

Statutes of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament in the Church of San Felice, Venice

(Venice, Archivio storico del patriarcato di Venezia, Parrocchia di San Felice, Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento, Mariiegola.)

This work was done at the time of misser Piero the dyer, steward, and misser Nicolò Baffo, vicar, and misser Domenico, secretary, and their companions misser Battista from Como, master Francesco cloth merchant, master Luixe, stonemason, master Hierolimo *toscan*, and master Gregol, oar maker, in 1541.

Regulations and rules of the scuola or fraternity of the Most Holy Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

For praise and glory of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen. We brothers, having considered many times that human nature, which is formed in the image and imitation of God, has no greater obligation than to his omnipotent Creator and Redeemer, who wanted to liberate him from the hand of the devil, by offering Himself as host and sacrifice on the wood of the Cross, and also, with the greatest love and charity wanted to give Himself to us as food, for the greater faith and testimony of His Most Holy Passion, giving His Most Holy Body to be eaten and His Most Precious Blood to be drunk, as at His last supper, lovingly demonstrated to His dear disciples as His testament before He tasted the difficult step of the most cruel and bitter death of the Cross, through which we have been brought back from the hand of the devil, and bought by His Most Precious Blood, as the Holy Scripture recounts, "You were bought with a price," that is, with the Most Holy Blood of the Immaculate Lamb made obedient for us until death, to give us His kingdom of eternal life. Truly, therefore, in remembrance of such charity, love, and unbounded goodness that He used towards us sinners, in thanks for such a gift, deservedly with all our mental and bodily strength we are obligated to render unto Him the deserved honour, and offer Him praise, and do Him reverence with every devotion and demonstration of thanks that is possible for us, so that our Redeemer will have mercy on us in this world and will grant us rest in the next, with the salvation of our souls.

And so that these, our rules should have a good beginning, a better middle, and the best ending, we invoke the name of the Eternal God and the glorious Virgin Mother Holy Mary his sweetest mother, and our intercessor Saint Mark the Apostle and Evangelist, protector of this blessed city, that this should be for the increase and triumph of our most illustrious government, with perpetual victory and peace for this, our glorious and blessed city of

Venice, and honour and praise to our Most Serene Prince Piero Lando, and also glory and praise to our Most Reverend Monsignor Patriarch Hieronimo Querini, and for the good and salvation of all our souls, and of all the benefactors of this, our blessed scuola and fraternity. World without end. Amen.

**Rules for electing the steward, vicar, and secretary,
and the other officers.**

Chapter 1.

When it is desired to choose the steward by all those who are in the chapter meeting, as many balls as there are persons present shall be placed in the urn, and among those balls six should be gilded or marked, and they should be placed in the urn all together, and those who select the first three golden balls should nominate a steward, a vicar, and a secretary, and those who select the other [three golden balls] should do the same, and then they should be voted on one by one. And those who gain the most votes will be elected.

**Of the number of officials of the board of the confraternity
and their responsibilities.**

Chapter 2.

First we wish and order that three officials should be elected for this, our scuola and fraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament, that is a steward, a vicar, and a secretary, and also five companions, that are in all eight, all of whom are required and obligated by their conscience and on peril of their souls, to sustain, govern, and conserve all the goods of the confraternity, both money and other objects that belong to it, with all their strength and knowledge, and to place and safeguard the money and objects of the said confraternity in the designated strongbox with three keys, to be held one by the steward, another by the vicar, and another by the secretary. And they must always increase the honour and wealth of this our scuola and fraternity, always dealing justly and charitably with all the brothers and sisters of all classes without any fraud. The said steward, after he shall be chosen and elected, is obligated to have all of the present statute and bylaws read to all the brothers who are present, and the sexton is required to announce this to everybody, so that everybody will know and understand what they are obligated to do and observe according to the regulations of our confraternity, and understand the penalties and sanctions contained in this statute.

**That everybody in the parish, great and small,
may enter into this confraternity.**

Chapter 3.

Also, we wish and order that all those persons who wish, for their devotion, to join our blessed scuola and fraternity, whether male or female, can be chosen

and accepted, whenever they might be inspired by God, without tardiness or delay. It is not allowed to prohibit anybody from entering the confraternity, that is, those from the parish. All the brothers and sisters must submit to the rules, laws, and terminations of the present statute, in its entirety, as it will be shown to them. Those of the board should also show them the indulgences contained in this statute according to the Bull of the late Most Reverend Patriarch. They are all obligated, once they have been admitted, to pay one *soldo* every month, which comes to 12 *soldi*¹ a year.

