

# MEETING of the US REGION

August 25 to September 1, 2021

Gethsemani Abbey  
Trappist, Kentucky



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Participants</b> .....	3
<b>Votes</b> .....	4
<b>Full Minutes</b>	
Introduction.....	8
General Chapter.....	9
Fathers Immediate.....	9
The Role of the Abbot General and Council .....	11
Creative Fidelity.....	12
The Declaration of Principle on Safeguarding.....	14
Regional Matters .....	14
Evaluation.....	19
<b>Appendices</b>	
I.    US Regional Statute.....	20
II.   Working Grid.....	22

**U.S. REGIONAL MEETING PARTICIPANTS**

**Gethsemani Abbey  
August 25-September 1, 2021**

**MONASTERY**

Berryville  
Crozet  
Genesee  
Gethsemani  
Guadalupe  
Holy Spirit  
Mepkin  
Mississippi  
New Melleray  
Redwoods  
Santa Rita  
Snowmass  
Spencer  
Wrentham

**SUPERIOR**

Fr Joseph Wittstock  
M Kathy Ullrich  
Fr Gerard D'Souza  
Fr Elias Dietz  
Fr Peter McCarthy  
Fr Augustine Myslinski  
Fr Joseph Tedesco  
M Rebecca Stramoski  
Fr Stephen Verbest (Delegated Administrator)  
M Kathy De Vico  
M Victoria Murray  
Fr Charles Albanese  
Fr Vincent Rogers  
M Sofia Millican

**SECRETARIES**

Sr Barbara Smickel, Crozet  
Sr Anna O'Meara, Mississippi

*President of the Region: Fr Gerard D'Souza*

*Assistant Moderator: M Kathy Ullrich*

*Vote formulation: M Kathy De Vico, Fr Elias*

*Readers for the Minutes: M Sofia, Fr Joseph Tedesco*

*Finances: Secretaries*

## VOTES – US REGIONAL MEETING 2021

(Fr Paul Mark, Abbot of New Clairvaux, was unable to attend this meeting. Fr Stephen, the Delegated Administrator of New Melleray, was present and was given the right of vote at this regional meeting by unanimous vote of the US Regional Superiors. Thus there was a total of 14 persons voting.)

### **Resignation and Election of the Abbot General**

1. We recommend that the Regional Reports on the role of the Abbot General be read in the aula before the election of the new Abbot General.

YES 14                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0

2. Many of us are concerned whether a majority of the capitulants will be able to travel to Assisi for the General Chapter in September, 2022. Therefore, we recommend that a decision of whether or not to hold the General Chapter be made and announced by March 1, 2022.

YES 14                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0

3. If it is determined that the planned General Chapter cannot be held in 2022, we propose that the election of the Abbot General proceed immediately by other means.

YES 14                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0

4. Moreover, we suggest that the Central Commission already appoint a commission to prepare for the eventuality of an election without personal presence.

YES 14                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0

### **Liturgy: Celebration of Lauds and Eucharist**

5. Reflecting the dissatisfaction of many with the liturgical space at *Domus Pacis*, we recommend that Lauds and Mass be celebrated by the entire Chapter only for the opening and closing of the Chapter and on Sundays and major feasts. On other days we recommend that Lauds and Mass be celebrated separately in linguistic groups.

YES 13                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 1

### **Covid Protocol**

6. In view of the current pandemic, we recommend that a comprehensive medical plan for the General Chapter of 2022 be developed in collaboration with competent medical advisers and the personnel at *Domus Pacis*.

**YES 14**

**NO 0**

**ABSTAIN 0**

### **Agenda / Invited Speakers**

7. Given that five years have passed since the 2017 General Chapter, we think it necessary to focus exclusively on the Chapter's agenda in 2022. We therefore ask the Central Commission not to invite speakers from the Order or from outside the Order at this Chapter.

**YES 13**

**NO 0**

**ABSTAIN 1**

### **Fathers Immediate**

8. We suggest that the General Chapter of 2022 in its deliberations on the Father Immediate question, rather than focusing on changing the structures of filiation and the Father Immediate, focus on better ways of functioning within the current structures.

**YES 14**

**NO 0**

**ABSTAIN 0**

9. At the 2017 General Chapter, a special Commission was appointed to look for solutions to individual problematic situations regarding Fathers Immediate. The Commission did not have sufficient time to study all these situations and to consult with all the concerned parties, especially with the communities in question. Therefore, we ask the Central Commission to create a body of capitulants (or former capitulants) to begin this work before the General Chapter of 2022. The work of this special Commission would be presented to the General Chapter.

**YES 14**

**NO 0**

**ABSTAIN 0**

10. In 2020 the Abbot General and his Council asked the Fathers Immediate delegated at the 2017 General Chapter to submit an evaluation of their experience of these delegations. We recommend that the Commission proposed in vote #9 above have access to those evaluations.

