do, and use all possible gentleness. 8 And above all, be on your guard not to want to get anything done by force, 9 because God has given free will to everyone, 10 and wants to force no one, 11 but only proposes, invites and counsels, 12 as he does also through the mouth of St John, saying: "Suadeo tibi emere coronam immarcescibilem"; that is, I counsel you to buy the crown which cannot wither. I counsel you, he says, and not, I force you. 13 I do not say, however, that it will not be necessary occasionally to use reproaches and severity, 14 at the place and time, according to the importance, condition and need of the persons, 15 but we must be moved solely by charity and by the sole zeal for souls.

Fourth Legacy

1 Fourth: you must be eager and ardent in putting all your zeal and concern into ensuring that your daughters are adorned with every virtue, 2 and with all regal and refined manners, 3 so that more and more they may please Jesus Christ, their Spouse.

4 And you must be especially solicitous and careful that they keep themselves intact and chaste, 5 and that in every action and gesture they behave with modesty and prudence, 6 and do everything with patience and charity. 7 Now one sees temporal mothers putting a great deal of care and effort into attiring, adorning and embellishing their daughters in many different ways, so that they may please their earthly spouses; 8 and the more important and noble these men are, the more the mothers strive with all diligence to make their daughters more and more attractive, especially in what they understand to be more agreeable to them. 9 And they have and place all their contentment in being the mothers of daughters who are so pleasing to such noble spouses, 10 for in this way they also hope, because and by means of their daughters, to have the love and favour of their sons-in-law. 11 How much more must you do this for these heavenly daughters of yours, 12 who are spouses not of earthly husbands, corruptible and ultimately stinking, 13 but of the immortal Son of the eternal God.

14 Oh, what a new beauty and dignity to be lady governors and mothers of the spouses of the King of kings and Lord of lords, 15 and to become in a way the mothers-in-law of the Son of God; 16 and thus, by means of the daughters, to win the favour and love of the Most High. 17 Indeed, happy will you be if you are ready and alert to recognize this new and unique destiny of yours.

Fifth Legacy

1 Fifth: you will be [well] advised when you have gently counselled and warned one of them three, or at most four times, about some notable fault, 2 and you see that she does not want to obey, 3 then leave her alone 4 and stop sending her the leaders or other visitors, 5 especially because it might happen that the poor child, seeing herself thus abandoned and dismissed, would be moved to repentance, 6 and would more desire to want to stay 7 and persevere in this Company. 8 For God also dismissed Adam from Paradise so that, thus knowing himself better, he would have to do penance. 9 So, if being sorry for her fault, she wants to return, she must be received, 10 but on condition that she ask pardon *of* you all, and also *of* her leader. 11 And as a penance, she should be given to fast one Friday on bread and water.

Sixth Legacy

1 Sixth: you will be forewarned when you see that one *of* them finds great difficulty in deciding to give up fashionable trifles and other similar frills, which in themselves have little importance, 2 do not have too high a hope about her that she will persevere under this Rule. 3 For if she does not want to do what is lesser, much less will she do what is greater. 4 But here, however, you must be prudent, because it can happen that a person has set almost all her desire on a bagatelle, so that, having conquered herself on this point, she will no longer find any other too difficult.

Seventh Legacy

1Seventh: make sure that you all meet with the leaders twice, or at least once a month, 2 and thus confer together, 3 and make a careful examination of the government. 4 And especially of what the leaders will report to you about the behaviour of your dear daughters, 5 and about their necessities and needs, both spiritual and material. 7 And provide for everything as the Holy Spirit inspires you.

Eighth Legacy

1 Eighth: you must take care to have your daughters come together from time to time in the place you think best and most convenient. 2 And then (according to whether you have at your disposal a suitable person) have them listen to a short sermon and exhortation, 3 so that, together like this, they might also meet each other as loving sisters, 4 and thus, talking over spiritual matters, rejoice together, 5 and together encourage one another, 6 which will be no small help to them.

