

CENTRAL COMMISSION 2021



Rome, 23rd November – 1st December, 2021

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PARTICIPANTS AT THE MEETING OF THE CENTRAL COMMISSION
SERAPHICUM - ROME 2021

1 **Abbot General** Dom EAMON Fitzgerald

Members of the Coordination Commission:

2 Promoter Dom JEAN-MARC Chéné, *Bellefontaine*
3 Vice-Promoter Mother REBEKKA Willekes, *Klaarland*
4 Members Dom ROBERTO de la Iglesia Pérez, *Cardeña*
5 Mother MARIE Fahy, *Glencairn*
6 Dom ELIAS Dietz, *Gethsemani*

Superior Delegates from the Regions:

7 CAN Dom CLÉMENT Charbonneau, *Mistassini*
8 CNE Mother MARIE PASCALE Dran, *Brialmont*
10 NED Dom BERNARDUS Peeters, *Tilburg*
11 ORIENS Mother GIOVANNA Garbelli, *Matutum*
12 RAFMA Dom JEAN-BOSCO Kamali, *Victoria*
13 Mother PHILOMÈNE Kalimbanya, *Kibungo*
14 RE Mother ISABEL Rivero Navarro, *Vico*
15 RéCiF Dom BENOÎT Briand, *Timadeuc*
16 REI Mother MAGDALENA Köning, *Donnersberg*
17 REM Mother ANNE-EMMANUELLE Devêche, *Blauvac*
18 REMILA Mother MARIELA Jerez Pereira, *Quilvo*
19 Mother LILIANA Schiano Moriello, *Boa Vista*
20 USA Dom GERARD D'Souza, *Genesee*

Members of the Council of the Abbot General:

21 Dom TIMOTHY Kelly, Procurator
22 Mother DANIELÈ Levrard
23 Dom ANASTASIUS Li
24 Mère RACHEL Agoukpe
25 Dom JUAN JOSÉ Domingo Falomir

(24 people with voting rights)

Interpreters:

26	French - English	Father WILLIAM Dingwall, <i>Spencer</i>
27	French - Spanish	Ms MARIA GABRIELA Scanavino
28	English - French	Ms CORINNE O'Connor (<i>Le Rivet</i>)
29	English - Spanish	Ms ANA Blazquez
30	Spanish - French	Father RAPHAËL García-Pelayo, <i>Cîteaux</i>
31	Spanish - English	Brother GREGORY Escardo, <i>Gethsemani</i>

Secretaries:

32	English	Sister FIACHRA Nutty, <i>Glencairn</i>
33	French	Sister MARIE Mouris, <i>Val d'Igny</i>
34	Spanish	Father MARCO ANTONIO Maldonado Jaramillo, <i>Jacona</i>

Printing and various Services:

35	Sister MARILUCIA Ji, <i>Quilvo, Generalate</i>
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Invited guest to join the meeting by video conference:

Father Mauricio Tavella, *Azul*, Central Secretary for Formation

Apologies:

Dom Daniel of the Region of the ISLES
Dom Raphael of ORIENS Region

INTRODUCTION

The Central Commission meeting was convened to prepare the General Chapter of 2022. The challenges facing the meeting were considerable, primarily due to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic which caused postponement of the General Chapter of 2020. This resulted in a backlog of issues still waiting to be handled and the addition of several new issues which had since arisen.

Undaunted by an agenda which sought to combine 148 regional votes taken in 2021 with the outcome of the Central Commission meeting of 2019, everyone quickly settled down to work, which later was evaluated by participants as being of a notably fraternal and productive nature.

Dom Eamon's announcement of his desire to present his resignation as Abbot General as soon as possible gave a note of urgency to discussions on the first day and coloured much of the subsequent agenda.

Gratitude was expressed for the wonders of technology which permitted Fr Mauricio to join the meeting by video conference from the monastery of Azul and to present his report as Central Secretary for Formation.

A very pleasant visit to Tre Fontane and the resident Brothers and sisters, which included a reception and tour were greatly appreciated and enjoyed. The praying of Vespers in common at this place of unique spiritual significance was deemed particularly moving.

It was the remarkable capacity for fraternal exchanges and a flexibility of opinion that resulted in creative solutions being found to urgent and complex issues while the re-visiting of several long-term topics bore additional fruit at this very dynamic meeting.

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE CENTRAL COMMISSION OF 2021

The Abbot General, Dom Eamon, warmly welcomed everyone to the Central Commission meeting of 2021 at the Pontifical Theological Faculty of Saint Bonaventure, commonly called the “*Seraphicum*” located about five hundred metres from the abbey of Tre Fontane, the place of the martyrdom of St Paul.

Reminding everyone that the role of the Central Commission is to prepare the agenda and related matters for the next General Chapter, Dom Eamon went on to say that the date upon which this would occur would be largely determined by his need, as a result of a serious health issue, to tender his resignation as soon as possible.