**YES 14**

**NO 0**

**ABSTAIN 0**

11. We further recommend that this special Commission in its deliberations refer to vote 77 of the 2017 General Chapter:

***WE ENCOURAGE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSALS OF N. VI OF THE WORKING PAPER ON THE FATHER IMMEDIATE (cf p. 32 of the General Booklet).***

**YES 14**

**NO 0**

**ABSTAIN 0**

12. We suggest that this special Commission be composed of 3 capitulants (or former capitulants) and one member of the Abbot General’s Council.

**YES 14                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0**

13. In view of reducing the workload of the General Chapter in 2022, the solutions proposed by this special Commission may be implemented before the General Chapter in those cases where all the involved parties are in agreement.

**YES 14                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0**

**Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable Adults**

14. We ask the 2021 Central Commission to clarify the reason for the “Declaration of Principle on Safeguarding” proposed in votes 37, 38, and 60 of the 2019 Central Commission and to clarify how this document will be used.

**YES 14                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0**

15. Vote 37 of the 2019 Central Commission asks the General Chapter to “affirm our Order’s commitment to preventing sexual abuse, the abuse of power, and all forms of manipulation of conscience.” The proposed draft of this “Declaration of Principle” found in the working paper prepared by Dom Richard of Mt. Melleray and Dom Bernardus of Tilburg goes beyond this mandate to request “the necessary adaptation of our own legislation to include protection against all forms of abuse.” Our Region proposes that we limit the scope of legislation in this area to sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.

**YES 14                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0**

16. In vote 38 of the 2019 Central Commission, the Law Commission was asked only to add to our legislation “a policy for the protection from abuse of minors and vulnerable adults and that the community provide education in this area.” We think that the Law Commission’s proposed text, by adding “any form of physical or psychological violence or abuse in interpersonal relationships, etc.” went beyond what was asked for in vote 38.

**YES 14                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0**

17. It is standard practice in the Church to have policies safeguarding minors and vulnerable adults from sexual abuse. We would find it difficult to develop Order-wide policies in the broader areas of psychological violence, abuse of power, and abuse of conscience. We therefore suggest that the Law Commission limit its work to the area of sexual abuse.

**YES 14                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0**

**Resignations of Abbots and Abbesses**

18. Many of us find the handling of resignations at the General Chapter an uncomfortable experience. The process takes up valuable time in an already heavy agenda. Moreover, many of us find the process artificial in the sense that Commissions sometimes deal with delicate situations in distant and unfamiliar houses. We therefore propose that C. 40 be amended as follows:

An abbot/abbess presents his/her resignation to the Abbot General, who ordinarily acts as Vicar of the General Chapter in this matter. For reasons other than reaching the age of 75, an abbot/abbess may present his/her resignation to the General Chapter.

**YES 13**

**NO**

**ABSTAIN 1**

**Regional Matter**

19. We support the development of the series of educational videos under the title *Schola Cisterciensis*, and as a Region we will continue to fund this effort.

**YES 14**

**NO 0**

**ABSTAIN 0**

## INTRODUCTION

Following a series of virtual meetings on Sunday afternoons throughout the spring and summer months, the superiors of the U.S. Region were delighted to gather in person in the warm, southern hospitality of Gethsemani Abbey, August 25-September 1. As they had discovered, there are many advantages to meeting virtually, and a considerable amount of work was accomplished in their Zoom meetings. Yet the rapport shared among them throughout this meeting made it quite evident that they found it very good to actually be together, enjoying the kind of supportive interactions and conversations that can only happen in person. *How good and how pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity!*

In an effort to minimize the amount of travel during the continuing pandemic with the new danger posed by the Delta variant, only the superiors and two secretaries were present at this meeting – a total of 16. We welcomed one new abbot since our last Regional Meeting on site - Fr Vincent Rogers, Abbot of Spencer, and also Fr Stephen Verbest, Delegated Administrator of New Melleray Abbey. Regrettably, Fr Paul Mark of Vina was not able to attend, and he was very much missed. During our time together we were reminded of the shortness of our earthly life by the deaths of two monks of our houses. Shortly after his arrival at Gethsemani, Fr Joseph of Berryville received word that Fr Maurice Flood had died; on Sunday Fr Peter of Guadalupe learned of the death of Br. Martin DePorres Gonzales. May they rest in peace.

The focus of this meeting was preparation for the General Chapter 2022. Main issues worked on included the General Chapter, the Role of the Abbot General and his Councilors, Fathers Immediate and the Safeguarding Policy. Discussions of these topics are summarized in the Minutes and votes reported in the Vote section. Full Minutes of the meeting in English and a summary version in English, as well as Summaries in French and Spanish will be posted on the Order's website. A copy of the Full Minutes will also be sent by email to the Generalate and to all the U.S. monasteries.

The report that follows documents the discussion and decisions during the meeting, but only partially conveys the peaceful spirit of mutual respect, support and trust that permeated the deliberations and lightened the work.

Before departing all enjoyed a delightful *Gaudeamus* with the Gethsemani monks. We are grateful to the community for its gracious hospitality and accommodations throughout our stay.

