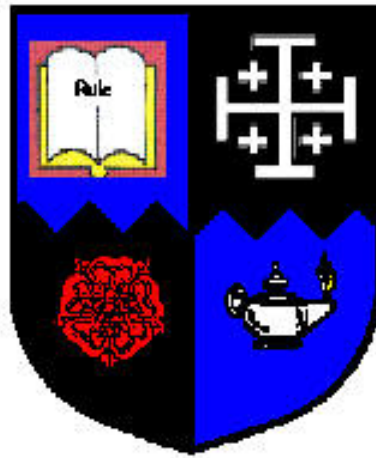


THE CHARTER AND RULE

FOR THE

GREY ROBED MONKS OF ST. BENEDICT



APPROVED FOR USE

BY

THE MOST REV. TERRY M. BOYER, OSB

ABBOT GENERAL & FOUNDER

INTRODUCTION

The Charter and Rule of the Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict:

I

The order shall be known as the Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict. The order is an ecumenical ministry, of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Rule of Benedict shall be the primary rule of the order.

II

The Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict shall serve all God's people. The Grey Robed Monks will respond to the needs of the local church and all the people of God by providing services for a variety of needs in the church and secular communities. Grey Robed Monks accomplish this through a wide variety of loving works of mercy. Monks are encouraged to discern their individual vocation when deciding upon the works of mercy they will perform. The Grey Robed Monks will also develop and implement special programs in prayer, spirituality, and human development, all of which encourage a deeper relationship with God. In consideration of these works, the Grey Robed Benedictines will be formed as a "Monastery with-out walls."

III

The Habit - The Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict has adopted religious garb to be worn by professed members, novices and oblates at such times designated by the abbot or superior of the chapter. Habits are regarded as being a visible designation of our commitment and community. The habit also serves as a visible sign to the community at large. The habit shall be worn for special times such as the celebration of Eucharist, Communal Prayer, and at chapter meetings. There is no distinction between the habits of male and female members.

The habit consists of this:

- A grey tunic or alb with near fitted sleeves.
- Professed monks of the order shall wear, a black, straight cut, full-length scapular with hood (or a black scapular without hood, and a cowl neck). The medal of St. Benedict may be embroidered on the scapular for solemn professed monks.
- A black belt.
- A black Benedictine Crucifix shall be worn by professed members of the order. A wooden cross with the medal of St. Benedict shall be worn by novices and oblates.
- A Benedictine medal, rosary, or other chaplet may be worn, attached to the belt.

IV

Any member of the Christian faithful may apply for membership with the Grey Robed Monks. Persons shall obtain an application from the chapter leader, director of inquirers, or abbot and shall return the application to the director of inquirers. Membership in the Grey Robed Monks is open to all regardless of gender, marital status or sexual orientation. (Note: Ordained clergy, of any denomination, shall obtain their bishop's permission to make application. This shall be indicated by submitting a letter of consent from their bishop with the application.)

A. Postulancy and Novitiate

1. *Application.* Persons who have submitted a completed application to the director of inquirers shall be considered postulants and encouraged to attend all meetings of the order. Postulants have no voting rights and may not hold any administrative position in the order. The postulancy shall last while the application is being processed. Postulants shall be assigned to a chapter leader who will serve as advisor. The postulant should maintain regular contact with their advisor. The chapter leader should observe and work with the postulant for several weeks before submitting a vocational recommendation to the novice master. Postulants may withdraw from the postulancy at any time by submitting a letter in writing to the director of inquirers.

2. *Acceptance.* After receiving a favorable application, the abbot/abbess/prior/prioress shall invite the applicant to enter the novitiate or oblate during a special celebration of the next profession feast. A novice or oblate shall be assigned to the novice master. A novice or oblate takes no vows and may leave the Grey Robed Monks at any time by giving written notice to his/her superior and the novice master.

