

DEUS VULT

SACERDOS CUSTOS TRAINING GUIDE

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Verse 1.0

ORDO ACERBUS DEVOTIO

Compiled from the teachings and sermons of Hugo, Cardinal-Obscure of the Order, and translated from the Latin.



We are *Ordo Acerbus Devotio*, the Order of Bitter Piety, because we must serve in shadow and silence. Our works must go unseen.

We are the instruments of God's plan; that which must be protected and shielded from those who would undo His works. It is the duty of our Order to defend Christendom and the Church from all her foes – within and without. It is the duty of our Order to destroy those enemies whose existence cannot be countenanced. It is the duty of our Order to conceal ourselves from simple common folk, from greedy merchants and grasping nobles; even from fellow servants of God. Our work is solely for the initiated.

As initiates of the Order, you will go where needed, at the behest of your Masters. You will seek the enemies of God and bring them down. You will be the hammer of witches and the slayer of fiends. You will be God's own instrument. We will make you into a holy warrior and fill you with the righteous fury of a true servant of God.

You are mortal. You shall die, unknown and unmourned; your deeds will be forgotten.

O, but my brothers and sisters, your rewards in heaven shall be great indeed.

On the History of the Order

The true history of the Order will not be revealed until after your initiation. It is a secret only the Masters are privy to but you may know our brotherhood is an ancient one, far older than any of the Benedictine congregations. Our brothers walked the roads of the Holy Land ten centuries ago. I say this not from pride but humility, in the hope you too will realise the enormity of our sacred task and likewise be humbled before it. The serpent of pride is ever present, hoping to sting those initiates who mistake the power and authority granted them by the Order for their own grandeur.

Within these walls, we refer to our Order as the *Ordo Acerbus Devotio*. In the outside world, we may wear the habits of others as suits our needs, becoming Benedictines or Cistercians or village priests or mad-eyed prophets or brigands or whores and heretics if our duty commands. Of late, some call themselves Joachimites, after Joachim of Fiore who is friend to us. Others refer to us as the Order of St. Michel, after our home.

In truth, the Order has no name. Names are unnecessary. The only identity we bear is found in our blessed signet rings. Anyone who recognises the ring you bear will understand what its authority and grant you all aid and succour.

On the Nature of the Order

Ours is a secret and singular Order. We admit men and women equally and make little distinction between the two. Our initiates are granted exceptional leeway to accomplish their tasks as they see fit, by any means necessary. Our purpose is not to teach or to glorify God's name through prayer; it is to protect and shepherd the common folk from the powers of evil that would divert them from His holy plan.

Our members are held in a state of Extraordinary Grace. Whatsoever you do, so long as it is in the *direct* service of the Order, is a pure and sinless act. There is nothing that cannot be forgiven if your intent is utterly pure. You might lie, steal, cheat, murder until your hands run red with the blood of a hundred blessed martyrs, or fornicate with Beelzebub on the very altar of this church, and yet be free of sin – so long as you did all these things in the service of the Order.

This is not a license to sin. You will answer for any sins you commit of your own volition. Beware the temptation to claim you act in accordance with the Order, when in fact you follow your own mere desires. Extraordinary Grace is extended only to those deserving of it; among the worst blights on Christendom are those former brothers and sisters of ours who have fallen because they believed themselves incorruptible. Extraordinary Grace is a terrible burden, not a gift.

On the Duties of the Order

The sacred purpose of our Order is to shepherd Christendom along the path of the divine journey. Every soul we save is another step on that long road towards final enlightenment of all Mankind.

You must watch for signs of corruption and sin inspired by supernatural evils. Where you find such malignance, you must destroy it. Suffer not the witch to live, nor the demon to remain on this earthly plane. Where possible, you must learn all you can about your foe before putting them to the sword, so the Order may better fight such dangers in the future. Books of black magic and forbidden lore should be brought back to the abbey so those monks fortified against in such heresies may catalogue them.

Knowledge is dangerous. The Church is the only true light of wisdom in this world and must be the gatekeeper of all learning. Certain things are permissible for the common folk to know but others must be concealed. The use of magic, the true nature of certain creatures, the use of various arts and devices from ancient times or other cultures; all of these imperil the unwary soul. Better you burn down an entire village, sending the souls of everyone within to God's judgement, than let any perilous knowledge escape into the wider world. An entire nation may be damned by a whisper, if its soul are not fortified and protected against such blandishments. Better a whole town dies than a kingdom fall.

You must protect Christendom from enemies, within and without, but you must resist intercession where mundane sin overthrows the appointed order of society. Should a lord grind his peasants into the earth while neglecting his own responsibilities, should a corrupt monk sell indulgences and keep the proceeds, should madmen plot to overthrow their rightful lord – oftentimes, you must walk past without comment. The Church has other mechanisms, other men, to counter such follies.

You are a highly trained instrument, forged to defeat supernatural threats to God's clean Earth, and you are not to be blunted in mundane works.

On the Structure of the Order

The Cardinal-Obscure is the head of the Order and is subordinate only to the Supreme Pontiff himself. It is the Pope who appoints our leader who, though a member of the College of Cardinals, is utterly unknown to his peers.

Under the Cardinal-Obscure are the Claustal Priors, Obediantiary Priors and Preceptors. The Claustal Priors reside here, in the Mont St-Michel and each oversees a different aspect of our Order's duties.

- The Prior of Medicine is concerned with the healing of the sick, diagnosis of disease and preparation of poison.
- The Prior of Arms is responsible for the training in combat and use of weapons, as well as defence of the monastery.
- The Prior of the Archives maintains the library and archival vaults beneath the rock.

The Obediantiary Priors are in charge of the other monasteries of our Order across Christendom. The Preceptors command the scattered outposts and secret fortresses of the Order.

Together with certain respected individuals, these Priors and Preceptors are collectively referred to as the Masters and they advise the Cardinal-Obscure on what must be done. The Masters reside in the Mont St-Michel or their respective priories and preceptries, and are not committed to the field save for tasks of the gravest importance.



On the Teaching of Initiates

You are now *Sacerdos Custos*, a guardian priest, sometimes called a priest-warden, charged with the defence of mankind. You are the shield of civilisation, and have suffered a long road to attain your position.

The Church recruited for your natural gifts and talents, taking you from your mother's womb or as a young child, and making you a ward where you could be studied and assessed. Passing examination, you were then inducted as a novice among monks or nuns where your formal training began.

After many long years, you were finally brought to the Mont St. Michel as an initiate where the existence and purpose of the Order was made plain to you. Succeeding many of your peers, you completed your training and, fortified against the evils we taught you to fight, became *Sacerdos Custos*.

We have taught you to fight with weapons and without, to vanish in plain sight and to move like a shadow, how to live like a beggar and live like a king, and how to discern the truth though it be clouded in deceit. We have taught you the use of our secret arts, of poison and choking fogs and secret writings, of our mechanical tools and superior weapons. I tell you this, there is no better school in the entire world and there is no mortal foe you cannot defeat. You are the perfect instrument of God's plan.

You have been tested and will be tested again but, for now, you are worthy enough to continue in your service. From this point on, your life belongs to the Order as *Sacerdos Custos*. Fall, and all of Christendom falls with you.

On the Abbey of the Mont St. Michel

The Lord said unto his chief disciple, 'thou art Peter and upon this rock do I build my church.' The rock that was ordained for us by the Archangel Michael himself is this one. Our island is accessible from the mainland only by a single narrow road and that road floods at high tide; the water races across the flats swifter than horses can run. Here, on this sheltered island, we have built our abbey and our chief sanctum. Outsiders believe the Mont St-Michel merely a wealthy monastery following the Rule of St. Benedict.

They believe what we permit them to believe.

Brothers and sisters, even now you have seen but a tiny portion of the secrets this island holds. There are tunnels beneath your feet that worm their way into the living rock and run out under the sea-bed. There are hidden chambers and dungeons and sealed vaults that you have walked past every day of your training but have not noticed despite your perception. There are secrets long-buried that sleep, waiting for the day when the Order has need of them – and I tell you this truly, this is but one of the Order's fortresses.

On the Blessed Ring and the Order's Sanction

Each member of our Order bears a single token of our authority, in the form of a signet ring marked with the sigil of the crossed keys, the mark of the Supreme Pontiff. It is his direct authority that you carry and, when bearing the ring, your words will be as his own.

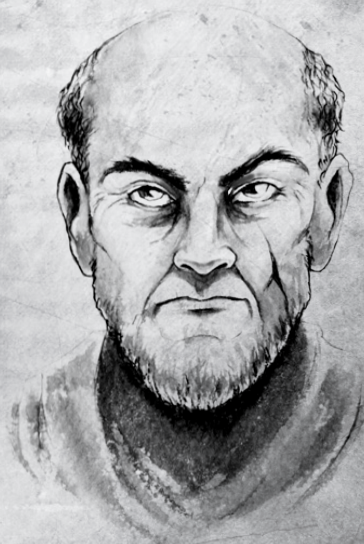
Those who recognise these rings are bound to offer you whatever aid they can. Any bishop or senior member of the clergy, any monk or learned scholar, any knight from the Templars or Hospitallers, will recognise the ring and the authority it signifies, though they remain ignorant of your true purpose. You may demand shelter or aid, monies or men, or whatever else you require.

As ever, beware the temptation to abuse this authority. Your fellow Christians are brothers in service to the Lord, not slaves to be whipped. Use the blessed ring only when necessary.

Verse 1.1

CHARACTER CREATION

In Deus Vult, you play a Sacerdos Custos, a Guardian Priest of the Order. You have spent many years in one of the Order's monasteries, learning their secret ways and swearing to faithfully follow their strictures. You are now an anointed priest of the Ordo Acerbus Devotio.



Most of those initiated into the Order spend all their lives training for this honour. The Order funds orphanages and schools across Europe – when a promising child is found, he or she is taken and placed in one of the Order’s nunneries or monasteries, where they are trained and honed for many years before eventually passing on to the Mont St-Michel for their final training and initiation as a guardian priest.

After you have created your Characteristics, Attributes and Skills as shown below, your character must take the Novice of the Order background and one of the Order Training Specialisations (page 10), before rolling on the Past Events Table (page 11). Finally, you will roll on the Community of Faith table (page 12).

Use the standard character creation rules from the *Legend Core Rulebook* for your guardian priest, with the following changes.

Characteristics and Attributes

Determine your character’s STR, DEX, CON, SIZ, INT, POW and CHA as normal, but re-roll any scores under 6; the Order only accepts exceptional candidates.

Calculate your character’s Attributes (such as Strike Rank, Damage Modifier, Improvement Roll Modifier and Movement) as normal.

Calculate your Common Skills and Advanced Skills as normal, apart from the changes mentioned in New and Changed Skills.

Seasoned Characters

Guardian priests are highly trained agents, the best warrior monks in all of Christendom. As such, they start as seasoned characters, as defined on page 26 of the *Legend Core Rulebook*, and summarised here. As usual, Games Masters may allow players to create even more experienced characters using these rules.

- Characters have 350 free skill points and can spend up to 50 points on one skill in character creation.
- Characters start with 3 Hero points.
- Characters may not start with Heroic Abilities.

Money and Equipment

The needs of your character are taken care of by the Order. A guardian priest owns nothing; instead, he may requisition gear from the Order as the need arises. See The Instruments of God on page 14.

Novice of the Order Background

You never knew your parents or family, or recall them but dimly. At a young age, you were taken to be trained by the Order and have never known life outside of the grey stone walls of monasteries.

Common Skill Bonuses

All Novices of the Order gain the following bonuses:

+10% to Culture (Own) Lore (Regional), Perception, Insight, Resilience and Persistence +20% to Athletics, Unarmed and Stealth

Combat Styles

Novices of the Order choose four Combat Styles from the following:

Bow, Crossbow, Dagger, Sword and Shield, 2H Sword, Mace and Shield, Quarterstaff, Sword, Sword and Dagger, Garotte

Advanced Skills

All Novices of the Order gain the following Advanced Skills:

Lore (Christian Theology) +10%, Language (Native) +50%, Language (Latin), Lore (Occult) +10%

In addition, Novices of the Order choose four Advanced Skills from the following:

Acrobatics, Courtesy, Craft (Alchemy), Craft (Poison), Culture (any), Engineering, Healing, Language (any), Mechanisms, Meditation, Survival or Track



Order Training Specialisations

All initiates of the Order are given intensive training to prepare themselves for the trials to come. The training given to each varies depending on their God-given gifts. The strong are taught to fight, the clever are put to studying secret arts, and so forth.

In game terms, the Order Training Specialisation you take is determined by your highest Characteristic. If you have two or more Characteristics with the same value (e.g. Strength 15, Intelligence 15), you may choose which specialisation to take.

Training	Highest Characteristic	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills
Custodian of Arms	STR	Athletics +10% Brawn +10%, Resilience +10%, any two Combat Styles +10%	—
Custodian of Secrets	DEX	Athletics +10%, Sleight +10%, Stealth +10%, any Ranged Combat Style +10%	Pick any One Acrobatics, Disguise, Mechanisms
Mortification of the Body	CON or SIZ	Athletics +10% Brawn +10%, Resilience +10%, any one Combat Style +10%	Pick any One Boating, Craft (any), Shiphandling, Survival, Track
Mortification of the Mind	INT	Athletics +10%, Perception +5%, Persistence +5%, any one Combat Style +10%	Pick any Two Commerce, Courtesy, Craft, Culture (other), Disguise, Engineering, Healing, Language (any), Lore (any), Mechanisms
Mortification of the Soul	POW	Athletics +5%, Perception +10%, Persistence +5%, any one Combat Style +10%	Pick any Two Art, Courtesy, Culture (Specific Culture), Healing, Language (any), Lore (any), Meditation, Oratory
Custodian of Words	CHA	Athletics +5%, Influence +5%, Insight +5%, Persistence +5%, any one Combat Style +10%	Pick any Two Art, Commerce, Courtesy, Culture (any), Disguise, Healing, Language (any), Lore (any), Mechanisms, Meditation, Oratory, Play Instrument, Seduction, Streetwise

A Note on the Occult

You are welcome to select the Lore (Occult) skill, either as part of your Novice or Specialisation training. This represents your knowledge of many of the dangers you will face. However, with knowledge comes great danger as you will also, in theory, have the skill with which to read grimoires, cast spells and make use of darker powers. The Lore (Occult) skill is, after all, *exactly* the same skill sorcerers, witches and cultists use to harness their own dark power.

This use of the Lore (Occult) skill leads to damnation. You have been warned...

Past Events

The world is a strange and terrifying place and the Order may not have been your first encounter with the supernatural. Roll on the appropriate Past Events table to determine what strange events, if any, lurk in your background.

PAST EVENTS TABLE

Roll d20	Event
1	Your family were all murdered by a heretical cult; as a mewling infant, you were plucked from the unholy altar by a member of the Order seconds before the cult sacrificed you to their dark gods.
2	You bear a strange birthmark. The Order's astrologers arrived at your parents' door on the night of your birth, like the Magi came to honour Our Lord in Bethlehem.
3	Plague or sickness took your family; you might have ended up a beggar or worse but the Order gave you a home.
4	You never knew your family. Your instructors in the Order refuse to speak of them and they have always looked at you oddly, as if watching for some dormant trait to assert itself.
5	You are the child of a member of the Order who succumbed to the sin of lust. You know your sire is still a member of the Order but he will never acknowledge he is your father. You are the embodiment of his shame.
6	Your parents were members of a cult. By rights, you should have burned with them when the Order destroyed the cult but some guardian priest took pity on you and carried you to the monastery.
7	Your parents were slain by a some supernatural evil – and that evil is still out there, somewhere. You have sworn to kill it or die trying.
8	Your family was wiped out by war. You have always wondered where you came from – you suspect you come of noble blood. Perhaps now you can uncover your true heritage.
9	When you first entered the Order's halls, there was a strange omen. Perhaps a statue fell from its niche and shattered, the skies wept blood, or a flight of black crows landed on the roof of the church and croaked a cryptic rhyme.
10	You ran away from home at a very young age, only to find a new home with the Order. No doubt your parents think you dead.
11	During your training, you accidentally killed another student during a practise bout. Your instructors absolved you of any wrong-doing but the face of your victim still haunts your dreams.
12	One of your fellow trainees took a dislike to you during your instruction. Gain him as a Rival.
13	During your training, you crept into one of the Order's underground vaults. You saw something there that so terrified you, you fled the place and never returned. What was it?
14	One of the Masters has taken a special interest in you and believes you destined for great and unfortunate things. Gain him as an Ally.

Roll d20	Event
15	Not all members of the Order have the luxury of completing their studies. You were taken from the Mont St. Michel before finishing your training, because there was a task you were especially suited for. What was it?
16	Once, after a particularly intense training session, you had a vision. You babbled in tongues for three days, while elder guardian priests recorded your every word. You do not remember a single thing you said but you were inspired by the Holy Spirit that day.
17	There was an accident with the Greek Fire during training and you were scarred by the flames. Where do you bear this mark?
18	Something in the Order's vaults calls to you. Perhaps it is a chained demon, a book of forbidden lore, or the unquiet spirit of some damned heretic. Whatever it is, it haunts your dreams and whispers to you in the night.
19	Some in the Order are driven by faith; you are driven by demons. You have a killer's blood-thirst – do you keep it in check through prayer and self-denial, or let it loose, safe in the protection of Extraordinary Grace?
20	You will die a martyr in the Order's service; that is what the old blind monk prophesied when he first touched your face. You have only a year or two at most left in this mortal realm; spend your time wisely.

The Community of Faith

Roll on the Community of Faith table to determine the Connections made during your training and career in the Order.

Add +10 to your roll if you are creating a Veteran character.