Elected as Coordinators for next Regional Meeting: M Kathy Ullrich, Fr Joseph Wittstock  
(Place and date of the meeting are not yet arranged)



## **GENERAL CHAPTER**

The 2022 General Chapter, postponed from 2020, is perhaps one of the most crucial Chapters in recent decades – because of the pressing issues only partially resolved by the last General Chapter in 2017, and which have intensified since then. In addition, since the coming Chapter must elect an Abbot General, we already know that the agenda will be very full. With this in mind, we desire that the Central Commission prioritize items on the agenda in such a way as to make the most of our time at the Chapter for the good of the Order. We see these priorities as: Election of the Abbot General and his Council, House Reports from all the communities, the Fathers Immediate situation, Cst 67 and the Statute on *Accompanying Fragile Communities*, and our Order's application of *Cor Orans*. It will be a very weighty General Chapter. But in addition to our good will, there is also technology to help us make it very pastoral and very fruitful.

We considered also the Liturgy at the Chapter, the guest speaker arrangement, and the Covid situation and its impact upon plans for the Chapter. We would like the Generalate to initiate development of a detailed professional medical plan to have in place, foreseeing all contingencies, and including some testing process. In connection with this we highly recommend an actual date of commitment by the Abbot General for officially calling the 2022 General Chapter - and also the commitment of individual superiors to attending it – always presuming good health!

A separate issue, but which must be considered – is the possibility of utilizing the current permission of CICLSAL for religious Orders to elect a Supreme Moderator by mail-in ballot. This raises many, many questions and difficulties and objections – and likely would not be considered in normal circumstances. But it is obvious that we are not living in normal times – and it seems we must take into account the possibility that a General Chapter might not occur in 2022. The CICLSAL permission only extends through the end of 2022. This option could become our only option for the election of an Abbot General in the foreseeable future.

Our VOTES convey our recommendations on these issues.

## **FATHERS IMMEDIATE**

Fr Peter of Guadalupe presented a summary of all that has been done on this topic, as a part of the agenda of General Chapters, dating back to 2007. Obviously some of our present difficulties have a long history! The clearest recent presentation occurs in the Minutes of the Central Commission at Roscrea in 2016, and in the three votes that emerged from this meeting and which then led to the work on this topic at the last General Chapter in 2017. That work and the solutions arrived at then could only be temporary measures – and now, five years later, have in some cases become confounded by the

closure of several mother houses, and the increasing precariousness of several monasteries with large filiations. The difficulty of finding Fathers Immediate has thus only increased.

Our discussion of this topic ranged wide as we tried to consider all the various possibilities for meeting the urgency of this situation. We spoke of collegiality and subsidiarity in view of the traditional structures of the Order – and how these might be adapted. The traditional way a monastery becomes a part of the Order is through filiation. We are all autonomous houses united as an Order through the relationship of filiation; thus we have a very simple but effective network. This is not just a concept but a beautiful reality, and unique to our Order – perhaps that is why it has perdured all these centuries.

With all this in mind, rather than looking for structural changes, we began by considering other options. It seems to us that **delegation** is perhaps the key to effectively addressing the current situation – within the established structures of the Order.

We again studied with appreciation the Working Paper of the *ad hoc* Commission (composed of Fr Timothy Kelly, Abbot Olivier of Citeaux, Mother Martha Driscoll of Gedono) – in particular Section VI and its presentation of concrete possibilities through collaboration and delegation:

- *Seek collaboration within the motherhouse, and through delegation*
- *Seek collaboration within a filiation*
- *Seek collaboration within the Region*
- *Seek collaboration with the nuns of the Order*

In fact, Vote 77 of the General Chapter of 2017 calls attention precisely to this Section VI of the Working Paper: “We encourage the implementation of the Proposals of Section VI of the Working Paper on the Father Immediate.” (Yes: 155, No: 4, Abs 4) And then there were the comments on this from the various Commissions at the Chapter which favor this approach of creative collaboration.

We suggest more regional collaboration on the possibilities for legitimate and responsible delegation; we have resources in personnel within our houses as yet untapped – we need to be more creative in exploring this. A specific suggestion was that abbesses might serve as delegated visitors more often. We also considered the possibility of establishing another group which might review situations where circumstances require adjustments to be made in filiations; perhaps some kind of Court of Review to listen, to suggest – and, where appropriate, make arrangements which could then be reviewed by the Abbot General, and only be brought to the General Chapter if necessary. The goal would be to take care of such situations ‘locally’ where possible – and not to overload the agenda of the Chapter. Another possibility would be for the Central Commission to function in this way, or establish a Commission which would supplement the work of the Abbot General and his Council. This commission would investigate situations and make concrete proposals to bring to the Chapter, after consulting the communities involved (perhaps using retired superiors as ‘consultants’). However, if satisfactory

solutions can be found and all parties are in agreement, the Abbot General and his Council could approve such solutions and these situations would not even need to be brought to the Chapter.