3. *Novitiate.* It is the goal of novices to make profession after completing their studies and discernment. A novice is a member and shall participate in all activities of the order. A novice may be addressed as "Brother" (Br.) or "Sister" (Sr.). The initials NOSB follow a novice's name as they are not yet professed members. The novitiate shall last for a minimum of six months but may be extended by the novice, novice master or the abbot. If a novice has not been accepted for simple profession after a period of two years and one day, the novice shall leave the novitiate and may join the oblate. During the novitiate, the novice shall complete the following:

- Daily study of the Rule of Benedict
- Study of the early monastic fathers and mothers of the church.
- Engage in the work of the church and community as directed by the novice master and superior.
- Hold faithfully to Morning and Evening Prayer, and the practice of Lectio Divina.

4. The habit for novices will be the grey tunic, with the black belt, and the wooden Benedictine Cross.

B. Oblate

1. *Definition.* Oblates do not intend to make profession but desire to be associated with the order to a lesser degree.

2. *Participation.* Oblates may participate in all activities of the order, but may not hold any administrative position. Oblates do not wear the habit, but may wear the wooden Benedictine Cross. Oblates live a non-professed life influenced by the rule, and may each discern their individual vocation and commitment.

3. *Chapter Assignment.* Oblates shall be assigned by the abbot to a chapter leader or shall remain directly under the abbot. They shall maintain regular contact with their superior. They shall attend chapter functions whenever feasible.

4. *Address.* Oblates are not addressed as “brother” or “sister” but, may use the initials ObLOSB after their name.

5. *Withdrawal or Removal.* Oblates may withdraw from the oblate at any time by submitting a letter in writing to their superior. Oblates who allow three weeks to pass without contacting their assigned superior may be dropped from oblate.

C. Simple Profession

1. *Request.* After the required time has passed, and the novice has completed the required studies, the novice may request in writing to make simple profession. Simply professed monks who wish to renew their profession shall do the same. This letter shall include a summary of their experiences with the Grey Robed Monks and shall be sent to the novice master, superior and Abbot General.

2. *Profession Feasts.* Professions may be made on the Feast of St. Scholastica (February 10), St. Hugh the Great, Abbot (April 29), St. Benedict (July 11) or St. Vincent Madelgarus, (September 20). Exceptions may be granted by the Abbot General.

3. *Charter Members.* The charter members of the Order shall be considered eligible to make simple profession on the first profession feast after ratification of this rule provided they have completed the studies delineated in paragraph III.

4. *Acceptance.* Applicants accepted into simple vows shall make vows for a period of between one and three years. They shall be professed members and participate in all activities of the order. Once professed, members may follow their name with the initials OSB as a sign of their profession in the Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict. Simple vows may be renewed for as long as the member desires. Simple professed members may wear the complete habit.

D. Solemn Profession

1. *Request.* After two consecutive years in simple vows, a simple professed monk may request to make solemn profession, in writing, to the community superior and Abbot General. This letter shall include a summary of the monk's experiences with the Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict.
2. *Rejection.* If the superior, or Abbot General, decides not to proceed with solemn vows, the member shall be provided with due cause. The monk may renew simple vows and work to improve the needed areas. The monk may reapply for solemn profession in one year, if desired.
3. *Acceptance.* Simple professed monks accepted into solemn vows shall make vows for life. Solemnly professed members shall participate in all activities of the order.

E. Religious Orders and Holy Orders

Historically, there have been separate views regarding Religious Orders and Holy Orders. For the sake of clarity, the Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict will hold that they are one and the same. The order recommends that those who aspire to Holy Orders and Religious Profession approach them separately.

1. Members who wish to pursue ordination will complete the process as outlined in the Canons of the jurisdiction, unless otherwise prescribed by the Abbot General.
2. Members who seek the religious life shall complete the process as outlined in this charter and rule.

V

Vows – The vows of the Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict shall be Obedience, Poverty and Holy Work. Vows continue to be a time honored sign of dedication to God and the spread of the Gospel and express our deepest commitment to the Rule and the Order.