How every year a new board, that is the officers, shall be elected.

Chapter 4.

Also, we desire and order that the day of the Circumcision, which is the first day of the year, a new board must be made, that is, elect new officers for the governing of the said confraternity, and for the election of this board, every one of the members and officers of the board may, according to their conscience, select and nominate those persons who in their opinion are sufficient and able to sustain the government of the said confraternity. After they have been selected and written down, they should be voted on one by one. And those who receive more votes are those who are elected. And when the new board is elected, those of the old board are required and obligated to turn over and consign to the new board an inventory of all the money, candles, ornaments, and other goods of the confraternity, under penalty to each of them who refuses to be expelled from the confraternity. And this we order should be done in perpetuity every year from board to board for the good and profit of the confraternity.

Of the required manner of going to bring communion to the infirm.

Chapter 5.

Also we wish and order that when it shall be necessary to go and bring communion to the infirm of our parish, no special methods should be used to accompany it, going with sincerity, love, and charity, both to houses of the poor as those of the rich, and this we wish shall be observed also in going to bury the bodies of the brothers and sisters of our scuola and fraternity.

Of the rule of the candles, and of ringing the bell when communion is brought to the infirm.

Chapter 6.

Also, we wish and order that when it should be necessary to bring the Most Sacred Body of our Lord Jesus Christ to some infirm person, it must be accompanied by as many double candles as there are persons who want to accompany it, and so that none of the board members or brothers should offer the excuse of not knowing the hour they must come, we order that three peals of the bell designated for this purpose should be sounded, according to

¹ In the monetary system used in this statute book, there are twenty *soldi* (abbreviated s.) in one *lira* (£), and six *lire*, four *soldi* (or 124 *soldi*) in one ducat (abbreviated D.).

practice, and all the brothers should gather in the church at the sound of the three peals, except in the case of a reasonable impediment.

That every first Sunday of the month a mass must be celebrated.

Chapter 6.

Also we wish and ordain that every first Sunday of the month a mass must be celebrated in song with organs, deacon, and subdeacon, and Thursday of every week a mass at the altar of the Sacrament. And all the members of the board are obligated to come to the said mass under penalty to the steward for each absence of four *soldi*, and the other members three *soldi*, except in case of a reasonable impediment, and the chapter of priests shall have two ducats a year to celebrate the said masses and to officiate.

How twice a year alms should be sought throughout the parish.

Chapter 7.

Also we wish and order that twice a year, that is at Christmas and Easter, the steward, vicar, and secretary should go throughout the parish seeking alms for the benefit of this confraternity, as is the custom.

How the sexton should put out the bench every ordained Sunday.

Chapter 8.

Also we wish and ordain that every ordained Sunday the steward and his companions are obligated to have the sexton put out on our bench the Patriarch's bull, the cashboxes, and the crucifix to draw in people to this holy devotion. The said sexton is obligated to recommend the confraternity to the people and have others recommend it, and to go around the church with the alms box seeking donations. The said sexton should be paid an annual salary by the confraternity of two ducats.

That the money of the confraternity may not be spent without the permission of the board. Chapter 9.

Also, we legislate and ordain that the money and property of our confraternity should be preserved with all diligence and respect and that it should not be spent inappropriately, and that, for the benefit of the confraternity, neither the steward nor the vicar may spend more than two ducats without license from the board.

For the Praise of God, 29 September 1538 in the church of San Felice.

A general chapter meeting was called to confirm the above rules and order, and to create the statute book. In the said chapter meeting twenty-two men of the said parish congregated. To the assembled group the aforesaid bylaws were read one by one, and the ballot urns were sent around for their confirmation and to create the statute book.

There were 21 votes yes
1 no. Approved.

Summary of the indulgences conceded universally to all the companies of the Most Precious Body of Christ. Extracted from the papal bull ...

Summary of the indulgences of the Company of the Image of the Saviour conceded to the altar of the Sacrament ...

Summary of the indulgence conceded and confirmed by Our Lord, the Most Blessed Pope Paul III to the confraternity of the Most Precious Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, both in the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, as well as in every place in the world, both instituted at present and to be instituted in the future. And first in the papal bull of the said confraternity ...

Those indulgences gained by those who visit the altar of the Sacrament of this church where the said confraternity is instituted ...

Indulgences conceded to the Confraternity of the Image of the Saviour
at the Holy of Holies in the Lateran...

Indulgences conceded to the brothers of the Carità ...

Indulgences of San Spirito in Saxia ...