Our VOTES reflect our conclusions on this matter. We support not changing the structures of the Order but adjusting the functions. By observing the principle of subsidiarity: if something can be effectively done at one level, it should not be assigned to a higher level. There are matters which can and should be dealt with more effectively and pastorally by other resources ahead of the General Chapter.

### **ROLE OF THE ABBOT GENERAL AND COUNCIL**

We believe that the role of the Abbot General and his Council at the present time calls for a new vision of leadership in tune with both present realities and the Cistercian charism. In the person of the Abbot General the Order needs a compassionate pastoral leader who is a good collaborator and communicator, and comfortable and capable in the use of communication technology.

In his pastoral role we envision the Abbot General as one who inspires and motivates a spirit of renewal in the Order, fostering our charism and patrimony as we seek to live in new ways in response to the needs of our time. We look to him to lead and inspire us in discerning anew what is our mission in the life of the Church. Our founders did this in their day; we must do the same in ours. The issue of vocations – attracting young men and women of our day – is related to this question of living faithfully our charism in new ways that speak to the realities of the present age.

Foremost among present needs in the Order is the creative care of the increasing number of fragile communities of the Order – a need that is related to the situation of Fathers Immediate. Yet the Abbot General cannot allow himself to be weighed down by the enormity of these two demands, but rather be open to creative ways of sharing this responsibility through various forms of delegation.

No one can do all we hope from our Abbot General, nor does he need to. The leader for our day is one who seeks counsel and readily works with others, - valuing and utilizing collegiality and synodality. Recognizing the giftedness of his brothers and sisters, he knows how to delegate to his councilors. Might he also delegate to other monks and nuns of the Order?

The enormous amount of energy required for all we ask of the Abbot General will soon be depleted if we do not find ways to reconfigure both our expectations and the way he does his job. How do we lighten his load? Re-envisioning the way of life of the Abbot General, we recognize that the pastor himself needs pastoral care and a healthy amount of support. A regular visitation of the Generalate may be one way of doing this. Looking at the organization of the Council with new eyes may be another. What are the gifts of each councilor and how can the Council share the work and offer support to the

Abbot General? Another is the notion of an expanded Council comprised of monks and nuns living in different parts of the world from whom the Abbot General could seek regular periodic counsel and advice – this is an instance of the need for the Abbot General to be comfort and familiarity with virtual conferencing.

Our conversation revitalized our own deepest hopes and energized us in our shared responsibility to help make this all happen. Our VOTES convey our conclusions.

### **CREATIVE FIDELITY, INNOVATION IN CONTINUITY**

Fr Joseph of Berryville provided an excellent Power Point presentation based in part on the 2020 Working Paper prepared by Dom Bernardo Olivera and Mother Marion Risetto, on the context for the Election of the Abbot General, and also on the 2021 paper “For those going to the General Chapter for the First Time” by Fr Augustine Roberts. Both documents are informative and provocative, inviting creative reflection and collaboration to meet some of the special challenges now facing the communities of our Order. Fr Joseph’s presentation was thought-provoking, and our discussion afterwards ranged widely. Following are just some key reflections and questions to stimulate further thinking and courses of action.

- What might ‘creative fidelity in continuity with tradition’ look like in our cultural context?
- How to present our charism in a way that speaks to our 21<sup>st</sup> Century culture, how convey its beauty and dynamism? How respond to our culture as creatively as did 12<sup>th</sup> Century Citeaux?
- What kind of tools might help us in this situation?
- Is there not so much a crisis of leadership but rather a need to help provide superiors and formators in our Order with tools of spiritual leadership, skills in motivation, in developing potential? What might ‘strategic vision’ look like in our context?
- How can we provide an ambience where a 21<sup>st</sup> Century St Bernard, St Lutgarde, Bl Gerard might be engendered and flourish?
- Do we believe and live according to the belief that our Cistercian monastic, contemplative life is essential to the life of the Church, has a mission in the Church?

These and other questions gave rise to a very searching and beautiful sharing among the members of our Regional Meeting. What follows here is simply an attempt to capture the essence of the exchange in order to share it with the larger Order.

Fragility is part of the human condition, both for individuals and for groups. Community life brings this to our attention in countless ways. Our own ongoing conversion is surely our largest contribution to the Order and our own communities. Young and not-so-young candidates seriously considering our vocation are looking for authenticity in us and for guidance in deepening their prayer, their relationship to God, and how to become more real and authentic in their Christian commitment.

Conversion is not only a personal task; it must happen also on a community level. The quality of community relationships especially speaks volumes.

Flourishing is a very vague term; we use it loosely but know instinctively what is implied and what conditions enable it, and which can inhibit it. Here creativity is surely needed in the concrete circumstances.

