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A Draft Rule

for the Companions

of the Community of the Resurrection



I The Charism of CR

On 25 July, 1892 the Community of the Resurrection came into being when the first six brethren, at the inspiration of Charles Gore, made profession in the Chapel of the Pusey House, Oxford. Its charism, that is its distinctive gift and call from God, is to live the baptismal vocation through a commitment to community life, sustained by common worship, and issuing in works that are primarily of a public character. As a charism of the Spirit it is given not only for the members of the Community, but also for the upbuilding of the whole Church. The context for the Community's foundation is the Church of England in the nineteenth century which, until the re-emergence of communities in that century, had not known the religious life since the Reformation; and yet it is a Church that is largely dependent on the Benedictine heritage. Something of the monastic charism of community belongs to the Anglican Communion, and the rebirth of the religious life makes this explicit. An embodied charism has its own ethos: that is, in each generation, it will be realised in, and distorted by, the social and cultural concerns of those involved. Careful, continuing discernment is needed in order to recognise the part played by ethos, the human element, and assess it, both critically and positively. Such discernment is necessary for the Community to be able to hold fast to its charism and understand rightly its God-given gift.

II The Charism of CR and the Resurrection Mystery

In baptism all are incorporated into the death and resurrection of Christ; but while all religious life marks the passage from death to life in the resurrection community, the Community of the Resurrection is called specially to public, prophetic witness to the Christian hope of the Kingdom. The common life and corporate worship of its members is properly made visible in its works, which embrace social and missionary concern. Such work as is undertaken stands in close relation to life together in a house of the Community. The dedication to the Resurrection does not indicate an obligation to particular works or particular places, but rather a commitment to make public the fruits of the community life and worship in order to proclaim the world made new in Christ.

III The Charism of Community and the Mediation of Authority

The charism of community life is no less than that common life which is proper to the Body of Christ and is expressed in "mutual obedience out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5.21). The initial structures of CR were tentative, evolutionary and provisional; and subsequent history has indicated that, in our own life as in the wider Church, **koinonia** cannot be effectively maintained without **episkopè**. In the early stages of the Community's life this was recognised in choosing one of the brethren to be the Superior.

For our understanding of fellowship (**koinonia**), decision-making, and authority (**episkopè**), the Community, like the Church, accepts the patterns given in the New Testament as a primary source. The interdependence of Superior and brethren likewise mirror the exegesis of the New Testament sources to be found in the Lima Report BEM (1982) and the Final Report ARCIC (1981). Thus, the Superior and his representatives, "as leaders and teachers . . . call the community to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ". Grace is given to those called to exercise **episkopè** in and for the Community; and grace is similarly given to the brethren to accept the **episkopè** of the Superior and his representatives. Mutual obedience is thus fostered and the common life furthered.

IV Community and Common Worship

The charism of the Community lies in the integration of three elements: community life, common worship, and works primarily of a public character. Personal and corporate integrity within the Community requires that the brethren seek to be 'of one heart and one mind' in all matters relating to common life and common worship. Such worship, above all the daily corporate celebration of Office and Eucharist, draws us together to reflect on the sources of our life and to hear the Word which we are to speak. At the same time, common worship stands in its own right; in the words of the 1988 Lambeth Report:

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“Christian worship has its own self-authenticating character as the prime duty of the Church of God. It should be offered to God by the Church for his glory and without any conscious eye to some ulterior purpose. The mystery of worship is that the Church is caught up into the heavens, so as to be forgetful of herself and simply to gaze on the vision of God” (section 178).

V The Context of our Life: the Anglican Communion

Our identity is that of a religious community within the Anglican Communion. We acknowledge with gratitude the inheritance we have received within that Communion and not least through the tradition of Anglicanism which issued in the revival of the religious life in the nineteenth century. We are grateful for the nurture which that tradition has afforded brethren over many years; and we recognise the unique opportunities and responsibilities before us today as Anglicans who are also members of the wider ‘religious family’. Through our charism we are thus privileged, in our life as in our works, to forward that ecumenical vision which unites members of all religious communities, as we find our place in the mainstream tradition of the religious life.

Companions of CR

Our vocation begins with baptism since it is there that we are taken into the Body of Christ and are called to live with him. Through baptism we share with all Christians the delight of being ‘fellow citizens in the Kingdom of God’ but as members of the CR family we have our own way of living out this vocation. This centres around our emphasis on the Risen Christ

A Companion is a person who ‘takes bread with’ us. That is what the Latin means. The phrase conjures up a number of Gospel pictures. We think of Jesus feeding the five thousand, of Jesus describing himself as the bread of life come down from heaven, of Jesus saying ‘This is my body’ and of Jesus with his two companions on the road to Emmaus, showing himself in the breaking of bread.

As Companions we are on the road to Emmaus, walking with each other, meeting the stranger who turns out to be Christ, discovering this in the breaking of bread.

Companions and Brethren of CR are centred on Christ. Together we “eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood”; together we listen to him as he feeds us with his word in the Gospel and the Holy Scriptures; together we walk with him on the long roads of our lives, not always recognising him; from time to time we see him in his risen self, and are set on fire.

Companions have seen in the life of CR a way of living out the Christian vocation which strengthens and inspires them. They want to be part of it, both to draw strength and encouragement from it and to contribute to it in whatever way they can. True love involves giving and receiving; the giving and receiving between Companions and Brethren is an expression of our love for each other.