A. Vow of Obedience

1. *Definition.* The vow of obedience binds the member to the spiritual and community decisions of the chapter superior, abbot, prefect for religious orders, and/or bishops with regards to spiritual and community life. It also indicates our obedience to God and the needs of our brothers and sisters.
2. *Violation.* Willful disobedience of superior(s) may be considered grounds for release from the Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict. Unknowing disobedience should be corrected by the superior in accordance with the Rule of St. Benedict.

B. Vow of Poverty

1. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to poverty. Poverty means that we do not obsess about internal or external possessions and cravings. Poverty requires that we keep what meets our needs, rather than always seeking the newest and nicest. Poverty requires that we not seek power or domination over others or through ideas. It is complete detachment.

2. Grey Robed Monks should always seek to care for others, particularly those who are unable to care for themselves. In all instances, the Grey Robed Monks shall strive to set the example of Christian charity through their works.

3. Grey Robed Monks must earnestly work to follow the Lord's command to love God with all that is within them and love their neighbors as themselves. In accordance with the rule of our Holy Father Benedict, the monks must heed the commandments of God: respect life, respect others' property, and honor every person with whom they come in contact as if it were the Lord himself. This is perfect poverty.

C. Vow of Holy Work

1. The vow of Holy Work binds the monks to labor the spiritual and/or corporal works of mercy. Each member shall spend one hour each week in these works, beyond the other commitments of the vows.

2. Each monk will exercise this vow in accord with their individual discernment and the specific calling made by the superior. Some will be called to prayer; others called to feed the hungry and others to care for the sick and infirm.

3. According to the Rule of Benedict, idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, we should have a task that we perform daily. The Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict are called to provide for themselves. Work in the secular community should be seen as a chance to witness to others. This should be an opportunity to show God's mercy, love, and glory. Whenever possible, the monks shall financially contribute to the Order to carry out the work of the Grey Robed Monks, and for taking care of the poor.

4. The Holy Work of the church is:

- To guide those seeking God.
- To pray for others.
- To comfort those who suffer.
- To forgive and seek forgiveness.

5. The Corporal Works of Mercy are:

- To feed the hungry.

- To give drink to the thirsty.
- To clothe the naked.
- To visit the imprisoned.
- To shelter the homeless.
- To visit the sick.
- To bury the dead.

VI

Celebration of the Eucharist and The Liturgy of the Hours: The Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict shall participate in the Celebration of the Eucharist weekly, preferably on Sunday, and on major feast days of the Church. The monks will maintain the ancient practice of praying the Liturgy of the Hours and shall pray the Morning and Evening Prayer each day. After the weekly Eucharistic Celebration, the monks are encouraged to pray either Morning or Evening Prayer in common.

VII

Administrative Leadership of the Order: As outlined by our Holy Father St. Benedict, the community must have “order”. To accomplish this, the Rule outlines administrative and leadership positions for the good of the community. The Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict establish the following administrative and leadership positions for the Grey Robed Monks:

A. The Abbot General

The title of Abbot General shall be used whether the abbot is male or female. The Abbot General for the charter community shall be its founder, the Most Reverend Terry M Boyer, OSB. The founding Abbot General shall be Abbot General until he desires to retire from administrative oversight. The successive Abbots General shall be elected for a period of six years. At the completion of the six year term, The Abbot General shall gather the communities for election of a new Abbot General. A unanimous vote is required for the election of a new Abbot General. If a unanimous vote cannot be obtained, the Abbot General may appoint a new Abbot General for a one year term. In all cases only those monks in holy orders may be elected as Abbot General.

1. The Abbot General shall exercise complete governance of the Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict.

- a) The Abbot-General has full authority to pass decisions upon all current affairs and difficulties.