Revitalization can be an even more ambiguous reality to define. One of our group pointed out that an orchard is revitalized by pruning. Such an operation is not a surprise nor unhealthy – quite the contrary. In the life of the Order more pruning will surely continue to occur with some pain involved. There will surely be some pain involved. To change the image, some individual community lights will go out so that the Light itself may continue to shine. This does not mean that we should not do all that can reasonably and responsibly be done to enable each community's light to continue to shine.

Adaptation is another very important reality. Here is where creativity is called for, and collaboration in concrete actions that may help us to do this appropriately. Pastoral solicitude has a wide range here for consultation, collaboration and creative action.

In connection with all of the above, we spoke of some experiences that can give all of us ideas to consider.

There are some people who want to be closely associated with our communities, share our spirituality, be a part of our worship, etc., – without a permanent commitment. Some communities are trying to respond to this creatively. This is just one example of seeking to adapt in an authentic way to some of the challenges of our time.

The role of Superiors has become much more demanding in the current cultural context. The areas of expected competence are amazing – more than most real human beings can meet! Sometimes the more important pastoral aspect can be lost sight of – the focus on the spiritual health, growth, life of the community. And ultimately this is what contributes to the life of the whole Order.

Fr Joseph's Power Point Presentation was entitled: Citeaux, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Principles and Suggestions for a creative fidelity—innovation in Continuity. (See accompanying Power Point file.)

## **DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE ON SAFEGUARDING AGAINST ALL FORMS OF ABUSE**

Fr Joseph of Mepkin presented a review of the Working Paper requested by the Central Commission, Citeaux 2019, and which was then prepared by Fr Richard of Mt Melleray and Fr Bernardus of Tilburg, with reference to the Report of the Law Commission Meeting, August 26-30, 2019 on Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Adults

In our reading and discussion of these documents we encountered several problems. The reason for the “Declaration of Principle on Safeguarding” and how it will be used is not clear to us.

The present draft of this “Declaration of Principle on Safeguarding” proposes changes in legislation that includes not only sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, but also abuse of conscience and power. Because the terms “abuse of power” and “abuse of conscience” are so broad, we do not see how they can be legislated. Therefore, we suggest that we limit the scope of legislation to sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. This is in keeping with the standard practice in the Church.

In Vote 38 of the 2019 Central Commission, the Law Commission was asked only to add to our legislation “a policy for the protection from abuse of minors and vulnerable adults and that the community provides education in this area.” We think that the Law Commission’s proposed text, by adding “any form of physical or psychological violence or abuse in interpersonal relationships, etc.” went beyond what was asked in Vote 38.

## **REGIONAL MATTERS**

### **Report of the Regional Secretary of Formation**

Sr Pamela Clinton of Wrentham was appointed Regional Secretary of Formation at the 2019 Regional Meeting. The 2020 Junior Seminar was planned to be held at Guadalupe at the end of April, but never happened because of the pandemic. Likewise, Junior Seminar 2021 had to be cancelled. At this point Sr Pamela looked for an alternative which resulted in offering two one-week courses, virtually. The first a course on Eucharistic Theology being offered at Wrentham; and the second a week of zoom sessions presented by Fr Daniel Hombergen of Guadalupe on Emotional Disorder, Prayer and Healing in the Early Monastic Tradition. The sessions were designed to give opportunities for interaction among the participants. The response of the juniors was quite favorable. For 2022 Sr Pamela has arranged for Berryville to host the Juniors April 25 to May 7 with Fr. Michael Casey as presenter. This is Plan A. Given the unknowns related to the Covid, Sr Pamela also has Plans B & C for 2022. Plan B – Sr Pamela is in the process of engaging two other possible presenters for Berryville. Plan C – If the continuing pandemic prevents travel to Berryville, the Plan B presenters will give their presentations virtually.

Sr Pamela has planned the 2022 seminar on the pattern of recent seminars. However, she has a somewhat different model in mind for the future. The length of time together at a monastery would be shortened and supplemented by two virtual events. The content of presentations would be more academic, based on the *Ratio*, and follow a four-year systematized curriculum. We asked that Sr. Pamela work out a possible plan and present it to us at the next Regional meeting. In our discussion we spoke to the importance of the experiential dimension of a program that would help people appropriate the content in ways helpful to monastic formation. Also, there is an important value in the opportunity the Junior Seminar provides for new members of the Order to get to know one another. This is especially true as we get smaller. Lastly, we suggest that Sr Pamela check with the French, Spanish and Dutch Regions about their formation programs and, likewise, contact the Junior Directors to clarify what is already being offered in our own programs.

In addition to the Junior Seminar Sr Pamela had some questions related to several other projects:

*ProQuest* – allows us (all our monasteries taken together as one library) to subscribe to the online database of *Patrologia Latina*. Sr Pamela is questioning whether it is used sufficiently to justify the cost. Considering that it is such a valuable resource, it seems worth the cost even if it has a lean number of users. The problem is that people can forget that we have it. It may be helpful for Sr Pamela to remind us at the time of its renewal.

*Vision Vocation Network* – Currently only 8 monasteries use the network. Sr Pamela asks whether the use justifies the cost. We decided to maintain the subscription since eight monasteries find it effective in their regard.