Thus, having handed over the meeting to the Promoter Dom Jean-Marc and his colleagues, Dom Eamon invoked a blessing on the work of the meeting and all its participants.

PRELIMINARIES

The formulation of votes:

in the light of the success of the procedure adopted at the Central Commission Meetings of Roscrea in 2016 and Citeaux in 2019, it was agreed to employ the same system for the meeting of 2021. Thus the coordinating commission were responsible for the formulation of votes while an *ad hoc* committee consisting of D Bernardus, D Juan José and M Marie Pascale, undertook to review and correct them.

Translation:

For the sake of consistency and accuracy, a number of participants (D Clement, D Roberto, D Jean Bosco) agreed to monitor translations for the duration of the meeting.

COVID 19:

To ensure the health and safety of all participants, staff and visitors to the *Seraphicum*, shortly after our arrival antigen tests were taken and the necessary protocols including the wearing of masks, sanitization of hands etc. were agreed. We were impressed by these and other measures which were both reassuring and effective and which bode well for future meetings of the Order when these kinds of protocols are established and observed.

It was with sadness that participants learned of the death of Fr Jean Pierre of the community of Tibhirine, whose funeral took place on the first day of this meeting. Prayers for his eternal peace and rest were offered at the office of Terce.

I. PREPARATION OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

1. Resignation and Election of the Abbot General

The Abbot General’s announcement of his desire to present his resignation to the General Chapter as soon as possible required this issue and that of the election of his successor to become a priority on the initial day of the meeting.

First considerations given to the matter included:

- How to expedite D Eamon’s release from the burden of the office of Abbot General.
- Making a decision on the type and duration of the General Chapter of 2022.
- Formulation of proposals for the dates, location and agenda.
- Seeking ways to ensure participation in elections by those unable to attend in person.

Vote 1: We wish to have a General Chapter in February 2022 to accept the resignation of the present AG and to elect a new AG.

YES 21 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 2: We wish to hold the General Chapter of 2022 in 2 parts, in February and in September.

YES 20 NO 3 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 3: We wish to elect the 2 new councillors of the AG in February 2022.

YES 14 NO 7 ABS 1 No Vote 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 4: We wish to hold the General Chapter of February 2022 in *Domus Pacis* in Assisi.

YES 19 NO 2 ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 5: We ask the AG and his Council to seek the permission of the Holy See to allow superiors, who cannot travel to Assisi, to vote by proxy in the February 2022 election of the AG.

YES 14 NO 7 ABS 1 No Vote 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 11: We ask the AG and his Council to seek the permission of the Holy See to allow superiors who cannot travel to Assisi to vote by proxy in February 2022 for the new members of the Council of the AG.

YES 17 NO 5 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 12: We wish to limit the scope of the GC of February 2022 to the resignation, the election of the AG and 2 members of his Council.

YES 4 NO 18 ABS 1

Proposition rejected

(If this vote is accepted we take vote 13)

~~Vote 13: We wish the dates of the GC to be February 6th – 13th, 2022 (arrive on the 6th, leave on the 13th).~~

~~YES NO ABS~~

Vote 14: We wish to extend the scope of the GC of February 2022 to include the resignation of the Abbot General, the election of a new Abbot General and two councillors and other topics.

YES 19 NO 3 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted we take votes 15 and 16)

Vote 15: We wish the dates of the GC to be February 6th -18th, 2022 (arrive on the 6th, leave on the 18th).

YES 19 NO 4 ABS

Proposition accepted

2. Alternative Plan 'B'

As the status of the pandemic was entirely unpredictable at the time of meeting, the commission, while convened, considered it prudent to elect an *ad hoc* commission to draw up an alternative plan or 'Plan B' in the event that the General Chapter Part 1 could not take place. Gratitude was expressed to the Abbot General's councillors D Timothy and D Juan José for agreeing to undertake this charge.

Vote 19: We wish to form an *ad hoc* commission during this central commission to draw up an alternative plan in the event that the General Chapter Part 1 cannot take place.

YES 20 NO 4 ABS

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted, we take vote 20)

Vote 20: We wish this commission to be composed of two people.

YES 19 NO 2 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

3. Preparation for the Election of a New Abbot General

Limitations of time for preparation, coupled with COVID restrictions and the vast distances between members in some regions (which preclude meetings beforehand) gave rise for concern. To alleviate these difficulties, it was decided to make some provisions including: - a procedure of election, the appointment of a master of ceremonies, time allocated for both a conference on the role of the Abbot General and regional reflection.

Vote 62: We ask that we adopt the following procedure for the election of the AG at the GC Part 1 in 2022:

- Dialogue and nominations within the Regional Conferences
- Presentation of the Regions’ nominations in the aula without discussion
- Discussion of the Regions’ nominations in the commissions
- Election

YES 22 NO ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 29: We ask the Abbot General and his Council to invite Dom Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori (O.Cist) to the GC 2022 Part 1 to give a conference.

