

MANUAL

for

DIRECTORS and OFFICERS



*A Guide in the
Administration of the
Confraternity of Christian Mothers*



Issued by:

THE ARCHCONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN MOTHERS
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PREFACE

The purpose of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers has been approved by the Vatican Council Documents as being more important than ever before. What could be more basic to the needs of the world than to have wives and mothers made aware of their dignity and responsibility so that they may form the minds and hearts of their children in a Christian way of life?

At the National Office we must rely totally on our local Father Directors and officers. We hope our new edition of the *Manual for Directors and Officers* will assist them in their noble efforts.

Rev. Bertin Roll, O.F.M. Cap.

National Director

&

Mrs. Catherine Bulger

National Secretary

-Revisers

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CHAPTER I

Origin, Importance, and Praise of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers.

I. – The Origin of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers

1. The present sketch is an extract taken from the French *Annals of the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers*, and presumably contains all that has been handed down to us concerning that society.

In the northern part of France there lived, about the middle of the last century, a very respectable woman named Louise Josson de Bilhem, the wife of a court official. Endowed with rare qualities both in mind and heart, she was the central figure around which the most learned and esteemed gentlemen and ladies were grouped. As a wife and mother she was a model, admired and imitated by others; she was as the “Strong Woman” Holy Scripture speaks of, who pays attention to all, has watchful eyes over all, a helping hand for all, and who thus insures for her home prosperity, wealth, comfort and peace. Whenever a noble work was undertaken or in progress in the city she was one of the most zealous promoters.

2. She heard of the pious wishes of a few Christian Mothers who were solicitous about the welfare of their children and desirous of working together to attain the great end they had in view. Herself a mother, she could not but understand the reality of the fear with which

in our days, every truly Christian and conscientious mother's heart is filled. She could not resist the strong, innate desire of uniting these pious mothers, who, by assisting one another, would mutually care for the welfare of their children. With zeal and thoughtfulness she went to work. Her noble undertaking was blessed; her endeavors were richly rewarded. Within a short time the mothers were united in a holy league, and assisted one another by words and deeds and mutual prayers.

3. The first day of the beautiful month of May, in 1850, the Christian mothers of Lille, France, assembled for the first time to pray with and for one another and their children, to discuss their problems, and to advise one another regarding the Christian rearing of their children. This was the first union and the first public meeting of Christian Mothers. The members of this incipient Confraternity of Christian Mothers were well aware that success would not crown their efforts unless they enjoyed the assistance and encouragement of those whom our Divine Savior has appointed as teachers and leaders of His faithful followers, and who alone were to administer His Sacraments and dispense His blessings. Accordingly, they entrusted their undertaking to their pastors.

4. The fact that the Societies of Christian Mothers originated with the mothers was a dispensation of Divine Providence. They are to be planted and nurtured by the mothers themselves; they are to be the fruit of their sincerest and heartiest wishes for the welfare of their little ones.

5. After the pastors were interested in the society and extended to it their protection its propagation was astonishingly rapid. The little band of pious mothers who formed the nucleus of the society has grown to be a vast army. What a touching and impressive sight to see this vast array of Christian mothers, surrounded by their children, praying in union for one another, and offering all their merits for one sublime purpose!

6. At present there are six Archconfraternities of Christian Mothers in the world. They are located in Paris, Rome, Regensburg (Ratisbon), Cracow, Einsiedeln, and Pittsburgh. The society found its way into America at an early date, and on the 16th of January, 1881, the Confraternity of Christian Mothers canonically erected in St. Augustine's Church, 220-37th St., Pittsburgh, PA, was raised to the rank of an Archconfraternity with the right of affiliating other Confraternities wherever the Ordinary approved.

Since then over 3,500 Confraternities have been affiliated with the Pittsburgh Archconfraternity directed by the Capuchin Fathers and Brothers.

II. – The Importance of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers

1. The society of Christian Mothers finds its sphere of action in the family. The family in which the child was born and passed the first period of his life will, as a general rule, exercise the most decisive influence on his whole future life. What will the Church and the School—although the latter is conducted on sound Christian principles, and the teachers are actuated by Christian motives and impelled by a good will – what will

and what can the Church and the School accomplish if the family, especially the heart and soul of the family, the mother, will not co-operate with and lend her aid to them? Hence, the frequent complaints of pastors and teachers that the family no longer seconds and encourages their endeavors. Children are sent to school utterly neglected and without any previous preparation. Whatever pastors and teachers build is frequently torn down again by the parents themselves.

2. Now, the Confraternity of Christian Mothers appeals to the family, and especially to the mothers. These, above all, it desires to sanctify by frequent and regular prayers in communion with thousands of their own condition and vocation, by talks and discussions, by the frequentation of the Sacraments, by the edifying example of the other associates.

3. The Confraternity will not attain its end by simply uniting the mothers in prayers; its scope is wider. It desires to instruct and educate the mothers in performing their duties, in practicing the virtues which should adorn their hearts; and by proper instructions at the regular meetings it strives to rouse them to renewed activity, to impress upon them the consciousness of their high vocation, and to inflame them with an ardent zeal. Its aim is to show them the way of attaining their own sanctification and that of their families and neighbors, to imbue them with a thoroughly Christian spirit, to induce them to bring up their children in such a manner as to render them an ornament to the Church and useful members of society, and to insure their temporal, but especially their eternal welfare.

4. Let us bring home to all mothers the great importance of their sacred duties toward their children, and teach them that compliance with these duties must begin at the earliest possible time. Let us render them capable and willing by suitable instructions and the means of grace of Holy Mother Church. Let us inspire them with a love for their state of life and vocation as educators and teachers of their own children!

III. – Praise of the Confraternity

1. We need not be surprised to hear that all who have seen the rich spiritual fruit produced by the Confraternity of Christian Mothers are lavish in their praise and commendation of it. Again and again they refer to the almost visible increase of piety in the family and devotedness to the performance of duties wherever such Confraternities have been established.

2. Who has not read the beautiful words of the great Pius IX? “Give me truly Christian mothers, and I will renew the face of the earth!” When he first heard of an association of Christian Mothers in Paris he blessed it with “effusion of heart,” to use his own expression. Afterward he repeatedly by word of mouth and by writing blessed this Confraternity, which he delighted in calling his own. “We have already,” said he, “Confraternities for all ages, all needs, all conditions and situations in life, except for mothers of families. Now, in this our age it is precisely the family which is attacked by modern impiety.”

3. One priest wrote: "If the Christian family is once successfully destroyed its restoration would be nigh impossible. The experience we had regarding Confraternities of Christian Mothers justify their earnest commendation. I am convinced that a properly and well conducted Confraternity of Christian Mothers will strengthen Christianity in the mothers, and will render them capable of performing all their duties and of complying with their sacred obligations, and that, in consequence, such families as are very nearly lost would be reclaimed; that much, very much, can be done through the Confraternities of Christian Mothers for the proper education of the children; the religious standard of the parish will be elevated and firmly grounded. I am of the opinion that such a powerful means as has been given to us by God to arrest the de-Christianizing of the family, should not be left untried."

4. Father A. A. Lambing wrote: "The mother's influence is felt for all time and for eternity, and that influence is exercised from the very cradle. It will almost invariably be found that a good man or woman has had a good mother, a fact that some mothers themselves do not duly appreciate."

"After the priest of God there is no one who exercises so wholesome an influence in religion and in the world as the truly Christian mother. And at what disadvantage will not the priest himself, though the annointed minister of God and the dispenser of His mysteries, labor if the way is not prepared for him by the Christian mother! We may safely assert that the destinies of the individual, of society, of the Church and the State are in the hands of mothers more than they are in those of

anyone else. Neglect them, or permit them to neglect themselves, and all others who labor for the good of religion and society will do so at immense disadvantages, and will meet at best with but partial success.”

“The example and influence of the Christian father is of incalculable value; but it does not begin to be felt to any considerable extent till the formation of the character and habits of the child has made considerable progress; and besides, the father is not with the little ones too much during the precious years of childhood. It is his vocation and his duty to earn a livelihood for them, and this usually takes him away from home. But the very same law requires the mother to be with them, and at the same time affords her every opportunity of moulding their character and habits. What the guardian angel is to the child in its relation to the invisible world, that the mother is to it in its relation to the world around it.”

“It must, then, be repeated: the destinies of the Church and the world are in the hands of Christian mothers more than they are or can be in the hands of any other person or class of persons.”

“For this reason the establishment of the Society of Christian Mothers in every congregation in the land is earnestly to be desired ”

CHAPTER II

The Canonical Establishment, Essential Marks, Statutes and Indulgences of a Confraternity of Christian Mothers.

I. – Canonical Establishment

1. As soon as the establishment of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers is determined on, the first step is to make it the theme of a talk at all the Masses. Or a priest acquainted with the ideals of the Confraternity might be called upon to conduct a triduum, a series of three talks on three evenings, concluding the triduum with the first solemn reception. The establishment, arrangement, management, advantages and purposes of the Confraternity, the conditions under which members are enrolled in it and the duties it imposes should be briefly and accurately explained. The mothers must be encouraged and requested to make application for enrollment. On this occasion it should be most emphatically stated that, though a small contribution would be requested, poor women would not be asked any contribution whatever, and that all requisites would be given to them free of charge, at the expense of the Confraternity's treasury. Let the pastor on this occasion convince his people that in the establishment of the Confraternity he seeks nothing else but the welfare of the parish, especially of the mothers; that he has but one object in view, namely, that the mothers love prayer, receive the Sacraments, sanctify themselves, perform their various duties toward their husbands, and especially their little ones, with greater faithfulness and conscientiousness; in short, that by means of the Confraternity they and their

families be made happier day by day. Let him endeavor to convince his people that by the establishment of the Confraternity he offers the parish a rich treasure of blessings and grace.

2. The next thing to be done is to petition the Ordinary of the diocese in writing for the canonical establishment of the Confraternity and for the permission to affiliate it to the Archconfraternity. It would be best to request the Director General, Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers, 220-37th Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15201 to forward the blank application for affiliation, so that no essential point is overlooked, or anything not essential added.

After the application for affiliation has been properly filled, it must be presented or sent to the Ordinary of the diocese for his official signature.

As soon as the application for affiliation has been properly signed and returned, it should be forwarded to the Director General of the Archconfraternity, who will fill out and forward the Diploma of Affiliation. From the date the diploma is issued, the new Confraternity shares in all the indulgences and privileges of the Archconfraternity, and enjoys a special participation in all the good works performed for and by the members of the Archconfraternity and by affiliated Confraternities. The real life of the Confraternity now begins.

If the original diploma of affiliation is lost or soiled, a duplicate copy can be obtained, free of charge, from the National Office

Ordinarily an offering of at least ten dollars is given for the original diploma. There are no annual dues to the National Office, but we think each Confraternity should send a yearly offering to defray the expenses of the National Office. Time and time again we mail free material to Father Directors and officers. As one thoughtful priest wrote: "You cannot run the National Office on reputation alone."

II. – The Essential Marks of a Confraternity of Christian Mothers.

The essential marks of a Confraternity of Christian Mothers are three: 1. *The same end and purpose.* 2. *The same name.* 3. *The same principal patroness.* These three essential characteristics must be contained in the petition to the Ordinary.