*Regional Website* – The primary purpose of the website is to attract vocations. The initial expense and ongoing expenses are high. Are we getting a good return on our investment? Sr Pamela suggests moving the site to a host that is much less expensive, such as *eCatholic.com*. Our discussion raised the question as to whether *eCatholic.com* could host our website. If so, is there someone in the region who could do the maintenance?

### **Regional Website**

Br Christopher Cheney of Vina, web-administrator of the regional website, prepared a report. The duties of the web-administrator include replying to messages and forms sent to the website, posting news and upcoming discernment events, posting vocation stories and blog articles from the various houses, and working with tech support. The regional website is intended to function above all as a vocations portal - to build awareness, provide information and facilitate content. Looking at the statistics, it appears that there are 10-15 vocation inquiries a month through the website contact forms. Currently, maintenance of the website is performed by the Williams Group. They are also available to the web-administrator for tech support and consultation as needed. While the site seems capable of what we want it to do, the important matter is how much traffic is coming to the site.

We discussed the Regional website in connection with questions raised by Sr Pamela Clinton in her report on the Regional Formation Program. See Regional Secretary of Formation (previous entry).

### **Cistercian Publications**

Because of the pandemic, the Cistercian Publication Board of Directors did not meet in 2020, but did meet online on January 30, 2021. The next meeting is planned to take place in person at the Fetzer Institute on May 26, 2022. The current situation of Cistercian Publications is solid and successful. Significant factors contributing to this success are having an excellent and dedicated editor in Marsha Dutton, its steady attraction of excellent authors, and consistency in its mission.

Cistercian Publications is also doing well financially. For the financial year ending June 2021 it will not be necessary for the Region to subsidize CP. Our profit-sharing agreement with Liturgical Press is in place, but we rarely reach the threshold of sales and profits that results in some income to Cistercian Publications.

The Corporation of Cistercian Publication is composed of all the elected Superiors of our U.S. Region, and we welcomed Fr. Vincent Rogers, Abbot of Spencer, as a new member of this Corporation.

### **Cistercian Studies Quarterly**

CSQ continues to thrive and is financially sound. The journal is lean, making it simple to maintain in internal structure. Most important to its success is the continued contributions of experts in the field. Articles from those who have published with CSQ before are providing new insights to its readers. CSQ is now available on the online platform ATLA which makes it possible to respond to requests for back issues by referring inquirers to the ATLA database. Much credit for all this is due to Fr Lawrence of Gethsemani as Editor, and Fr Jerome of Genesee as Administrator.

### **Schola Cistercienses**

First presented to the Regional Meeting in 2019 by Sr Grace Remington of Mississippi Abbey and Fr Lawrence Morey of Gethsemani, this proposed project is to produce a series of videotaped courses on Cistercian themes, given by scholars in the areas of their specific expertise.

This initiative is in response to the difficulties experienced by many houses of the Order in engaging good speakers and the fact that because of aging an increasing number of these scholars are unable to travel and are limited in the number of engagements they can accept. The courses would be available to any house of the order by DVD or streaming online. At the request of the 2019 Regional Meeting, Sr Grace and Fr Lawrence have produced one set of classes on Rancé by David Bell. They are excellent in quality. Marsha Dutton has agreed to give a series of conferences on Aelred this fall. Possible classes



for the future include: Fr Michael Casey on Bernard and Gueric of Igny, Bernard McGinn on Cistercian Mysticism, Teryl Kinder on Cistercian architecture, Pauline Matarasso on John of Forde, Fr Elias Dietz on Isaac of Stella and on the manuscript tradition. Our conversation about this project shared the enthusiasm of its two presenters in recognizing and responding to a genuine need in the Order. Consequently, we approved the proposal and the budget submitted with it, with appreciation and gratitude to Sr Grace and Fr Lawrence.

### **Monastic Business Association (MBA)**

We addressed three items presented in the report by Fr Stephen Verbest, MBA Secretary, to the Regional Superiors: Affirmation of the Amended By-Laws of the MBA, Election of the Board of Directors of the MBA and Certification Marks.

Affirmation of the Amended By-Laws of the MBA - The Board of Directors had given unanimous consent on March, 2020, and with unanimous written consent. At this meeting we completed the process by affirming the Amended By-Laws by unanimous vote.

Election of the Board of Directors and Officers of the Corporation – Since two members of the Board, Fr Damien Carr and Fr Mark Scott, have retired as abbots, and the third member, Fr Elias Dietz, preferred not to be re-elected, we elected three new Directors: Fr Vincent Rogers, Fr Joseph Tedesco and Mother Kathy Ullrich. Fr Vincent was elected President. Subsequent to their election the Board of Directors met and elected the following Officers: Fr Gerard D’Souza – Vice President; Fr Stephen Verbest - Secretary and Treasurer.