Indulgences of S. Giovanni Battista and SS. Cosmo and Damiano of the Florentines ...

The indulgences of the monastery of the Populo ...²

Praise God. 1547, 15 March.

On 15 March, misser Marcho del Be of Venice, steward of the Confraternity of Our Lord, had a chapter meeting called. The brothers, thirteen in number, met in the church, and he made the motion to add two companions alongside the six from the beginning of the year, so that there will be eight, and alongside these, two mid-year members, who shall serve as syndics, and who shall be elected every year at Pentecost, and shall serve six months under one steward and six under another. And it was passed unanimously.

He also proposed that no one should be elected to the board if he is a debtor, and in case such a person were elected, the secretary is obligated to let him know, and then to inform him that if within eight days he does not pay his

² With the listing of the indulgences granted to the confraternity, the original layer ends.

debt, he shall be entirely removed from the board and the company. It passed unanimously.

And also he proposed that all those on the board shall be obligated to accompany [to their burial] those of our brothers who die, except for just cause. Also, that the confraternity should have twelve candles of one pound each to accompany the aforesaid brothers, and that our sexton shall be obligated to carry them when the confraternity goes to accompany a body, and give them to whomever shall be there. The aforesaid motion passed unanimously. This was written by me, Valerio Bon, rag seller, secretary of this confraternity.

...

7 January 1553

To avoid discontent that might occur, the motion was made in the general chapter meeting held on this day, by misser Nicolò Cerchier, saying that it would be good, in his opinion, to elect two syndics each year, who would verify and examine the accounts of the steward, so that it can be seen in what way he spends the income from alms, interest, and dues of this confraternity. The motion was made, and passed unanimously, with thirty votes in favour and none against.

[approved by Provveditori di Comun 23 January 1553³]

...

25 July 1560

In the name of the Eternal God and of the glorious mother Holy Mary, and of the entire heavenly court. Amen.

Rule that the steward may not send the confraternity to accompany bodies without the following regulation.

On this day, after dinner, misser Marco Gedin, steward, and the board members of the confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament called a chapter meeting. A motion was made in this meeting, to avoid any possible complaint, saying that, for the good of the confraternity, because of the need and great calamity, it is in debt for the bill for candles since the time of misser Gierolamo di Letti, steward in the year 1559, as seen in his accounts. And also because of the debt on the candle bill for this year with misser Francesco dala Nave at the bridge of the hat makers, as can be seen in his accounts, and this because of the procession of Our Lord Jesus Christ [Corpus Christi] and also for communions and other needs. We wish and order that from now on, when anyone from the parish shall die, both men and women, and wants the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament to accompany their funeral, the steward serving at the time may not send the confraternity to accompany the body unless he

³The Provveditori di Comun was a government body charged, among many other things, with regulating all the *scuole piccole*, or small confraternities, of the city.

receives a ducat for each body, under penalty of paying that himself every time that he violates the present rule, without pardon or remission. Brothers or sisters of our confraternity who die may not be accompanied by the Holy Sacrament if they do not pay their entire dues, being therefore debtors, otherwise the steward is obligated to pay it himself, having violated the current rule. Eighteen brothers of the confraternity were gathered in the church of San Felice at the sound of the bell, as is the custom, and the motion was put to the vote.

Yes — 11

No — 7: It was passed.

In the name of God

10 January 1587

In the name of the Holy Spirit. The general chapter meeting having been called in the church of San Felice of Venice by signor Andrea dal'Ogio, steward of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament, in order to elect a new board, misser Marco Caleger and misser Alessandro Grasseni, syndics of the said confraternity were present. Having considered and seen the statute book, for the good of the confraternity, and having also noticed from the accounts of past stewards, that they have spent more of the confraternity's money than allowed by the rule in the statute book, without asking permission from the board, as required by the rule, they make the following motion, keeping in mind all the other rules that are in the statute book of this confraternity. From now on, in the future, no steward, nor vicar, nor secretary may spend any money of the confraternity except for the candles that are necessary for the confraternity, and beyond the candles they may spend, including everything in the other rule, in all 5 ducats, and it is meant that these 5 ducats are beyond the ordinary expenses of the confraternity. The aforesaid motion was put to the vote, and passed unanimously, with 23 votes. And, for the benefit of the confraternity, the aforesaid license of the general chapter shall be granted with two thirds of the votes, and for those who violate the rule, the syndics are required to make them pay out of their own pockets whatever they spent in excess.