1. – *The Same End and Purpose*

The first and most important characteristic to be embodied in the petition to the Ordinary is a precise statement of the purpose and end for which such a Confraternity is desired. A society can only then be considered a real Confraternity of Christian Mothers when its aim and purpose is *the Christian education of the children by the mothers.* Such a sublime end, however, can in no way be attained unless the mother herself, above all, is thoroughly imbued with a truly Christian spirit, nor even then be successfully attained unless the child lives in a truly Christian atmosphere. Hence, a mother who is a member of the Confraternity takes

upon herself the special obligation of enkindling the fire of the love of Jesus Christ, first in her own heart, and then in the hearts of her husband, children and neighbors.

That such alone is the aim and purpose of the Confraternity may be readily learned from the papal briefs pertaining to it. The brief of July 6, 1871, to the Confraternity of Christian Mothers in Ratisbon, by which several indulgences were granted, contains the following significant words: "Since ... among the many pious and charitable works, which the members are wont to prosecute, they must above all work for the Christian education of their children."

This, therefore, was and must continue to be the end and aim of all Confraternities to be affiliated; and only such societies can be validly affiliated and secure for their members the indulgences and privileges, and participate in the graces granted the Archconfraternity. The Confraternity of Christian Mothers of Pittsburgh never had any other object in view. For this end alone were the indulgences and privileges granted it, and for this purpose alone was it elevated to the dignity of an Archconfraternity with the right of affiliation. A Society of Christian Mothers which has a wider or a narrower scope, or has a quite different end in view than the aforesaid, could not be affiliated, and if, after its valid affiliation, it should change this primary and essential purpose, it would by that very fact sever all connections with the Archconfraternity, and cease to be a branch of it. (See pages 67-68)

Other good works, as keeping the church neat and clean, decorating the altars, assisting the poor and needy associates, holding card parties and socials and the like, may form a secondary object, but it must always be subordinate to the principal aim. Great care must be taken lest the secondary purpose gradually become the primary one, and the latter be relegated to a subordinate place. Hence, it becomes necessary again and again to remind the members that the various good works, undertaken and performed by them as a secondary object, and the secondary object itself, are of minor significance in themselves, and praiseworthy only in so far as they form a means to attain the proper and primary end of the Confraternity, and thus merit the grace of imparting to their children a better Christian education.

2-3. – *Name and Principal Patroness*

Another important and essential feature of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers is the *Name and the principal Patroness*. According to the papal briefs, its name is “The Confraternity of Christian Mothers,” and its principal Patroness, *the Immaculate Virgin under the title of Our Lady of Sorrows*.

In the first brief of indulgences which the very first of all canonically erected Confraternities of Christian Mothers, that of Paris, received on September 18, 1855, it was named: “A pious union, canonically erected under the title: ‘Christian Mothers,’ and with the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Seven Dolours as patroness.”

From its very inception the Pittsburgh Archconfraternity accepted the above decisions as having reference to it, and thus the Holy See was petitioned for the graces and privileges it now enjoys. No one, therefore, could, if he wishes a Confraternity to remain affiliated to the Archconfraternity, change the name or select another principal patron.

In order not to multiply organizations in a parish, pastors are within their rights in combining the Confraternity of Christian Mothers with an already existing organization. The following combinations are quite common: Christian Mothers – Rosary Confraternity; Christian Mothers' Club; Christian Mothers and Guild; Altar Society & Christian Wives & Mothers; P.T.G. & Christian Mothers.

Regarding the secondary patron saints, the Holy See has established no particular rule, but accorded full liberty of choice.

III. – The Statutes of the Confraternity

A. General Statutes and Remarks

B. Special Statutes and Remarks

(Subject to approval and change of the Father Director of each Confraternity)

The three marks referred to in Chapter II are the only essential requisites. Wherever they are found a Confraternity of Christian Mothers has been established, and will remain such until the proper authorities decide otherwise. It is customary to establish certain rules and statutes to be observed by the members in order that the aim and purpose of the Confraternity may more

readily be attained. Their observance is most earnestly recommended, because without them a Confraternity will hardly flourish. Organization is a condition of success in religious as well as social matters.

The statutes of a Confraternity of Christian Mothers may be either *general* or *special*. General statutes are enacted by the Archconfraternity, and their general acceptance is advisable and recommended, in order to secure a certain uniformity in the direction, regulation, life and work of the Confraternity. Thereby the societies coalesce into a federation of love, form one family, and are guided by one spirit. This is a great and important advantage. As a rule, they are generally accepted and introduced either at once or gradually.

Special statutes are enacted to regulate the particulars of the Confraternity's life, and to embody such points as could not be provided for in the general statutes. A copy of such statutes is added, which may be either accepted and introduced, or if not, serve as a model upon which to frame others if any should choose to do so.

A – General Statutes and Remarks

I. Any good, practicing Catholic woman, married or widowed, though she has no children, may be admitted, provided she seriously intends to promote the aims of the Confraternity, especially that of the Christian home education of children, and to comply with its statutes. (Unmarried and non-Catholic married women may be associate members.) See Supplement p.67.

Some doubts arose regarding childless women. To remove these doubts a postulate was sent to Rome from Ratisbon, and on April 20, 1883, the following response was forwarded: "We hereby authoritatively declare, that widows and women, lawfully married, but childless, are to be admitted to membership." Hence, every widow and married woman can be admitted as a full member of the Confraternity and share in all its graces, even though they have no children, or never had any.

Though God denied them the joys of motherhood, yet they become such in a spiritual, though true sense, through the Confraternity. By their endeavors to contribute, at least by prayer and good works, to the proper and Christian education and salvation of the children, they obtain great merits.

II. Those to be enrolled must be admitted by the Director, or his lawful representative, who will enter their Christian and family names in the register of the parish Confraternity. It is advisable also to enter their place of residence.

The Director appointed by the Bishop can validly admit new members and he enjoys the faculty of subdelegating. From the day that the new member's name has been entered in the register she is a full member, and shares in all the spiritual benefits of the Confraternity. A register of the Confraternity is prescribed. The material inscription of the name may be performed by anyone, as long as the applicant has been duly enrolled by one possessing the faculty.

III. Members must be extremely solicitous to educate their children according to the principles of the Gospel.

The aim and object of the Confraternity is here recalled to the member's mind, and an earnest request added to strive after it. The Christian education of the children is an imperative duty imposed on the mothers by God, and the Confraternity stresses it as its most important and primary aim. We urge mothers to read and study how to train their children.

IV. Every day they should recite the *Daily Prayer for the Children* to the Patrons of the Confraternity, to which others may be added, as the patron saint of the parish and the special patron of the mother. (Page 60)

She was smiling. There was a glow of sweetness and peace in her mild eyes. "Father, I want to tell you something. You requested us to say the Christian Mother Daily Prayer every day. Well, twenty years ago I began to pray it. I know it off by heart. At present, my oldest boy is a Brother in a religious community, my oldest daughter is a Nun. Another boy will soon be a doctor, and my other daughter is training to become a nurse. Father, I attribute the success I have had with my children to the fact that in twenty years I have not missed my Christian Mother Daily Prayer."

This rule prescribes the daily invocation of the patron saints of the Confraternity. An occasional sermon on their life and virtues, and a special devotion to them, are very effective in elevating the spirit of the Confraternity. The members should be reminded of the intentions for which they should recite their prayers. This may be known from the wording of the prayers and from the very nature of the Confraternity itself. The intentions may be:

1. That no child shall die without the sacrament of baptism.
2. That all become more and more like the Sacred Heart of Jesus who loved the little ones so tenderly, and be confirmed in the love of God.
3. That all enjoy so much temporal happiness and prosperity as is compatible with their eternal welfare.
4. That all die a happy death.

For themselves the mothers recite their prayers:

1. That they may insure their own salvation, perform their sacred duties faithfully and conscientiously, especially that of educating their children in a Christian manner, and obtain God's assistance in all temporal needs.
2. That the Confraternity be established in other parishes, the existing Confraternities increase in number as well as in zeal, and that all associates endeavor to comply with their duties, especially in training the little ones in the fear and love of God; finally, that all the special and particular needs of each mother be included in her humble petitions and carried before the throne of God.

It is indeed deserving of all praise if mothers add the invocation of their own patron saints and those of their husbands, children, and of the parish church.

Father Directors may advise the mothers to put the *Daily Prayer*, obtainable on a separate card, someplace where they will see it and be reminded to pray it everyday. Good spots for the card are: above the kitchen sink, inside the cupboard door, and on mother's mirror.

V. They should cherish a special love for one another. Every month they should offer Holy Communion for the associates, or if this cannot conveniently be done, they should attend Holy Mass, receive Communion spiritually, and offer them for the same intention. They should also in other ways, as opportunities present themselves, assist one another, especially the elderly.

Many a Confraternity of Christian Mothers has begun and flourished until the sharp tongues of some of the mothers began to cut away the bonds of love and charitableness that held the group together. Faults were noticed, then commented upon, colored, spiced, enlarged, and spread through the Confraternity and the parish. And the life of the Confraternity was poisoned. Poisoned to death by those who should give it life and vitality. Other Confraternities have not been put to death. But bitter tongues have drained the energy from some of the members and made the group listless and almost inactive.

With this thought in mind, a motto for each mother should be: If you do not know anything good about a person, do not speak about that person. Nothing will render the Confraternity more commendable, nothing will insure a greater blessing, than the charity awakened by mutual prayer and offering of good works by the members. It will thus become manifest whether Jesus is in their midst and dwells among them, and also to what degree the members are truly Christian women and the Confraternity a truly Christian society.

VI. Several times a year, and wherever feasible every month, the members should assemble on the day and at the hour appointed by the Director, to listen to a conference adapted to the purpose of the Confraternity, and to offer prayers for their children and families. For such intentions of the associates as have been specially recommended, prayers are said in common. *(The meeting should help the members spiritually, intellectually and socially. Invite Dads to come meetings.)*

The day of the meeting should as much as possible be devoted to recollection and renewal of the inner self. The mothers should examine their conscience to see whether or not they have neglected any of their duties, and if so, seek pardon by a good confession and resolve to do better in the future. They should strengthen one another by mutual prayer, by assisting at Mass, and, if possible, by Holy Communion. They will receive new inspirations and a powerful impulse from the serious words of the Director. With renewed vigor and revived courage they will return to their arduous task.

VII. On the day of the meeting Holy Mass should be said for the intentions of the associates, and all who can should receive Holy Communion.

Many Confraternities now begin the meeting with an evening Mass, homily, group Communion and thanksgiving in common. Then the women gather in the hall for the business meeting and the rest of the program.

VIII. Twice a year in addition to the regular monthly Communion a general Communion should be held, on the principal feast of the Confraternity, and on such other day as the Director will appoint.

By general Communions the spirit of unity is fostered and strengthened among the members. By partaking of the same heavenly food the uniformity of their state of life and vocation, the identity of their obligations and the correspondence of their prayers are more clearly illustrated. Petty differences are forgotten in Holy Communion. By partaking of the same Bread of Angels, by receiving the one and same Christ, they are cognizant of their equality and the peculiar needs common to all of them. He alone can supply them; He is the only source whence the life of their souls springs and to Whom they must lead their little ones. "For we, being many, are one bread, one body. all that partake of one bread." (1 Cor. 10.17.)

IX. The Director of the Confraternity is the one named by the Bishop. The Director will appoint officers or permit an election for a term designated by him. He will approve all by-laws, rules and projects.