Certification Marks – The adoption of a certification mark for protection of regional products and services has been under consideration. Fr Stephen gave a clear explanation of its value as an added security against unapproved use of the names Trappist and Trappistine and also as a guard of the integrity of products or services. We requested that the Board of Directors look further into the matter.

### **Regional Health Plan and Catastrophe Fund**

Currently the Regional Health Care Plan is administered at Conyers. The investment of the funds is solid and is yielding good interest for the 14 participating communities. The program was designed originally to assist a community in a situation of unusually high medical costs which it would find difficult to meet. However, the fact that there has not been a request for assistance since 2012 raises the question as to whether the plan is still needed. In the interim, many communities have felt the need to invest in commercial health insurance, and no longer count on the plan. Our conversation also included discussion about the exorbitant cost of both medical care and health insurance. It was decided to keep the health care plan as is for the present– just in case it is needed - since the money is well invested and is relatively easy to administer through the generosity of Conyers.

### **Chaplains for Monasteries of Nuns**

The difficulty of finding chaplains for our women's houses is becoming a common problem, and several houses in our region are feeling the impact of this. The aging of OCSO priests and fewer candidates for the priesthood in our communities has greatly reduced the pool of possible chaplains. The problem is exacerbated by the reality that the priests who would be able to take on this responsibility are needed in their own monasteries. Turning to diocesan priests does not seem to be an answer to this dilemma because of the general shortage of priests in the Church. Often retired or inactive priests are not able to meet this need. Consequently, Mass and the sacraments are not always available for some of our nuns.

Brainstorming together on ways to alleviate this problem yielded some suggestions. Monks could be 'on loan' for short periods of time. Perhaps some kind of exchange could be worked out in instances: a nun replaces a monk and his work – for example, guest master – while he serves as chaplain for a period of time in the nun's monastery. Another possibility is hiring a lay person to enable a monk to serve as chaplain.

We realize there is no easy solution for this serious difficulty. It is good to know that as a Region we support one another and are sensitive to possibilities that may emerge by way of alleviating the problem. It is a concrete experience of the Charter of Charity being applied in our time. It is heartening to experience the solicitude of our brothers for our sisters – an example of our collaboration on a regional level.

### **Secretaries for Regional Meetings**

Going forward, we realize the need to train some newer and younger monks/nuns to fulfill this function. There are some possibilities which will be considered – someone who could come to the next meeting and work with the two secretaries who have had the experience of being responsible for the Minutes of the Regional Meetings in recent years.

## **EVALUATION OF THIS REGIONAL MEETING**

It had been two and a half years since the last Regional meeting - and the warm, pleasant hospitality of the Gethsemani community provided the perfect space for us to gather at last. Throughout our week-long meeting we were renewed daily by sharing in the Liturgy of the community and also by good meals and comfortable accommodations. No wonder one superior described the week of work as an “almost relaxing experience.”

The positive energy and peaceful calm that supported our work seemed to come from the openness, mutual respect and high level of trust that we share. While it seems that in the past we had more pastoral sharings scheduled apart from the work of the meeting, now the easy flow between the pastoral and the business aspects blends smoothly. We worked together through some heavy, complex issues and came to consensus as well as to some new conclusions. The newer superiors among us expressed appreciation for the wisdom, skill and “real brilliance in the thinking” of the senior members of the group that gives them a sense of security and hope for the future. In the words of one, “as an Order we belong to one another, and this gathering expresses that.”

Many distinct pieces combined to create a well-organized, peacefully paced meeting: the preliminary work, the preparation and presentations of reports and papers, the work of the vote formulators and also the moderators who kept us on track during the sessions. A special thanks and tribute was given to Sr. Barbara who has been with us for many years as a secretary and has spoiled us with her gentle presence and efficiency. We are happy to be here!

## U.S. REGIONAL STATUTE

(Approved at Regional Meeting 2014) - % changed at 2017 Meeting /approved 2019

**01. US REGION is the official name. The Region is composed of both monks and nuns.**

(Constitution 81; Regional Meeting 1996)

**02. Regional Meetings:**

- A. At least one meeting is held during a General Chapter. Two Regional Meetings are held between General Chapters: usually, one with delegates from the communities, one without delegates.
- B. The first meeting after a General Chapter prepares for the Central Commission
- C. Delegates, elected to attend the General Chapter, attend the Regional Meeting that prepares for the coming General Chapter.
- D. There may be meetings for pastoral sharing.
- E. Parliamentary law is followed during the full regional meeting.
- F. Superiors, Delegates, and Delegates to the General Chapter have a right to vote if the nature of the vote does not restrict this right to the Superiors.

**03. President of the Region is elected by the superiors present at the first Regional Meeting after a General Chapter. The responsibilities are:**

- A. Presiding at Regional Meetings.
- B. Coordinating and moderating Regional Meetings using the help of two assistant moderators if the Regional Meeting opts for these assistants.
- C. Preparing an agenda and circulating it with other necessary information to the superiors.
- D. Inviting a Canadian observer and other persons who are asked to attend.
- E. Providing for secretaries for the Regional Meetings.
- F. Calling mini-meetings when these are required.
- G. Dividing the expenses of a Regional Meeting according to the percentage basis.