YES 22 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 51: We ask the AG and his Council to appoint a Master of Ceremonies for the Election and Installation of the new Abbot General.

YES 22 NO ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 30: We ask the Abbot General and his Council to invite Dom Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori O.Cist to be a witness of the election of the Abbot General.

YES 20 NO 4 ABS

Proposition accepted

4. Election of Abbot General’s Council

The election of the Abbot General’s Council was discussed. Due to the pandemic-induced postponement of the General Chapter of 2020, several councillors’ mandates have been extended until the next General Chapter. Clarification was sought on the procedure for the election of members to the Council including the possibility of regional presentation of candidates. As three councillors are reaching the end of their mandates, new appointments need to be made and an adequate time of transition afforded, especially in the light of the forthcoming two-part General Chapter in 2022.

Vote 23: We wish to have a presentation on the role of the AG’s Council before the election.

YES 15 NO 8 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 24: We wish to adopt the following procedure for the election of the two new Councillors of the AG at the GC part 1:

- Discussion and nominations within the Regional Conferences
- Presentation of the Regions’ nominations in the aula
- Discussion of the Regions’ nominations in the commissions
- Election

YES 22 NO 1 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 25: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC part 1 the topic of possible changes to the legislation on the Councillors of the AG.

YES 11 NO 13 ABS

Proposition rejected

(If this vote is accepted, we proceed to vote 26)

~~Vote 26: We ask the Law Commission to prepare a working paper on these possible changes to the legislation: for example age limit and the number of terms allowed to the Councillors of the AG.~~

~~YES NO ABS~~

5. COVID-19

It was agreed that the health and safety of participants must be a high priority at the General Chapter and that all possible prevention methods must be adopted to avoid contraction and spread of the virus.

Much impressed by measures employed at the Central Commission meeting, it was acknowledged that local protocols, national and international restrictions, testing, and periods of initial quarantine, were key elements in combatting possible infection and ensuring people felt safe and comfortable. It was suggested that a medical team, conversant with local facilities and services ought to be in attendance. Furthermore, special attention should be paid to the size of meeting rooms and the provision of adequate ventilation.

Another matter of concern was the needed COVID provisions for those participants who cannot be accommodated at *Domus Pacis*. Aside from the costs associated with this issue, consideration was given to the maintenance of a COVID free ‘bubble’ among the assembly. Several suggestions will be investigated by a member of the Abbot General’s Council in this regard but, in order to reduce complications and expenses, a vote was taken on the participation of regional delegates.

Vote 52: We wish to invite Regional Delegates to the General Chapter 2022 Part 1.

YES 3 NO 19 ABS 1

Proposition rejected

6. Finance

The negative impact of the world wide pandemic on the financial state of many houses and the cost of attending two sessions of a General Chapter in one year were considered likely to discourage full attendance. Therefore it was decided to seek assistance from the Commission of Aid. The request would be for the Commission to cover all costs – including those of travel and accommodation. An estimate of the total figure, based on those for the General Chapter of 2017 would be included in a letter of request (Appendix iv) to be sent by the Promoter.

Vote 57: We make an extraordinary request to the Commission of Aid to finance the cost of the GC 2022 Part 1.

YES 20 NO 1 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

7. Regional Reports

The first day of the General Chapter Part 1 is to be a designated time for regional meetings. One task at those meetings will be to reflect on the Region’s view of the Abbot General’s role in the light of their present needs and expectations and to present the outcome in the aula.

In addition, Regional Reports are to be prepared for Part 2 of the Chapter, with the inclusion of both positive and negative experiences together with general statistics of the regions to help provide a more balanced view of the state of the Order.

Vote 6: We confirm vote 24 of the CC meeting 2019, which says: *“We ask the Regions to submit a text of not more than 3,000 characters, expressing their view of the AG’s role in the light of their present needs and expectations.”*

YES 8 NO 15 ABS

Proposition rejected

(If this vote is not accepted we proceed to vote 7)

Vote 7: We wish to have Regional Reports including general statistics of the Region at the GC September 2022.

YES 22 NO 1 ABS

Proposition accepted

8. House reports

Past experiences of handling house reports at the General Chapter have not always been good, primarily due to time pressures related to many capitulants working in various *ad hoc* commissions. This situation gives rise to a temptation to consider only house reports that demonstrate some form of difficulty, but this approach could lead to dissatisfaction of other houses who would lack motivation to produce reports in the future.

A primary purpose of the study of house reports is to provide an effective way for the General Chapter to really listen and thus garner an accurate view of the state of the Order. Thus, the General Chapter must operate with a more pastoral focus and work towards an arrangement that gives adequate time for this important work.

II. MAJOR ISSUES FROM THE AGENDA

9. *Cor Orans*

Cor Orans, the document which implements the encyclical *Vultum Dei Quaerere*, affects all communities of nuns since it came into force in 2018. During the Central Commission of 2019 (votes 47-49) discussions focused on the adaptation of this document to our existing legislation and the presentation of requests for dispensation regarding some of its requirements which were subsequently granted. It also examined the work required of the Law Commission to try to ensure greater harmonization of legislation between monks and nuns.