Some Father Directors prefer to have an election with a change of officers every year or every other year.

If the election of the officers of the Confraternity is left to the members, it might give rise to factions, quarrels, dislikes, jealousy and envy. These evils can easily be avoided if the Director reserves to himself the appointment of officers; he can easily find out who are fitted for the various offices. Should any Director, however, wish to change this statute and permit an election, the dictates of prudence would be followed if the approval of the election were reserved to himself. He should establish the principle that the officers are such, not by virtue of their election, but only by virtue of appointment by him, or by his approval. This seems to be the most proper way, as it is in harmony with the general practice of the Church.

X. The officials of the Confraternity shall give an edifying example to all the associates; they shall see that the members attend the meetings and conduct themselves in a manner becoming a Christian mother. They shall visit and comfort the sick, and support them as much as lies in their power, being especially solicitous about a happy death. All matters of greater importance are to be referred to the Director.

The officers should willingly accept their responsibility and exemplify in their own lives the ideals of Christian motherhood. In dealing with the members, the officers must exercise charity and mercy and patiently bear criticism and inconveniences they will experience. Father Directors ought to rely on the officers and allow them to use the talents God has given them. If, however, they should become proud, haughty and independent, and frustrate the efforts of the Director, they must be removed from office.

Officers have the duty of helping all the members to realize that the Father Director is their leader, appointed by the Ordinary. A director gives directions. Consequently it is entirely out of place for officers to take

the attitude "We'll go ahead with this and afterwards tell Father. If he does not approve, it's too late." That note is completely out of harmony with the Confraternity.

Much of the success of a Confraternity depends on the officers studying the *Handbook for Officers* and the *Manual for Directors and Officers*, consulting with the Father Director, planning meetings, and inquiring how other groups operate.

New officers need the help of former officers. Isn't it depressing to know that at times some of the outgoing officers, who should be the mainstay of the Confraternity, turn out to be trouble-makers? They criticize and find fault and give the impression that the new officers are undoing what was accomplished in the past. Sometimes it happens that ex-officers do not even attend the meetings. That should never be. Once a lady has been an officer she realizes the value of cooperation. For that reason she ought to be an outstanding member, one on whom the new officers can rely, one to whom they can turn for advice and encouragement, one who understands that the new officers are trying their best though their methods may differ from hers.

XI. When an associate has departed this life, prayers and good works shall immediately be offered up by the associates, and as soon as possible a Holy Mass should be said. All who are able to do so should be present at the funeral services. Within the seven days following All Souls' Day a Holy Mass should be offered for all the departed members.

The bond of love uniting the associates is not severed by death, but continues to exist. It should manifest itself partly by prayers which the living recite for the departed members and by the special care they take of the orphaned children; partly by prayers which the departed will offer up while detained in purgatory, and will continue to offer up after having entered into the realms of bliss.

XII. The deceased members and their children are recommended to the hearts and prayers and merits of the associates.

The bond of love for one another remains unbroken even in eternity.

B. – *Special Statutes and Remarks*

1. The Confraternity of Christian Mothers has been established by the Most Rev Bishop of in St Church on the day of 20 and affiliated to the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers of Pittsburgh on the day of, 20

Wherever a priest has charge of two parishes he may establish the Confraternity in each of the parishes, or in only one of them. In the latter case he can enroll the members of the other parish in the register of the parish where it has been canonically established. Participation in the indulgences and graces begin to take effect on the day stated in the Diploma of Affiliation.

2. According to the regulations of the Bishop the actual pastor or any other priest chosen and authorized by the pastor shall be Director of the Confraternity.

If the Bishop has appointed the pastor for the time being as Director of the Confraternity, his lawful successor in office is the Director by virtue of his office as pastor. This important question has been decided by the Sacred Congregation, June 25, 1887: "Whether, in view of the decree of Jan. 8, 1861, granting bishops special faculties to name existing pastors as rectors of confraternities, it would be necessary, upon the death or the removal of such a pastor, acting as rector of a sodality, that the new pastor be appointed by a new nomination on the part of the bishop to the post of rector?" "The answer was in the negative." The appointment of an assistant priest as Director would not transmit the same office to his successor in the same capacity in case of his death or removal. The best way to avoid any difficulties on this point, and the one generally followed, is that the pastor request the appointment as Director with the right of subdelegation.

3. The General Statutes of the Archconfraternity hold good also in this place.

The advisability of accepting the general status has already been discussed.

4. Admission to the Confraternity is free. Women not sufficiently known are to be recommended, at least, by a Prefect.

Those who pay annual dues will share in the Masses offered for the members and will have a Mass offered for the repose of their soul shortly after death. Those not doing so regularly or not at all will have no Holy Mass, and will have an equal share in the Holy Masses of those years only in which their contributions were received.

Women who are not members of the parish may be admitted if they present themselves to the Director or his lawful representative. Persons who are not present cannot, as a rule, be admitted. The power of admitting and enrolling new members may, however, be delegated, with the approval of the Bishop, not only to priests, but also to lay persons of both sexes. It is required, however, that such as have been duly delegated to admit new members provide for the proper registration of the names of those whom they have admitted, by sending the names to the Director of the Confraternity for which they were subdelegated. This ought to be done at least once a year. In this way the Confraternity could widely spread with little pains. There are many good, pious and zealous mothers living in parishes where there are no prospects of ever establishing a Confraternity. Now, if they could be induced to join, they would, undoubtedly, labor to attain the object of the Confraternity, and comply with the statutes as well as their situation and circumstances would permit. In such a case the appointment of zelatrices, or organizers, with the power of enrolling new members would certainly be in place. By the zeal of such women, branch societies of Christian mothers are very often formed, which frequently manifest more zeal and activity, and diffuse more blessings, than such societies as are under the immediate supervision of a Director. Where this mode of enrollment is not feasible or advisable, the women may make application for membership by letter, or by a third person, to the Director of the society, or his lawful representative.

5. The Confraternity annually celebrates the feast of as its principal feast. This feast is chosen by the members.

Holy Mass, group Communion and enrollment of new members take place that day.

The choice of a principal feast and of the days on which partial indulgences can be gained is left entirely to the members. The Director enjoys, for the sake of good order and edification, the right of superintendence, but not such rights as would interfere with the liberty of the members.

The Ritual of Solemn Reception will be found in this book. Several other receptions may be celebrated during the year, whenever the applicants are numerous and the Confraternity is sufficiently large.

6. The medal of the Confraternity is to be worn for regular meetings, at processions and at the funeral of members. The medal of a deceased member is pinned to her dress.

The majority of Confraternities no longer use any ribbon. They prefer the Sorrowful Mother medal with the bar marked "Christian Mothers."

7. The regular meetings will be held
.....A member who has been absent from two consecutive meetings is obliged to present an excuse.

The conferences and regular meetings are commonly held at a time most convenient for the majority. Many groups now begin with an evening Mass.

8. The Confraternity is divided into sections consisting of a Prefect, an Assistant Prefect and members.

The sections contain from ten to twenty-five members. In assigning the members it is advisable to take as much as possible the ages of the members into consideration. Young women do not wish to be among older women and that is one reason why some may refuse to be enrolled. Let the young women form sections by themselves, placing a young woman of some influence over them as Prefect. Let them also hold one or the other of the responsible offices. We now have A Leader's Manual for Mothers of Preschoolers.

9. Members proving themselves careless and negligent must be reported to the Director. If his admonitions are disregarded they must be expelled. Expulsion deprives

them of every claim on the advantages of the Confraternity. They may be readmitted if they have given sufficient evidence of a good will during three months.

The expulsion of a member is indeed a very disagreeable task for the Director, and very humiliating to the member; yet the honor and welfare of the Confraternity demand the dismissal of such members as are a burden and a scandal to the rest. Besides, it is sometimes the only means of recalling tepid members to a sense of their duties.

10. After the principal object, this Confraternity has an important secondary object, the performance of works of charity and mercy towards members. For this purpose the Prefects should be acquainted with the members of their section, and should in their corporal and spiritual necessities assist them according to their ability.

Write to our National Office for details on the St. Gerard Committee which assists young mothers and the sick of the parish.

Charity towards associates has already been recommended in No. V. of the General Statutes. It could be encouraged by making it the secondary aim of the Confraternity. Some Confraternities have chosen as a secondary object, the beautifying of the altars and the church; but this could just as well be attained in some other way.

11. On the death of a member the certificate of membership should be returned to the Director, who, at the next general meeting, will publish her death, so that prayers may be offered for the repose of her soul. Members shall recite three "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys" daily, for one week, and on the day of the funeral five decades of the Rosary. They should also see that the Holy Sacrifice is offered for the repose of her soul.

Considering the tender love of our good and pious mothers towards the poor souls in purgatory, something very special should be done for members departed, and that generously.

12. To defray the small expenses arising from Masses, alms to the needy members, for Confraternity books, medals, certificates of membership, annual dues are collected. The Treasurer must render an account of the receipts and expenditures as often as the Director requires. The fund is never to be touched to defray expenses not immediately affecting the Confraternity.

Compulsory contributions for the sake of religion are always objectionable, and cannot be tolerated. They should always be free, and the more this is impressed the better. The members should contribute cheerfully for the love of God, and their charity should rather necessitate restraint than encouragement. In some Confraternities the women give an offering at the time of reception to pay for the cost of their medal, Conference Booklet and the Daily Prayer Card. Most groups ask for annual dues from the members, poor members always being excepted. Then certain Confraternities take up a collection at each meeting and every member is at liberty to contribute what she pleases. All money made by the Confraternity belongs to the parish even though the Father Director may allow the women to administer the funds under his supervision.

13. All the sacrifices of time, money, and work, all the Holy Masses, and prayers said by the members, have but this one intention, to obtain for the children the grace of a truly Christian education, of a virtuous life and a happy death.

This is a very important statute, and should be recalled to the minds of the members again and again. That is not a true Christian Mothers' Confraternity which places a secondary object on a level with the primary one. The primary object must always remain the truly Christian education of the children. The spiritual and eternal welfare of the little ones of the Lord is the end and aim of a real Confraternity of Christian Mothers. All that a Christian mother does as a member must tend to this end and purpose.

14. The general as well as the special statutes have been approved by the Most Rev. Bishop, and should, therefore, be conscientiously observed, although they do not impose an obligation binding under pain of sin.

Scrupulous members must be informed that the transgression of any of the statutes is not a sin; the tepid must be informed that they are unworthy members of the Confraternity and do not foster the true Christian love for their children, because they do not prize and observe the statutes.

SUMMARY OF THE INDULGENCES OF THE ARCHCONFRATERNITY

Plenary Indulgences

(The following letter explains why there has been a change regarding the indulgenced feast days.)

The Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary, Rome, Italy

Most Holy Father:

The spiritual director of the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers, established in Saint Augustine Church (now known as Our Lady of the Angels parish) of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, of the Episcopal city of Pittsburgh, humbly asks that, according to the norm of the Apostolic Constitution “The Doctrine and Practice of Indulgences” of January 1, 1967, n. 14, the Indulgences granted by the Holy See to the aforesaid Archconfraternity be reviewed.

January 17, 1968

The Sacred Penitentiary, by special and express Apostolic Authority, graciously grants a plenary indulgence to be gained by the aforesaid members, provided they fulfill the usual conditions (confession, communion and prayer for the intention of the Holy Father) and make or renew, at least privately, their promise faithfully to observe the rules of the association.