Add +20 to your roll if you are creating a Master character.

1D100	Contacts, Enemies and Rivals
01–25	None
26–30	1 Enemy
31–50	1 Contact
51–60	1 Ally
61–70	1 Contact and 1 Rival
71–80	2 Contacts, 1 Rival
81–95	2 Contacts*, 1 Rival, 1 Enemy and 1 Ally
96–100	2 Contacts*, 2 Allies*, 1 Enemy
101–110	3 Contacts*, 2 Allies*, 2 Enemies
111–120	4 Contacts*, 3 Allies*, 3 Enemies*
121–130	5 Contacts*, 3 Allies*, 4 Enemies*

* You may take a Master of the Order as one of your Contacts/Allies/Enemies.

Allies: Allies are older members of the Order, fellow guardian priests with whom you have bonded, close friends, or other people in whom you have complete trust. Your allies know at least something about the true nature of the Order, although you may conceal certain facts from them for their own good – as they may from you.

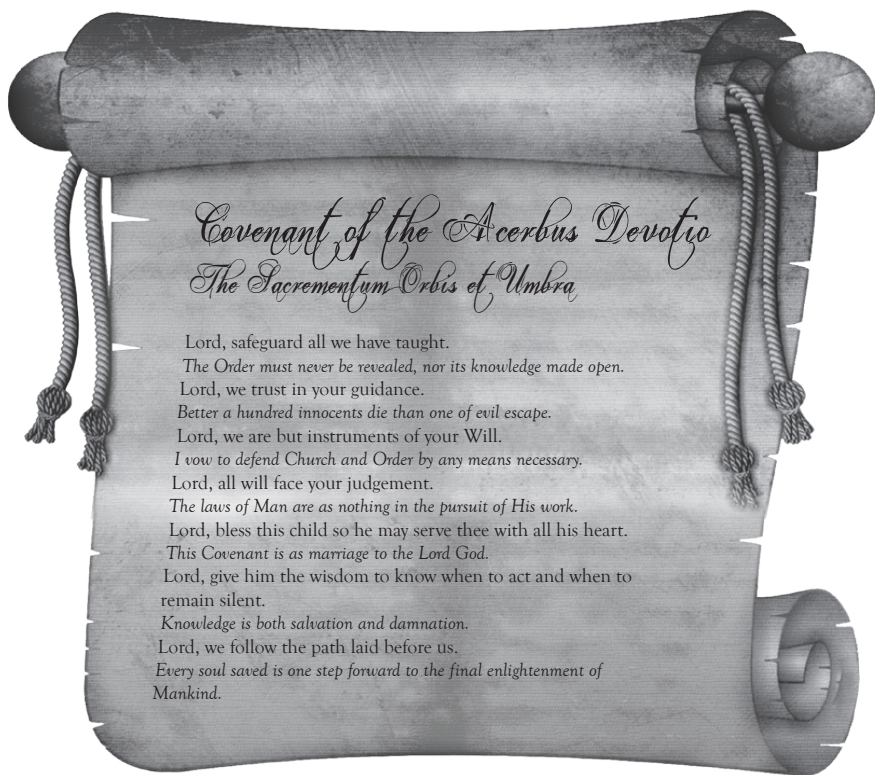
Contacts: Contacts are other members of the Order with whom you have good relations, friends in the outside world, or simply people you have helped in the past who now owe you a favour. Most Contacts know nothing about the Order, believing you to be a simple monk or nun. Their lives would be forfeit if they knew too much.

Rivals: Rivals are other members of the Order with whom you quarrelled, nobles or clergy who were offended by your interference in their affairs, inquisitors or witch-hunters you have crossed in the past, or some other person who opposes you but whom you are not permitted to kill.

Enemies: Enemies are old foes who have escaped you in the past. They might be witches, demons, monsters, corrupt nobles or bishops, or even former members of the Order fallen from grace.

Connections

The Connections rule may be used for your character; if a player works another player's character into his Past Event or Community of Faith, *both* characters gain a +10% bonus to any one skill.



Covenant of the Acerbus Devotio *The Sacramentum Orbis et Umbra*

Lord, safeguard all we have taught.
The Order must never be revealed, nor its knowledge made open.
Lord, we trust in your guidance.
Better a hundred innocents die than one of evil escape.
Lord, we are but instruments of your Will.
I vow to defend Church and Order by any means necessary.
Lord, all will face your judgement.
The laws of Man are as nothing in the pursuit of His work.
Lord, bless this child so he may serve thee with all his heart.
This Covenant is as marriage to the Lord God.
Lord, give him the wisdom to know when to act and when to remain silent.
Knowledge is both salvation and damnation.
Lord, we follow the path laid before us.
Every soul saved is one step forward to the final enlightenment of Mankind.

Verse 1.3

THE INSTRUMENTS OF GOD

*Listen, O my son, to the precepts of thy master, and incline the ear of thy heart,
and cheerfully receive and faithfully ex-ecute the admonitions of thy loving father,
that by the toil of obedience thou mayest return to him from whom by the sloth of
disobedience thou hast gone away.*

– From the Rule of St. Benedict



When the library of Alexandria burned, agents of the Order were there, spiriting away certain key texts and infamous scrolls. When Rome conquered Greece and when the barbarians conquered Rome, the Order was there, preserving the secrets of the past and taking forbidden knowledge into custody. Today, the libraries beneath Mont St-Michel are unequalled anywhere in the known world, save perhaps Constantinople. The Order applies these secrets to the creation of weapons and tools, which are then entrusted to the guardian monks.

The Order is divided into ranks. Players will have guardian priests, the middle rank, and this rank is itself divided into five degrees (players start at the first degree). A character's rank in the Order determines what equipment and resources he can request from the Order's armoury and coffers.

Advancing in Rank

To advance in rank, a character must complete missions for the Order, impress his superiors, win the support of influential monks and clergy, and serve for a minimum length of time. A guardian priest who fails to excel or who is unwilling or disobedient may never pass beyond the second degree; an ambitious and well-connected monk can race up through the ranks in only a few years.

Advancement within the Order is a matter for roleplaying but the Games Master should consider the following guidelines.

- **Minimum Service:** A character should serve for at least one full year at each guardian priest degree and Master position.
- **Completed Missions:** The character should have completed at least three investigations or other missions for the Order.
- **Support:** The character should have earned the support and admiration of a superior within the Order, or some influential external figure such as a bishop, cardinal or king.
- **Exemplary Service:** The character should have accomplished some truly wondrous deed, such as saving the life of a fellow guardian priest, donating POW, or recovering important relics.

RANKS OF THE ORDER

Rank	Legend Cult Equivalent	Asset Points
Ward	Level 0	0
Novice	Level 1	5
Initiate	Level 1	8
Guardian Priest, First Degree	Level 2	10
Guardian Priest, Second Degree	Level 2	15
Guardian Priest, Third Degree	Level 2	20
Guardian Priest, Fourth Degree	Level 2	25
Guardian Priest, Fifth Degree	Level 3	30
Master, Preceptor	Level 3	35
Master, Obediantary Prior	Level 3	40
Master, Claustral Prior	Level 4	45
Cardinal-Obscure	Level 4	50

Let the Abbot appoint brethren on whose life and character he can rely, over the property of the monastery in tools, clothing, and things generally, and let him assign to them, as he shall deem proper, all the articles which must be collected after use and stored away. Let the Abbot keep a list of these articles, so that, when the brethren in turn succeed each other in these trusts, he may know what he giveth and what he receiveth back. If anyone, however, handleth the goods of the monastery slovenly or carelessly let him be reprimanded and if he doth not amend let him come under the discipline of the Rule.

– From the Rule of St. Benedict

Asset Points

Each rank gives a character a number of Asset Points. These points represent what equipment and tools the character is permitted to take with him on his mission. Characters may find and use other items during the course of their investigations but are not permitted to retain any personal possessions from mission-to-mission. A character who finds a particularly fine broadsword on the corpse of a slain cultist may take the sword and use it but, afterwards, he must give the broadsword over to the nearest priory or preceptry. If the player is set on keeping it, the Games Master should assign the sword a cost in Asset Points for the next mission – the sword is the property of the Order, not the character who found it.

Characters may combine Asset Points if they wish.

Bonus Asset Points

Characters may be given Bonus Asset Points under certain circumstances.

- If a mission is especially dangerous, the Order will grant additional aid and resources.
- If a character performs in an exemplary fashion on one mission, he may be granted added help in the next.
- If the characters agree to perform some additional task, they may be given Asset Points in recompense.

Replenishing Assets

Characters may change their existing Assets, or replace spent Assets between missions, by visiting the Mont St. Michel, a priory or a preceptry.

Basic Equipment

All guardian priests receive the following equipment for free at the start of any mission.

- A suit of hard leather armour, covering all locations except the head (AP1)
- A set of black robes
- A black cloak
- A belt with a dagger, dirk, stylus and wax tablet
- A Blessed Ring

Other equipment must be purchased with Asset Points.

Common Close Combat Weapons

Characters receive a dagger and a dirk for free. Longswords, maces, quarterstaves and crossbows cost one Asset Point each; other weapons cost three Asset Points – the Order has plenty of common weapons but there is not much call for a military flail or a lance in occult investigations.

Rare Close Combat Weapons

These weapons are secrets of the Order and must be kept secret from outsiders. Guardian priests that lose one of these weapons will be chastised by their superiors and must serve penance.

Averrunci Blade: These ancient daggers date back to the Roman Empire. They are ugly black things, used originally for sacrificing adherents of foreign cults. A character holding an Averrunci blade gains a +10% bonus to Persistence, Resilience or Evade checks made to resist hostile spells. The blade can deal damage to spirits and immaterial foes. It counts as a dagger for the purposes of combat styles.

Bolt Sword: The bolt sword is a finely made scimitar with two concealed spring-loaded crossbow bolts. The two projectiles are loaded into the sword by sliding them into the firing chambers, and then the spring is wound tightly by cranking a wheel built into the crossguard. The bolts lack the penetrating power of a full-size crossbow but can be very useful in a fight. The bolt sword can be used as a ranged weapon, or the warrior can discharge one or both bolts while stabbing a foe at close range.

Crusader Blade: A crusader blade consists of a pair of tooth-edged metal disks mounted on two short poles. When the poles are squeezed together, the motion compresses a spring-powered clockwork device between the disks. Crank the device enough and release the safety catch, and the disks spin at high speed for up to a minute. In effect, it is a small hand-powered chainsaw.

Before a crusader blade can be used, it must be charged. This takes one minute of squeezing the handles; a character can make other actions while doing this, so long as he dedicates one hand to preparing his blade. A blade can be charged in advance of a fight and can store its charge indefinitely. A charge lasts for 12 rounds of combat.

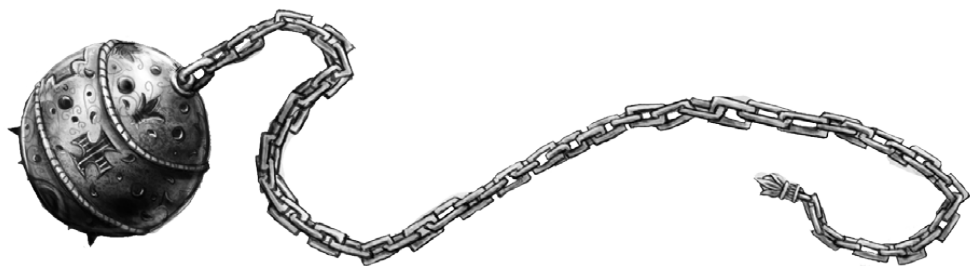
The crusader blade inflicts an extra 1d6 damage against foes not wearing metal armour.

Combat Thurible: The combat thurible is a weighted incense burner on a heavy chain. It can be swung like a ball and chain, trailing a cloud of strong-smelling incense in its wake as it goes.

The combat thurible can be loaded with any of the following alchemical substances: dust of revelation, choking dust, smoke powder or burning incense. Anyone in combat with the wielder of the combat thurible also suffers the effects of the alchemical compound. In the case of smoke powder, the thurible wielder is equally impeded by the smoke; for the other compounds, the thurible wielder is only engulfed by his incense cloud if he fumbles an attack.

The alchemical cloud lasts for six rounds (or 36 rounds, in the case of smoke powder).





Thunderbolt Gauntlet: This is a heavy metal gauntlet, with several jars of alchemical compounds mounted on the back. When activated, the gauntlet crackles with electricity, as the jars combine to form a crude but potent battery. The gauntlet can be used in three ways.

- If wielded with a metal melee weapon, the gauntlet adds an extra 1d4 damage to each successful attack. If the defender is wearing metal armour or using a metal weapon to parry, this extra damage cannot be parried.
- If wielded on its own, the gauntlet may be used to make direct attacks. The gauntlet's damage ignores metal armour.
- Finally, the gauntlet can be used to produce a single ranged attack. This thunderbolt exhausts the gauntlet's battery completely.

Melee Weapon Improvements

The Order can also apply improvements to weapons. These improvements apply to only a single weapon or piece of equipment carried by the character.

Concealed Blade: One of the character's possessions or items of clothing contains a concealed spring-mounted blade. The character gains a +50% bonus to his attack roll for the first time he uses this blade in a combat, reflecting the advantage of surprise.

Silvered: The weapon is made or coated in silver. Certain creatures can only be injured by silvered weapons.

Consecrated: The weapon is blessed, making it holy. Certain creatures can only be injured by consecrated weapons.

Damascene (Edged Weapon Only): The weapon is made of the fabled Damascene Steel, a metal harder and sharper than any found in Christendom. It is said that Damascene blades can cut through stone without losing their edge, or slice a silk handkerchief. A Damascene weapon increases all its damage dice by one step, so a blade that normally does 1d6 damage now does 1d8, a blade that deals 1d10 damage now inflicts 1d12, and so forth. Furthermore, the weapon's AP and HP are both increased by +4.

Ranged Weapons

The Order's light and heavy crossbows are exceedingly well made but relatively conventional in design and material. The hand crossbow, however, is a wonder of the maker's craft, combining exceptional penetration with a collapsible frame allowing it to be easily concealed.

CLOSE COMBAT WEAPONS

	Damage Dice	STR/ DEX	Size	Reach	Combat Manoeuvres	ENC	AP/ HP	Asset Points
Common								
Dagger	1D4+1	-/-	S	S	Bleed, Impale	—	6/8	0
Dirk	1D3+2	-/-	S	S	Bleed, Impale	—	6/6	0
Garrotte	1D2	-/9	S	T	—	—	1/2	1
Heater Shield	1D4	9/-	L	S		2	6/12	1
Longsword	1D8 1D10	13/9 9/9	M L	L L	Bleed, Impale, Sunder (2H only)	2	6/12	1
Mace	1D8	7/7	M	S	Stun Location	1	6/6	1
Quarterstaff	1D8	7/7	M	L	Stun Location	2	4/8	1
Warsword	1D8	9/7	M	M	Bleed, Impale	2	6/10	1
Rare								
Averrunci Blade	1D4+1	-/-	S	S	Bleed, Impale	—	10/8	4
Bolt Sword*	1D8	13/9	M	L	Bleed, Impale, Point-Blank Bolt**	2	6/10	2
Combat Thurible	1D6+1	9/11	M	M	Entangle, Stun Location	2	6/8	3
Concealed Blade	1D4	-/-	S	S	Bleed, Impale	—	5/4	1
Crusader Blade	1D6+1	9/9	M	M	Bleed	2	6/8	3
Thunderbolt Gauntlet*	+1D4 2D4	By weapon -/-	S	T	+Stun Location Stun Location	4	4/8	4
Bladed Light Crossbow*	1D4	7/9	S	S	Impale, Bleed	1	6/5	2
Bladed Heavy Crossbow*	1D6	9/9	M	S	Impale, Bleed	2	6/8	3
Bladed Hand Crossbow*	1D3	5/9	S	S	Impale, Bleed	—	4/3	2

*: Also, see the ranged weapon table.

: **Point-Blank Bolt: This Offensive Combat Manoeuvre discharges a bolt from the bolt sword into the victim at close range. It inflicts an extra 1D6 damage to the same location as was hit in the attack. This manoeuvre is stackable once.

Ranged Weapon Improvements

These improvements can only be applied to crossbows.

Scope: The crossbow is fitted with a small spyglass, making it easier to aim at long distances. A scope has two benefits.

- The bonus from Aiming is doubled to *twice* the character's Critical Range in that skill.
- When firing at long range, the character's skill is reduced by a quarter instead of being halved.

Bladed: The crossbow is fitted with sharp blades and its frame is reinforced, making it usable as a basic melee weapon.

Automatic: The crossbow has a clockwork loading mechanism, automatically resetting itself after each shot. Such mechanisms only work for three rounds, after which time the crossbow must be reloaded normally until the mechanism is rewound. Rewinding an automatic loader takes one minute. While the automatic loader is running, the load time for the crossbow is reduced to zero.

Shattering (Heavy Crossbow Only): This crossbow is specially reinforced so it can be cranked to a much higher tension than a normal bow. The shot fired under this higher tension inflicts 1d12 damage instead of 1d10. This increased damage only applies to the first shot fired with the crossbow in any encounter. Resetting the crossbow takes a full minute.

RANGED WEAPONS

Weapon	Damage	Damage Modifier	Range	Load	STR/DEX	SIZ	Combat Manoeuvres	ENC	AP/HP	Asset Points
Bolt Sword	1D6	N	50m	5	5/9	M	Impale, Point-Blank Shot	2	6/10	2
Heavy crossbow	1D10	N	150m	3	7/9	H	Impale, Sunder	2	4/8	2
Light crossbow	1D8	N	100m	2	5/9	L	Impale	1	4/5	1
Hand crossbow	1D6	N	50m	1	5/9	S	Impale	—	2/3	1
Thun- derbolt Gaunt- let*	3d6	N	25m	—	—/—	M	Stun Location	4	4/8	4

*: See also the Close Combat table.