Discussions at the Central Commission of 2021 took up the points of the Central Commission of 2019, which resulted in a suggestion to enter into dialogue with the Sacred Congregation with the objective of coming to a mutually acceptable agreement from currently differing standpoints. It was suggested that the Abbot General, with the Law Commission, should approach the CICLSAL, with a view to exploring possibilities and thereafter make a presentation to the GC in the form of a working paper

Vote 16: We suggest that the GC of Feb 2022 request that the AG and his Council together with the Law Commission explore with the CICLSAL the implications of *Cor Orans* for our legislation.

YES 22 NO 1 ABS

Proposition accepted

10. Safeguarding and Prevention of Abuse

The complexity of this topic, addressed at the 2019 Central Commission, suggests that the concept of abuse needs to be more clearly defined, since many documents now speak of '*all forms of abuse*' which includes sexual abuse and the abuse of power and conscience. The US Region stressed the importance of being precise in legally defining the issue, since to speak of abuse in general terms opens up the possibility of increased legal responsibility.

At a formative and preventive level, the contribution of the Regions who have worked on this subject, coupled with the draft "*Declaration of Principles on the Prevention of All Forms of Abuse*" are useful first steps in clarifying the difficulties that can arise in communities and how they should be handled. The participation of an expert at the General Chapter to speak on the subject should be a great help in furthering the issue.

There is an ever-increasing awareness of the need to have both a monastic and juridical formation on safeguarding and prevention of abuse and to elaborate a protocol as required by the Holy See.

The legislation of the Order recognizes the authority of superiors to deal with issues of abuse, in cooperation with the local Bishop and the Holy See as and when cases arise, but consideration could also be given to the idea of creating a monastic tribunal to adjudicate and issue sanctions where appropriate.

Vote 32: We ask the new Abbot General and his Council to invite to the GC 2022 part 2 an expert on the topic of different forms of abuse and their prevention.

YES 20 NO 2 ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 35: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 part 2 the topic of safeguarding against all forms of abuse.

YES 22 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 36: We wish to appoint a commission to draw up a working paper for the GC 2022 part 2 based on the draft of “The Declaration of Principle on Safeguarding Against all Forms of Abuse” and on the input from the Regions.

YES 19 NO 4 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 37: We wish this commission to be composed of 2 persons.

YES 20 NO 1 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

11. Structures of the Order

11.1. Delegated Father Immediate:

Much of the work on the issue of Fathers Immediate, has already been done. A synthesis of responses to a questionnaire sent to the twenty-three houses affected by the delegation of temporarily appointed Fathers Immediate at the General Chapter of 2017 was presented to the meeting. Of the fifteen respondents, ten do not want a definitive change and five do.

If a Community is content with a delegation, but doesn't want a definitive change, what is to happen next? There are no criteria for making a decision, so a case by case study is required.

Possible solutions might include:

- That the Regional Conferences play a role.
- That the regular visitation become less frequent.
- That the abbesses of the order become more involved.

Such solutions would need to be flexible i.e. of a short-term nature and subject to evaluation, especially as the role of a Father Immediate is not limited just to visitations but also involves a pastoral role.

The Central Commission is asking the General Chapter to appoint a commission to begin working on these issues after the first part of the Chapter in February:

Vote 28: We ask the GC gathered in Feb 2022 for the first part of the Chapter to elect a commission, similar to the one established at the GC of 2017 regarding Fathers Immediate in order to gather information and seek solutions to present at the GC 2022 part 2.

YES 22 NO 3 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

11.2. Greater Involvement on the Part of Abbesses

At the Central Commission of 2019, a proposal to put on the agenda of the General Chapter the temporary delegation of the paternity of a monastery of nuns, to an abbess, was rejected. The real question was in fact, not the idea of entrusting regular visitations, but the pastoral charge, to female superiors.

Mentalities have changed considerably since 2019, and in response to a particular situation a pastoral responsibility has been entrusted to an abbess, acting as Pastoral Assistant to a house of monks.

Vote 59: In order to encourage a greater involvement of Abbesses in Regular Visitations and pastoral accompaniment, we recommend that the Commission on Fathers Immediate, refer to vote 77 of the GC 2017.

YES 20 NO 1 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

11.3. Monastic Commissary

The creation of the office of ‘Monastic Commissary’ could be a useful instrument in the management of certain crisis cases. By legally creating such a role, the Order could act without having to take each case to the Holy See.

At present, in the face of an emergency situation, our legislation permits:

- That a small Commission be formed, to reflect on a given situation.
- That the Central Commission might act as an enlarged Council of the Abbot General.
- That the Abbot General decide on a special visit, so a report might be written and presented to the General Chapter, which would subsequently take a decision.

11.4. Accompaniment of fragile Communities

Since not all fragile Communities necessarily proceed to suppression, one Region proposed that the Statute on accompaniment should be separated from the Statute dealing with suppression.

