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Reflection on the Dominican Rule, Candidacy II, Unit 10

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As we near final profession, we will commit to following the Dominican Rule for the rest of our lives. This Rule helps us keep on a good spiritual track. Historically it can be seen that without the discipline of a guide or rule people will tend toward error and evil.

St. Augustine wrote a rule that was to be read once a week so “that in it you can see yourselves reflected as in a mirror lest anything be forgotten, and therefore, neglected.”

St. Benedict authored the Benedictine Rule nearly 1500 years ago. These rules were to be observed in the monasteries to foster spiritual growth and escape from spiritual laziness and succumbing to our own wills and appetites.

St. Dominic devised a Rule that was democratic and reasonable. Following the Rule fosters order and unity. This promotes harmony among the members who have varied and different strengths and weaknesses. It provides a peaceful environment among such different personalities.

Unit 9 of Candidacy I explained the Rule. St. Dominic was great enthusiast for the Rule. The Rule provides a guide to measure against.

Every religious organization has a Rule which guides their community in light of their charism. St. Dominic read the Rule one time per week to his followers. There is unity in following the Rule. Unity does not stifle legitimate differences which work for the benefit of the Order and does not bind under the pain of sin. The Dominicans encourage variety in unity. St. Dominic said it is much better to follow the Rule from belief and love, rather than obligation.

Dominican Rule was set up in 1285 under the jurisdiction of the Master. Dominicans did not want to punish transgressions of the Rule. They believed that God is more pleased with actions performed out of love. Concern for the poor has been part of the Lay Dominicans from the beginning and was taken very seriously.

There have been five Rules beginning in 1285 and four in the twentieth century.

Summary of Rule:

Chapter I In 1987 the Rule was promulgated by Damien Byrne, OP, the Mater of the order.

Chapter II: Be assiduous in prayer (Col. 4:2) at the hours and appointed times. When you pray to God in Psalms, think over in your heart the words that come from your lips. Don't chant anything not prescribed.

Chapter III: Use moderation and self denial at mealtimes. Don't take nourishment alone. Let your heart too, hunger for the words of God.

Chapter IV: This covers guarding against looking on a woman with lust. There are prescribed measures to take to avoid this, and actions to be taken if there is failure in this.

Chapter V: This chapter deals with the care of the community and treatment of the sick.  
Chapter VI: This deals with asking pardon for offenses and forgiving offenses.

Finally professed Lay Dominicans are encouraged to pray the entire Liturgy of the Hours. The Rule easily infuses supernatural motives into all our actions. Living the Rule brings peace to our lives which engenders joy.