Ammunition

Special ammunition of this sort may be obtained for bows or slings, or even discs and other thrown weapons. Each unit of ammunition contains 10 shots.

Silvered: The weapon is made or coated in silver. Certain creatures can only be injured by silvered weapons.

Consecrated: The weapon is blessed, making it holy. Certain creatures can only be injured by consecrated weapons.

Incendiary: The weapon's head contains a small charge of Greek Fire; when it hits, it bursts into flame, inflicting an extra 1d4 fire damage and setting anything flammable alight.

Corded: The bolt is attached to the crossbow by an exceedingly thin and strong line of corded silk. The bolt can therefore be used to Entangle foes (as per the Combat Manoeuvre), or set tripwires or other traps.

Explosive: The bolt contains a small charge of Blasting Powder; when it hits, it deals an extra 1d4 damage and has the Stun Location effect. Explosive bolts deal normal damage to inanimate objects.

Armour

While members of the Order are trained in the use of armour, few wear anything heavier than leather. Armour is heavy and slow, and offers no protection against many supernatural threats. While it is not unheard of for a guardian priest to don plate mail and carry a sword like a Templar, it is certainly not the Order's recommended tactic.

Most of the armour sets described here are those found in any preceptry or priory. Plate mail is only available in a large priory or the Mont St. Michel.

Armour Improvements

Silent (Leather Armour Only): The armour is blackened with dyes and soot, and is specially muffled and treated to be as quiet as possible. The character gains a +10% bonus to all Stealth rolls.

Light: The armour is made to be light and flexible. Reduce the Armour Penalty by half for the purposes of determining the armour's effects on movement.

Blessed: The armour is blessed, making it a powerful shield against the supernatural. The wearer of the armour has a +10% bonus to Resilience, Evade and Persistence tests made against hostile magic.

ARMOUR TABLE

Armour	AP	Locations Protected	ENC	Armour Penalty	Asset Points
Hard Leather Byrnie and Cap	2	Chest, Head	1	-1	1
Hard Leather Vambraces and Greaves	2	Arms, Legs	1	-2	1
Chain Coat with hood	5	All except Legs	5	-5	5
Chain Leggings	5	Legs	2	-2	3
Full Chainmail	5	All	7	-7	7
Plate Helmet	6	Head	1	-2	2
Full Plate	6	All	12	-9	12

Trappings

Trappings are mundane items and tools that may be of use on a mission.

Traveller's Garb: A loose tunic, leggings, a cloak and a pair of roadworn boots; the sort of garb that might be worn by a pilgrim, tinker or other traveller on the road.

Common Disguise: A set of clothes and other trappings to disguise the wearer as a member of a specific but commonly encountered profession or background, such as a miner, smith, harlot, washerwoman, merchant, Jew, Norman and so on.

Unusual Disguise: A set of clothes and other trappings to disguise the character as a member of a rare profession or inhabitant of a distant land, such as a bishop, sorcerer, Turkish prince or limbless beggar.

Fine Clothing: A set of clothing suitable for a rich merchant or minor noble.

Exceedingly Fine Clothing: A set of clothing suitable for a princess or a king.

Average Horse: It's a horse.

Fine Horse: A trained warhorse or very swift riding horse.

Letter of Recognisance: This is a letter signed by either the Bishop of Avranche or a noble friendly to the Order, which purports to describe the identity and mission of the bearer. Should a monk need to masquerade as a messenger from the bishop, or a knight in the service of a duke, he may request a suitable letter of recognisance.

Other Mundane: The Order has stores of various sorts of goods and in many cities they can purchase needed items from local merchants. A character can buy any of the mundane goods listed in the *Legend Core Rulebook* or *Arms of Legend*, such as crowbars, fishing kits, musical instruments, and so on. Every 100 SP or part of the value of any amount of mundane goods costs one Asset Points.

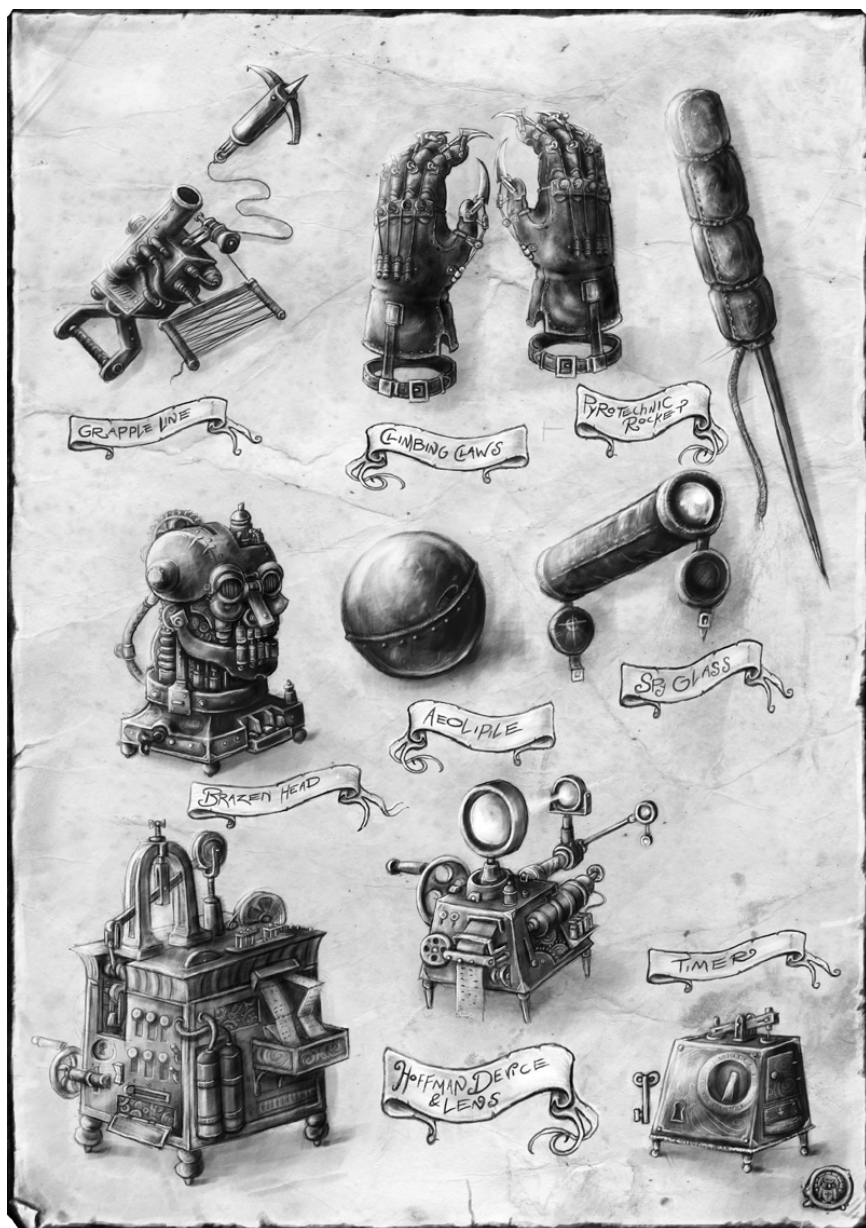
Treasure

Guardian priests may draw money from the Order's coffers for day-to-day needs. Each Asset Point allocated to treasure gives the character 50 Silver Pieces.

Wondrous Devices

The Order's library preserves texts believed lost to the rest of the world. Many works by famous Greek scholars were taken by the Order when Alexandria burned; other scrolls were salvaged from the sack of Rome. In the centuries since, the Order has continued to experiment in secret, combining cunning craftsmanship with sorcery. These devices are the product of this research. Guardian priests may use these devices on their missions but must not let them fall into the hands of outsiders.

Aeolipile: The classic aeolipile is a hollow brazen sphere, small enough to fit into a man's hand, containing a measure of water. When the water is heated, the aeolipile spins under the pressure of the escaping steam. The Order's aeolipiles do not need an external heat source, as there is a small amount of an alchemical substance that burns vigorously on contact with water. The user slides a lever on the aeolipile and throws it towards some guards. As the alchemical substance heats the water, the aeolipile spins and rolls around, shrieking like a cat in heat or a devil out of Hell.



The primary use of the aeolipile is as a distraction. An active aeolipile makes a tremendous racket, which can draw guards away from a hidden guardian priest. It gives a -40% penalty to Perception tests in the first round of activation, dropping by 10% each round until it reaches zero. Once all the water has been boiled away, the remaining amount of the alchemical substance causes the aeolipile to shatter into hundreds of pieces, making recovery of an activated device impossible.

Climbing Claws: These light-weight claws mimic those of a cat. They are worn on the hands and feet, allowing a guardian priest to climb sheer surfaces with ease. Climbing claws give a +20% bonus to any Athletics tests involving climbing. They may also be used in unarmed combat; fighting in climbing claws incurs a -20% penalty to the fighter's Unarmed Combat rolls but increases his damage bonus by +1d3 and allows him to use the Bleed manoeuvre.

Grapple Line: The grapple line is a grappling hook attached to a small pneumatic engine. Pressing a control stud on the engine causes the grapple line to shoot out with tremendous force. The range of the device is 20 metres – as long as the attached line. Aiming the grapple hook correctly under pressure requires a Mechanisms test.

The launching mechanism can be reset but takes an hour's work. A character can fire the grapple line as a weapon; it works just like a light crossbow.

Hoffman Device: The Hoffman device is a recent creation by a brilliant German monk of the Order. Hoffman managed to recreate the mechanical computers described by Archimedes and combined the intricate clockwork with divining tools and lodestone rods.

The Order has long known that sorcery leaves invisible stains on the material world. A powerful occult working can alter ley lines and telluric currents; the summoning of a demon causes compasses to spin and lodestones to lose their vitality. It is possible for a skilled student of both the black arts and geometry to plot these deviations and distortions but few in the Order possess sufficient skill to do so.

The Hoffman Device automates this task. It still requires both clever mind and steady hand to read and interpret the device, but it is much quicker and easier to use than theodolite, compass and blood-dipped quill (it is also less hazardous to the soul).

To read a Hoffman Device, a successful Lore (Occult) roll is required. The Games Master should make this roll secretly. On a successful roll, the character determines the general direction of the nearest major magical activity, as well as a rough idea of its nature. On a critical, he can even use the Hoffman Device as a compass that points to a location, person or item closely connected to the magic. On a failed roll, he learns nothing useful other than the presence or absence of magic. On a fumble, he misinterprets the device's readings entirely and gains false information. Reading the device takes thirty minutes.

The Hoffman Device can be used to augment Track tests to follow supernatural beings.

Pyrotechnic Rocket: The secret of this device comes from the distant east, where rockets of this sort are a delight to Emperors. The rocket is a wrapped faggot of wood and paper, made to look like a traveller's bundle. There is a stake at one end, so the rocket can be planted in the ground. To use the rocket, simply light the fuse and stand well back. It will catch fire and rush into the sky like a dragon, soaring for several seconds before exploding in a cataclysm of light and sound, as though the Last Trump was sounding in heaven. There are many uses to this device – a signal flare, a wonder to overawe enemies, a means of setting fire to a distant roof or small forest, or a way to permanently dispose of an unwanted corpse by scattering it over a wide area.

The pyrotechnic rocket is basically a large firework. It can be used as an exceedingly clumsy weapon – use the Mechanisms skill but at a -60% penalty to hit. A character who is next to the rocket when it explodes takes 2d6 damage to one location and 1d6 damage to all other locations.

Spyglass: A true wonder, the spyglass is a short leather tube containing two perfectly ground lenses of Venetian glass. Held to the eye, it magnifies distant objects.

Timer: This little brass box is a mechanical device which works like a water-clock. Wind the control dial to the desired time delay – from six seconds to 60 minutes – and the timer will silently count down until the specified period has elapsed. When the timer runs out, it either creates a spark of flame – enough to light a fuse – or coughs out a cloud of whatever alchemical compound it was loaded with, such as dust of revelation, choking dust, smoke powder or burning incense.

Hoffman Lens: Another creation of the genius Hoffman, the lens is a variation on the mechanisms of the Hoffman Device. Wearing the lens – which, we are assured by the Masters, is not a sinful deed – allows the monk to perceive the invisible flows of arcane energy. The lens does not have the same range as the device but is easier to use.

A character wearing a Hoffman Lens gains the benefit of the Mystic Vision spell (see the *Legend Core Rulebook*, page 201).

Brazen Head: A Brazen Head is a complicated apparatus of brass cogs, bellows, tubes and wheels in the semblance of a human head. The Head contains a spirit which holds great knowledge of various topics, usually the occult. The guardian priest may consult with the Brazen Head as needed but be warned; while the spirit is compelled to be truthful, it may try to mislead or deceive out of malice.

A Brazen Head has 250 points of skills, which must be allocated among the various Lores.

Alchemical Compounds

The Order's knowledge of alchemy and herb-craft is unequalled in Europe. The preparations described here may be used without any special training for the most part, as they come in little clay jars or leather pouches. Some of the more complex drugs need the Lore (alchemy) skill to apply correctly, especially if the character intends to modify the effect of the concoction.

Some of the compounds count as poisons, using the standard poison rules found in the *Legend Core Rulebook*. A character can try to modify the Potency of the poison by making a Lore (alchemy) test. A successful roll means that the character can increase or decrease the Potency by up to 25; on a critical, by up to 50. A failed roll has the opposite of the desired effect.

Smoke Powder: A simple concoction, smoke powder is a greasy grey substance that emits a pungent cloud of thick smoke when set alight. A pouch of smoke powder contains enough to create a thick cloud of smoke some 60 feet across, or six smoke-bomb-sized clouds. Smoke gives a +40% bonus to Stealth tests made within the cloud and gives a -40% penalty to ranged attacks.

Smoke Bomb: A smoke bomb is a little clay egg containing a pinch of smoke powder and a few grains of blasting powder. When thrown to the ground, it releases a small cloud of smoke, large enough to hide in or cover an escape. Smoke bombs are easier to use than smoke powder, as they contain their own source of ignition. Each smoke bomb can only be used once.

Flaredust: This is a small vial of dust that glows on contact with the air. It can be used in several ways. Throwing the vial to the ground causes a flash and a bang that can blind the unwary (Resilience roll to avoid) or illuminate an area. A pinch of flaredust can be used as a light source, lighting a place without heat. Adding flaredust to a little water creates a sticky substance that glows dimly in the dark and lasts for several hours.

Drunkard's Poison: This herbal concoction greatly increases the effects of alcohol. Adding a pinch of the poison to a single glass of wine ensures anyone who drinks the wine will feel as though he finished a whole cask on his own. It is a useful way to put guards to sleep or to make a suspicious informant more liberal with his words.

Application: Ingestion

Onset time: 2D6 Minutes

Duration: 2D6 hours

Resistance Time: One Resistance roll

Potency: 50

Resistance: Resilience

Conditions: The victim becomes extremely intoxicated. During the early stages, he becomes friendly and talkative; later, he will likely fall asleep, become belligerent, vomit prodigiously, or all three. After waking again, the victim has a hangover so vile he may consider himself a candidate for martyrdom.

Antidote/Cure: None, save rest

Sleeping Draught: This tasteless milky liquid can be added to any food or drink and it puts those who consume it into a blissful slumber. A smaller dose of the liquid dulls pain and softens the senses. The draught may also be poured onto a rag and used to smother guards.

Application: Ingestion or Inhalation

Onset time: 1D8 minutes (Inhalation - 1d4 rounds)

Duration: 2D6 hours

Resistance Time: Hourly. The first Resistance roll must be made at the end of the Onset Time, then hourly thereafter. Success indicates the victim has woken up but remains groggy for the remainder of the Duration.

Potency: 75

Resistance: Resilience

Conditions: Unconscious. If the victim fails the Resistance roll he falls into a deep sleep remaining unconscious until he succeeds in resisting the draught, or the Duration expires. The victim awakes feeling groggy and lethargic, gaining a level of fatigue in addition to any already suffered.

Antidote/Cure: The sap of the foxglove plant can protect against the effects of a sleeping draught if taken in advance of the poisoning. The slumbering victim may also be awoken by a sharp blow or loud noise.

Healing Draught: This sovereign remedy cures both fatigue and injury. A character who drinks a healing draft regains 1d3 Hit Points to his most damaged location. He also recovers two levels of Fatigue.

Vitriol: This is a glass jar of highly potent vitriol. Vitriol is corrosive to anything it touches and the Order's preparation can melt through small amounts of wood, bone, metal or even stone. A lock could be dissolved from the inside, a rope treated to break at the right moment, or a spy-hole bored in a floor by just spilling a little acid in the right place.

It can be thrown as a grenade-like weapon, splashing the target for 2d6 points of damage. If the target is wearing armour, vitriol reduces the protection of the armour in the location hit by 1d3 before damage is applied. Vitriol is ineffective against natural armour.

Blade Venom: This compound is made from the poison of the dread amphisbaena. When applied to a weapon, it makes any blow from the blade agonisingly painful.

Application: Injection

Onset time: 1D3 Combat Rounds

Duration: 2D6 minutes

Resistance Time: One Resistance roll

Potency: 55

Resistance: Resilience

Conditions: Agony. If the victim fails his Resistance roll the poisoned location is incapacitated with pain. The effect continues until the Duration is completed.