**04. Regional Personnel:**

- A. At the end of each Regional Meeting, two assistant moderators are elected for the following Regional Meeting. They form a coordinating committee with the President.
- B. Regional Delegates for the General Chapter are elected at that Regional Meeting with delegates from the communities. Eligible for the Chapter are those monks and nuns delegates present at the Meeting. Electors are the delegates present or the superior of a community which does not have a delegate present. All of these electors (monks and nuns) vote for a monk delegate and a nun delegate.
- C. Regional Secretary of Formation is elected by superiors and delegates at the first Regional Meeting after a General Chapter. He or she chooses an assistant. The secretary's responsibilities are given in #71, Guidelines on Formation.
- D. When the US Region sponsors CSQ, the editor is elected by the US Regional Meeting, by superiors and delegates. The editor's term of office is six years. If a new editor must be named between meetings, the Regional President makes a temporary appointment until the next Regional Meeting. The US Regional Meeting will also elect three Directors whose task is to promote CSQ, to provide counsel to the editor, and to advise the region about its choice

of editors. The financial and administrative matters of CSQ are overseen by the Board of Directors of Cistercian Studies Quarterly, Inc., a board that consists of a President (the editor), a Vice President, a Treasurer (i.e. the administrator of CSQ's current business, who may be an employee), and a Secretary (a monk or nun of the region capable of monitoring the corporation and its finances). If the sponsorship of CSQ passes to another region, these provisions cease to apply.

- E. Cistercian Publications: Members of this Corporation are the superiors of each community. New superiors must be voted in at a Regional Meeting. Meetings of the Corporation are held during a Regional Meeting.
- F. A member for the Central Commissions and an alternate are elected at a Regional Meeting during the General Chapter.
- G. Monastic Business Association officials are elected at a Regional Meeting.
- H. Regional Health Plan has an administrator and a substitute elected by the Region.

**05. Regional Expenses**, shared and pro-rated by the communities, are:

- A. The Regional Delegates to General Chapter
- B. Secretaries for Regional Meetings.
- C. Abbot General if he attends a Regional Meeting, and his secretary, but only room and board.
- D. English Speaking Member of the Permanent Council if she/he is present.
- E. Visitors officially invited.
- F. The schedule for pro-rating is:
  - 9% Gethsemani, New Melleray, Spencer, Genesee
  
  - 6.5% Conyers, Guadalupe, Wrentham, Berryville, Vina, Mepkin,  
Snowmass, Mississippi
  
  - 4% Redwoods, Santa Rita, Crozet.

Wed evening 6:30: Welcome – Fr Gerard  
 Fr Elias – Hskp/Ltgy; Finances,etc – Sec'ty  
 Select Vote Formulators, Rdrs of Minutes

**REGIONAL MEETING – AUG 26-SEP 1**  
**Gethsemani Abbey**

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
8:45 – Terce G  GenChap: M Kathy DeV Elec procedure Ab Gen Liturgy (place, etc) Covid Protocol Invited speakers	8:45 – Terce G  Frs Immediate – Fr Peter	8:45 – Terce K  Creative Fidelity Fr Joseph of B'vl	8:30 K Regional items, con't:  Sec Formation – M Sofia (con't)  Regional Website Fr Gerard	8:45 – Terce K  Initial presentation of Votes	8:45 – Terce K  Voting
Morning Break 10:00–10:20	Morning Break 10:00–10:20	Morning Break 10:00–10:20		Morning Break 10:00–10:20	Morning Break 10:00–10:20
G  Continued  (until noon)	G  Continued  (until noon)	K  Continued  (until noon)	<b>Terce/Mass 10:20</b>	K  Initial presentation of Votes (con't) (until noon)	K  Voting  (until noon)
Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
2:00 – None K  <u>Regional Matters</u>  Summary Written Reports: MBA – Fr Stephen V <i>Schola Cister</i> – M Rebecca	2:00 – None G  Role of Ab Gen & Council (M Kathy U)	2:00 – None G  Safeguarding Policy  (Fr Joseph of Mepkin)	2:00 - None  <b>Free</b>	2:00 – None G  Initial presentation of Votes (con't)	2:00 – None G  Leftover Regional items, etc
Afternoon Break 3:30-3:50	Afternoon Break 3:30-3:50	Afternoon Break 3:30-3:50		Afternoon Break 3:30-3:50	Afternoon Break 3:30-3:50
K  <u>Regional Matters con't</u> CP/CSQ – Fr Elias Health Plan-Fr Augustine  Sec Formation – M Sofia (until 5 p.m.)	G  Continued  (until 5 p.m.)	G  Continued  (until 5 p.m.)	<b>Free</b>	G  Open items  (until 5 p.m.)	G  Autocritique Rgnl Mtg 2021  Elec 2 Coordinators and select place/date for 2022 meeting