Concerning the rights of the members of a house that is being closed it was recognised that the Commission responsible for the closure of a House must ensure that each Brother or Sister has a place to go. However, the right to be received into a monastery of the Order, e.g. the mother house, may result in creating a problem for another Community. Since some Communities are hesitant about accepting such an arrangement, this matter is in need of attention.

While much work has already been done on these issues, it is essential that they now proceed to the next stage.

Vote 21: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC part 1 Cst 67, C 34bis and the ‘Statute on fragile communities and the suppression of a monastery’.

YES 20 NO 3 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 22: We wish to deal with this topic by extraordinary procedure.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS

Proposition accepted

11.5. Resignations of Superiors

In the case of the resignation of superiors for reasons of age it was suggested this matter be dealt with by the Abbot General and his Council, in order to avoid overloading the work of the General Chapter.

Vote 41: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 part 2 a revision of C. 40 by which the AG acts ordinarily as Vicar of the GC in resignations for reasons of age.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted, we proceed to vote 42)

Vote 42: We ask the Law Commission to prepare a working paper on this topic.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 43: We wish this topic to be treated by ordinary procedure.

YES 22 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

11.6. Absent members of a Community

Work needs to be done on the question of absent members who can be neglected despite being part of a superiors' pastoral charge. Sometimes people are legitimately absent and need support from their superior. At other times people are illegitimately absent and need to be encouraged to return or seek departure from the Order. In cases where departure is being considered, the question that could be asked is - what has been done to bring the person back to their Community?

Vote 40: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 part 2 the question of the care of absent members with a view to providing pastoral guidelines.

YES 22 NO 1 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 40 bis.: We wish that this topic be treated by ordinary procedure.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS

Proposition accepted

11.7. Regions

There was general agreement that the effectiveness of the General Chapter is greatly enhanced by the prior work of the Regions, since initial groundwork can contribute significantly to dealing with complex issues. Sometimes it has been suggested that if Regions were accorded additional powers, they might be able to undertake additional work in preparation for the General Chapter and perhaps even provide new means, within our current structure, for dealing with particular issues.

In many ways the principle of subsidiarity, whereby issues are dealt with as near to the grass root level as possible, is already working well in our Order, but a suggestion was made that the forthcoming General Chapter could provide an opportunity for a concrete study of how it might better be implemented. Furthermore, if Regions were asked to deal with particular issues before the forthcoming Chapter was convened, it might enable a prospective vision to emerge which would give rise to new and creative ways of moving forward together.

Another question arose concerning the composition of our Regions, which some consider no longer representative of reality. Should Sub-Regions become the norm, especially where great geographical or cultural differences exist? Smaller sub-Regions might help reduce travel costs, or perhaps facilitate more frequent meetings, but this could also impoverish the richness currently enjoyed at meetings where more diverse perspectives are shared.

It was acknowledged that since the composition of Regions is approved by the General Chapter, their restructuring would also necessitate its approval.

Vote 46: We wish to put on the agenda of the GC 2022 Part 2 the study of the role of the regions in the light of the principle of subsidiarity.

YES 17 NO 6 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 47 bis.: We wish this issue to be dealt with under the ordinary procedure.

YES 24 NO 0 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 61: In the context of the synod on synodality we ask that a reflection on the functioning of the Regions in the light of the principle of subsidiarity be given time in the commissions of the GC 2022, part 2 a first step in the process.

YES 19 NO 3 ABS

Proposition accepted

11.8. Finance Commission and Commission of Aid

The previous Central Commission requested an evaluation of the Order's finance and of the work of the Commission of Aid to be presented in a report at the next General Chapter. Financial experts are currently working to clarify certain points concerning the Order's finances and will make suggestions for improved management once the ongoing process has been completed.

The current members of the Commission of Aid were elected with a mandate that was due to expire in 2020. Consequently, this Commission will need to be renewed during the next General Chapter. All current members will be eligible for re-election but M Geneviève-Marie has stated that she believes the time has come for her to retire while she can still transmit the finer details associated with her responsibilities.

Opinion was expressed on the need of a transmission period which could occur between February and September, even if the election of the new Commission takes place during the first part of the General Chapter in February of 2022.

Vote 56: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 Part 1 the election of the members of the Commission of Aid.

YES 18 NO 3 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

12. Irish Houses

The sudden announcement of the resignation of the abbot at Mt Melleray, and the subsequent implications for all houses of the Order in Ireland was a surprise addition to the agenda of the Central Commission. This was brought about by a letter from D Michael, Abbot of Bolton and Father Immediate of Mt Melleray, addressed to the Abbot General. In that communication D Michael outlined the crisis situation now existing among the Cistercian houses, where there is a dearth of superiors and Father's Immediate and little hope of finding people to fill these roles. One participant put the situation in context saying that these communities, without either superior or Father Immediate, desperately need urgent support and that the matter could not wait until the next GC.