Antidote/Cure: None

Burning Incense: This pungent resin irritates the eyes and nose. Those of the Order are partially immune to the incense's effect, as part of a novice's training involves long hours of meditation within incense-filled chambers. A stick of burning incense can be thrown into a room, to smoke out foes, or dropped in the middle of a fight to give the advantage to its user.

Those within the area of effect of burning incense suffer a -20% penalty to all Perception rolls and attack rolls. Members of the Order suffer only a -10% penalty. A stick of burning incense lasts for 12 rounds. It takes one round to light the stick.

Greek Fire: This fabled weapon was stolen from the alchemists of Constantinople. Greek fire is a jellied substance that burns on contact with the air. Not even water can put out the lurid purple-green flames of Greek fire; the only way to stop it burning is to smother it.

A character struck by Greek Fire suffers 1d4 damage each round to any location covered in the substance. The fire keeps burning for two minutes (20 rounds) or until the victim gets rid of the fire. A character covered in Greek fire can either drop to the ground and roll, or scrape it off with his hands.

Dropping to the ground and rolling has a 1-in-6 chance of putting out all the flames in the first round, a 2-in-6 chance in the second round, and so on.

Scraping off the fire with your hands allows a character to remove the fire from one Hit Location each round. The downside is that the character's arm is now covered in fire and will take damage. If the only location afflicted is the arm, the character can scrape off the fire with a tool of some kind. The Games Master may call for Persistence tests for characters that stalwartly stand around scraping flaming petroleum off as though it was nothing but mud.

Wolfsbane: This poison is a brew of belladonna and wolfsbane and is extremely damaging to werewolves. Indeed, the poison causes them such pain they may be forced to transform even in the middle of the day. It affects them in both human and wolf form equally. A dilute dose of wolfsbane is not lethal but still causes discomfort and can be used as a test for lycanthropy.

It is nearly harmless to ordinary mortals, although a few unfortunate souls have a strong allergy to the poison and react much as a werewolf would.

Wolfsbane can also cure lycanthropy, if administered before the first change. The poison drives out the wolf curse.

Application: Injection

Onset time: 1D3 Combat Rounds

Duration: 3D6 Combat Rounds

Resistance Time: One Resistance roll

Potency: 90

Resistance: Resilience

Conditions: Bleeding. The werewolf suffers one damage to the afflicted location each round for the duration of the poison. If the location is reduced to maimed (it has lost twice its starting Hit Points), the poison moves to the chest or abdomen and begins to cause damage there instead.

Antidote/Cure: None known, although it is rumoured that if the werewolf eats the heart of a Christian while under the effects of the poison, it will cure the beast of all damage sustained from wolvesbane.

Maddening Draught: Those who drink this poison are bedevilled by visions and frightful nightmares. They may run raving through the streets, convinced that all the hosts of Hell are upon them, or curl into a ball and shiver like a terrified child, or laugh uproariously at some imagined jester. The draught does not affect their health or other capacities; it only warps their perceptions of the world. There is no way to predict how the draught will affect those who drink the wine of madness.

Once the visions pass, most victims believe they fell victim to a temporary fever of the brain and dismiss all strange events they recently witnessed as part of the hallucinations, making the maddening draught a useful tool for removing witnesses without killing them.

Application: Ingestion

Onset time: 1D3 Minutes

Duration: 1D6 Hours

Resistance Time: One Persistence roll

Potency: 60

Resistance: Persistence

Conditions: Mania. The victim hallucinates wildly. This may or may not affect his reactions – a victim who thinks the characters are all monsters come to eat his flesh can fight back normally, despite his delusions.

Antidote/Cure: A Healing test can be used to bleed the victim, restoring the balance of his humours. This causes 1d3 damage to any one location and requires the victim sit quietly and submit to the surgeon's knife – an unlikely choice for most raving victims of this poison!

Blasting Powder: One of the Order's most closely guarded secrets, blasting powder would surely bring utter chaos and woe to the world if its method of making were to become known. Blasting powder is a gritty dust that explodes violently when lit or struck vigorously.

Blasting powder is issued in a small cask, together with an oil-dipped fuse. This explosive charge is enough to blast a hole in a wall or bring down a small tower if placed correctly. It can also be set as a most efficacious trap.

A charge of blasting powder deals 3d6 damage to all Hit Locations of anyone within one metre of it, 2d6 damage to three Hit Locations of anyone within two metres of the blast and 1d6 damage to one Hit Location of a character within three metres of the explosion.

Setting blasting powder to demolish a structure requires an Engineering test.

Undetectable Poison (3): This clear liquid is almost tasteless and odourless, making it ideal for assassinations (some people with exceptionally sensitive palates claim it tastes of almonds). The liquid can be added to food, or poured into a victim's eye or ear.

Application: Ingestion

Onset time: 1D6 x 5 Minutes

Duration: Permanent

Resistance Time: One Resilience roll

Potency: 50

Resistance: Resilience

Conditions: Death

Antidote/Cure: Taking a purgative before the Onset time expires reduces the damage to 2d4 points to the abdomen.

Panacea: The panacea potion is derived from a formula taught to us by Polybus, who learned at the feet of Hippocrates himself. The panacea is a sovereign cure for many ills, strengthening the body's natural resistance to all manner of poisons and diseases. To be fully effective, it should be taken *before* illness strikes.

A panacea potion gives a +50% bonus to Resilience rolls against poison for one hour. If the character drinks the potion *after* consuming poison, the Resilience bonus is only +25%.

Lethal Venom: This blade venom is among the most deadly concoctions of the Order's alchemists. A single scratch from an envenomed blade is surely a mortal wound. The poison is prepared in small metal jars, capped with a wax seal. To use it, pierce the waxen seal with a thin blade but be wary – inhaling the poison's fumes is almost as deadly as suffering its bite.

Applying lethal venom correctly requires a successful Lore (alchemy) test. If the character fails, he spoils the venom; if he fumbles the roll, he cuts himself and suffers the effect of the venom.

Application: Injection

Onset time: 1D3 Rounds

Duration: Instantaneous

Resistance Time: One Resilience roll

Potency: 80

Resistance: Resilience

Conditions: 6d4 damage to the chest

Antidote/Cure: None

Dust of Revelation: The dust of revelation is a tincture of silver, ground glass, iron filings and other, rarer substances. When thrown into the air, it makes invisible creatures visible for a few seconds. The amount of dust used depends on how large an area the user wants to illuminate; a pinch is enough to cover a small room but the user might have to dump the whole pouch onto the breeze if he does not know roughly where his unseen foe lurks.

Choking Dust: Choking dust is a virulent poison. Anyone who inhales the particles begins to choke. Repeated exposure to the dust can cause permanent scarring of the lungs.

A single pouch of choking dust is enough to fill a large room with the poison. It can be used in a more discriminate fashion, hurling pinches of dust into the face of a foe; if used in this fashion, the pouch contains five handfuls of dust and the attacker uses the Sleight skill to attack.

Application: Inhalation
Onset time: Instantaneous
Duration: Time spent in dust cloud + 1d4 rounds.
Resistance Time: Special
Potency: 50
Resistance: Resilience
Conditions: Asphyxiation
Antidote/Cure: Moving out of the cloud of dust ends the effect

Demonsbane: Among the rarest of the alchemical formulae used by the Order, demonsbane uses the ground bones of saints mixed with holy water and certain rare herbs and spices. A weapon dipped in demonsbane is lethal to supernatural foes – if a demonsbane weapon hits a demon or a sorcerer who has trafficked with demons, it inflicts an extra 1d6 damage. Demonsbane weapons may even strike immaterial demons. A jar of demonsbane contains enough of the holy liquid to treat up to five weapons for one fight (or one weapon for five fights).

Relics

The holy relics of the Order are kept in the church at the Mont St. Michel, where they are treated with great reverence as befits the remains of the Saints. When the situation merits it, though – when the threat is grave or when there is clear evidence of a supernatural danger – a guardian priest may be permitted to take a relic from the church. Many of these relics are utterly irreplaceable and it would be better to lose one's life rather than permit the relic to be lost. As the relics are unique, they may not always be available – a guardian priest may return to Mont St. Michel, only to find that another guardian priest in the Order has already taken the Angel Feather out into the world.

Other Priors and Preceptries may have other relics.

Relics bolster the faith of those who carry them, by giving a bonus to the Divine Fervour and Lore (Christian Theology) skill for the purposes of Divine Magic. A character must have an existing Divine Fervour skill to gain the benefit of the relic.

Holy Water: This is a vial of water, blessed by the Holy Father himself in the basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome and transported under armed guard to the Mont St. Michel. Truly it is said that nothing puts demons to flight like holy water.

Saint's Fingerbones: The Order has a number of these relics. Each one is a bone from the body of a saint, kept in a silver reliquary that is worn around the neck.

Wearing a Saint's Fingerbone gives a +20% bonus to Divine Fervour and Lore (Christian Theology).

Cross of the Unremembered Martyrs: This humble wooden cross was carried by many members of the Order in the past. Their battles against evil are mercifully forgotten by all but the echoes in the labyrinth beneath the Mont St. Michel but the cross they bore inherited something of their faith.

The Cross gives a +20% bonus to Divine Fervour and Lore (Christian Theology). Furthermore, the character may sacrifice his own luck for the benefit of others, as befits a martyr; he may spend his own Hero Points on behalf of others.



Arrowhead of St. Sebastian: St. Sebastian was martyred with a hail of arrows. A few of the arrowheads that pierced his holy flesh were recovered by the Order and attached to new shafts. Redeemed by contact with the saint's holy blood, these arrows are now potent weapons against evil.

An arrowhead of St. Sebastian may be attached to any bolt or arrow. It allows the attacker to add his Divine Fervour skill to his attack roll. If the attack hits, it deals double normal damage against any unholy or demonic foes. The arrowhead may be recovered after the battle.

Angel Feather: This shining feather was found in the cathedral at Avranches and comes from the vast wings of St. Michael himself. It is encased in imperishable crystal inlaid with purest silver and carried on a golden chain.

The character who bears the Angel Feather gains a +20% bonus to Divine Fervour and Lore (Christian Theology). He may also spend a Hero Point to float off the ground and rise into the air. He may fly in any direction at a speed of one metre per round so long as the character concentrates, as detailed on page 195 of the *Legend Core Rulebook*.

Blood of St. Januarius: The sacred dried blood of St. Januarius is kept in a glass ampoule. On certain feast-days, or when unexpected danger is approaching, the blood miraculously liquefies. A character that bears the Blood of St. Januarius is protected against any unexpected threats.

The holy blood does indeed liquefy moments before any attack. A character carrying the blood may add his Divine Fervour score to his Perception to spot ambushes, traps and other unexpected dangers. He also gains a +5 bonus to his Strike Rank and a +20% bonus to Divine Fervour and Lore (Christian Theology).

St. George's Lance: This is a Roman *pilum*, a short javelin designed to be thrown or used as a spear. This antique weapon is kept in a steel reliquary when given to a guardian priest. A character bearing the Lance gains a +20% bonus to all attack rolls against monsters and to Evade tests against monster attacks. Furthermore, he may spend a Hero Point to add the Impale manoeuvre to any successful attack with a weapon that can impale.

Book of Simon Magus: Simon Magus was an infamous sorcerer of tremendous power who lived in the first century after Christ. He challenged the early leaders of the Church, claiming his magic eclipsed even that of God the Most High. To prove his power, Simon Magus levitated over the forum and intended to climb to Heaven; St. Peter prayed to the Lord and the sorcerer's spell vanished. Simon Magus fell to his death and his grimoire passed into the keeping of the Order.

Because of its close association with the founders of the Church and the ensuing Odour of Sanctity, the Book of Simon Magus is not considered to be a sinful book and those who use its magic are not putting their souls in peril. Nevertheless, those who approach the book without proper humility and faith risk utter destruction. The Book of Simon Magus is described further in the Games Masters Story Guide.

Skull of St. Aubert: St. Aubert was the bishop of Avranches when St. Michael the Archangel, patron of our Order, appeared before him and commanded him to build a church on the rock of Mont Tombe. When the bishop refused, the angel put forth his flaming finger and bored a hole in the bishop's skull. That skull is venerated as a relic by the Order and the round hole made by the angel's finger is still clearly visible.

A character bearing the skull has a +30% bonus to Divine Fervour and Lore (Christian Theology) tests. He may also spend a Hero Point to manifest power of the skull; anyone then touched by the bearer is either cured of one level of Fatigue or suffers 3d6 points of damage.

Fragment of the True Cross: This is a small fragment of the very cross on which Our Lord was crucified. It is contained within a golden locket, which can be opened to reveal the blessed relic within. A character bearing the fragment has a +50% bonus to Divine Fervour and Lore (Christian Theology) tests.

EQUIPMENT TABLE

Close Combat Weapons*	Cost	Armour*	Cost
Long or War sword	1	Hard Leather Byrnie and Cap	1
Mace	1	Hard Leather Vambraces and Greaves	1
Quarterstaff	1	Chain Coat with hood	5
Crossbow	1	Chain Leggings	3
Dirk and Dagger	—	Full Chainmail	7
Bolt Sword	2	Plate Helmet	2
Averrunci Blade	4	Full Plate	12
Crusader Blade	3		
Thunderbolt Gauntlet	4	Improvements	
Combat Thurible	3	Silent	1
Heater Shield	1	Blessed	3
Other Weapon	3	Light	2
Improvements	Cost	Relics	
Concealed Blade	1	Holy Water	1
Silvered	2	Saint's Fingerbones	2
Consecrated	3	Arrowhead of St. Sebastian	3
Damascene	4	Cross of the Unremembered Martyr	3
		Angel Feather	4

Ranged Weapons	Cost	Relics	Cost
Light Crossbow	1	Blood of St. Januarius	5
Heavy Crossbow	2	Lance of St. George	10
Hand Crossbow	1	Book of Simon Magus	15
Other Weapon	3	Skull of St. Aubert	15
		Fragment of the True Cross	20
Improvements		Trappings	Cost
Scope	1	Traveller's Garb	—
Blade	1	Common Disguise	1
Automatic	2	Uncommon Disguise	3
Shattering	2	Fine Clothing	1
		Exceedingly Fine Clothing	3
Ammunition		Common Horse	1
Silvered	1	Fine Horse	2
Consecrated	2	Other Goods	1/100 SP
Incendiary	2	Treasure	1/50SP
Corded	1		
Explosive	3	Wondrous Devices	
		Aeolipile	1
Alchemical Compounds		Climbing Claws	1
Smoke Powder	1	Grapple Line	2
Drunkard's Poison	1	Hoffman Device	2
Greek Fire	2	Pyrotechnic Rocket	2
		Spyglass	2
Sleeping Draught	2	Timer	2
Wolfsbane	2	Hoffman Lens	3
Vitriol	2	Brazen Head	5
Healing Draught	2		
Maddening Draught	2		
Blasting Powder	3		
Blade Venom	3		
Undetectable Poison	3		
Panacea	3		
Burning Incense	3		
Dust of Revelation	4		
Choking Dust	4		
Demonsbane	5		

Verse 1.3

GIFTS AND MIRACLES

The Order is blessed by God with many gifts but the most divine of these are the Preternatural Gifts and the Miracles vouchsafed to certain devoted monks.



Preternatural Gifts are physical, mental or spiritual wonders, such as the power to see in the darkness, incredible acts of strength or agility, or immunity to disease or poison. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve possessed many such gifts but they were lost in the Fall. Some saints and heroes have manifested Preternatural Gifts in the past and a few members of the Order are so blessed.

Miracles, on the other hand, are nothing short of the direct intervention of the Divine into the mortal world. While God may intercede as He chooses, a few members have such pure souls and such fiery devotion that they may channel the very power of God through their prayers, just as Elijah and Moses did. Blessed are those who inspire their fellows by their faith made manifest!

Preternatural Gifts

Preternatural Gifts are how the Order refers to Heroic Abilities. All the standard Heroic Abilities from the *Legend Core Rulebook* are available to guardian priests of the Order, except Reincarnation. While the Order believes that Preternatural Gifts are supernatural powers granted by God, most are simply the result of intense training and high-superhuman prowess.

Advanced Evasion

Requirements: DEX 15 or higher, Evade 70% or higher

Hero Points: 5

Duration: A number of melee rounds equal to DEX

The guardian priest is adept at fighting large groups of enemies at once, using the press of foes to his advantage. Enemies fight themselves, getting in each other's way and blocking their own attacks as the guardian priest nimbly dances through the carnage. For the duration of the ability's effect, he gains an extra Combat Action each round that can only be spent on evading attacks. This extra Combat Action cannot be used to avoid attacks from the first foe to attack the character in a round.

Animal Ally

Requirements: POW 15 or higher, Lore (nature) or Survival 70%

Hero Points: 5

Duration: Permanent

The character has won the loyalty of an animal ally of some sort. Common animal allies include dogs, horses, crows and wolves. This animal is drawn to the character and will help him to the best of its ability. It might attack foes, carry a message, warn him of an ambush or track down lost allies. The animal is not necessarily trained in any way and may not always obey the character, nor is the animal obviously supernatural in any way. If the animal is attacked or mistreated, it may flee.

By spending a Magic Point, the character can summon the animal ally at a distance (it knows when its friend is in need). Magic Points can also be spent to protect the animal (each Magic Point spent reduces the damage suffered by the animal by one point).

Commanding Voice

Requirements: CHA 15+, Influence 70% or higher

Hero Points: 5

Duration: 1 round

The character's voice has the ring of command and lesser men leap to attention when he speaks. The character gains a +40% bonus to Influence attempts when trying to take charge in a crisis or when ordering subordinates around (not necessarily *his* subordinates but anyone used to being part of a hierarchy).