Requirements for a Companion

A Companion must have a spiritual director with whom he or she can work out a personal Rule of Life which is challenging yet realistic and is adapted to the person’s circumstances. Every Christian life must have deep roots in our personal devotion to Lord; our active ministry will be strengthened and informed by our prayer, reflection and study.

The Rule should contain the following elements:

Sunday worship; unless impossible this should always be the Eucharist.

Penitence, preferably through the regular use of the Sacrament of Confession.

Daily Prayer; this may take a variety of forms but a commitment to some kind of daily office even of a very simple format will make real the Companion’s association with CR’s monastic life.

A retreat of some kind at least once a year.

A rule of fasting

A commitment to regular study of the Christian faith.

Generous almsgiving within the Companion’s means.

If possible there should be some kind of involvement in a secular organisation

It is also recommended that a Companion should try to visit the Community at Mirfield once a year, if not prevented by age, sickness, family circumstances or distance. This helps to keep the relationship with CR personal and living.

Since our charism in CR is that of the Resurrection of Christ all of us need to be thinking constantly of what this actually means in our own Christian lives.

As Companions we need to try and meet with other Companions either in one of the local groups, or at Mirfield, or in small informal gatherings where these are possible. Such meetings can take the form of common worship, study, pilgrimage or sheer socialising. They should aim to be fun, not duty!

My God , I desire to love thee
with all my heart
which thou madest for thyself;
with all my mind
which only thou can'st satisfy;
with all my soul
which longs to soar to thee;
with all my strength, my feeble strength,
which shrinks before so great a task,
and yet can choose nought else
But spend itself in loving thee.

Claim thou my heart,
fill thou my mind,
uplift my soul and
Reinforce my strength,
that where I fail,
thou mayest succeed in me,
and make me love thee perfectly.

W H Frere

Notes on the Requirements:

1. A **spiritual director** can be any Christian whom we feel can help us to see the way forward in our life with God. This can be our parish priest, any other nearby priest, a Religious Brother or Sister, or a lay person. The real director is the Holy Spirit and any good director will help us to look to where God is calling us, or inviting us.
2. a) **Sunday Eucharist.** Sunday is the day of Christ's resurrection and the Eucharist is the sacrament through which he makes his risen self present to us and brings the fruits of his sacrifice into our lives. It is by our commitment to this more than anything else that we proclaim our calling to be sons and daughters of the Resurrection.

B) **Penitence.** All the Gospels begin with a call to repentance. We can not pretend that we are not sinners and repentance must be a constant part of our lives, so that we can enter, and re-enter into the joy of being forgiven sinners restored to our Father's side. CR is heir to that part of the Anglican Communion which rediscovered its catholic inheritance in the Oxford Movement. Sacramental confession is a part of this privilege and joy. Without it catholic Anglicanism easily becomes sentimental and superficial

c) Life at Mirfield revolves around **the daily office** and this gives it its monastic atmosphere. Those who love the spirituality of CR need to be involved in this through praying one of the many offices which are now available and when ever possible with other people. The Simple Office published by CR is drawn from CR offices and may make a suitable connecting link. It may help people also to say offices at times such as 6.45 a.m., 12.00 midday and 6.00 p.m. to link in with the Community's usual times of prayer. Many Companions like to say Compline at 9.15 p.m. and to know they are sharing this with the Community and Companions all over the world.

d) From its foundation CR has been very involved in the giving of **retreats**. As life gets busier people find it more and more difficult to find time for God, and so it becomes increasingly important to set aside time to come apart, as the disciples did , and simply be with Christ. If for good reason (for example, because of family commitments) a

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proper retreat is not possible, a little organisation can usually secure a quiet day three or four times a year.

e) **Fasting** is much misunderstood today. It is not life denying, but asserts that all things belong to God and come to us as his gift. Fasting can be penitential in sorrow for our sins, or the sins of the society we live in; it can identify us with the suffering of Christ on the Cross; it can be a prayer for the millions of poor people who are compelled by their poverty to go without; it can clarify our minds and make us more able to pray, giving us time to pray. Fasting with others can be invigorating as we fight the battle together. A rule of fasting needs to be sensible: not so easy that we don't notice it, but not so hard that it damages us. It may be a choice for simplicity rather than plenty. It is a good way of preparing ourselves for the times such as Easter and Christmas when it is equally right to feast. Fasting and feasting go together in the Catholic understanding of the Kingdom of God.

f) CR's work has always been that of teaching, preaching and is trying to understand the changes that take place in modern life. All Companions need to take this aspect of Christian life seriously through reading and talking with others about issues of Christian faith. This has nothing to do with levels of education. Everyone can do it if they try.

g) The Jewish Christian tradition has always regarded **giving** as a fundamental duty and a joy. Most people give out of what they have left over. Those who trust in the Risen Christ should feel they can take bigger risks than this, certain that God will look after them.

h) Christianity has always worked as **leaven in the world**. Its ministry is often hidden. Christians need to work with all members of society to bring about a more just and compassionate society in which Christ can be recognised. This may mean joining trade unions, inter-faith groups, justice and peace groups, Fairtrade, civic societies or charitable organisations so that we learn more about our society and help to 'make a difference'.