And also, the motion was made, that from now on in the future, the steward, vicar, and secretary are required diligently, the first Sunday of every month, to open the alms boxes used in the church and in the parish, and count the money found in those boxes, and write down the amounts in the account book of the confraternity, and if they do not do that, and some theft of those boxes should occur with the money inside, the aforesaid are required and obligated, according to the consciences of their souls, to repay the confraternity out of their own pockets, with the authority of the syndics who will cause the present rule to be observed.

In the name of God. 2 February 1596.

The chapter of brothers of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament having gathered in the church of San Felice, the parish priest complained that he cannot manage, with the nine lire that our confraternity gives him, to keep the lamp in front of the Most Holy Sacrament burning. Therefore, the magnificent guardian Giovan Francesco Calderini, with the members of the board, and the syndics present, moved that the nine lire that are paid to the said parish priest should be increased to the sum of 18 lire, for the entire year, to be paid from the funds of our confraternity, as usual.

Votes in favour — n. 21

Against — 7

} and it was approved.

Praise God. 18 March 1612.

At the sound of the bell, in the church of San Felice, with 26 voting members present, the general chapter was called to order by Giacomo Boscardo, guardian of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament, to regulate several items of no small importance. That is that from 1541 the chapter of San Felice has been obligated, in return for an allocation made by the said confraternity of two ducats a year, to say mass the first Sunday of every month, and similarly every Thursday another mass for the brothers of the said confraternity. For the same obligation the allocation to the said priests, because it was too small, was increased by another two ducats a year. In this matter, the said guardian, moved by a good impulse, thought, and said to the chapter that it would be a great charity, and something very pleasing to God, that the said Thursday mass be done as a funeral mass, said for the souls of the brothers and sisters of our confraternity. In the same matter, he also said that doing this would be in the interest of the brothers of the confraternity for this reason, that when it shall please Our Lord to call us to a better life, when will be buried in this or in another church, we will benefit eternally from these holy actions, which will be done daily.

In this matter the aforesaid guardian made the motion to do the said masses in the aforesaid manner, and in addition to increase another two ducats the allocation to the said priests. There were 26 votes in favour and none against. This condition was added: that if the Thursday of any week should be a holiday, or there should be some other impediment, the said funeral mass should be said before or after in the same week, and if at any time the said priests do not act entirely in conformity with this, our holy intention, and with their obligation, the guardian who shall be serving then, seeing a failure in this action, should withhold the increase of two ducats from the said priests, and take, for the sake of charity, whatever expedient shall be necessary for the poor dead, and if he does otherwise, paying the said increase, it shall be paid out of his own funds. Beyond this, if the said guardian, because of his business shall not be present at the ceremony on a Thursday, and it should not conform to our intention that it be a funeral mass, then the sexton has the obligation to inform the said guardian, so that he may take action, and in the event that the

sexton does not do so, he shall be deprived of his post, and another shall be elected in his stead. In addition, from time to time, when a new guardian is elected, this rule in particular should be read to the chapter, so that over time this holy action, so pleasing to God, and very useful for the poor dead, shall be observed inviolably.

28 October 1618

Similarly the same evening, misser Jacomo Boscard, syndic of the said confraternity, moved by a good and holy mind, said that it would be something very pleasing to Our Lord to remind ourselves also of his poor ones, creating a fraternity, as in the other parishes, for the poor of this parish, who are in great need and misery, such that they are dying of hunger. Two of our brothers could be selected every month to go with the sexton every week, as usual, looking for alms and bread, and all of this will be done with the permission of the parish priest, as highest leader, and if the project will go well, as hoped, one could provide also a doctor and medicine, and other things, according to the alms that will be found. The motion was put to a vote, and it passed unanimously.

1619 24 June

The general chapter of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament gathered in the church of San Felice with 21 in attendance, to make the motion to elect the new board the first day of the year, and the old board shall be required and obligated within eight days of the election of the new board, to renounce entirely everything to the new board, and if this rule is violated, the steward who does not want to renounce, or any of his companions, is required and obligated to pay as penalty 3 ducats, which amount shall be for the benefit and income of our confraternity of the Most Holy [Sacrament].

In favour 20

Against 1

Further, that no funds of the confraternity may be spent on anything at all unless all the board, that is guardian, vicar, secretary, syndics, and the three added members [agree], under penalty for transgressing of 10 ducats out of his own purse, without any pardon, and this means expenditures beyond the ordinary. Board members who will serve are required and obligated to enforce this rule, under penalty of paying themselves if they do not give notice of the violation committed, and of the transgression of this rule, said monetary penalty going to the benefit of the said confraternity of the Most Holy [Sacrament].