Eidetic Memory

Requirements: INT 15+, Persistence 70% or higher

Hero Points: 5

Duration: 1 round

By spending a Magic Point, the character can recall perfectly anything he has ever seen, even if he only glimpsed it for a moment. More Magic Points are needed to recall especially subtle details. Just being able to perfectly recall an event does not mean the character automatically knows everything about it – he may have failed to spot some clue, or it may have been too dark to read all of a page of text, even if the character saw some of it. The Games Master has final authority over all uses of eidetic memory.

Forgettable

Requirements: CHA 15+, Stealth 50% or higher, Disguise 50% or higher

Hero Points: 5

Duration: 1 round

You have a knack for blending into the crowd, so much so that others overlook you and forget you. Anyone who meets you must make a successful Insight test to remember anything more than the most basic details (*'I think he was... average, really'*). You may also vanish into a crowd as long as your appearance vaguely matches that of the people around you – you cannot hide in a crowd if you are the only one wearing plate armour, for example.

Martial Throw

Requirements: DEX 12 or higher, Unarmed Combat 60% or higher

Hero Points: 3

Duration: 1 Round

The character can use the Martial Throw combat manoeuvres this round.

Offensive Throw: The recipient is thrown in any direction by one metre for every five points (or fraction thereof) of damage rolled. Martial throw works only on creatures up to twice the attacker's SIZ. The calculation uses the damage value originally rolled by the attacker, before any subtractions due to armour, parries and so forth. The thrown opponent then the recipient must make a Difficult (–20%) Athletics Skill Test to avoid falling prone.

Defensive Throw: The attacker is thrown one metre. It otherwise works the same as the offensive manoeuvre.

Martial Sweep

Requirements: DEX 12 or higher, Unarmed Combat 60% or higher

Hero Points: 3

Duration: 1 Round

The character can use the Martial Sweep combat manoeuvre this round.

Martial Sweep: Do not roll for Hit Location normally; instead, the attack hits a random leg. If the attack inflicts damage, the foe must make a Difficult (–20%) Athletics Skill Test to avoid falling prone. This is both an offensive and defensive combat manoeuvre.



Martial Strike

Requirements: STR 12 or higher, Unarmed Combat 60% or higher

Hero Points: 3

Duration: 1 Round

The character can use the Martial Strike combat manoeuvre this round.

Martial Strike: The character inflicts 1d8 damage instead of 1d3 with an unarmed attack. This is an offensive manoeuvre.

Martial Parry

Requirements: CON 12 or higher, Unarmed Combat 60% or higher

Hero Points: 3

Duration: 1 Round

The character can use the Martial Parry combat manoeuvre this round.

Martial Parry: The character's limbs count as Large weapons for the purposes of parrying. This is a defensive manoeuvre.

Pure Faith

Requirements: POW 15 or higher, Divine Fervour 50% or higher

Hero Points: 10

Duration: 1 spell

The character has a pure and simple faith in the Almighty. Divine power flows through him as light through clear glass. He may not understand everything he does but he can work wonders.

The character may use his Divine Fervour skill instead of Lore (Theology) when casting Divine spells.

Scent Evil

Requirements: POW 15 or higher, Perception 70% or higher

Hero Points: 5

Duration: A number of rounds equal to the character's POW

The character can sense the presence of the supernatural. He cannot discern its location and this ability does not allow him to infallibly tell who the evildoer is but for the duration of this ability, the character can smell evil. He may use his Perception score instead of Insight when trying to determine if someone is trustworthy and he can detect the presence of supernatural effects or creatures, even invisible ones.

Sudden Strike

Requirements: DEX 15 or higher, any one melee Combat Style 90%

Hero Points: 10

Duration: 1 round

The character explodes into action, attacking many foes at once. The character gets three extra Combat Actions which can only be used for attacks. No foe may be attacked more than once with these bonus Combat Actions. The character also gains a +5 bonus to Strike Rank for this round only. Sudden Strike may only be activated in the first round of a combat.

Street Fighter

Requirements: STR 15 or higher, Streetwise 50% or higher

Hero Points: 5

Duration: 1 encounter

Whenever anyone within reach of the character fumbles an attack or is knocked prone, the character may make a free unarmed attack on them.

Steely Glare

Requirements: CHA 15 or higher, Influence 50% or higher, Brawn or Insight 50% or higher

Hero Points: 5

Duration: 1 round

The character can intimidate his opponent with a savage glare. Using Steely Glare is a free action. The opponent must make an opposed Persistence test against the character's Influence; if he fails, he suffers a -25% penalty to his attack rolls this round. The opponent may avoid this penalty by spending two Magic Points instead.

Zeal

Requirements: CON 15 or higher, Brawn 50% or higher, Divine Fervour or Persistence 50% or higher

Hero Points: 5

Duration: 1 Round

You may ignore the effects of Serious or Major Wounds for the round; you do not need to drop weapons if your arm is incapacitated, your movement is not hindered by your maimed leg and you do not need to make Resilience tests to stay conscious if your chest, head or abdomen are wounded. The benefits of this Preternatural Gift only last for one turn; you will have to spend another Magic Point next round to keep fighting without penalties.

Miracles

Miracles are what happen when the direct hand of God enters the mortal world on behalf of His true believers. When a Miracle occurs, no one present can be left in any doubt that they have been in the presence of God.

For every witness, the effect is different. Some will sense the air charged with potent static, while others may see an angel descend from Heaven on a ray of divine light that spreads throughout the immediate area. The target of the Miracle may levitate a few feet into the air, or be surrounded by a shining nimbus or aura.

However, *all* will experience a feeling of utter purity so profound that it hurts. Some will also experience depression in the days and weeks after, knowing they may never again be within God's presence.

Only a small fraction of the Order has the spiritual power and raw faith to attract the direct intervention of God. Guardian priests with Divine Fervour are treated with awe and respect by their peers; they may even be seen as a living saint and will almost certainly be beatified after death.

In the wider world, such faith is almost unheard of. There are endless traveller's tales of hermits with miraculous powers and spontaneous healing, or young virgins whose attract countless pilgrims but almost all of these turn out to be exaggerations or fabrications.

Divine Fervour

The Divine Fervour skill measures the character's devotion to God.

A guardian priest will gain the Divine Fervour skill when he dedicates POW to it. The Games Master is free to allow guardian priests to do this immediately after character creation, or he may require a guardian priest complete some task, typically one of the methods of improving Divine Fervour listed below. When the task is completed, the Divine Fervour skill is gained, along with the bonus for completing the task.

Under normal circumstances, we would recommend characters 'earn' the right to use Divine Fervour and that it is not granted lightly. However, players and Games Masters might like to experiment with young guardian priests who have obviously been chosen by God and start with the Divine Fervour skill, perhaps starting with only 200 or 250 free skill points when creating the character to compensate – harsh, but the path to true righteousness is never easy!

When attained by a character, Divine Fervour starts at a score of CHA + any dedicated POW. It can only be improved through Improvement Rolls, by increasing CHA, or by proving dedication through deeds and sacrifice, as shown overleaf.

Improving Divine Favour

- Dedicating more POW to the skill: 1 point per point of POW Dedicated, to a maximum listed on the table below.
- Prayer, fasting and living in accordance with the scriptures: 1d3 points per year.
- Completing a pilgrimage: 1d4+1 points.
- Extreme self-sacrifice (living on a pillar, flagellation, vow of total poverty, stigmata): 1d4+1 points per year.
- Battling a major supernatural evil: 1d6 points.

Limit to Dedicated POW

Rank	Limits
Ward	No Dedicated POW
Novice	¼ POW
Initiate	¼ POW
Guardian Priest, First Degree	¼ POW
Guardian Priest, Second Degree	½ POW
Guardian Priest, Third Degree	½ POW
Guardian Priest, Fourth Degree	½ POW
Guardian Priest, Fifth Degree	¾ POW
Master, Preceptor	¾ POW
Master, Obediary Prior	¾ POW
Master, Claustal Prior	All POW
Cardinal-Obscure	All POW

Calling for Miracles

Miracles are treated as spells but many require the character be of a minimum rank, and many have a default difficulty applied to them.

To call for a Miracle, the character selects the one he wishes for and makes a Divine Fervour test, with the listed difficulty applied. Normally, Magic Points are expended, as the power for a Miracle comes direct from Heaven, not the character. However, some Miracles can draw upon the character's Magic Points as they sacrifice a little of their own energy to direct the Miracle.

The Games Master is free to increase or lower the difficulty to account for the situation and manner in which the Miracle is being called; if the Miracle is being called for frivolous reasons, the Games Master is free to make the difficulty Formidable, or even altogether impossible. If the fate of all Christendom depends on the Miracle occurring, the Games Master can rest assured that God will be watching to make the difficulty much easier. We would also suggest making the difficulty easier if the player calling for the Miracle does so in a humble, devout manner, while calling upon specific saints and Christ himself.

Once a Miracle has been asked for, regardless of whether the Divine Fervour test was successful or not, another will not be granted the same day. Furthermore, a -50% penalty will be applied to any Miracle asked for the next day. This penalty is reduced by 10% for every subsequent day.

The following Miracles can all be (humbly) asked for by a character with Divine Fervour.

Amazing Grace

Duration 15, Difficulty: Hard, Rank: Guardian Priest

The character is filled with the power of the divine. He shines from within with an unearthly light and all his actions are filled with a holy grace. For the duration of the Miracle, he gains the following benefits:

- +25% to Evade, Resilience and Persistence
- +25% to attacks
- +6 to Strike Rank
- His damage bonus increases by one step
- +25% to Influence

Angel of Death

Area Special, Difficulty: Hard, Rank: Guardian Priest, Fifth Degree

The character calls for the Angel of Death, who passes over an area designated by the caster. During the night, every human within the area dies, except those who paint a sign, in the blood of a lamb, over their doorway. There is no way to resist this spell, although certain sorcerous defences may provide a defence.

Angel's Touch

Instant, Touch

The character channels the power of St. Michael the Archangel, causing his hands and eyes to glow with a fiery white light. Anyone touched by the character is either cured of one level of Fatigue or suffers 1 point of damage for every Magic Point the character expends.

Banish Demon

Instant, Rank: Guardian Priest, Resist (Persistence)

This Miracle compels a demon to return to Hell, or whatever extra-dimensional realm it calls home. The character must know the demon's true name, be touching the demon, or have some other significant spiritual connection to it. Failure temporarily dismisses the demon but the creature will return within a short time (3d6 rounds) and is immune to future Banish Demon attempts by that character forever. A character may spend a Hero Point to make the demon vulnerable again for one round or to halve its Persistence when resisting this Miracle.

Levitation

Concentration, Rank: Novice

The character floats off the ground and rises into the air. He may fly in any direction at a speed of one metre per round.

Divine Spells as Miracles

The following divine spells from the Legend Core Rulebook can be petitioned for as Miracles, with the minimum rank and difficulty shown on the table below.

Divine Spell	Difficulty	Minimum Rank
Eclipse	Routine	Guardian Priest
Evergreen	Routine	
Bless Crops	Routine	
Consecrate	Routine	Master
Cure Disease/Poison	Routine	Novice
Excommunicate	Routine	Master
Heal Body	Routine	Guardian Priest
Heal Mind	Routine	Guardian Priest
Heal Wound	Routine	Novice
Lightning Strike *	Routine	Guardian Priest
Resurrect	Hard	Master
	Routine	

* This is God's own lightning, so damage is increased to 6d6.

New Miracles

So, what about calling for a host of locusts, parting waves or turning a staff into a snake? Games Masters and players are welcome to create their own Miracles, with the Games Master as the arbiter of the minimum rank a character should be and what, if any, additional difficulty is placed upon it.

Just remember, while a Miracle might seem very important to a player and his character, God does indeed move in mysterious ways, and that character's failure might well be part of His plan...

Verse 1.4

HISTORY AND ORGANISATION

The Order exists to control knowledge. The secrets of this chapter are known only to the initiated – the Sacerdos Custos. Even novices who have lived their whole lives in the Order's care know nothing of the true history and purpose of the brotherhood until they pass through their trials and swear allegiance to the Cardinal Obscure. Part of this oath promises never to reveal the Order's secrets to any outsider, on pain of both death and damnation. Those who break this oath are hunted down and excised by their former brothers.



A History Noble and Unknown

The Order's claims of antiquity cannot be wholly substantiated. The Masters point to a Hebrew document, the *Pesher Ben Josef*, which dates from the first century after Christ and was recovered from a tomb in the Levant. The *Pesher Ben Josef* forms part of the lost Gospel of Thomas; the sections pertinent to the Order taken from the fourth and twelfth books.

Thomas 4

- 1 And Jesus and his disciples came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes*
- 2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,*
- 3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:*
- 4 Because he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.*
- 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, and there too were the bones of those he had murdered.*
- 6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,*
- 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.*
- 8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.*
- 9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.*
- 10 And he strove with Jesus, but was defeated.*
- 11 Now was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.*
- 12 And forthwith Jesus did cast out the unclean spirits. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place towards the sea, (they were about two thousand).*
- 13 And Jesus appointed four of his disciples to follow after the swine and said let ye not shed the blood of any man, but those beasts that are with unclean spirits, these I give you leave to kill.*
- 14 And they went out to see what it was that was done.*

Thomas 12

- 22 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he said to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.*
- 23 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;*
- 24 And said unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.*
- 25 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.*
- 26 And one of his disciples approached him and said, Master, all the city is in uproar against thee. Follow, and I shall bring thee to a refuge.*
- 27 But Jesus refused, saying this is not my father's will. But thou go, and remember what I have told thee, and let no harm come to those who follow me.*
- 28 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.*
- 29 And again he went away, and prayed, and spoke the same words.*

Precursors

There are other groups comparable to the Order in certain respects. Wherever evil men consort with evil powers, surely the Lord will move the spirits of good men to intervene. Even among the pagans and the Saracens there are found a few virtuous souls who take up arms against demons and sorcerers. These other groups lack the divine blessing that enflames the souls of the Order, or the knowledge they act with the Lord's own grace.

The most important of these precursor orders existed during the Roman Republic. The *Averunci* were a secret sect under the direction of rich families. At night, they would creep through the streets of Rome, searching for foreign priests, druids, practitioners of human sacrifice, magi and

demon-worshippers. The *Averruni* employed spies and informants, as well as tools such as the Hoffman Device favoured by our Order, but their chief weapon was ever the sacrificial blade of blood-quenched iron. When the dawn rose over the city, the vile followers of these blasphemous cults would awake to find their masters dead, their throats cut and their tongues removed. In this fashion, the *Averruni* defended the Roman republic from the worst effects of sorcerous interference.

As Rome grew, the *Averruni* became a part of the Legions, attached initially as *cohors auxiliae* (irregular fighting units) but due to their extensive knowledge of engineering and sorcery, they became commonly associated with the *praefectus fabrum*, the engineers. By day, the *Averruni* would build bridges and roads; by night, they would hunt down and kill sorcerers.

Caesar Augustus took the *Averruni* under Imperial jurisdiction, formally making them subordinate to the Pontifex Maximus. In this time, the *Averruni* persecuted the early Christians most unjustly but still worked to suppress evil rituals and sorcery within the Empire. Both Christian martyr and damned diabolist met their ends upon the knives of the *Averruni*.

The Decadence of Rome and Foundation of the Order

Later Emperors, including Nero, made a study of sorcery themselves. To protect both themselves and the evil wizards who instructed them, the Emperors disbanded the *Averruni* who had protected Rome for hundreds of years. Driven underground and hunted as they had once hunted sorcerers, the *Averruni* became allied with the early Christians. St. Hippolytus wrote most eloquently and forcefully of the need for the skills of the *Averruni*.

The Order, bolstered by the resources and secrets of the *Averruni*, was the hidden shield of the early Church. They guided our holy forefathers to unity at the Council of Nicea and suppressed the heresies of the Arians and Nestorians. A formal Papal mandate was given to the Order by Pope Honorius in 634, in the Secret Bull *Ad Orbi et Umbri*.

The slow collapse of the Western Empire gave rise to hundreds of magical sects and diverse heresies. Worse, the knowledge of the Ancient World, assimilated by the Romans from the Greeks and Egyptians, was lost to wave after wave of barbarian invasions and revolts. Libraries burned and scholars were put to death. The role of the Order in preserving this ancient knowledge cannot be understated – our forefathers took scrolls and spirited away wonders even as the barbarians were hammering at the gates of Rome. In truth, we also fired libraries and slew scholars, for it is better the knowledge of the ancients be in our care than sown like pearls before swine.

Nonetheless, many feared the end of the world had come as the old order was swept away. We do not know the hour nor the day when the end will come but we know it shall be heralded by days of madness when evil sorcerers and dark forces hold sway over suffering Mankind. There are foul tides in the spiritual realms, when heresy and sorcery rise up like the waters of some unfathomable ocean and wash over Christendom in a catastrophic wave. These are the times when the Order must be as a bulwark or breakwater, shielding Church and flock from the worst predations of evil. After the fall of Rome, the Order strove mightily to be that shield and, through sacrifice, faith and sheer necessity, it was victorious.

The chaos abated. The Church had endured and was now united; the Bride of Christ ready to be mother to the world that is to come.

In times of peace, a man may set aside his sword. The Order began to prepare for the next crisis, to categorise and develop our stockpile of knowledge, to ready our fortresses and instruments for the tumultuous era to come. There were still heretics to be silenced and monsters to be destroyed but

these lurked in forests and wilderness instead of cities and villages. The Order established a network of hidden preceptries and refuges in the east, around the great city of Constantinople. This eastern watchtower lay close to Persia, from whence a prodigious number of sorcerers and diabolists come.

The Mont St. Michel

This central fortress of our Order is truly a wonder. Rising from the ocean like an armoured giant or a cathedral-ship, the rock of the Mont St. Michel is accessible only by a narrow land-bridge and even then only at low tide. Prior to the establishment of our church there, the island was called Mont Tombe.