From this very stark and concrete situation the urgent need to reinvigorate the process of confirming the proposed statute on the accompaniment of fragile communities became clear, but in the interim the Central Commission, acting as the plenary council of the Abbot General, sought to provide a speedy, practical, yet temporary solution, from legislation already in existence.

One possible solution considered was the launching of a pilot scheme by appointing a 'monastic commissary' with the approval of the Holy See but this process was eventually rejected because it was likely to take some time. Ultimately it was decided to appoint M Marie, abbess of Glencairn, as 'Pastoral Assistant' to the abbey of Mellifont, charged with the task of providing accompaniment to that community while conducting research which would lead to the presentation of a report on the situation to the GC Part 2 of 2022.

Vote 45: We ask the Abbot General to appoint M. Marie of Glencairn as Pastoral Assistant for the community of Mellifont until the GC 2022 part 2.

YES 21 NO ABS 3

Proposition accepted

III. THE FUNCTIONING OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

Considerations concerning the costs and sacrifices made to facilitate attendance at a two-part General Chapter gave rise to a number of votes which sought to improve time management for the purposes of:

- Addressing the range of issues and pastoral concerns which have built up over a five-year period since the last General Chapter.
- Affording an opportunity for geographically disparate Regions to meet and reflect with their members.
- Making provision for sufficient time for prayer and reflection prior to the election of the new Abbot General.
- Forming a clear vision of the current state of the Order through a deep listening process.

Vote 8: We wish to hold regional meetings on the first day of the GC in February 2022 in preparation for the election.

YES 23 NO ABS

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted, we proceed to vote 9)

Vote 9: We wish that each Region give a brief report in the aula.

YES 21 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 10: We wish to have an afternoon of prayer and silence on the eve of the election of the AG.

YES 22 NO ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 27: We wish to devote time during the GC Part 1 to exchange in commissions on the present situation of the Order.

YES 18 NO 5 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 41: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 part 2 a revision of C. 40 by which the AG acts ordinarily as Vicar of the GC in resignations for reasons of age.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 44: We ask the Coordinating Commission to seek ways of avoiding absences in the commissions while the house reports are being studied.

YES 22 NO ABS 2

Proposition accepted

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

13. Liturgy and Celebration of the Divine Office

Discussions took place on several liturgical matters including the time and place of the daily celebration of the Eucharist, participation at Vespers, the production of a booklet for the celebration of Lauds and Vespers in a simplified tri-lingual rite, and for conducting the rite of installation of the new Abbot General.

Concerns surrounding the possible transmission of COVID greatly influenced several decisions and a solution was sought which would minimize contact with non-participants of the General Chapter. In addition, it was agreed that the small chapel at *Domus Pacis* would provide a quiet space for prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament rather than the theatre which will be used for daily Mass.

Vote 48: We wish to celebrate Vespers in *Domus Pacis* in the same way we celebrate Lauds (in the three languages).

YES 19 NO 4 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 49: We wish to continue to celebrate Lauds and the daily Eucharist in *Domus Pacis*.

YES 19 NO 1 ABS 4

Proposition accepted

Vote 50: We ask that a booklet be prepared (in the three languages) for Lauds and Vespers for both parts of the General Chapter.

YES 22 NO ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 58: We wish to celebrate Lauds and Mass in the Basilica for the opening and closing of the GC 2022 if circumstances allow.

YES 16 NO 5 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

14. Conferences and Invited Guests

Since a large number of issues requiring attention have amassed since the General Chapter of 2017, it was agreed to limit the number of conferences and invited guests and combine both, wherever possible.

A decision therefore was reached to have four topics spread over Parts 1 and 2 of the GC, delivered at the invitation of the AG and his council:

1. On the role of the Abbot General.
2. On revitalization of our values and observances.
3. On the different forms of abuse and their prevention.
4. On what gives life to younger members of our Order.

Vote 29: We ask the Abbot General and his Council to invite Dom Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori (O.Cist) to the GC 2022 Part 1 to give a conference.

YES 22 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 31: We ask the Abbot General and his Council to invite an abbess to give a conference during GC 2022 part 1 on the revitalisation of our Cistercian values and observances.

YES 22 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 32: We ask the new Abbot General and his Council to invite to the GC 2022 part 2 an expert on the topic of different forms of abuse and their prevention.

YES 20 NO 2 ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 33: We ask the new Abbot General and his Council to invite to the GC 2022 Part 2, two solemnly professed of the Order between 35-50 years of age to give conferences on what they find most life-giving in the Order today.

YES 19 NO 5 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 34: We ask the new Abbot General and his Council to determine who will be invited as guests to the GC 2022 part 2 and what will be their manner of participation.

YES 23 NO ABS 1

Proposition accepted

15. Ecology and the Environment

Concern was expressed at this meeting and that of the Central Commission of 2019 about the environmental impact of the General Chapter. Reductions in the use and disposal of large quantities of plastic and paper both in the work and catering areas could be achieved. To that end, the management of *Domus Pacis* will be consulted to see how and where improvements can be made - possibly with the provision of an INTRANET facility for electronic sharing of documentation and the introduction of environmentally friendly catering products.

