

Carta Caritatis Posterior: The Charter of Charity

attributed to St. Stephen Harding

Since we realize that we are servants, albeit unprofitable ones, of the one true King, our Lord and Master, we impose no exaction of temporal possessions or earthly goods on our fellow-abbots and fellow-monks and brothers whom, in diverse regions, the goodness of God has placed under the discipline of the Rule, to be cared for by us the least among men. For, wishing to be of service to them and to all the children of Holy Church, we make no provision that would burden them, that would diminish their temporal goods, lest while seeking to enrich ourselves from their poverty we ourselves should fail to avoid the evil of avarice which, according to the Apostle, is the service of idols.

We do wish, however, to retain the care of their souls for the sake of charity so that if they should ever attempt, even if but in a small measure, to stray from their sacred resolve and the observance of the holy Rule—which may God avert—through our solicitude they may be able to return to the right path of life.

Now, therefore, we will and command them to observe the Rule of blessed Benedict in every particular just as it is observed in New Monastery; not to introduce any other interpretation into the text of the Holy Rule; but to understand it and to keep it just as our ancestors, our holy fathers, namely the monks of New Monastery, understood it and kept it, and as we, ourselves, understand it and keep it today.

And because we receive all monks coming from other monasteries into ours, and they in like manner receive ours, it seems

Quia unius veri Regis, et Domini, et Magistri, nos omnes servos licet inutiles, cognoscimus, idcirco abbatibus et confratribus nostris monachis, quos per diversa loca Dei pietas per nos miserimos homines sub regulari disciplina ordinaverit, nullam terrenae commoditatis, seu rerum temporalium exactionem imponimus. Prodesse enim illis, omnibusque sanctae Ecclesiae filiis cupientes, nihil quod eos gravet, nihil quod eorum substantiam minuat, erga eos agere disponimus: ne dum nos abundantes de eorum paupertate esse cupimus, avaritiae malum, quod secundum Apostolum idolorum servitus comprobatur, evitare non possimus.

Curam tamen animarum illorum gratia charitatis retinere volumus: ut si quando a sancto proposito et observantia sanctae Regulae, quod absit, declinare tentaverint, per nostram sollicitudinem ad rectitudinem vitae redire possint.

Nunc vero volumus, illisque praecipimus, ut Regulam beati Benedicti per omnia observent, sicuti in Novo Monasterio observatur. Non alium inducant sensum in lectione sanctae Regulae, sed sicut antecessores nostri sancti Patres, monachi scilicet Novi Monasterii intellexerunt et tenuerunt, et nos hodie intelligimus, et tenemus: ita et isti intelligant et teneant.

Et quia omnes monachos ipsorum ad nos venientes in claustro nostro recipimus, et ipsi similiter nostros in claustris suis, ideo

proper to us and it is, furthermore, our will that all our monasteries have usages in chanting and all the books necessary for day and night offices and the celebration of Masses similar to the usages and books in use at New Monastery; that there may be no discord in our daily actions, but that we may all live together in the bond of charity under one rule and in the practice of the same usages.

oportunum nobis videtur, et hoc etiam volumus, ut mores et cantum et omnes libros ad horas diurnas et nocturnas, et ad missas necessarios, secundum formam morum et librorum Novi Monasterii possideant: quatenus in actibus nostris nulla sit discordia, sed una charitate, una regula, similibusque vivamus moribus.