In 708 AD, the Archangel Michael appeared to St. Aubert, then bishop of Avranches and commanded him to build a church on the rock. When he refused, the angel placed a burning finger on St. Aubert's forehead and branded him with holy fire. The relic of St. Aubert's skull is one of our most sacred icons. Our Order, masquerading as Benedictines, took possession of the island and transformed it into the stronghold it is today. The Mont St-Michel is home, refuge, castle and church to us.

Prior to the establishment of this central base, our Order's chief residence was in the underground catacombs of Rome. This labyrinth was secure and private, both traits most vital in our endeavours but we could not act openly. The Mont St-Michel offered security and privacy while also presenting a public face for the Order. We appeared to be another wealthy monastery under the aegis of Avranches and in this guise we could take in monies and build further strongholds. Monks from our Order established further priories, schools and orphanages in Normandy, so our novices could be trained discretely. We found it best to begin with a child who could be moulded into a perfect instrument, instead of a man already soiled by the vicissitudes of the world.

The Norman lord William Longsword conquered the Cotentin Peninsula, making the Mont St. Michel part of Normandy. This was in accordance with our Order's plans, for our monks travelled with the avaricious Normans all over Europe. We lent our support to William's descendant, called both Bastard and Conqueror, and were rewarded with lands all over England. The independent incomes of the Order grew prodigiously, allowing us to found further daughter priories in both England and Europe.

As the new millennium waxed, there was a resurgence of apocalyptic cults and false prophets, and once again our Order was there in the shadows, ensuring no madman or diabolist triumphed. Still, this new tide of chaos and heresy could not be wholly stemmed and Christendom was engulfed by secret cults and sorcery. This vile tide dragged all of Europe down into sin.

The Schism

In 1054, long-standing divisions within the Church came to a head. Legates of Pope Leo IX travelled to Constantinople to threaten the Patriarch there, Michael Cerularius. Both sides excommunicated one another in their dispute and the Church was rent by a terrible schism between the Latin and Greek, west and east. Our Order, too, was divided by this schism and the eastern priories are now lost to us.

One of Leo's successors, Stephen IX, wished to use our Order as a weapon in his own political ambitions, ordering our agents to assassinate Norman lords and disobedient bishops. Such interference with secular politics is not within the Order's mandate – we are tasked with guarding the Church against supernatural and heretical threats, not killing those who offend the current Pope. Therefore, when Stephen's successor Nicholas II obtained the Holy See, the Order requested he issue a second secret Bull, *On The Shepherding of Mankind (In Regendi Hominum)*, which



declares the Order remain aloof from secular politics in all its forms. It is forbidden for any members of the Order to own land, hold noble title, or use our secret arts for any purposes other than the destruction of evil.

The Crusades & New Heresies

A century ago, Pope Urban II preached at the Council of Clermont, calling upon the noble warriors of Europe to go to the aid of the Christians of the East. This call was eagerly answered by many, both common and nobility. Great hosts marched or sailed into the lands of the Saracens, creating the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Our agents were among them. In the east, we have come into conflict with the secretive Hashishim and other sorcerous sects; we have foiled schemes to topple the Christian kingdoms, and aided our brethren in the militant monastic orders.

Organised heresy also troubles Europe once more. Spawned by the tide of evil loosed by the millennium, heresies like the Cathari defy the authority of the Pope. These heresies often conceal worse crimes – sorcery, human sacrifice, witchcraft, consorting with demons – which force us to step in. Between the Crusades in the east and organised heresy in the west, our Order is sorely pressed. There are too few of our brethren to deal with the threats facing Christendom.

Structure of the Order

The Order's internal structure is modelled on the Rule of St. Benedict, as set down in the 7th century. When in the abbey of the Mont St. Michel or in one of our priories, our members must observe that Rule in all its particulars. Goods are held in common and provided to each member according to necessity. We pray eight times a day, as per the Rule. Between these times, each member is to apply himself to his appointed tasks or to occupy himself with training, study and other fruitful labour.

Those guardian priests who walk the land in search of evil-doers or investigating reports of supernatural threats are exempt from scheduled prayers but must still offer praise and thanks to God whenever possible. They are to attend Mass as often as convenient and confess to an ordained priest or confessor as required.

Novices

All members of the Order begin as a novice within an monastic abbey where they undergo their initial training and are examined for true potential. There are three grades of novice – Ward, Novice and Initiate.

The training regimen of the Order is extremely demanding. In addition to studying the Bible, other scriptures, and writings of the saints and holy fathers, novices are obliged to study many other fields appropriate to the novice's level of accomplishment and intellect.

All novices are also trained in techniques of observation, deduction, rhetoric and logic, so they are capable of acting wisely in all situations. Nor do we neglect the body in all this honing of the mind – starting from the moment they enter the Order's care, novices are trained in combat, techniques of stealth and meditation. A fully trained member of the Order is the equal of the finest knight, the most brutal gladiator, the most cunning thief, and the most learned scholar in all of Christendom.

This training can be brutal at times as we push each novice to the limits of their endurance, physical, mental and spiritual. Not all survive, and not all who do prove worthy. Those who fail are sometimes permitted to join the Order in an administrative or domestic role, locked away forever

Bishop Honorius, Servant of the Servants of God.

Every good reward and every good gift is from above, descending from the Father of Light, with Whom there is no change and no overshadowing vicissitudes. Caringly, beloved sons in the Lord, we praise the omnipotent God for you and on behalf of you, because your religious order, your venerable institution is and must remain a secret lest lesser souls become corrupted through vile rumour. Through inspiring grace you became attentive hearers of the Gospel, having forsaken worldly ostentation and private property, indeed having abandoned the wide path that leads towards death, you humbly chose the hard way that leads to life and sacrifice. In agreement with this is the fact that you, just as true disciples of the Lord and warriors most skilled in holy war, are indeed fired up by the flame of charity and fulfil by your deeds the words of the Gospel that says: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends, whence, in accordance with the words of the great Shepard, you are not afraid to lay down your souls for your brothers and defend them from attacks of the pagans. You were appointed by the Lord to be defenders of the Catholic Church and assailants of Christ's foes. It is indeed lawful that may you exert in your pursuit and laudable devotion in such a holy deed with all your heart and all your mind. Nevertheless, we encourage your corporation in the Lord, and, for the remission of your sins, by the authority of God and St. Peter, prince of the apostles, we charge you, as well as your those serving you, that you intrepidly fight, invoking the name of Christ, against the enemies of the cross, in order to protect the Catholic Church and to secure that which is under the tyranny of pagans and heretics and ought to be rescued from their filth. Further, we charge that you always conceal and never reveal the blasphemous secrets and unwholesome knowledge of those you defeat, but that you instead destroy it or make goodly use of it in the form of redemption through further victories over the pagan and the heretic. In carrying out this duty, you are encouraged to do whatever is necessary to protect the flock of the Catholic Church from the depredations of evil and things of darkness, and for this you have our blessing.

In times of sore and pressing need, and only when all other recourses save prayer have been thoroughly exhausted, your members may call upon the authority of this office, as signified by the blessed rings which all the anointed of your order shall bear, and thus demand aid, succour, shelter, monies or whatsoever else you require from the bishop of the place you find yourself in, and further we charge these our beloved bishops to respond promptly to your call and never hinder your business nor your travel, even if they are in ignorance of your ultimate ends.

We also establish in this present decree that the religious life that has been instituted in your house, inspired by divine grace, shall be observed inviolably and the brothers who serve the Lord therein shall live chastely without personal property, and, confirming their profession by words and morals, shall be subject and obedient to their master and to those whom he ordains. Moreover, since this house of your sacred institution merited to be the source and origin of the order, it shall likewise forever be considered the head and principal of all the places that belong to it. And because those who are defenders of the Church should live and be sustained from the goods of the Church we by all means prohibit the exaction of tithes against your will from all moveable and immovable possessions and anything that belongs to your venerable house.

within the heart of the Mont St. Michel, but most are kept within their abbeys where they dutifully serve the Lord for the rest of their days.

We are God's instruments. It is only right and proper that He should have the finest tools we can forge.

Ward

Those children taken in by the Church are referred to as wards, and both male and female children are taken. For the purposes of the Order, it is preferred that such children be orphans; they must be of good health and free from deformity or other flaws. In certain rare cases, it is permitted for the Order to take children who are not orphans but such admissions are at the discretion of the Father Superior of the Monastery at the Manoir de Brion or the Mother Superior of the Nunnery at Manoir de Sophia.

The custodians of wards, from village priests to archbishops, are required to send semi-regular reports on the progress of their charges to their superiors. These reports are intercepted by our Order and children of exceptional talent or purity are removed from their churches to be taken to one of our abbeys. Here, wards are trained until the age of fourteen. They are given basic instruction in combat techniques and physical discipline, and are taught to read and write in both Latin and the common tongue of the region. They are also taught history, philosophy, herbalism, and the rudiments of theology – many who will go on to join our Order are extremely advanced by this time, able to hold their own in debate with accomplished theologians.

Novice

Novices are potential members of the Order who are undergoing intermediate training from the age of fourteen onwards. Novices are trained in combat techniques, stealth and evasion, deception and spycraft, in the techniques of assassination and cryptography, and in how to lead and how to obey. They are trained to meditate and pray, to master fear and weakness, and to mortify the flesh and the spirit in the service of God. They study all the sciences that will prove useful in later service, including herbalism, medicine, alchemy, metallurgy, geology, and the natural history of animals and plants. They study history in all its parts, from the Creation to the present day, with a special emphasis on practical knowledge; how to conduct a siege in the Roman fashion, where to find the secret cellar in a temple of Apollo, how to behave as if you are a slave in Barbary, or a prince in Byzantium.

Novices study theology and after receiving a solid grounding in the teachings of Christ, the writings of the apostles and evangelists follow, along with the collected wisdom of saints, church fathers and wise philosophers. Suitably fortified, they are then taught about other religions. They study the differences between the Western and Eastern Churches, and all the heresies and cults who have troubled us in the past.

They study the Torah of the Jew and the writings of the rabbis, they study the Quran of the Saracen and the lore of Moorish sorcerers. They are instructed in the beliefs and methods of pagan cults, in witchcraft and diabolism, in demonology and sorcery (these latter teachings are, of course, wholly abstract and contain no practical workings; students are closely watched to ensure none stray from the path).

Novice training takes an average of three years, though the aptitude and zeal of the novice can shorten this. Once a novice is deemed ready, he is tested again before passing onto the rank of Initiate.

Initiate

The final phase of training takes place at the Mont St. Michel. Here, initiates are finally inducted into the great purpose of the Order and the Divine Path, before being given practical training in its tools and methods. These are secrets of the Order, so are only revealed in the secure confines of the stronghold. Patience is a virtue. Thus these children, brought into the Order as wards are triply virtuous, for they have laboured and studied for many years without any inkling of the Order's purpose.

Initiates train under the watchful eye of the Masters for at least a year. Their instruction is mostly practical – the safe use of alchemical compounds, the operation of our stranger weapons, methods for slaying certain creatures, charms against hostile magic, and the proper ways to carry out an investigation or deal with a cult. Initiate training is so intense that normal rules of the monastery are suspended. Initiates need pray only once a day and attend Mass but once a week, for every other waking hour is consumed with study and practise. Initiates are pressed very hard indeed; even the strongest and most exceptional could falter at the last. In the crucible of the *Cella Probatum*, we burn away all doubt, all hesitation, all fear, and leave only a perfected Warrior of God.

The Trials

For a novice to proceed, he must succeed in the Trial. This involves an examination by a visiting guardian priest who probes the novice to test his moral courage and knowledge of the novice. A bout will also be fought – one the novice invariably loses – to demonstrate physical capability.

At no point will the novice be told he is taking part in a Trial or what the consequences of it will be, but those who pass will be taken immediately to the Mont St. Michel to become an initiate. Those who do not will cease their training and remain in their abbey to serve God through other means.

The Trial for initiates is much harder. The initiate is brought to the chapel at Mont St. Michel, clad only in a white robe, where they are left alone to pray all night. At some time during the night, the initiate will be tested in some manner unique to that individual. Perhaps the Initiate will be given a draught of a maddening potion in a cup of wine, so he sees terrifying sights and must demonstrate his mastery of his own mind by banishing the horrors. Perhaps elder members of the Order arrive and take the initiate to a forest glade where he must battle a series of foes, or maybe a secret door in the chapel opens and the initiate must pass through a gauntlet of traps and tests.

In the morning, the initiate's peers and tutors arrive at the chapel. If the initiate is still within, he has passed the Trial. If he is gone, they may never see him again.

The Initiation Ceremony

Successful postulants return to the chapel for the ceremony of initiation. The initiate lies on the floor, arms outstretched, while the Cardinal-Obscure of the Order recites Mass and anoints each initiate with the sign of the cross, using a mix of oil, water and a third, secret, substance.

The Covenant of the *Acerbus Devotio*, the *Sacrementum Orbis et Umbra*, is recited and forms the transition between initiate and guardian priest.

The ceremony is a form of Holy Ordination. To be initiated is to become a priest, although initiates are not to celebrate mass, hear confessions or perform any other sacraments except in times of extreme urgency.

The reason for this ordination is three-fold. First, the initiate may at times be called to perform an exorcism, driving out evil spirits and casting demons back to Hell. Second, it is to facilitate the granting of Extraordinary Grace, the primary spiritual defence vouchsafed to our Order. Third, so that he might act as a confessor to his brothers. Often, in the field, our members may find themselves far from a church and yet be in dire need of confession having imperilled their immortal souls in the course of their onerous duties. In such circumstances, it is permitted for one initiate to act as confessor to another.

Guardian Priests

Those who have been fully initiated into our Order become *Sacerdos Custos*, guardian priests – sometimes also known as priest-wardens. They are priest, monk and warrior, an embodiment of the Holy Trinity on Earth.

Guardian priests are the strong arm and watchful eye of the Order. They have completed their training and are considered full members of the Order; their lives and deaths are dedicated to God. Guardian priests may dwell at Mont St. Michel, or one of the priories across Christendom, but most only return home every three or four years. The rest of their lives, they spend out in the wild, doing God's work.

A small number of guardian priests are permitted to remain at Mont St. Michel or a priory if their work demands it, if they need to work as scribes, smiths or other craftsmen, or are recovering from illness or injury. The demands of the Order, however, are such that every able-bodied guardian priest who can labour in the world must do so. There are perilously few of us and a great number of enemies of Christendom to thwart.

Guardian priests are divided into five degrees. As a guardian priest gains experience and accomplishes great works of faith and courage, he may advance through these degrees toward the rank of Master. Each step along this path is marked by a further ceremony where the guardian priest restates his vows and is brought deeper into the mysteries of the Order.

Guardian Priest of the first Degree

Those who have just completed their training are guardian priests of the first degree. They are journeymen, who have learned all they must but lack the seasoned wisdom in how to apply it. First degree guardian priests are either sent out into the world in the company of a more senior member, or else work closely with a preceptory or priory where the Master there can give them suitable tasks and practical instruction without them straying too far.

The first degree is a most perilous time for the guardian priest's soul. Like a falcon let loose from the jesses for the first time, there exists the risk that this new freedom will overwhelm him and he flees the Order's care. After many years of intense training and confinement, the temptations of the world may be too much for an unwary soul to resist.

Worst of all, the guardian priest may be overly confident in his skills and gifts, forgetting that our Extraordinary Grace stems from humility above all else. Knowing he can defeat five foes, the guardian priest unwisely attacks ten. Knowing he will be forgiven for any sin he commits as a matter of necessity, he commits sins as a matter of indulgence. Knowing God will know His own and that death is sometimes preferable to life, he slaughters indiscriminately. Be watchful of your fellow travellers, lest they succumb to these temptations!

A year's seasoning is normally sufficient for one of the first degree. After this probationary period, the guardian priest returns to the Mont St. Michel. There, his progress is assessed and he may be permitted to advance to the second degree.

Guardian Priest of the Second Degree

Such guardian priests have proved themselves reliable, true to their vows and capable of acting independently. Second degree guardian priests usually travel in pairs, in small groups or – if necessary – alone. They may be attached to a priory, preceptory or supervised by a higher-degree guardian priest but such contacts are fleeting. For a season or more at a time, second degree guardian priests travel through Christendom, ranging from the great cities to the meanest hamlets, from the frozen mountains of the north to the shores of Africa.

Should the guardian priest find signs of evil, he must first learn all he can about the threat. Can he deal with it on his own or must he gather more of the Order first? Does he have a full accounting of those involved or are there other, unknown dangers to ambush the unwary intruder? Does he know of the tools and weapons that will be required to slay whatever supernatural foes are present or must such supplies first be found? Caution is balanced with expediency. It is unwise to rush in too eagerly but it is equally unwise to wait too long, or the threat may grow too large and innocents suffer unduly.

To advance to the third degree, a guardian priest must demonstrate he possesses the qualities of leadership and discipline.

Guardian Priest of the Third Degree

The third degree guardian priest is as a father to those lower-ranking monks who depend on him for counsel and wise guidance. He is seasoned by many years toil in the vineyard of Christendom, yet he has not permitted his vision to be clouded by either cynicism or despair. He has seen the many forms of evil, yet still knows to assume nothing and strive to see instead of merely looking.

Third degree guardian priests also wander the roads but their paths are circumscribed. The path trodden by a third degree member is determined by the Masters and his peregrinations invariably take him to places where danger is likely, or where he will be found by second degree guardian priests who need his aid. Third degree guardian priests are also responsible for looking for new potential recruits; let each monk who is raised to the third degree first find his own replacement, lest death take him unawares.