16. Services

The list of services required at the General Chapter is a long one which includes secretaries, translators, interpreters etc. The need for proficient and adequate translation was emphasized to avoid the delays experienced at the General Chapter of 2017 when many translators worked remotely from monasteries in different time zones.

V. PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE ABBOT GENERAL

During the Central Commission of Rome, a plenary council of the Abbot General was convened.

VI. MISCELLANEOUS

17. Incorporation of the Community of La Merci Dieu

An obligation concerning membership of an Order or Federation made by *Cor Orans*, prompted this Community of eight Sisters to ask for its incorporation into the OCSO. The Community of Klaarland is currently committed to accompanying the community in this endeavour and supports their application. The most notable difference between the life of the Sisters of La Merci Dieu and our Order is that, for health reasons, they do not celebrate the Office of Vigils.

Vote 17: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC Part 2 the request of the community of N.D. de la Merci-Dieu to be incorporated into the Order.

YES 18 NO 6 ABS 0

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted, we take vote 18)

Vote 18: We wish to treat this topic by ordinary procedure.

YES 19 NO 5 ABS 0

Proposition accepted

18. The Request of the Canadian Region

Dom Clément presented the request of the Canadian Region to join CNE as a Sub-Region. Because of their fragility, the five houses that currently belong to the CAN Region, now propose to become a Sub-Region of CNE with whom they share a common language and culture. The majority of the CAN have accepted this proposal and CNE are also willing.

Vote 47 : We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 Part 2 the request of the Canadian region to become a sub-region of CNE.

YES 24 No 0 ABS 0

Proposition accepted

Vote 47 bis : We would like this issue to be dealt with by ordinary procedure.

YES 24 No 0 ABS 0

Proposition accepted

19. The Central Secretary for Formation

The Central Secretary for Formation, Father Mauricio from Azul, joined the meeting by video-conference, to present his report and discuss his difficulties and his ideas for the future. What seemed to weigh heavily on Fr Mauricio was the lack of communication he receives from Communities and superiors, or even from Regional Secretaries for Formation.

The following is a list of proposals for the future:

- a course on the life and works of Saint Gertrude
- a formation project which would focus on the transmission of the perennial values of the old Cistercian rite
- a rereading of our C 16 in the light of the Papal encyclical *Fratelli tutti*;
- a course on the subject of the various forms of abuse within religious life, with the help of the recent book by Dom Dysmas de Lassus, (not yet available in English), entitled *Risks and Deviations of Religious Life*.

During the discussion following his report, members of the commission assured Fr Mauricio of the usefulness and appreciation of his work. The pandemic is probably one of the reasons for the lack of collaboration and exchanges between all parties involved in formation.

His proposal to work on the Cistercian rite caught the imagination of some in the group: both the Cistercian Order and some of our Regions expressed interest. There was also keen interest in a follow-up of the *Experientia* program dedicated to our contemporary authors.

For many in formation there is a lack of texts which have been translated into their native tongue and thus it would be important to find collaborators in various countries to assist with this vital work.

The proposal made to combine functions of the Central Secretary for Formation with that of the Secretary of the Abbot General, was rejected for several reasons, not least of which was the difficulty of finding someone who would have all the relevant skills to undertake both jobs.

The confirmation or re-election of the Central Secretary for Formation is the responsibility of the next Central Commission. To encourage Father Mauricio to continue in his service, the Central Commission assured him of their appreciation and took the following vote:

Vote 60: We ask the presidents of the regions to gather information from the communities on how they studied and benefitted from the *EXPERIENTIA* program, and send it to Fr. Mauricio of Azul, the Central Secretary for Formation.

YES 17 NO 2 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

20. *Elenchus*

At the request of one regional vote it was accepted that the founding house of each monastery ought to be included in the *Elenchus*.

Vote 55: We ask that the name of the founding house of each monastery (if known) be included in the *Elenchus*.

YES 20 NO 2 ABS 2

Proposition accepted

21. The Proposed Reestablishment of a Liturgy Commission

At present, the Liturgy Secretary only ensures the preparation of the *Ordo*. Now a wish has been expressed for the restoration of the Liturgy Commission of the Order. Such a commission could, very usefully work on obtaining permission for the celebration of the liturgical feasts of the Saints of our Order in various languages, which is a process requiring both skill and patience. Alternatively, a collaboration with the Cistercian Order could be established in this area to share the work involved. Ideally members of this Commission would need both to be knowledgeable and have some practical experience in this area.

Vote 53: We ask that the GC 2022 Part 2 consider the reestablishment of the Liturgical Commission of the Order.