Votes yes — 21

Votes no — 0

Further, that the reverend priests [of the parish] should be required to say the first Sunday of every month a mass sung at our altar of the Most Holy [Sacrament], with deacon, subdeacon, and organ, and Thursday of every week funeral mass at the altar of the Most Holy [Sacrament], that is the first is as usual, and also according to the rule passed earlier, that the Thursday the first

mass should be done for the dead at our altar of the Most Holy [Sacrament], and failing to do this, the steward who will be serving at the time is required and obligated to withhold the funds given for those services, and give particular notice about the issue to the board or to the entire chapter so that provisions can be made regarding such omissions, and for the benefit of those poor souls who wait for those sacrifices for their aid. The steward who shall serve in the future is required and obligated to have the present rule followed, and not doing so is required and obligated to pay the money for those services out of his own purse, to be enforced on the steward serving at the time by the Provveditori di Comun.

Votes yes — 20

Votes no — 1

Further, that the silver lamp may not be leant, nor the silver pax, since it would be very expensive for the confraternity to buy another one so soon, and so that they be preserved without any damage, under penalty to the guardian at such time, or his companions, to pay 25 ducats from their own purse in case of violation of this rule, and if the truth of this disobedience is proved, the Provveditori shall levy this fine, without pardon. Of the said amount, 5 ducats shall go to the person reporting the violation, and the other 20 ducats for the benefit of our Confraternity of the Most Holy [Sacrament], but all of this is left to the good judgment of their lordships [the Provveditori], without damage to the status of our Confraternity of the Most Holy [Sacrament].

Votes yes — 21

Votes no — 0

Further, a chest should be made, which should be kept under the organ, with three keys, one for the guardian, one for the vicar, and one for the secretary, in which should be placed and preserved all the most valuable silver and gold objects and cash of the confraternity, to avoid any sort of misfortune, such as has happened in the past, and such that the confraternity shall be assured of the safety of its gold and silver objects, cash, and other most important things that it currently owns, and that will be acquired from time to time. The steward who shall be in office must observe this rule, under the greatest penalty that the Provveditori di Comun shall consider appropriate, in order to assure that the funds, as well as the gold and silver objects and other things of the said confraternity shall not be diminished.

Votes yes — 21

Votes no — 0

[Approved by the Provveditori di Comun 26 June 1619]

Praise God 1637, 16 August

The tariff of all the expenditures that the guardian of the [Confraternity of the] Most Holy Sacrament of the church of San Felice [must make], and first To the reverend priests, D.8 per year, that is D.3 at Easter and D.3 on the Day of the Dead, and D.2 at Christmas.

To the reverend sacristan, D.1 to put up and take down the torches for Lent.

To the singers for the evening of Good Friday, D.4.

To the sexton, D.12 per year for his salary.

To the same, s.2 of every lira of alms he collects in the church and in the parish, having the obligation to go two times every month and search for alms.

To the same, s.12 to go to [Piazza] San Marco with two torches the day of Corpus Christi.

To the same, two lire for Good Friday.

To the same, two lire for each day that the Most Holy Sacrament is displayed; similarly it is promised to pay him three or four days a month⁴ and to put out the appropriate number of candles; nothing else may be spent of the confraternity's money for this purpose.

To the same, s.12 for each body, to carry the banner of the Most Holy Sacrament and to give out alms.

The things listed here and elsewhere are limitations, following the books for guidance in other things, maintaining the belongings of the confraternity in good condition, spending as little as possible, according to his conscience, and if he spends more than the aforesaid tariff without license from the chapter, it is intended that that shall be from his own purse.

This motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

The magnificent guardian and companions named above make the motion that the sexton should be re-elected every year when the new board is elected, that is, he should be confirmed every year as long as the brothers think appropriate, and if the aforesaid sexton does not behave well, the aforesaid brothers may dismiss him, and once dismissed, he may not be voted on in this confraternity until three years have passed. Once that time has passed, he may be voted on again in that chapter meeting. If the guardian does not follow this above rule, the said guardian, vicar, and secretary shall pay a penalty of twenty five ducats to the benefit of our confraternity. The present motion was voted on and was approved unanimously with one vote against.⁵

⁴ The original text reads "pagar tre o vero quattro mese al giorno" [pay three or four months a day], clearly a slip of the pen.

⁵ Following this item, most of the remainder of the statute book contains either records of decisions on particular items of business or copies of regulations from the Provveditori di Comun or other government bodies.