Guardian Priest of the Fourth Degree

To enter the fourth degree, one must have attained a special skill in one of the most vital tasks of the Order and have an unquestionable record of devotion to its cause.

Those of the fourth degree are very close to being raised to the rank of Master. They are recalled to the Mont St. Michel or another priory, where they work at the side of the Masters. Those of the fourth degree are as like the personal guard of the King of Kings, committed to battle only when victory or defeat seems certain.

Guardian Priest of the Fifth Degree

The fifth degree is attained only by very few guardian priests, for it is as much a degree of censure as commendation. To enter the fifth degree, the Guardian priest must have first reached the fourth

degree but then be found unsuitable to be elevated to the rank of Master. Perhaps it is a lack of discipline, or character flaw, or some shameful deed in their past. A fifth degree guardian priest is caught between their undeniable skill and devotion, and their equally undeniable base nature. They are not worthy of the rank of Master but superior in ability and experience to any other guardian priest.

As such, the fifth degree are entrusted with those tasks no other guardian priest could hope to complete. These tasks are perilous in the extreme and truly the zeal with which those of the fifth degree pursue the ultimate ends of our Order, even unto death, washes away whatever failing prevented them from reaching Masterhood.

The Order and the World

The existence of our Order is not a secret. Who can deny the Mont St. Michel rises from the sea like a defiant angel, or that monks and pilgrims travel from the abbey to all the lands of Christendom?

It is the *nature* of our Order that you have sworn to conceal. The common people must never be permitted to know we watch over them, or of the evils we protect them from. They must never know of our wondrous weapons or secret teachings. Above all, they must never know the nature of the Enemy, lest they be tempted to the path of darkness or overawed by the strength of our foes.

This is a fallen world. There are perils at every turn of the road and the unwary guardian priest may stumble if he is not prepared for these dangers. It is only at Mont St. Michel or another priory, where the guardian priest's faith is bolstered by the presence of his peers and the watchful guidance of the Masters.

The training you have received ensures that almost any physical peril you encounter will be overcome. You are enjoined to conceal your abilities whenever possible, using only the least force necessary.

If a man attacks you with his fists, knock him down with yours. If a man threatens you with a sword, disarm him. If you must enter a house without the knowledge of those within, look first for an open door before scaling a wall. Be modest and circumspect in all actions, and even submit to humiliation if necessary. Would an armoured knight, secure in his strength, strike a child who offends him? No, he would chastise the child and go about his business – so let it be with you.

If you must act with violent intent, do so swiftly and mercifully. Do not take pleasure in the act and do not kill unnecessarily. If an enemy may be defeated without killing him, consider doing so. If an enemy's suffering may be avoided or cut short, speed him to his final judgement. Delight not in cruelty or bloodshed.

At the same time, do not let consideration of honour or morality influence how you conduct violent acts. It is better to murder a foe as he sleeps than to face him with sword in hand. It is better to crush a dozen men with falling stones than to meet them on the battlefield, and it is better to poison a well than fight an army.

Consider too the virtues of deception and depravity. A mighty swordsman may be undefeatable through force of arms but threaten his infant son's life and he will yield to you. A proud king may be overawed if he discovers the heads of his nine best knights stacked in his privy chamber when he awakes. If you must masquerade as priest, or physician, or sorcerer, or ghost, or angel, or even demon, do so.

This brings us to a discussion of spiritual perils. Temptation takes many forms and the unwary guardian priest may fall unless he fortifies his heart and soul against the Devil's lures. The seven sins enumerated by Evagrius Ponticus and latterly by Pope Gregory I, are commonly listed as being Gluttony, Sloth, Envy, Greed, Lust, Pride and Wrath.

Gluttony is the least perilous of these sins for us, for we are rarely in a position to overindulge. Do not be like the abbots of certain rich monasteries, who grow fatter than the fatted calves they feast upon. Do not covet cloth-of-gold robes or fine armour; make do with what the Masters grant you, or what can be bought most cheaply and easily.

Your body is the Instrument of God and it is upon you to keep your body in full fitness. Never grow lax in your discipline. If you feel a roll of fat around your belly, you must go back on the road as soon as you are able. If you feel tempted to linger in bed, get up immediately and recite a prayer of contrition. The body is a lazy, grumbling and easily corrupted slave. It is up to you alone to master it and put it to good use.

Sloth is a grave sin for our Order. We are charged to be constantly watchful for signs of evil but how can we watch if we give in to sloth? Sloth brings neglect of our duties and behind this neglect, evil creeps in. All that is required for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. It cannot be denied that our duties are most difficult. Even Our Lord cried out at Gethsemane, asking for his duty to be taken from him, because it seemed great a burden – but we cannot afford to slacken our efforts, even for an instant. Watch your fellows lest they slip in their vigilance.

Envy stems from the hard burden of our vows. A guardian priest may look at a merchant and covet his wealth, or look at a knight and desire to be as acclaimed and famous. 'I have greater skills than either of these men,' he thinks, 'I could easily win a tourney or a battle, or make my fortune and never hunger again.' A guardian priest may even look at the humble peasant toiling in the fields, his honest wife by his side, and wish to have an ordinary, humble life, free from care and strife. This too is envy – envy of those who are weaker than you. Every one of us is exceptional in that we are blessed with strength, intelligence and skill beyond average and that blessing comes from God. You are called to higher service and must not shirk from it by envying those who seem to have easier lots in life.

Greed is entwined with envy. To succumb to envy is to desire a life beyond the Order; to succumb to greed is to be distracted by the material at the expense of the spiritual. The Order provides everything a monk needs – you are fed and sheltered by the Order, your expenses are paid from our coffers and we give you the tools and weapons you need. You yourself own nothing, because you need own nothing.

It cannot be denied that this is a hard test. A guardian priest who must disguise himself as a Byzantine prince might dine on roast boar and rich sweet-meats for a season but when he returns to the Order, he must also return to bread and boiled vegetables. A monk who serves the office of the Prior Adjutant may find himself entrusted with sums of money beyond imagining, enough to buy a life of utter luxury, but he is not permitted to keep one penny for himself.

In both cases, the monk could very easily prolong his mission to indulge his greed. 'Oh,' says the spy, 'I must stay on in Byzantium for another season, to learn the secrets of the *basileus*.' 'Oh,' says the clerk, 'if I am to spend this much gold on the needs of the Order, it is a little thing to spend but a few coins on my own needs.' Both of these monks have fallen prey to Greed.

The perils of Lust need hardly be explained. The Order is a mixed one, accepting both male and female members. A male initiate must study, work and even fight alongside women. We even train select women in the arts of seduction, instructing them to manipulate the Lust of others. Worse, a monk may be obliged to commit carnal acts as part of his duties, to maintain disguise or get closer to a target. At all times – even when engaged in the act itself – you must remain aloof and in control, resisting your lower urges and transforming the carnal deed into a mere mechanical operation. The pleasures of the body are a sinful trap, designed to distract the soul from its higher calling.

You are advised to avoid the company of the opposite sex. Where this is not possible, be on your guard against the perils of Lust and turn these energies to more productive purposes. Exhaust yourself in battle and you will have no desire to lie with another.

Pride is a deeply troubling sin for those of our Order, precisely because our position is so exalted. We are the chosen Warriors of God. We hold the power of life and death over our fellow men. We topple princes and kingdoms, wield devices of arcane and spiritual potency, and through it all we are assured of swift passage through Purgatory and a place in Heaven. We are as close as man can come to the angels of the Lord.

Remember that the Lord is the Son of God, and he knelt to wash his servant's feet. We must learn from this example. As soon as you account yourself better than the common man, instead of humbly accepting the power and authority of your holy office, then your pride will lead you astray.

Remember, always, that even angels can fall.

The final sin is Wrath and in this we must balance as on the edge of a knife. Righteous judgement, just punishment and cleansing fire are the tasks of our Order. It is better that a hundred perish than to let a single sinner escape and it is better that you destroy a city rather than sparing it and letting evil take root there again. At the same time, you must not succumb to the sin of Wrath and destroy or kill unnecessarily. Do only what is needful and good, no matter how vile or distasteful it seems. Temper mercy with vengeance and vengeance with mercy but always, always consider your actions before striking.

fríars, Mendicants and Gyrovagues

The usual guise for the wandering guardian priest is as black-robed friar – such sights are commonplace on the road. Those wishing to keep a lower profile should disguise themselves as mendicant beggars or even lepers; those wishing to allay suspicion should adopt the guise of a drunken and lawless gyrovague.

Other common identities taken are those of mercenary soldier, mountebank, travelling dealer in relics and curios, or pilgrim en route to the resting place of one saint or another. Female guardian priests may disguise themselves as nuns or the wives of other travellers.

When travelling, you should avoid attracting notice wherever possible. Speak little and try to turn any questions back upon the interlocutor. Gather what information you can, as rumours on the road may be your first clue to the nature of an impending threat. Do not be afraid to travel by night – you have the skills to avoid or defeat common brigands, and what people hide during the day they may reveal during the hours of darkness. The servants of the Enemy go abroad in darkness, so many of your hunts will take place at night.

Logistics and Communication

Messengers in the employ of the Order regularly travel between the priories and preceptries, carrying parcels of letters. Should you need to communicate with the Masters at the Mont St. Michel, leave a letter at the nearest preceptry and a reply will come as soon as possible.

The Order also maintains hidden message-drops in many places – the bole of a tree, perhaps, the home of a peasant friendly to us, or in a particular old Roman statue. These message-drops are checked by lesser spies and they report to the nearest preceptry. You may recognise these message-drops by the secret signs you have been taught.

While the Order has some wealthy benefactors and some priories own a great deal of land, the expense of our works are far in excess of our income. The Order must therefore rely on the treasury of Rome to pay for the deeds of the Mont St-Michel. Each year, a coffer of gold and other monies is brought from Rome to Normandy under armed guard, together with other relics and items necessary to the Order's functioning.

Guardian priests of the Order are not permitted to own property or have independent incomes. You should want nothing more than what you are given and be content with a simple robe, walking staff, pair of boots and arsenal of exotic weapons. You may request money from the Order to pay for expenses on the road but you should endeavour to live simply and humbly.

Oculus Dei

Their task is to seek out signs of evil and heresy. The barren earth where nothing grows, the malformed child or calf, fires on the hillside, strange and unwholesome gatherings – all these are clues to the existence of some unholy enemy. The guardian priest must gather rumours and separate wheat from chaff, distinguishing the genuine tales of monsters and demons from the addled imaginings of rustics.

The guardian priest must cultivate relationships with informants and spies; he must be at home in every part of society – heresy may always find root in humble, easily influenced peasants or in wealthy nobles. Do not act without proof but do not hesitate either. As soon as one suspects heresy or sorcery, investigate. If you are wrong, then stay your blades and vanish into the night. If you are right, cut out the heresy before it spreads.

The Order's task is also to investigate mysteries. There are supernatural phenomena not inherently evil but prodigies of nature. A grove where spirits gather, a font of magical power, a door into the caverns below the earth; all of these must be investigated, their mysteries plumbed and recorded for future reference. Many of these phenomena may be easily turned to evil – the font of sorcery must be capped, lest some vile necromancer find it and draw on its power. The grove of spirits may be a thing of beauty but if some pagan cult managed to commune with these ghosts, they could grow in power. As for the door to the caverns beneath – explore, but seal the door when you are done or terrible worms and nightfolk might issue forth from it.

All information is valuable. If a noble lord is sinfully consorting with a whore, that might seem to be no great matter but it should be recorded nonetheless. Perhaps the Order may need a favour from that lord in years to come, so we can offer forgiveness with one hand even as we demand aid with the other.

Watch, listen, learn.

Also, you must watch for signs of deviation from the Divine Path. The mysteries of the Path are beyond your current station in the Order but you must still watch for deviation. A deviant is one who dabbles in learning beyond his wisdom. Alchemy, thaumaturgy and such practises are one form of deviation but so too is the study of any art that might disrupt the society of Christendom. The electrical batteries and clockworks used in our weapons, for example, are wonderful but cannot be given to common folk – doing so would make the plan so much more difficult to accomplish.

On the Weighing of Souls

To be a guardian priest of the Order is to murder, not once but many times. If God is merciful, then most of these deaths will be those whom it is right to kill – monsters, murderers, heretics, demon-worshippers, necromancers and the like. Your holy blades will send the damned straight to Hell and this is a just and moral act.

You may also be called upon to kill the innocent. Remember the words of our prayer; *Better a hundred innocents die than one of evil escape.*

Consider this situation: you are in pursuit of a necromancer who intends to summon a demon. The demon will undoubtedly kill thousands. The necromancer flees into a village. If you painstakingly search through the village, you will not find the necromancer before he completes his unholy rite. You *must* destroy the village, killing hundreds to save thousands.

Now, let us assume you are somehow able to find the necromancer before the ritual is complete. You interrupt him just as he begins to open the gateway to Hell and put an end to his life before he calls up what he cannot put down. The necromancer is defeated, but your task is not yet over.

Anyone who witnessed the ritual now knows too much; they too must perish. If they do not die, they will speak of what they have seen. Information is power and words are poison. An uneducated and frightened peasant may not know the words of power he overheard but the worm of sorcery will wind its way into his ear and he will spread the evil further.

Do not murder lightly. Make each murder a sacramental act and weigh the deed's necessity against its inherent evil. If you can avoid exposing innocents to the supernatural, if you can conceal the evidence of your deeds, if you can spare those who do not deserve death, then you must do so – but never let mercy or human weakness stop you from carrying out God's commands. Think of the example of Sodom and Gomorrah – God would have stayed His holy fire if He could find but one righteous man in those sinful towns but when his angels failed to find such, then He did not hesitate to annihilate the evil ones.

Consultation with the Masters

The Masters of the Order are wise and learned monks, who have toiled in the same vineyard as you for many more years. If time is not pressing, it is wise to consult with the Masters before taking action. If you cannot reach the Mont St. Michel, then the nearest Preceptor may serve as proxy for the Masters.

The Masters

Those members of our Order who have been initiated into all five mysteries are deemed Masters. They do not wander the roads of Christendom. They serve by overseeing one of our many daughter priories or preceptries, or by attending the Cardinal-Obscure here at the Mont St. Michel. Masterhood may be given to any guardian priest of the second degree or higher but is normally

reserved for those of the fourth degree. An aged or maimed guardian priest of a lower degree may be granted Masterhood as a reward for his devotion but such an appointment must be limited to a preceptry or a lesser priory.

Masters are divided into three groups; the Claustal Priors, the Obediantary Priors and the Preceptors.

Claustal Priors

These Masters dwell at the Mont St. Michel. Each Claustal Prior has authority over one aspect of our Order's activity and within that sphere reigns supreme. They are the angels set over the comings and goings of our Order. Each Claustal Prior has demonstrated a deep understanding of their assigned duty and complete loyalty to the Order.

Prior Adjutant

The Prior Adjutant is the right hand of the Cardinal-Obscure and responsible for the daily running of the Mont St. Michel and the financial matters of the Order. He commands the coffers and treasure vaults, as well as the rents and emoluments for the Order's many properties. At his beck and call are a legion of clerks and scribes; if all the wealth of the Order were to be gathered in one place, the Prior Adjutant would be richer than any prince.

The Prior Adjutant serves as the Cardinal-Obscure in cases of illness or absence. By tradition, when two Masters have a quarrel, they must plead their case before the Adjutant before taking the quarrel to an Assembly. Novices and guardian priests never need bother the Prior Adjutant; he is as far above their concerns as the Heavens are above the Earth. Masters, though, are engaged in almost constant consultation with the Prior Adjutant, for his office oversees all of theirs.

Prior of the Archives

The Prior of the Archives is the Order's historian and record-keeper. In his scriptorium, lesser monks labour to record the deeds of guardian priests and Masters. The great library beneath the Mont St. Michel is in his care and he alone holds the keys to all the gates to the library.

The Archives contain as more tomes and scrolls as there were in Alexandria before the fire. The Archives do not discriminate – all information, regardless of its nature, may be valuable. Search the Archives and you will find ledgers of merchants filed next to magnificent illuminated manuscripts from Hibernia; you will find a bawdy song by some errant troubadour atop a pile of scrolls describing the precise method for slaying a great-worm and books of vile sorcery are stored in the same vault as ancient tablets dug from the tunnels under Jerusalem. All information is valuable; all secrets must be ours.

The duty of the Prior of the Archives is to gather, store and preserve this lore, to copy it when necessary and provide appropriate guidance to those who seek knowledge. Any member of the Order may apply to the Prior for permission to look through the Archives; the Prior must discern which requests are genuinely vital and which are impertinent curiosity.

Prior of Arms

The Prior of Arms is the Order's strong arm and stout shield. He is responsible for training our members in the various arts of combat and commanding the defence of the Mont St. Michel. Should our Order ever go to war en masse, the Prior of Arms would be at the head of our forces.

He must be vigilant at all times, ensuring no spy or thief steals our treasures or secrets. Should a stranger come to the Mont St. Michel, the Prior of Arms must ensure he is closely watched and prevent him from doing mischief. Should the tide of evil overwhelm even our last refuge, the last duty of the Prior of Arms will be to defend his brother Masters, buying their escape at the price of his own life.

As this is the most physically demanding of the Master offices, the Prior of Arms must prove his health and vitality to the satisfaction of the Cardinal-Obscure once each year. Should he fail to provide this proof, he is removed from office and replaced.

Prior Artífex

The Prior Artífex is the smith of the Order, responsible for creating the wondrous weapons used by the guardian priests to defeat creatures and supernatural foes. With the devices of the Prior Artífex, one man may defeat a dozen foes. He may study the alchemical records and ancient scrolls of Hero and Archimedes kept by the Prior of the Archives, and works with the Prior of Buildings to create secret passages and traps within our fortresses.