Ninth Legacy

1 Ninth: Know that if it were not useful and suitable that this Company have some income, God would not have begun to provide it. 2 I warn you however: be prudent in this matter, 3and be good and true mothers, 4 and such income as you have, spend it for the good and the development of the Company, according as discretion and motherly love will suggest to you. 5 In this matter I do not want you to seek outside advice; 6 you decide, only among yourselves, 7 according as charity and the Holy Spirit will enlighten and inspire you, 8 directing everything towards the good and spiritual benefit of your dear daughters, 9 as much to urge and move those who are already in [the Company] to greater love and obligation to do good, 10 as to attract still others to it. 11 For this is the real purpose, agreeable to God, of almsgiving and kindness, that by means of them the creature is drawn away from evil and vice, 12 and led to virtue and good behaviour, 13 or at least to greater spiritual benefit. 14 Indeed, in this way people are so to speak won over and obliged and compelled to do the very thing one wants. 15 Because just as for example, if a girl takes and accepts some present and gift from some worldly stranger, she remains obliged to gratify the wishes of that person,

16 and it seems that she is no longer able to say no, 17 so, neither more nor less, by gifts and alms people are drawn and somehow compelled to do good; and thus they remain almost bound to do good. 18 Follow this road and you cannot go wrong.

Tenth Legacy

1Tenth: I beg you with all my heart, please be watchful and most vigilant, like so many caring shepherdesses, for this heavenly flock 2 entrusted to your hands, 3 that no weeds of discord or other scandal grow up among them, 4 and especially that they not sully themselves with any poisonous and heretical opinion in these pestilential times. 5 And consider that the devil never sleeps, but in a thousand ways seeks our ruin.

6 Be on guard, then, 7 and take care especially that they are united and one in will, as we read of the Apostles and other Christians of the early Church: "Erat autem eorum cor unum"; that is, they were all of one heart. 8 In the same way, you also strive to be like this with all your dear daughters, 9 because the more you are united, the more Jesus Christ will be in your midst as a father and good shepherd. 10 And there will be no other sign that you are in the grace of the Lord than that you love one another and are united together,

11 for he himself says: "In hoc cognoscet mundus quod eritis mei discipuli, si diligeretis invicem"; that is, by this the world will know that you are mine, if together, you love one another.

12 And thus, loving each other and living in harmony together are a sure sign that we are walking the path right and pleasing to God.

13 Therefore, my sisters and mothers, be vigilant on this point, for on this point especially the devil will set snares for you under the guise of good. 14 So if you become aware of even the slightest shadow of such a plague, remedy it at once, according as God will enlighten you.

15 And on no account let such a seed grow in the Company, 16 because it would be a plague of bad example also for the city and even beyond. 17 For where there is disparity of wills, inevitably there is discord; 18 where there is discord, without any doubt there is ruin; as the Saviour says: "Omne regnum in seipsum divisum desolabitur"; that is, every government in discord with itself will fall into ruin.

Last Legacy

1Finally, take the greatest care that the good directives given, especially those in the Rule, be most diligently observed. 2 And if, according to times and circumstances, the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice.

3And always let your principal recourse be to gather at the feet of Jesus Christ, 4 and there, all of you, with all your daughters, to offer most fervent prayers. 5 For in this way, without doubt, Jesus Christ will be in your midst, and as a true and good master, he will enlighten and teach you what you have to do.

6 Hold this for certain: that this Rule has been planted directly by his holy hand, 7 and he will never abandon this Company as long as the world lasts. 8 Because, if he has planted it in the first place, who is there who can uproot it? 9 Believe it, 10 do not doubt, 11 have firm faith that it will be so. 12 I know what I am saying. 13 Blessed are those who will take very good care of it.

14 If you faithfully carry out these and other similar things, as the Holy Spirit suggests to you according to the times and circumstances, rejoice, go forward willingly. 15 See, a great reward will be prepared for you. 16 And where the daughters are, there also will be the mothers. 17 Be consoled; do not doubt; we want to see you in our midst in heaven, 18 for the Lover of us all wants this too. 19 And who is there who could resist him, 20 whose light and joyful splendour of truth will surround you at the moment of death, 21 and will deliver you from the hands of the enemy. 22 So, persevere faithfully and joyfully in the work you have begun. 23 And take care, take care I say, not to lose your fervour, 24 for every promise that I make to you will be fulfilled for you beyond measure. 25 Now I am going, 26 and you, in the meantime, do what has to be done. 27 But first I embrace you, and to you all I give the kiss of peace, 28 begging God to bless you.

In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti

Amen