1. On the day of solemn reception.
2. On the feasts of:
 - a) Holy Family – Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity
 - b) Annunciation – March 25
 - c) Queenship of Mary – August 22
 - d) Our Lady of Sorrows – September 15
 - e) St. Gerard Majella – October 16
 - f) Christ the King – Last Sunday after Pentecost
 - g) St. Elizabeth – Mother of St. John the Baptist – November 5

Please note carefully the one section of the above requirements: the members must make or renew, at least privately, their promise faithfully to observe the rules of the association.

Partial Indulgences

- a) On four days appointed by the Director. Conditions: Prayer according to the intentions of the Holy Father.
- b) As often as members are present at the Conference lectures.
- c) For the recitation with a contrite heart of the *Christian Mother's Daily Prayer for the Children*.
- d) For every good work performed according to the object and rules of the Confraternity or in its behalf.

Some Norms from the Apostolic Constitution on Indulgences:

No. 6 – A plenary indulgence can be acquired only once a day. A partial indulgence may be gained many times a day, unless something different is explicitly stated.

No.7 – To acquire a plenary indulgence it is necessary to perform the work to which the indulgence is attached and to fulfill three conditions: sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion and prayer for the intentions of the Pope. It is further required that all attachment to sin, even to venial sin, be absent...

No.8 – The three conditions may be fulfilled several days before or after the performance of the prescribed work; nevertheless, it is fitting that Communion be received and the prayers for the intentions of the Pope be said the same day the work is performed.

No.9 – A single sacramental confession suffices for gaining several plenary indulgences, but Communion must be received and prayers for the Pope's intentions recited for the gaining of each plenary indulgence.

No.10 – The condition of praying for the Pope's intentions is fully satisfied by reciting one "Our Father" and one "Hail Mary"; nevertheless, the individual faithful are free to recite any other prayer according to their own piety and devotion toward the Pope.



CHAPTER III

The Life of the Confraternity.

I. – Reception

The necessary preparations and the ritual for solemn reception are listed on page 70.

1. At the reception, each woman should receive a *Christian Mother Medal*, the *Conference Booklet* of prayers, and a separate *Daily Prayer* card that could be placed in the kitchen where a mother will see it and pray it at least once a day. A *Certificate of Membership* is given to each member at the next meeting, and her full name, residence, and telephone number are entered in the register of the Confraternity. The member admitted will share in all the indulgences and graces and privileges of the Confraternity from the day of entry of her name in the Confraternity's register. Though a public and solemn reception is no longer required, yet, it can hardly be dispensed with.

2. The solemn establishment of the Confraternity and the first solemn reception should be announced on the preceeding Sunday. The day should be one of solemnity and rejoicing for the whole congregation.

3. The solemn reception, the principal solemnity of the day, should take place at a convenient hour in the afternoon or evening. As it is to be a public affair, a family feast, invite the entire parish. The applicants occupy the seats reserved for them. At the beginning of the service the applicants receive candles to be held during the whole time but where this is not feasible, two women may hold candles and represent all the members.

4. The service should begin with the regular Conference prayers. In concise words the Director will again speak on the great importance and the sublime and holy end of the Confraternity. Let him also inform his people of the great hopes he entertains that the Confraternity will not be barren and sterile, but productive of the greatest blessings and richest spiritual fruit for the parents and their children. The service may conclude with Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. A solemn reception of applicants should take place but once a year, unless circumstances, the number of applicants and the size of the parish should make a second or still more frequent solemn receptions desirable.

Women who have not been enrolled, but have expressed their willingness to become members, may attend the regular conferences.

Members transferring to another Confraternity need only present themselves to the Father Director in their new parish and mention their membership so that he may place their names on the Confraternity register.

II. – Regular Meetings

1. The regular meetings unite the members with a strong bond and keep ablaze their zeal. This Confraternity has its own peculiar characteristics, and differs from many others in this, that it obliges its associates not only to the recitation of prayers in common, but also to energetic action and labor.

According to the early history of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers: "The first day of the beautiful month of May in 1850 the Christian Mothers of Lille France

assembled for the first time to pray with and for one another and their children, to discuss their problems, and to advise one another regarding the Christian rearing of their children.”

The important points are the praying, discussing and advising. For that reason the mothers should be given an opportunity for discussion at the regular meetings. Some of the best discussions are held, oddly enough, not in the public meeting but when three or four mothers are sitting together after the meeting drinking a cup of coffee.

Confraternity meetings are flexible and can be adapted to the needs of the parish. The local Father Director has the right to determine what is to be done at a meeting, but Father expects suggestions and help from the leaders. Officers should submit their plans and ideas to Father for approval in advance of the general meeting. A good meeting will help the members spiritually, intellectually and socially.

Some Confraternities begin their meeting with an Evening Mass, homily, group Communion and a short thanksgiving. The regular Conference Prayers from the Conference Booklets or Conference Prayer Cards may be recited a few minutes before Mass.

Other groups begin in Church with the Conference Prayers, instruction, and Benediction.

Still others, follow this outline in the hall:

Please arrange the chairs so that the members are as close as possible to the main table. Too frequently the women are seated at long tables or card tables and some even have their back to the officers and speaker. This is poor planning.

If a social is to follow, each member can easily pick up her chair and move it to a table after the business meeting.

Ask those who are to give reports to sit close to the main table so they can use the microphone. Coming from the back of the hall takes up a lot of time and too many reports are not even heard because the woman fails to use the speaking system.

SUGGESTED

CONFRATERNITY MEETING OUTLINE

PRAYERS..... from the Conference Booklets or
Conference Prayer Cards.

PRESIDENT warmly welcomes all.

SECRETARY minutes.

TREASURER.....report.

COMMITTEES –

Membership report, introduce new members.

St. Gerard report of new babies, ill, help given.

Greeting Cardreport of cards sent.

Parish Representative if affiliated with N.C.C.W.

Deathsreport.

School..... message from Sisters.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

MISCELLANEOUS.....announcements, requests, correspondence, sermonette and one or two items from the Christian Mother Bulletin.

SPEAKER.....when so planned.

SPECIAL PROGRAM.....when so planned.

FATHER DIRECTOR.....comments, message, question box (if so desired.)

PRAYERS.....concluding.

After the meeting, literature may be distributed followed by a social. This fosters a good family spirit.

2. Regarding the meetings, it is very much to be desired that they be called regularly once a month, on a certain day not to be changed afterward without grave reasons. The General Statutes of the Archconfraternity require several meetings in the course of the year, and wherever feasible a regular meeting in every month. The day may be a certain Sunday of the month or a Sunday immediately following a feast for which an indulgence is granted. Some groups find that the majority of the members can be on hand for an evening meeting during the week. In some parishes, where the members of a Confraternity live near the church, we have found that a Mass is said at a late hour, and the regular meeting held on that occasion. Others prefer a week day to a Sunday. In general it would seem to be somewhat difficult to assemble a large number of the members living in larger cities and have them receive the Sacraments on such feasts of the Confraternity as occur on week days, as some of them do, such as the feasts of the Annunciation, Queenship of Mary, St. Gerard Majella. The mother more

than any other member of the family is busy, and often finds it very difficult to leave home, even for necessary calls or necessary shopping. In appointing the hour for the regular meetings consideration should be taken of the local circumstances and the conditions of the families, and that hour should be chosen in which the greater number of members can conveniently leave their homes. All should be accommodated as much as possible, the rich and the poor, the mother with little children and the mother with grown children, so that none of the more important duties of the home should have to be neglected on account of the conference.

Young mothers have their work for God in front of them and need the great benefits of the Confraternity. Yet many young mothers are under a false impression as is evident from the following conversation: "Have you as yet joined the Confraternity of Christian Mothers in your parish?" "Oh, Father, how can I? You know that I have two other little ones at home and now my baby. I just can't get to the meetings, so I've never joined. After the boys are older I'll have more time and then I'll join."

She was sincere, but under the wrong impression. She thought that attendance at the regular meetings is the essential part of membership. That is not so. We certainly advocate that all members get to the meetings, but allowances must be made. Even though a young mother may not attend all the meetings, she will be greatly helped by receiving Holy Communion regularly, by praying her *Christian Mother Daily Prayer*, by being made aware of her great responsibilities as a mother and by sharing in all the merits of thousands and thousands of other mothers who are her sister-associates.

The purpose of the Church in establishing the Confraternity is to help mothers in the education of their children, and education begins in the cradle. If officers of Confraternities would approach young mothers and explain how eager the Church is to help them, more young mothers would join even though they may not be able to attend every meeting.

3. Though the day and hour for the regular meeting has been fixed, it is still necessary to make a special announcement on the Sunday or feast day preceding the meeting. The Confraternities of Christian Mothers are so important and of such great interest to the parish that they deserve frequent public mention. Such public announcements are, at the same time, a strong appeal to those mothers who are not enrolled. Finally, the whole family should know it, and make arrangements accordingly, when mother is to attend the conference of the Confraternity. Some Confraternities mail notices to the members; others have telephone committees that get in touch with the membership prior to a meeting. The more personal the approach, the better the results.

4. Some Father Directors find it helpful to mention the very special requests for which the members are asked to pray. Mothers, hearing of the trials and anxieties of their sister-associates, are encouraged to patiently bear up under the crosses God asks them to carry in their own lives.

5. A rather pious and very salutary devotion in its results, to which we would draw the attention of the Directors, is a short examination of conscience. This may be made before or after the sermon. We would prefer an examination of conscience after the sermon, as it

would be of greater spiritual benefit to the mothers, and would most probably suggest some special resolutions before leaving. This examen would refer to the various duties of the mother and wife, especially such as had been touched on at the last conference, and such as are apt to be forgotten or neglected in the respective parishes. If at each meeting a mother would ask herself just a few of the following questions, the ideals of the Confraternity would continually be kept before her mind. Let each member ask herself:

1. Have I tried to be a source of encouragement and inspiration to my husband?
2. Have I impaired the authority of my husband with the children regarding obedience?
3. Have I belittled him before the children or friends by revealing his faults?
4. Have I been indulgent, obedient and conciliatory toward my husband?
5. Have I tried to be neat in my appearance when my husband comes home from work?
6. Have I frequently discussed with my husband the character formation of the children?
7. Have I every day recited the *Christian Mother's Daily Prayer for the Children*?
8. Have I prayed with my children and taught them their religion?
9. Have I been reading and studying how to train my children to be good Catholics and loyal citizens?

10. Have I taken an interest in the studies of my children and made sure that they use their talents?
11. Have I tried to mention items of a religious nature in my remarks, or is the family conversation limited to the movies, sports, styles, television and the weather?
12. Have I corrected the faults of the children, especially stubbornness, selfishness, disobedience and untruthfulness?
13. Have I used unbecoming language in their presence, cursed or abused them when angry?
14. Have I allowed my children to bring their friends home, even though the furniture and rugs are given rather rough treatment?
15. Have I permitted my sons or daughters to date too young in life? To “go steady” with no prospect of marriage in the near future?
16. Have I permitted the children to visit dangerous places of amusement, or allowed them to go to entertainments without sufficient supervision?
17. Have I been supervising the use of the radio and the television set, or are my children at times being subjected to trashy programs?
18. Have I been checking the computers, records, tapes and reading materials of my family along with the movies they watch at home or away from home?
19. Have I taught my girls to be ladylike by insisting that they dress as girls rather than as boys?
20. Have I taught my family to assume responsibility in parish, civic and political matters?