The care, repair and purchase of the common items, from handsaws to swords, and from rope to horses, also falls under the authority of the Prior Artífex and his servants.

Prior of Buildings

The Prior of Buildings is responsible for all the physical structures and fortifications of our Order, from the meanest hovel to the abbey of the Mont St. Michel itself. He oversees a legion of masons, carpenters, builders and artisans, who raise high the walls and delve deep the tunnels. He is responsible for both the building of new priories and the maintenance of existing ones.

The Prior of Buildings is sapper and artist, creator and destroyer. He may be called upon to demolish the walls of some Saracen city one day and design the most beautiful altar for a new church the next. He must be knowledgeable in all forms of decoration and adornment, and in all the techniques of architecture and building. Our Order holds secrets of the Romans and we can build wonders unequalled west of Constantinople.

The Prior of Buildings is the only member of the Order who is entrusted with a full knowledge of all the hidden passages and concealed places in our fortresses. Individual Preceptors or Masters may know a few of these passages but only the Prior of Buildings knows them all. He passes this knowledge on to his successor upon his death-bed.

Prior of the Crypts

The Prior of the Crypts is the keeper of the dead of the Order. Where possible, the bodies of the fallen are interred in the vaults beneath the Mont St. Michel – those whose mortal remains cannot be recovered are buried in distant lands and a cenotaph is placed within the vaults. The Prior of the Crypt and his apprentices are adept at embalming the dead, washing away taints and venoms, and assuaging sorrows.

Prior of Initiates

The Prior of Initiates works closely with the Masters of the Manoir de Brion and Manoir de Sophia. His duty is to train those sent to the Mont St. Michel, instructing them in the methods of the Order. He must test them harshly, putting them through trials of body and soul, for it is better that

a blade break when plunged into cold water to quench it, instead of on the battlefield. The Prior of Initiates is also responsible for gathering new recruits; he is obliged to send out guardian priests to find orphaned children of exceptional intelligence who might be brought into the service of God.

Should a novice fail in the testing, it is the responsibility of the Prior of Initiates to ensure the novice is given a more suitable position. Most failed novices are either transferred to another monastery, or given a place as a lay brother at the Mont St. Michel but some have the requisite skills to be placed where the Order may still make use of them.

Prior of Letters

The Prior of Letters is Gabriel to the Prior of Arm's Michael. His duty is to maintain communications between the various priories and preceptries. Messengers ride out from the Mont St. Michel, racing the onrushing tide while bearing letters bound for monks across Europe. Above all, these letters must remain secret, so the Prior of Letters must be adept at all forms of secret writing and concealment.

The Prior of Letters communicates not only with the Order but with a great host of informants, spies and other monks. Like a spider at the heart of a tremendous web, he hears strange tales and notices movements of armies across the face of the Earth. Some Genoese merchant may spy an unusual relic for sale in Constantinople, a fat monk in some Norman castle in England might write of a rumour of goblins in the wood, or a Roman cardinal might send word the Pope has fallen ill. All this news comes to the Prior of Letters, who carefully sorts through it and sifts out elements of vital truth.

Prior of Medicine

The Prior of Medicine is responsible for the care of the physical bodies of our members. With all the wisdom of Galen and Hippocrates at his command, there are few illnesses he cannot cure or wounds he cannot heal. Few herbs grow naturally at the Mont St. Michel but the Masters long ago constructed a house of glass, heated by sun in summer and underground hypocausts in winter, where plants from all over the world may thrive.

The Prior of Medicine also knows other secrets and can produce many drugs, poisons and other esoteric compounds, should such means be necessary.

Obediatiary Priors

Obediatiary Priors are of equal rank to the Claustral Priors. They are the Masters of the daughter priories and lesser schools owned by the Order. The daughter priories are made in the image of the Mont St. Michel, just as Man was made in the image of God. Should the unthinkable occur and the Mont St. Michel fall, then the Order would grow again from one of the daughter priories. While none of the lesser priories has the same wealth of knowledge and craft possessed by the central abbey, each has a few talented guardian priests who approach the skill of a Claustral Prior.

The Priory of Lihou is situated on the island of the same name, between England and Normandy. This isolated priory is built on a site of great magical potency. Our guardian priests are often troubled by witch-cults and warlocks, drawn to the island as moths to a flame. Only guardian priests of the third degree or higher may visit Lihou.

There are three priories close to the St. Michel itself. The Manoir de Brion, in the village of Genets, and the Manoir de Sophia, at Roz-sur-Couesnon, are for male and female novices of the Order, respectively. The Priory of Guérande lies further to the south, along the coast of Brittany.

In Gascony, south of Narbonne, there lies the Abbey of Fontfroide. While recognised as an abbey by the outside world, the Order considers this to be merely a priory, albeit a wealthy one. Gifts of land from various nobles have ensured the fortunes of Fontfroide. Across the Pyrenees in Aragon, there is a second daughter priory of the same line at Poblet, where monks study the secrets of the Moors.

There is one daughter priory in England, at St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall. This priory is built on a rock virtually identical to that of the Mont St. Michel and is similarly guarded by the onrushing tides. It is said the Archangel Michael, the special patron of our Order, has appeared in the skies over St. Michael's Mount. Securing this blessed sight was of great importance to the Order, so we lent our aid to William of Normandy when he conquered England and in return he gave us title to the island. One day, it shall be a great fortress and refuge; deep tunnels will be delved beneath the sands.

East, in the Holy Roman Empire, the Order maintains a single priory at Goslar, the Priory of St. George. This priory is closely associated with the knightly monastic orders, including the Teutonic Knights and many of our best warriors were trained at Goslar.

Finally, there are two priories in Italy. The Priory of San Giovanni in Venere is a great fortress and the prior there holds so much land and so many feudal obligations that he is accounted second only to the King of Sicily in that region. San Giovanni, like Lihou, is built on an ancient pagan site but the importance of the revenue and soldiers from the abbey mean that study of sorcery is forbidden. The loss of Lihou would be a blow; the loss of San Giovanni a catastrophe.

The Sacra de San Michele stands atop Mount Pirchirano and was founded by Pope Sylvester. The fortress is home to many of relics and papers saved from ancient times, as well as a workshop where crusader blades and other wonders are forged.

Preceptors

Preceptries are secret fortresses and outposts of the Order. Unlike the daughter priories, they do not appear to be monastic settlements. A preceptry might be a village church, a merchant's shop, a sturdy manor, or even a ship at anchor in the harbour. To outsiders, there is nothing remarkable about the preceptry, but our members are trained to notice the hidden signs which highlight its presence.

At a preceptry, members of the Order may obtain supplies, shelter and aid from other guardian priests stationed there. They may also consult with the Master of that house, called a preceptor. The preceptor will have been resident to the region for many years and makes it his business to know all that there is to know about the surrounding lands.

Preceptries are also vital parts of our Order's communications. Letters from the Mont St. Michel are brought to the preceptries and must be collected there by the designated recipient. Wandering guardian priests must therefore visit the local preceptry regularly to stay in contact with the Order.

Preceptries may change regularly, to avoid suspicion. If you arrive at a preceptry and find it vanished, or see secret signs that show it to be abandoned, then do not linger for long, as enemies may be watching you. Instead, look for clues left by the preceptor – if possible, he will have left a trail leading to the new safe-house.

Currently, the Order maintains preceptries in the following places: London, Paris, Rome, Marseilles, Genoa, Malta, Zaragoza and Thessaloniki. There were also preceptries in Jerusalem and Acre but these have been lost to the Saracens in recent years.

The Cardinal-Obscure

The Cardinal-Obscure is the head of our Order, First Warrior of God, Exalted Defender of the Faith, and considered to be the agent of St. Michael on Earth. He is elected from among the ranks of the Order by a Grand Assembly of the Masters and serves until his death. He holds the abbey of the Mont St. Michel and ranks equal of any other cardinal within the Church. He is also the feudal lord of the island and the surrounding coast, and has in his gift several fiefdoms which he gives in exchange for knights to defend the Mont St. Michel.

As the ultimate authority within the Order, the Cardinal-Obscure commands the Masters and determines the next step along the Divine Path. To this end, the Cardinal-Obscure is the only living soul permitted access to the Sanctum, a hidden chapel located deep beneath the Mont St. Michel. The contents of the Sanctum are known only to the Cardinal-Obscure but it is whispered that a book is kept there containing prophecies of the coming days and the end of the world.

Breviary

The Order has a number of private prayers taught to all initiates. Learn these prayers well; they contain secret wisdom. After each prayer is a brief commentary by Brother Adelard, Guardian Priest of the Third Degree and one of the Order's wisest theologians.

Sacrementum Orbis et Umbra:

Prayer for Ring and Shadow

P: Lord, safeguard all that we have taught.

R: The Order must never be revealed, nor its knowledge made open.

P: Lord, we trust in your guidance.

R: Better a hundred innocents die than one of evil escape.

P: Lord, we are but instruments of your Will.

R: I vow to defend Church and Order by any means necessary.

P: Lord, all will face your judgement.

R: The laws of Man are as nothing in the pursuit of His work.

P: Lord, bless this child so he may serve thee with all his heart.

R: This Covenant is as marriage to the Lord God.

P: Lord, give him the wisdom to know when to act and when to remain silent.

R: Knowledge is both salvation and damnation.

P: Lord, we follow the path laid before us.

R: Every soul saved is one step forward to the final enlightenment of Mankind.

Commentary of Brother Adelard: The Prayer for Ring and Shadow is at the core of the Order's initiation ceremony and encapsulates our key teachings. We acknowledge the gift of divine wisdom while accepting the burden of keeping it secret; we acknowledge the gift of divine authority while also taking on the burden of duty and judgement. We are blessed but with this exalted power comes equally demanding responsibility. The Prayer finishes by offering hope that our struggles will ultimately lead to glorious reward for all.

Prayer Against Fear

P: Lord, we are but instruments of your Will and our lives are yours.

R: We accept the bitter cup, knowing that our sacrifice will redeem all suffering.

P: I am the sword of God; happy are those who battle darkness, for they are the light of the world.

R: For God and St. Michael!

Commentary of Brother Adelard: The bitter cup recalls the sufferings of Our Lord in the Garden of Olives, where he asked that his death and suffering on the cross be taken from him. The prayer steels the monk in a moment of weakness, rallying flagging spirits and evoking the warrior spirit of the archangel.

Prayer Against The Flood

P: Lord, you are our saviour and our shield; protect us now against the rising tide.

R: As you wash away wickedness, let us be the instruments of your new covenant.

P: There shall be three ages to the world – the age of the Father, the age of the Son and the age of the Spirit.

R: As your Son's death and resurrection washed away sin, let us rejoice, for we shall be saved.

P: Lord, we stand with all the hosts of Heaven and join in their eternal work.

R: As the darkness rises, we shall drive it back.

Commentary of Brother Adelard: The doctrine of the three ages of the world was a secret teaching of the Order but in recent years we have permitted outsiders to learn of it, through agents such as Joachim of Fiore. The first age of the world was from Creation to the birth of Our Lord, the second from the ministry of Jesus to the near future, while the third age will bring confrontation between good and evil, and last until the end of the world. Our calculations lead us to believe the third age will commence sometime in the next century, most likely in the year 1260, although others suggest it began with the turn of the millennium.

Regardless of the impending or otherwise end of the world, the prayer asks for the support of the Most High in conflicts to come.

Prayer of Christian Release

P: We pray for the soul of Brother N., whose sufferings are at an end.

R: Lord, receive this our brother to his just reward. May his soul light the Path for us all.

P: Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Your grace has absolved N. of all his sins; may he also share in your resurrection.

R: Amen.

P: *(after dispatching N.)* We pray for his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed.

Commentary of Brother Adelard: This short prayer is to be said over the body of a guardian priest who has recently died, or who is about to die. Traditionally, it is also used to dispatch those corrupted by demonic influences or vile sorcery.

Prayer for Guidance

P: Lord, may your wisdom guide us through this darkness. Put our feet on your Divine Path, that we might defend our fellow-pilgrims as humanity travels to the Heavenly City you have prepared for us.

Commentary of Brother Abelard: The prayer for guidance is a simple appeal for divine aid. It is always answered, although only the wise may be able to discern the guidance of God.

A Demon-Haunted World

Taken from a lecture given to new novices of the Order, who have spent many years behind the walls of an abbey.

It is the Year of Our Lord 1189.

The new millennium brought with it a tide of chaos and uproar. The Holy Church, long a bastion of light and learning, is divided between west and east. The Holy Roman Empire quarrels with the Papacy over which is the supreme power in Europe, while the ambitious Normans swarm over the western islands and southern Italy. In the north of Italy, the city-states have grown rich and corrupt on trade.

To the east, Byzantium endures. The great city is balanced on a knife-edge between uncertain allies in Christendom and the threat of the Saracens. The holy city of Jerusalem was captured in the First Crusade but is now lost to us once more, and the armies of Saladin besiege other Christian fortresses. The Third Crusade may turn back these foes and men from all over Europe now don the crusaders' mark and make their way to war.

In the shadow of these great events, there is life. God has smiled upon the land and famine is a distant memory for many. The just order of society is maintained for the most part – the peasant toils, the warrior protects and the priest prays for their immortal souls. The roads are safer now than they have been since Charlemagne's day. Harvests are good, the towns and cities swell with merchants and craftsmen and students flock to the new universities. It is an era of growth and prosperity in the main.

Such prosperity brings with it dangers. The Order's purpose is to help protect and guide Christendom, as a mother teaches her children, and this task is made all the more difficult by disobedience and waywardness. The Divine Path laid out for the Order is most easily followed when those we care for have no choice but to obey. Peace, plenty and security, while desirable things of themselves, allow deviation from the long-planned course that Pilgrim Christianity must take.

Prosperity and wealth engender greed and corruption. Those who cling to their faith when times are hard are often quick to turn their backs on God and Church when they have wealth and safety, forgetting the comfort and protection the Church gave them in the past. In universities and towns, scholars meddle with secrets that must remain unknown. In the countryside, old cults take root once more. Beneath the earth, creatures stir, awoken by the great hubbub of sinful humanity above them.

Nor is the Church wholly blameless. Bishops live like kings and abbots live like princes; ecclesiastical titles are given away as rewards for political favours instead of faith and merit, indulgences are bought and sold at market. The Church is and must be a secular power as well as a spiritual one, but in the modern age, it has overstepped the mark. The Schism between west and east was triggered partially by the alliance between Rome and the German kings now exalted with the title of Holy Roman Emperor, in defiance of the rights claimed by Byzantium, and the Donation of Constantine (forged, to our shame, by members of the Order) has dragged the church into the excrement of this fallen world.

In short, though Christendom appears hale and strong, it rots from within. Cancers of sin and corruption, of learning without wisdom, of vile sorcery and pagan cults, of greed and decadence all fester in the world outside these walls. Your task will be to cure this sickness and save Christendom from the devil's spawn.

Other Defenders of the faith

In his wisdom, the Pope permits bishops to call the fledgling Inquisition to investigate heresy within their own dioceses. The effectiveness of such depends greatly on the zeal of the bishop who leads it and the man the Inquisition sends to conduct it. Some inquisitors are almost as effective as our guardian priests; others are corrupt, venal fools. In any case, the Inquisition is a blunt instrument, good for rooting out dissenters who follow the Cathar heresy, or Arianism, or some debased pagan belief but often useless at finding truly insidious heretics, and worse than useless at battling the supernatural.

Still, the Inquisition has Episcopal authority and must be tolerated, even though we watch it grow, nurturing itself as if hungry for power. Guardian priests may make use of Inquisition resources and information but do not trust them with any of our secrets.

Worse yet are the witchhunters. These fanatics wander from town to town looking for witches and monsters. A small few witchhunters have the skills, the knowledge, and the sanity to perform such a task but most are madmen who cause more damage than aid to our cause. Use the witchhunter as you would a slaving dog.

The Enemy

The Order's purpose is to defend Christendom against all supernatural foes, internal and external – but Christendom has grown so vast and divided that we can no longer investigate every heretic or deal with every sorcerer. The Order must concentrate on the greatest threats.

The ultimate enemy is, of course, Satan, the Great Adversary and Enemy of God. According to the Order's theology, the fallen works his evil in the world through five categories of agent.

- Monsters
- Cultists
- Sorcerers
- Heretics
- Impediments

Monsters are unnatural creatures that must be slain or bound. Demons and other spirits fall into this category, as do the unquiet dead. Monsters are almost always unique aberrations; to defeat a monster, one must first study it and learn its weaknesses.

Cultists are those who worship demons or evil spirits. They band together under the command of a witch or sorcerer, practising their vile rites, often including blasphemous black masses and human sacrifice. For the cultist, there can be no mercy. They must be expunged.

Sorcerers are those who practise the unholy science of magic. Chiefly, we are concerned with diabolists who seek to conjure demons but also alchemists, wonder-workers, charlatans, magi, astrologers and witches.

Heretics are those who have turned from the Church's orthodox teachings and, while still professing to worship the One True God, do not pay due homage to Rome. Some heresies are correctable and those who follow them may be reconciled to the Church; the Schism between east and west is greatly troubling but both branches of the apostolic Church still worship the same God. Other heresies cannot be forgiven; look to the Cathari of Southern France, who hold that this world was made by the Devil and the God we worship is evil for condemning us to life.

Finally, Impediments are those who are not necessarily enemies of Christendom but who impede humanity's progress along the Golden Path. Such impediments include those who would disseminate knowledge of the supernatural, those who would damage the social order, or those kings and rulers who do not do as the Church commands.