- b) The Abbot-General elected and confirmed, and exercising the duties of his office is, by custom of the Church styled a Regular Abbot. Regular Abbots are prelates in the full sense of the word. As such the Abbot General-Elect shall be consecrated and ordained to the episcopacy at the earliest opportunity and have full jurisdictional responsibility for the order and those ordained for the order.
- c) In terms of address, the Abbot will be referred to as Father Abbot or Mother Abbot. Title and privilege for correspondence is *The Most Reverend.....*
- d) The governance of the Abbot General shall not supersede, or in any way interfere with, the authority of any jurisdictional bishop. Likewise, a jurisdictional bishop shall not supersede, or in any way interfere with the authority of the Abbot General.
- e) The governance of the order shall not supersede or conflict with the Rule of St. Benedict.

2. Monks who aspire to Holy Orders will be referred to the Vocations Director of the jurisdictional diocese or their particular denomination for application and formation. Ordination by the Abbot into the order shall be at the discretion of the Abbot General.

3. The Abbot General, in consultation with the Benedictine community, will establish the Liturgical Rites for the Grey Robed Monks.

B. Superior

Each regional monastery shall have a Superior, (Prior or Abbot), who will act in the name of the Abbot General, and govern the regional monastery. The Superior will be addressed as Mother or Father Superior/Prior/Abbot/Abbess if they are in Holy Orders, or Sister or Brother Superior/Prior/Abbot/Abbess if they are not in Holy Orders.

1. In the initial formation of the monastery or community, the Abbot General will appoint a superior for a period of one year. After one year, the monastery will elect the superior with approval and blessing of the Abbot General.

2. The superior shall show no preference to the monks under their authority. They will lead by their example. They shall instruct and admonish with consistency compassion. The Superior must understand that the Lord will ask for a full accounting of those entrusted to their care.

3. The superior may admit members to the Novitiate, Oblates and Simple Profession of Vows. Solemn Profession is reserved to the Abbot General.

C. Director of Inquirers and Novice Master

The Director of Inquirers of the Grey Robed Monks shall have the commission to help aspirants to discern their vocation to religious life. The director of inquirers shall monitor the studies and works of postulants and novices during their formation and serve as the Novice Master for the Order. In consultation with the formation staff, the Director of Inquirers shall make recommendations to the abbot and the community on the appropriateness of a candidate's progress and readiness for profession.

1. For the charter community, the Abbot General will serve as the vocations director.
2. At the appropriate time the Abbot General shall select a member of the community who is at least a monk in solemn profession to serve as the Director of Inquirers and Novice Master.
3. The Director of Inquirers and Novice Master shall serve at the will of the Abbot General until replaced.

VIII

Gathering of the Order: The Order shall meet in common once every three years with the Abbot General in general council. These meetings will be required of all simple and solemn professed monks. Only those monks whose attendance will create a hardship shall be excused.

A. Local Gatherings

Each local monastic community shall meet in common at least twice monthly to celebrate the Eucharist and pray the Liturgy of the Hours together. Other local gatherings may be called as need to attend to local business.

B. Regional Gatherings

Each regional monastery will meet in common at least once every six months. One of these gatherings may be during the annual General Council. The regional superior may call the local leaders as needed to attend to special business. The Abbot General shall be invited to attend and advise the gatherings.

IX

Finances: All financial matters of the order at the international, national, regional, and local levels are under the control of the local Abbot/Superior and ultimately Abbot General.

A. Distribution of Funds

The Abbot General, in conjunction with the chapter leaders, shall develop a plan for the distribution of the of the order's funds to national, regional, and chapter functions and activities of the order.

B. Property of Denomination

The Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict is a separate legal and financial entity, with all property associated with the order or any chapter being in its title.

X

Canonicity: The Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict is under the protection of the Abbot General

A. A Jurisdictional Bishop may dissolve the relationship between the Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict and their Episcopal jurisdiction with or without cause.

B. The Abbot General, or Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict in general council, may dissolve the relationship with a jurisdictional diocese with or without cause.

Submission

I, the undersigned founder of the Grey Robed Monks of St. Benedict, ratify this Charter and Rule, being a revised version. The original version dated December 13, 2003.



The Most Reverend Terry M. Boyer, OSB
Abbot General