Still another list of questions might help the Director in his work and the mothers in their homes.

Questions for Every Day

1. Am I a Christian Mother or just a mother?
2. Is Christ the center of my life and my home?
3. Do I still agree with God that Dad is the head of the home?
4. Do I often recall that my marriage lasts “until *death* do us part?”
5. Do the members of my family pray grace before and after meals?
6. Do my children know the Angelus because we recite it in our home?
7. Do I strive to go to Holy Communion with the other members of our local parish Confraternity?
8. Do I make others feel that they are part of the team rather than belong to a clique that is hindering good from being done?
9. Is there a picture of Christ or His Mother in my living room and not just in the bedrooms?
10. Would Christ approve of the magazines and comic books I allow to come into my home?
11. Is my telephone used to receive and spread noble thoughts?
12. Are my radio and television programs improving me?
13. Are the radio, TV and CD player turned off in the room while the children are doing their homework?
14. Do I cooperate with the Sisters and lay teachers in the education of my children, or do I immediately find fault with those in authority when difficulty arises?
15. Do I allow my children to bring their friends home to play?
16. Am I more concerned about keeping my rugs and furniture in good condition than my children?

17. Have I fulfilled my obligation of instructing my children regarding holy purity, or have I allowed them to shift for themselves, getting their false ideas from other boys and girls, pictures, magazines, and gutters?
18. Are my children polite?
19. Do I teach my children to be good losers at play?
20. Do I fail to recognize faults in my children just because they are my own?
21. Are my children learning to be calm in difficulty because I am a patient mother?
22. Are my punishments an outlet for my anger?
23. Can I say to my children: Never say anything that mother wouldn't say?
24. Are my children learning to be charitable and tolerant of the faults of others because I am charitable and tolerant?
25. Do I speak more of the things I like about people, than of the things I dislike about them?
26. Do I think to praise once in a while?
27. Is my family happy all day because I try to be cheerful at breakfast?
28. At the supper table, do I mention the pleasant or the nasty events of the day?
29. When I have a headache or am sick, do I try to say: Jesus, it's all right with me?
30. In difficulties and joys, do I say to the family: Let's tell God about it?
31. Am I convinced that the world is what mothers are, that my home is what I am?

It would be good to add to this list such faults as are local, and any abuses which hinder or interfere with the proper education of the children. The examination may

be closed with three Hail Marys of thanksgiving for all the good the members have accomplished; then an act of contrition.

III. – On the Remarks to be Made Before the Sermon.

A few hints only will be given regarding the remarks to be made before the regular sermon. The remarks should have reference to such special points as will serve to elevate the Christian family, instill into it a thoroughly Christian spirit and insure the Christian education of the children. Many will be of such great importance and richness as very well to serve as subjects for one or more sermons. Circumstances, localities, abuses in the parish, the education of the little ones, and family life, will suggest such particular points and remarks. A systematic arrangement is not intended, as it is not within the scope of this little book. But, in order to have some little arrangement of the points, we will first refer to such remarks as are always in place, and which cannot be too frequently recalled to the mother's mind, and then to such as concern the Christian life of the family in accordance with the ecclesiastical year.

1. Family devotions must be encouraged and insisted on, and never lost sight of: morning and evening prayers should be said regularly. St. Augustine says, "He who prays well, lives well," and we might add, dies well, too. St. Theresa says: "He who does not pray well will either be a beast or become a devil." How much truth is contained in these words! And yet, in very many families this pious practice has been discarded and buried in the barren desert of busyness. Let us beg and exhort the Christian mothers to introduce this

custom into their families, and re-enkindle the love of prayer. The men should also hear this, and be convinced of the necessity and importance of family devotions. Let us depict to them with great warmth and zeal, in fatherly words, the numerous blessings of heaven, the rich gifts of grace, as well as the temporal blessings and advantages which will come to the home in which family devotions are held regularly. There are times when work urges, but prayers should not be omitted on that account; rather shorten them than neglect them entirely.

2. The happy middle way should be chosen in this regard, lest prayer becomes tedious and an uncomfortable burden to the sleepy little ones. The prayers should be said kneeling or standing before a crucifix, occupying a very conspicuous part of the room where family devotions are usually performed. If there is a little home-altar in the family, so much the better. The father, or one of the older children, should recite the prayers aloud. Those who were unavoidably absent from these devotional exercises should be obliged to perform them privately. A short morning and night prayer will suffice, and in Advent and Lent a litany or a rosary could be very appropriately added. On Sundays and Holydays of Obligation these devotions should be somewhat longer. The life of a saint, or a few chapters of some other pious, instructive and interesting book, could be added to the regular family devotions. A hymn would be a very appropriate conclusion. Some families make time for such devotions immediately after the evening meal.

The smaller children, who are generally sent to bed earlier than the rest, should recite the prayers with mother or dad. The mother should pray for the infants and bless them in the morning when rising and in the evening before putting them in bed.

3. The Director cannot too frequently inculcate upon mothers doing the duty of seeing that the morning and night prayers are said in common. No opportunity should be neglected of deeply impressing on their minds this important obligation; at visits, in school, at catechism instructions, in sermons, and on every proper occasion, he must revert to this duty. If this is done perseveringly we cannot but see the good results derived from this practice; God's assistance will be almost visible. What a great joy and pleasure to the pastor, what a great assistance in his arduous duties, what a great alleviation of his heavy burdens and responsibilities, if many prayers are said in a family, and an occasional prayer added for him! Praying as a family in the automobile is a commendable practice.

4. A large crucifix or religious picture placed in some conspicuous part of the livingroom, should not be wanting in a good Catholic family. The pastor could procure them for his flock and bless them. Smaller crucifixes should be hanging or standing in every bedroom and in the kitchen. A picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of St. Joseph and other saints can nowadays be procured by almost the poorest family, because the cost is so low as to be within the reach of all. The pastor could assist in procuring them by his advice.

5. Let the Director call the attention of mothers to sick calls. It looks odd when the priest is called to a sick person and finds everything topsy-turvy, no crucifix, no candles and candlesticks, no holy water, in fact none of the requisites. A sick-call outfit should be found in every family.

6. Holy-water fonts or small containers should not be missing in any family; at least each bedroom should be provided with one. The font may be hung near the door, within sight and reach of all. It should be large

enough to avoid too frequent refilling. The devil is afraid of holy water, and considered from a mere psychological standpoint, the very sight of the crucifix and holy water will deter one from sin and curb unruly passions. Besides, the crucifix and holy water are sacramentals and when properly and piously used will bestow special blessings and graces.

7. In every truly Christian family religious books are never missing. Let the attention of mothers be drawn to this, and aid them in every possible manner in procuring them. When the weather is unfavorable for outdoor sports or outings during the afternoons of Sundays and Holydays, and the long, cold winter evenings, the time could be very profitably passed in reading some pious, useful and instructive book or periodical. There is no want of useful, instructive, interesting and pious books, periodicals and papers for old and young people. Sewing and the like could be done on winter evenings for the poor, or the church, if the means will permit such acts of charity.

8. As good books should be placed at the disposal of the family, so bad books, papers, periodicals, and comics, must be banished from the home circle. Under no circumstances dare parents permit the children to read spicy paperbacks, suggestive comics and the like. They will ruin the best child. Every pastor knows only too well the tendencies of these publications, and the irreparable ruin they have already wrought. Let parents procure Catholic papers and periodicals published expressly for children; there are several of the kind published. What is intended for grown people is not always fit reading for young folks. If a watchful eye is not kept over the reading of the children the baneful results will soon show themselves, and the evil caused thereby will very often be irremediable. They will read

anything they lay their hands on, good or bad, indiscriminately, and the more sensational the more greedily will it be devoured.

9. When children are going to make their confession, the Christian mother should again be reminded of her particular duties in this regard. At home she must control the study of catechism, helping along the weaker ones, teaching them to pray, and also pray with them. She should remind the child of his predominant passion and principal faults before confession, and after confession recall to the child's mind the good resolutions he has formed.

10. During vacation the mother's duties are increased. Children are apt to throw aside all restraint at this time. They must be kept busy and engaged in one way or other, to keep them out of mischief; they must be guarded more closely to keep them from bad company, and from entering on forbidden paths. Think of St. Monica and her great son. As the school no longer coerces them the mother must be unusually vigilant, and see that prayers, attendance at church and confession, are not neglected. Children returning to school after vacation have often forgotten their prayers and catechism, and this is not altogether a fault of theirs, but of their careless parents.

11. Mothers should always enforce order and cleanliness. Their children should rise, retire, and take their meals at regular hours. Mothers must see that the children are properly washed and dressed, and if too little to do it themselves, let one of the older ones attend to it; never should they permit any to appear among others half clad; such conduct must be severely punished. The mother herself should shine as a model; and out of regard for her husband and children be a picture of neatness and cleanliness and propriety. No husband

cares about a home where disorder is supreme, or where the wife and children are dirty and unkempt. She who does not respect herself deserves no respect from others.

12. A mother ought to know where the children kneel in church and what they do in church and in school. Parents should assist the teachers as much as possible, and never publicly take the child's part when punished in school, but always uphold the teacher's authority.

IV. – On the Sermons at the Meetings.

1. It is a very excellent custom to make a few practical remarks before the sermon. Every pastor has taken notice of the great attention his people pay when the regular announcements are made on Sunday and when the banns of marriage are published one can almost hear a pin drop on the floor. But how quickly and almost visibly will their attention vanish when the Gospel is read. And if the preacher is no longer a stranger among them, but an old acquaintance, or if he does not possess the happy gift of making his sermons appear novel, and of rendering them interesting as to their content as well as to their form, the attention of his audience is almost entirely gone.

A good old pastor followed a very practical idea. To enable him to engross the attention of his people and to advance something new and interesting and instructive in all his sermons, he had four journals marked *Men*, *Women*, *Young Men*, *Young Ladies*. In these books he made a memorandum of what he had read and heard in the conversations with his fellow priests and what he himself had noticed, picked up, as it were, in the course of time, in the exercise of his priestly duties, that in any way had a bearing on these four states in life. The abuses to be eradicated, or that were creeping into the parish and family; everything deserving of praise and

imitation, or rebuke was jotted down in the four journals. When a proper occasion presented itself he requested the men of his parish or others to remain after Mass. They were willing to remain, and very anxious to know what special remarks would be made. Many abuses in the parish and the family were eradicated in an incredibly short time, and the results were so productive of good that he opened a fifth journal for children.

2. The preliminary remarks before the sermon should be short and to the point. The members should feel that these words come from the very depth of the heart. They should refer to the various important duties neglected by mothers, or to abuses that are gradually finding their way into the family. They will serve to remind the mothers of present important duties, and to inform them of what must be done at this time for the edification and restoration of the family to its proper position. They will be instrumental in instilling a truly Christian spirit in all of its members. He who always has a vigilant eye on his flock, who knows how to apply all his readings, all his labors and recreations, his travels, his varied experiences in the care of souls, his conversations with the different classes of people he necessarily meets with in the course of his life, his official, and unofficial calls on the families; he who knows how to apply all this to the one great end in view – of leading the flock entrusted to his care to the Good Shepherd – will never be at a loss for subject matter for practical remarks.

3. The sermon should not be a display of rhetoric. Pathos, poetry, figures of speech, and the like, are entirely out of place in this occasion. A mother with half a dozen children is generally very prosaic. The language should be simple, coming from the heart. The

sermon should be a catechetical one more than anything else, an instruction, a confidential conversation with the mothers on the importance of their duties.

V. – Keeping the Confraternity Alive.

1. The files of the National Office of the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers are filled with cards containing the dates that Confraternities were affiliated with the Archconfraternity. Some of the Confraternities are now nothing more than cards in the files. Directors and members have allowed the beautiful spiritual ideals of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers to be overshadowed by material aims.

Parish bingos, socials, picnic dinners, card parties, and money-raising schemes have found willing workers in those who are called Christian Mothers. Such Confraternities and mothers have forgotten the main purpose of the organization. The Christian Mothers were approved by the Holy Father as a group who would pray together, sanctify themselves together, and discuss their family problems together. Then they were to go back into their homes and put Christ into the hearts of their husbands, children, and neighbors. This is the group, primarily a spiritual group, that the Holy Father approved and spoke so glowingly of: “Give me truly Christian Mothers and I will renew the face of the earth.”

The Holy Father was not speaking of mothers who are united in card parties, but not in spiritual conferences and Holy Communion; mothers who are at every bingo but never at the bedside of a sick person; mothers who raise funds for the parish, but fail to rear their children as good Catholics. Secondary aims have a place in our

organization only if the primary purpose, the home education of the children, is being fostered. In places where the material aims have smothered the spiritual ideals, the members no longer share in the spiritual benefits of the Archconfraternity.

TEN SURE WAYS TO SMASH
ANY CHURCH ORGANIZATION

1. Don't come to meetings.
2. If you come, come late.
3. If the weather doesn't suit you, don't think of coming.
4. If you attend a meeting, find fault with the work of the officers and the other members.
5. Never accept office, as it is easier to criticize than to do things.
6. Nevertheless, get rebellious if you are not appointed on a committee, but if you are, don't attend committee meetings.
7. If asked by the chairman to give your opinion regarding some important matters reply you have nothing to say. After the meeting tell everyone how it ought to be done.
8. Do nothing more than is absolutely necessary, but when other members roll up their sleeves and willingly and unselfishly use their ability to help matters along, tell the world that the organization is being run by a clique.
9. Hold back your dues as long as possible, or don't pay at all.
10. Don't bother about getting new members. Let Georgeann do it.

– The Catholic Layman's Guide

2. “Every member is on the Membership Committee” sounds effective and each member does have a personal responsibility in charity to influence her friends and to acquaint them with the spiritual advantages of membership in the parish society, but it is more practical to have a few members form a “Membership Committee” chosen for their personality and tact.

The ladies on the Membership Committee study very thoroughly the *Manual for Directors and Officers* plus the *Handbook for Officers* and know the answers. They are the ones who can tell you what indulgences may be gained, when the Feast Days occur and the importance of saying the “Daily Prayer for the Children.”

They understand why the Church approves of the organization, and why the Church urges mothers to receive Holy Communion frequently. Their’s is the job to explain the object of the Confraternity, the status of members who have no children, the yearly offering, and all about Conference prayers and socials.

The mothers on the Membership Committee realize the value of a telephone in organizational work. Other opportunities spring up on the way home from Church, at social clubs, in the bowling league, and frequently at the store. They always seem to have an *Application for Admission Card* tucked in their purses ready to hand to a non-member. Other members look to them for help in bringing in a reluctant parishioner, one who thinks she can do very well “without joining anything” – or those who are simply shy.

Names of prospective members may be reported to the Membership Committee. These are kept until the time of formal reception when each “prospect” is contacted. Bringing prospective members to the Ceremony of Reception is most practical.

The Membership Committee usually acts as part of the Reception Committee at the Solemn Reception. The work of the Membership Committee is by no means finished because the new members have been received. It is vital for the Committee to encourage and keep in touch with the newly received ladies for at least three or four following meetings until they feel at home with the others.

If a member is happy about being a Christian Mother and shows it by her life, she is the best advertisement for her Confraternity and is serving God, through His Virgin Mother, and attracting others to be received and share in her spiritual treasure.

3. The Director himself, above all, should not lose courage. He must not spare any means to render the regular conferences as instructive and interesting as possible. He must perform the extra duties assumed conscientiously and punctually, and not think of his own convenience. Subject matter for the discourses must be gathered at all times. Material is surely not wanting. By frequent visits to families, by careful attention to the conduct of the parishioners at home and in church, and of the children at school and on the street, much valuable material can be gathered in a short time. Without a perfect knowledge of the condition of the parish and local circumstances he will be groping in the dark.

4. Having a Confraternity or parish library has been a great aid in encouraging parents to study about their own sanctification in marriage and how to form the character of a child in a Christian way.

5. External attractions are not to be undervalued. The homily should not be just something to pass the time, but must be well prepared. The church should be beautifully decorated on the feasts of the Confraternity with Masses offered for the living and deceased members.

All members are to attend the funeral services of a deceased member, if possible, and ought to consider it an affair of honor and charity.

6. Some zealous Directors have introduced Days and Evenings of Recollection plus annual retreats for the women. The results are very rewarding. A neighboring priest will willingly assist in such promotions. There is no

doubt that such occasions are of great advantage to the members of the Confraternity. They bring blessings not obtainable by other means, and will certainly enkindle the zeal for self-sanctification.

7. One or two meetings each year might be so arranged as to include the husbands and fathers of the parish. On such occasions topics could be discussed which pertain in a special way to husbands and wives, fathers and mothers.

8. Throughout the year opportunities will present themselves to Father Directors and to officers for encouraging the members to follow the mind of the Church regarding various beautiful practices. Among such practices are: having a crib in every home at Christmas time; holding Christmas parties after Christmas rather than during the penitential Advent season; fostering May altars in private homes; enthronement of the Sacred Heart in homes; reminding members of the special blessings of the Church before and after childbirth; celebrating baptismal anniversaries; encouraging short Family Retreats, family Holy Communion, and renewal of marriage promises on wedding anniversaries.

We hope that our Father Directors and officers will follow the mind of the Church and have the members participate not only in parish affairs but also in civic and political programs.

CHAPTER IV

Helps for Officers.

Even though we have a “Handbook for Officers” we are including in this *Manual for Directors and Officers* some special points that should be helpful for all officers.

I. – Wasted Talent

Do you think of a robber as someone rough and rugged with no respect for the property of others? You are correct. The world has always been plagued with that kind of robber. There is still another kind.

We will allow this former school teacher to describe herself. She boasted: “In all my years as a Catholic I’ve never served on any committee for a Church group; never sold tickets or taught a catechism class. I don’t believe in doing extra things for the Church. I go to Mass and that’s it!”

This woman is a talented, thankless thief. She is a highly respected robber. She’ll never be handcuffed and given a ride to the local jail. She will merely continue to live her own selfish life.

God never short-changes His Church. Every parish has people who are gifted with qualities of leadership; others who are human machines with energy to burn. Some parishioners give glory to God by using their abilities for Him; others rob God by burying their talents.

II. – Plan to be President

There are many practical reasons a woman might have for refusing to accept an office in the Confraternity of Christian Mothers. It may be that the term of office is not defined; that she fears she would have to serve for

several years, and she might accept if the term was for one year. She may know from the reports of past officers that she cannot expect much cooperation from members in the way of committee work. (A good president channels out the work; she doesn't do it!) Here are a few observations on the subject:

- It takes a heart to be president; a heart big enough to mother the entire membership.
- It takes sincerity, a belief in the principles and goals of the Christian Mothers.
- It takes work mixed with tact and personality.
- It takes faith in her Church, in her Country and Community and a will to serve all three.
- It takes maturity of mind, the ability to take whatever the office throws at you, to understand people, to accept them as they are; to reach out to the outer rim for the weakest.
- It takes knowing that your being president isn't going to revolutionize the parish even though you're going to try to be good for the parish and the members.
- It takes not taking things too seriously; putting first things first; realizing that being president does not come before your home and family.
- It takes a sense of humor; the willingness to admit you can make a mistake – and forget about it. (Nobody expects you to be perfect.)
- It takes being smart enough to handle a meeting; to keep peace; to consult the pastor on important matters; to guard the members from any breath of scandal; to take advice; to be human, kind and

considerate. You just might have all that it takes. One thing is sure – you'll never know unless you try! It's a learn-on-the-job proposition so go ahead, plan to be president.

III. – New Officers-New Blood

Many problems in the Confraternity of Christian Mothers revolve around officers and the reluctance of members to accept an office. In some parishes there is no rule or by-law defining the length of the term. The same women stay in office year after year. The Confraternity becomes inactive, wilts or dies.

A new slate of officers may not surpass the out-going group. Yet, if there is any initiative shown, a change means new life, new blood, new interest, new ideas. We are in a position at the National Office to see and appreciate the work of hundreds and hundreds of good officers. And we have also watched while certain units died a slow death from boredom and lack of leadership.

It takes courage to accept an office. It takes a generous woman with the real interest of the Confraternity at heart to gracefully relinquish the reins which she has held for sometime. Ex-officers can be a great source of encouragement and inspiration, chiefly by their courtesy in respecting the leadership efforts of the new officers.

IV. – Dependability

Dependability and success go hand in hand. There are many important qualities that contribute to the success of a Confraternity but there is none that is more important than dependability. Pastors and Father Directors are helped and encouraged when all the

members and especially the officers can be depended upon. Entirely too many organizations have been weakened and important committees have been fruitless because officers and chairmen have failed when they had been counted on.

Dependability, like loyalty, is an acquired trait. It is what a Christian Mother can be depended on to do. Her cheerful willingness to be of service counts so much. Christian Mothers are natural leaders, prayers and doers in their parish. When their Father Director has parish work for them to do, when they see something that needs to be done, they do it.

Married women who are not members are attracted to the Confraternity when they see good teamwork between Father Director, officers and members. The sincerity, dependability and the we-have-something-worthwhile attitude of Confraternity members is a catchy come-on to those who are eligible to join.

V. – Consult your Director

Officers and committee chairmen must be able to take it. Any leader is a target for criticism. However, some of the criticism can be avoided if officers, and especially the president, will consult with the Father Director and make decisions final only after receiving his approval. Here are a few obvious don'ts:

1. Don't forget that a Father Director directs. He approves by-laws and elections.
2. Don't engage a speaker without first consulting Father.
3. Don't set a date for a gathering until you find out if the hall is available.

4. Don't deplete the treasury by helping pet charities or by making expensive purchases without Father's knowledge.
5. Don't hold benefits or raffles without first asking your Father Director.
6. Don't forget to submit the names of candidates to Father before enrollment.

In general, many tense situations can be eliminated if the president or board of officers goes over the plans with the Father Director prior to the general meeting.

VI. – Teamwork

Success in most sports demands team effort. Individuals may have outstanding ability but be on a losing team because the squad does not click as a group. The same is true in a Confraternity of Christian Mothers. A thriving Confraternity indicates team work.

Why is it that some officers and chairmen fail in their assignments? Is it because they insist on working alone, will not delegate any authority, or refuse to give credit to others who helped them? It is disconcerting to hear the tone of some reports. The chairman of a card party thoughtlessly says: "Well, I have a brief report. I cleared \$600.00 and checking back I find that I made double what was made last year."

Why the stress on "I"? Was she the only one that worked? People will not be too eager to serve on her committee in the future. And why offend those who worked on last year's card party? The leader who is team-minded would have said: "Our committee is happy

to report that a total of \$600.00 was cleared. Without your wonderful cooperation we would never have done so well. Many thanks.”

VII. – Selfishness

At the National Headquarters here in Pittsburgh (it's really International) – there is a file full of affiliates. Each Confraternity of Christian Mothers – more than thirty-three hundred of them – has its own file card. It is unpleasant for us to report that some of these Confraternities are dead or at best, inactive. In certain cases the cause of death is unknown. In others, the burial of the Confraternity is the result of selfishness. That's the sad truth.

In analyzing the situation, we look at two groups: older members, and young wives and mothers. Many older members joined when they were young and enthusiastic about the spiritual help and instructions they received at the conferences. Now that their responsibilities are behind them, they don't appreciate a spiritual and intellectual meeting. They insist on a social night – and only social! This attitude nullifies the very purpose of the Christian Mothers and drives away the younger and serious women who might otherwise become members. This approach results in the Confraternity getting the reputation of being a society for older women.

In a few parishes we have been startled to find a group of young wives and mothers who promote only money-raising activities and at the end of the year go out for a big night and often blow the entire treasury

Most of our Confraternities, thank God, aim at a healthy and well-balanced program; spiritual, intellectual and social. Such units prosper and are beneficial to the entire parish and community. We are proud of them, their Father Directors and officers.

VIII. – Whose Fault is it?

When a Confraternity lacks life and spirit, is it helpful for Father Directors and officers to ask “whose fault is it?”

1. That no special Christian Mother prayers are recited at the meetings?
2. That the social is so well planned but sometimes the spiritual and intellectual sections are not?
3. That the Confraternity is a “School for Mothers” but nothing is studied at the meetings?
4. That the members do not have a library or literature chairman or at least some reading material available concerning the character formation of the children?
5. That some Catholic women’s organizations are being clubbed to death because they are run as social clubs?
6. That the vitality of a woman’s organization is judged by the size of the treasury?
7. That the names and addresses of the present officers are not sent to the National Office for the free literature?
8. That a woman says: “I would join the Christian Mothers but I belong to the Council of Catholic Women”? (We are a national affiliate of the NCCW

and pay regular dues each year to Washington. We're for the Council but it is not a parish society nor are there spiritual benefits connected with membership in the Council.)

9. That some members say they have never heard of the "Christian Mothers Daily Prayer for the Children"?
10. That the majority of our Confraternities never send an annual free-will offering to the National Office of Christian Mothers even though we mail free items to every group?
11. That youth delinquency is on the rise yet some of our Confraternities are allowed to die even though their purpose is the character formation of children?
12. That men are not invited to a meeting at least once or twice a year so that they might learn the purpose of the Confraternity and cooperate in the training of the children?
13. That many pastors say; "The Christian Mothers is the best organization in the parish" and others say: "The Christian Mothers seem to be slipping these days?"

Each officer will benefit herself and her Confraternity by obtaining a copy of our new Handbook for Officers.

In the Handbook you will find detailed information on all phases of an officers' job. Here is the Table of Contents:

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PRAYERS FOR CHRISTIAN MOTHER MEETINGS

(These prayers are to be prayed in Church or at the business meeting. Hymns are optional. The priest selects the time for the sermon, instruction or discussion.)

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, * replenish the hearts of Your faithful, * and kindle in them the fire of Your love.

We fly to your patronage, * Holy Mother of God, * despise not our petitions in our necessities, * but deliver us always * from all dangers * O Virgin, glorious and blessed.

Let Us Pray

Almighty and eternal God, * our Lord and Heavenly Father, * behold us assembled for the greater glory of Your Divine Majesty! * Shed upon our hearts Your light and truth, * that we may understand * and appreciate the dignity and duties * of our vocation as Christian wives and mothers. * Give us not only light to know * but strength to fulfill to the end Your divine decrees. * Grant that we may lead to eternal life * the souls of our children, * as well as our own. * This we implore of You * through Christ, Your Son, * the Friend of Children, * through His bitter sufferings and death, • and through the merits of all our holy patrons. * Amen.

The Daily Prayer for the Children

O Mary, * Immaculate Virgin and Sorrowful Mother, * commend our beloved children * to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, * Who refuses nothing to His Mother.

Holy Guardian Angels, *Pray for them.*

St. Joseph, powerful patron, *Pray for them.*

St. John, beloved disciple of the Heart of Jesus, *Pray for them.*

St. Augustine, *Pray for them.*

St. Anthony, *Pray for them.*

St. Aloysius, *Pray for them.*

St. Anne, Mother of Mary, *Pray for them.*

St. Elizabeth, *Pray for them.*

St. Monica *Pray for them*

For Various Intentions

Let Us Pray

For the absent, sick and deceased members. *Hear us, O Lord.*

For Father Directors and Officers. *Hear us, O Lord.*

For our members, husbands and children. *Hear us, O Lord.*

For a deeper love of Holy Mass and all the liturgy. *Hear us, O Lord.*

For vocations to the priesthood and religious life. *Hear us, O Lord.*

For more parishes to start the Confraternity of Christian Mothers. *Hear us, O Lord.*

For more patience. *Hear us, O Lord.*

For willing acceptance of crosses and suffering. *Hear us, O Lord.*

For peace in our homes and in the world. *Hear us, O Lord.*

For the conversion of sinners, social justice and the grace of a happy death. *Hear us, O Lord.*

O sweet Lord Jesus Christ, * we ask You, through the intercession of Your Sorrowful Mother, * to hear and answer our requests. * Amen.

Parents' Prayer for Their Children

O good God, we thank you, * that You have given us children, * made them heirs of heaven by holy Baptism, * and entrusted their training to us. * Fill us with a sense of our responsibility; * assist us in the care of their health, * but especially in the preservation of their innocence and purity of heart

Grant that we may teach them early to know and serve You, * and to love You with their whole heart. * May You in Your generosity, * see fit to grant to at least one of our children * the grace of a vocation in religion.

Grant that we ourselves * may carefully avoid all that we must forbid them, * and may faithfully practice all that we should teach them. * Help us to further at home by example * the work of the priests, religious and lay teachers in Church and in school.

Give us the spirit of sacrifice to study with our children. * Never allow us to grow soft * nor to make life too easy for our sons and daughters. * Help us to teach them the eternal value of self-discipline.

We commend them, O God, * to Your paternal care, * to the motherly protection of the Virgin Mary, * and to the guardianship of Your holy angels. * Bless our efforts, O heavenly Father, * and let our children advance in wisdom and age and grace before You and everyone. * Amen.

Prayer to the Mother of Sorrows

O Mother Mary, * your life was filled with the most wonderful joy and the deepest sorrow. * Your joy was the result of God's love in choosing you * to be the Mother of our Savior. * Your sorrow was caused by our sins * which led to the crucifixion of Christ on the cross.

Help us to think about the passion and death of Jesus. * Never allow us to grow so accustomed to the crucifix * that we fail to remember the terrible pains * that your Son suffered in our behalf

Prompt us and our families to improve ourselves * by striving after virtue and avoiding sin. * Then some day * we will share with you and your family * the eternal joys of heaven. Amen.

Aspirations

O Lord, grant to Your Church saintly priests and fervent religious.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, draw us and our families closer to you.

Mother of Sorrows, pray for us and our children.

All you saints in heaven, help us to fulfill our obligations in parish, civic and political affairs. Amen.

PRAYERS AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

For Christian Mother Confraternities

Prayer Before a Crucifix

Behold, * O kind and most sweet Jesus * I cast myself upon my knees in Your sight * and with the most fervent desire of my soul * I pray and beseech You * that You would impress upon my heart * lively sentiments of faith * hope * and charity * with true repentance for my sins * and a firm desire of amendment * while with deep affection and grief of soul * I ponder within myself and mentally contemplate * Your five most precious wounds * having before my eyes * that which David in prophecy made You say concerning Yourself, * O good Jesus: “they have pierced My hands and My feet * they have numbered all My bones.”

Note on Prayer before a Crucifix: **A plenary indulgence is granted on each Friday of Lent and Passiontide to the faithful, who after Communion, piously recite the above prayer before an image of Christ crucified; on other days of the year the indulgence is partial. See page 27.**

Prayer to Christ the King

O, Christ Jesus * I acknowledge You as King of the Universe. * All that has been created * has been made for You. * Exercise all Your rights over me. * I renew my baptismal vows * renouncing Satan and all his works and pomps. * I promise * to live a good Christian life * and to do all in my power * to procure the triumph of the rights of God and Your Church. * Divine Heart of Jesus * I offer You my poor actions * that they may help bring all hearts * to acknowledge Your Sacred Royalty * so that the reign of Your peace * may be established throughout the universe. * Amen.

A Mother's Prayer After Holy Communion

Dear Jesus, * I want You to know * that I believe with all my heart * that You have come to me in Holy Communion. * What a privilege for me! * You are my God * and knowing my unworthiness * You still enter my heart * because You realize how much I, a mother,

need You. * Dearest Jesus, * I thank You for dying to save me * and for staying with us in the Holy Eucharist.* My life, * my faith * my husband,*together with my motherhood and family *are all gifts from You. * All that I am and all that I have * I owe to You. * I thank You for everything, * most generous Jesus. * Seeing again how good You are to me * makes me sorry for being so unfair to You. * I could have been a better mother, * more patient, * more self-sacrificing. * My lips and heart could have prayed more often. * There was no need for my critical remarks. * I should have accepted my little pains and crosses without complaining. * You know all my other faults. * Please help me Jesus, to get rid of all of them * to prove my love for You. * You blessed me with my motherhood, * and I know that You are relying on me * to help my husband and children to be good Catholics. * Help me to keep You the center of my heart and my home. * Teach us to pray together so that we may stay together. *Never give us so much of this world * that we may forget You and the next world. * Make me conscious of my dignity as a mother. * Never let me forget that my marriage lasts until death. * Teach me to pray over and over again * to Your Mother: * “Mary, please help me to be a better mother.” * Kneeling here with the other members of our Confraternity, * I realize what a great privilege it is * to be a Christian Mother. * Strengthen our union through this Holy Communion. * Keep us grateful for the grace to love children. * Give us strength to resist the disease of empty homes and childless cradles. * Teach us to love one another * and to allow for the faults of others. * May we be model mothers * of whom You and Your Mother can always be proud. * Amen.

Prayer for the Children

Look, O most holy Mother of our Lord, * upon the great number of children * who, through the fault and negligence of their parents * stray in the path of iniquity and vice. * Have mercy on so many poor young souls * who might be saved, * but who will not, * either because their mothers are ignorant of their duties * or unwilling to fulfill them. * Remember the bitter passion and cruel death * endured by Your Divine Son * for those poor children! * Permit not that His great love, * His infinite merits be lost to them! * For the sake of that keenest of all swords * that pierced your tender heart * when you stood at the foot of the cross, * obtain for those erring mothers * the grace of their vocation. * Obtain likewise, for their children * the spirit of obedience and grateful love, * that the desires of the sweet Heart of Jesus * may be fulfilled * by both parents and children. Amen.

Prayer for the Archconfraternity

O glorious Queen of Heaven and earth! * You are the chosen patroness of all Christian mothers. * Bless, then, the Archconfraternity. * May it spread far and wide! * Obtain, we beseech you * that all mothers may seek protection in this Society * and, under its guidance, * become perfectly what you would have them * and what they ought to be: truly Christian Mothers, * your images and worthy representatives * with their children. * O you most pure, * most compassionate Mother of the Divine Savior * and of all the children of the Heavenly Father * who have been regenerated * in the holy sacrament of Baptism, help us in our vocation.

Gloria be to the Father, etc.

Prayer for a Deceased Christian Mother

(May be recited in the funeral parlor)

Mother of Sorrows and Patroness of all Christian Mothers,* you know that a member of our Confraternity, Mrs. , has died.

We are gathered to show our love for her and her family. * We beg you, dear Mary, * to intercede with your Son Jesus for this friend of ours. * May her suffering in purgatory, be very limited. * She prayed and worked with us while here on earth. * May she now be rewarded for the sacrifices she made.

Strengthen her family in their sorrow. * Inspire us at this sight of death * to improve our own way of living * so that all of us may be worthy * to be reunited in heaven for all eternity.

Eternal rest grant to her, O Lord, * and let perpetual light shine upon her. * May she rest in peace. Amen.

SUPPLEMENT CONCERNING THE MERGING OF GROUPS

Including Unmarried Women

Explanation

The eminent purpose of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers makes it an ideal parish society without being combined with any other organization. Unfortunately, some combinations have clouded the purpose of the Confraternity.

In permitting the combination of groups we have no intention to water down and change the purpose of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers. The Confraternity was never established by the Church for all the women of a parish. It was founded to help a married woman to be a better wife and mother and to help her in training her children to be good catholics. If the single women, good workers that many of them are, wish to work

along with the married women, that is fine. However, the prayers, ceremony of reception, name, conferences and activities should not be changed just because a few single women are in the group. We suggest that the single women would pray for the children of the parish, for their own nieces and nephews. That is what the Father Directors do without any problem.

NAMES

Common combinations are: "Christian Mothers-Rosary Confraternity;" "Christian Mothers and Guild;" "Christian Mothers' Club;" "Altar Society and Christian Wives and Mothers." It is essential that the term "Christian Mothers" be used in the official title.

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS

Where organizations are combined, the unmarried or associate members do not share in those spiritual benefits of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers (pages 26-27) which are limited by Holy Mother Church to married women with or without children. However, the single women share, as do the married, in all the parish benefits of the combined organizations such as Masses, visits, prayers at death, and the like.

Unmarried women, dedicated workers that they so often are, may be elected to any office because this is the "business end" of the organization. Once these questions are explained and understood, there is no further objection to a merger as the unmarried group (usually in the minority) loses nothing by combining but gains indirectly by the profit to home-life in the parish.

MEETINGS

The official Conference Prayers (page 59) are recited at the meeting. The single women are asked to pray along with the married and offer their prayers, as does the Father Director, for the children of the parish. Some may wish to include the following prayer:

*Prayer to Our Lady of Good Counsel
Patroness of the
National Council of Catholic Women*

O Lord of Heavenly Wisdom, * who have given us your own Mother Mary * to be our guide and counselor * in this our life, * grant that in all things * we may have the grace to seek * her maternal instruction * and to profit by it in humility and love.

O Mother of good counsel, * Patroness of the National Council of Catholic Women, * help us to understand and fulfill * the mind and will of your Divine Son, Jesus Christ. Under the blessing of the Father, * and by the power of the Holy Spirit, * may we be responsible * and intelligent daughters of the Church. * May we labor in the spirit of renewal * to realize more perfectly the kingdom of God * here below * as the only true preparation * for our share in the kingdom of Heaven. * And may we, * in all we think or do or say, * be filled with the same love of God and neighbor * that overflows from your own Immaculate Heart. Amen.

MEDALS

The medal of the Sorrowful Mother may be received by the entire membership. The married use a medal with a bar marked: "Christian Mothers." The single use a medal with an untitled bar or with a bar marked: "Guild" or "Rosary Society" or "Altar Society."

RECEPTION CEREMONY FOR UNMARRIED WOMEN

Following the enrollment of the married women into the Confraternity of Christian Mothers, the unmarried

women are asked to come to the altar and stand or kneel. Each receives her medal. The following Act of Consecration to the Sorrowful Mother may then be recited.

Act of Consecration

O Virgin Mother of God, * we dedicate and consecrate ourselves to you * under the title of the Sorrowful Mother. * May this medal inspire us * to cooperate with God's graces to improve ourselves. * Teach us, * in imitation of you, * to be unselfish and untiring, * in our work for the Church. * In moments of discouragement be our inspiration. * May we ever draw closer to you and your Son, Jesus Christ * now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

RITUAL OF SOLEMN RECEPTION into the Confraternity of the Christian Mothers

Preparations

1. Distribute Handbooks for Christian Mothers. (*Conference Booklets.*)
2. Sorrowful Mother medals on a tray.
3. Holy Water.
4. Candles. *It is fitting that during the actual reception the women to be received hold lighted candles. Two may hold candles to represent the group.*
5. Names of the women to be received. *The officers should obtain the names so that they might be listed*

later on in the Register (not a Dues Book) reserved for their parish Confraternity of Christian Mothers.

The Director or some other delegated priest in surplice or alb and white stole asks the women to be received to come forward with their Handbook and stand or kneel. Facing the group the priest begins:

Priest: In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Priest and Women: Come, Holy Spirit, * fill the hearts of Your faithful, * and kindle in them the fire of Your love.

Priest: Send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be created.

Women: And You shall renew the face of the earth.

Priest: Be mindful of Your congregation.

Women: Which You have possessed from the beginning.

Priest: Lord, hear my prayer.

Women: And let my cry come unto You.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

Women: And with your spirit.

Let Us Pray

Priest and Women: Look down we beseech You, O Lord, * upon Your family gathered in the name of our Patroness the Sorrowful Mother Mary. * Our desire in joining the Confraternity of Christian Mothers * is to learn more about the dignity and responsibility we have

in marriage * as wives and mothers. * We are seeking help to sanctify our own life * and that of our husband and children. * Teach us to realize through our membership * how much the Church relies on us * to Christianize our family and community. Amen.

Blessing of the Medals

Priest: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Women: Who made heaven and earth.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

Women: And with your spirit.

Let Us Pray

Priest and Women: Almighty, everlasting God, * Who are not displeased that we should fashion images of saints, * and that, as often as we look upon them with our bodily eyes, * the eyes of our memory should contemplate their saintly actions for imitation, * deign, we beseech You, * to bless ✠ and sanctify ✠ these medals, * made in honor and memory of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, the Sorrowful Mother of Our Lord. * Grant that whosoever may prayerfully and humbly use them * for the honor and love of the most Blessed and Immaculate Virgin, * may by her merits and intercession * obtain grace for the present life * and eternal glory in the next. * Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The priest sprinkles the medals with holy water.

The Distribution of the Medals

The formula for giving the medal may be said in the plural once for all. In necessity one medal may be used for the reception of all the candidates.

In giving a medal to each woman, the priest might have her kiss the medal and utter a short prayer such as *“Mary, please help me to be a better mother.”* If a woman has not been blessed with a family she might care to say: *“Mary, please help me to be a better wife”* or *“Mary, please help me to become a mother.”*

Priest: Receive the medal of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a pledge of your service to her. From this day be mindful that you are a handmaid (handmaids) of Our Lady, the Sorrowful Mother, and that you should ever strive to serve her faithfully by a good and holy life.

The priest continues with the following or similar words:

Priest: Dearly beloved mothers in Christ: With joy and gratitude to God you are assembled for this solemn reception into the Confraternity of Christian Mothers. Please answer with a sincere and devout heart the following questions:

Priest: Do you consecrate yourselves and your families from the bottom of your hearts to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Sorrows?

Women: We do.

Priest: Will you honor and love her as your Mother, and instill the same affection into the hearts of your husband and children?

Women: We will.

Priest: Will you be truly Christian wives and mothers, and encourage your husband and children to be faithful members of the Catholic Church and followers of Jesus

Christ? Will you pray for them and make every sacrifice God may demand of you for the salvation of their souls?

Women: We will.

It is advisable to have all the members present join in the consecration to Mary together with the ladies being received.

Priest: Repeat then, with your hearts and lips the following consecration to Mary:

Women: Most holy Virgin, * conceived without sin, * Mother of Sorrows, * to show my love and veneration towards you, * I consecrate *and devote myself to you * as your perpetual servant. * I resolve henceforth to be * your true child * and to fulfill toward you * all the duties of a child: * reverence, love and obedience. * Take me, therefore, O my Mother, * under your shelter and care. * By your intercession and merits * aid and protect me in all my necessities, * that I may always know * and accomplish with all my heart * what is pleasing to you * and what you wish me to do. * Especially teach me * how to educate my children * according to your mind. * Let them * and all the children * of the other members of our Confraternity * be recommended to your sorrowful heart. * Be henceforth to them * a loving Mother * full of grace and tenderness. * Have pity, too, * on all my family. * Help us in every need; * save us from every evil of body and soul, * and obtain for all of us * a happy death. * Amen.

Priest: May the Most Blessed and Immaculate Virgin and Sorrowful Mother Mary receive you into the ranks of her handmaids, and I, by the authorization granted me, do hereby receive and admit and affiliate you to

the Confraternity of Christian Mothers, erected in this church, that through the united praise and invocation of the same most holy and sorrowful afflicted Mother of God and through her most pious intercession, you may experience her help throughout life and at the hour of death. Furthermore, I hereby grant you participation in all the graces and spiritual benefits of this Confraternity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The names of new members should be recorded in a register reserved for their parish Confraternity of Christian Mothers. From the names handed in at the reception, the officers or Father Director may make out the Certificate of Membership which may be given to the to the women at their next meeting.

The Canon Law of the Church requires accurate registration of the names of the members in a well-bound book for the validity of membership.

SUGGESTED FORM OF INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN MOTHERS

1. The Father Director reads the following form of introduction:

“In virtue of the powers conferred on me as Director of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers, canonically established in this Church, I hereby declare that the following officers, duly (appointed) elected, shall take office from this day and shall have the duties and powers usually given to such officers as specified in the statutes and bylaws of the Confraternity of Christian Mothers.”

2. The Director announces the names of the new officers and asks them the following questions:

Director: Since you are the leaders of this society, do you promise to study as much as possible about its origin, aims and spiritual purpose?

Officers: (in unison and loud) We promise.

Director: Do you promise to plan meetings under the supervision of your Father Director that will benefit the members spiritually, intellectually, and socially?

Officers: We promise.

Director: Do you promise not to allow anything except serious illness or necessary work to keep you from attending the regular Confraternity meetings and the special meetings for officers?

Officers: We promise.

Director: Will you strive earnestly through prayer and the reception of the Sacraments to further your own personal holiness and that of your family?

Officers: We will.

Director: Will you, to the best of your ability, endeavor to imitate the virtues of your special patroness, the Blessed Mother, and give Christ His rightful place in your home and community?

Officers: We will.

3. The retiring officers now turn the symbols of their office over to the new officers.

Director: May Christ reward the outgoing officers for all their work and guide the new officers in the responsibilities they now take upon themselves. Finally we ask all the members for their cooperation at all times.