YES 20 NO 3 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted, we take the following vote)

Vote 54: We wish that this topic be treated by ordinary procedure.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS 0

Proposition accepted

22. A private Audience with the Pope

At the last General Chapter a Papal audience was granted to members of the Order, so it might be optimistic to expect another positive response to such a request. Nevertheless, because there will be a good number of new Superiors at the General Chapter of 2022 it was decided to make an application for same.

Vote 39: We ask that for the GC 2022 Part 2, a private audience with the Pope be requested.

YES 11 NO 9 ABS 4

Proposition accepted

23. A special prayer for January 26th

In order that everyone might be spiritually united in prayer on the feast of our Founders "for vocations and the renewal of our way of living Cistercian life", it was proposed that, a text created by the RéCiF Region might be made available to all Communities on our website.

VII. CONCLUSION

An outline of the Agenda for Parts 1 and 2 of the General Chapter of 2022 compiled by M Rebekka of the Co-ordinating Commission.

Agenda for the General Chapter of 2022

Part 1 – February

- Vote on the procedure for the General Chapter (vote 43, CC 2019)
- Regional Meetings on the first day, followed by a brief report in the aula
- Resignation and election of the Abbot General:
 - *Presentation of a working paper by Dom Bernardo and M. Marion*
 - Discussion and nominations in the Regions
 - Presentation in the aula without discussion
 - Discussion in commissions
 - Afternoon of prayer and silence on the eve of the election
 - Election
- Election of two members of the Council:
 - Presentation on the role of the Abbot General's Council
 - Discussion and nominations in the Regions
 - Presentation of the Regions' nominations in the aula
 - Discussion of the Regions' nominations in the commissions
 - Election
- Conference by Dom Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori O.Cist
- Conference by an abbess
- Exchange in commissions on the present situation of the Order
- Accompaniment of fragile communities and suppression (extraordinary procedure)
C.67, C.34 bis, the Statute on the accompaniment of fragile communities and on the suppression of a monastery, by the Law Commission
- Preparation regarding *Cor Orans*: requesting that the Abbot General and his Council, together with the Law Commission, explore with the CICALSAL the implications of *Cor Orans* for our legislation
- Election of a commission on Fathers Immediate
- Election of the members of the Commission of Aid

Part 2 – September

- Vote on the procedure for the house reports (vote 63, CC 2019)
- Regional Reports
- A Study of House Reports

- Request of incorporation by la Merci-Dieu (ordinary procedure)
- Request of the Canadian Region to become a sub region of CNE (ordinary procedure)
- Re-establishment of the Liturgical Commission of the Order (ordinary procedure)
- Care of absent members (ordinary procedure)
 - *Relevant information (C. 59. Vademecum and vote 8.1 of the Isles Regional Meeting 2019) in the General Booklet*
- Revision of C.40 on accepting resignations (ordinary procedure)
 - *Working paper by the Law Commission (to be written)*
- Two conferences by younger monks/nuns on what they find most life-giving
- Conference by an expert on the different forms of abuse and their prevention
- An exchange in commissions to reflect on the role and functioning of the Regions in the light of the principle of subsidiarity, as a first step of a process
- Safeguarding against all forms of abuse (extraordinary procedure)
 - *Working paper by D. Bernardus and M. Francesca*
- *Cor Orans* (extraordinary procedure)
 - *Working paper by the Law Commission (with possible updates)*
- Fathers Immediate
- Commission of Aid and Finance Commission
 - *Report of an evaluation conducted with financial experts*
- Private audience with the Pope

Preparatory work for the General Chapter of 2022

➤ **Documents**

1. *A working paper by Dom Bernardo and M. Marion on the election of the Abbot General*
2. *A working paper by the Law Commission on the acceptance of resignations of superiors*
3. *A working paper by D. Bernardus and M. Francesca on safeguarding and protection against all forms of abuse*
4. *Relevant information on Care of Absent members (C. 59. Vademecum and vote 8.1 of the Isles Regional Meeting 2019) in the General Booklet.*
5. *A working paper on C.67, C.34 bis, the Statute on the accompaniment of fragile communities and on the suppression of a monastery, by the Law Commission*
6. *An updated working paper by the Law Commission on Cor Orans*
7. *A report produced in conjunction with financial experts of an evaluation of the Commission of Finance and the Commission of Aid*

➤ **Conferences:**

1. By two younger solemnly professed members of the Order
2. By Dom Mauro Lepori O. Cist
3. By an abbess
4. By an expert on safeguarding and the different forms of abuse

24. EVALUATION AND CLOSURE

All participants at this meeting were united in their appreciation of the splendid organization that enabled everyone to feel safe, comfortable and secure amidst the continuing COVID pandemic. Several brothers and sisters from far-flung lands expressed specific thanks for the caring concern they received, especially during their time of quarantine before the meeting.

Everyone seemed to have formed a favourable impression of the staff and facilities at the *Seraphicum* although a little less noise at night would have been appreciated.

Numerous tributes were paid to the Abbot General and his council for the excellent job of preparation and organization which occasioned everything to run smoothly. The Co-ordinating Commission were congratulated on their efficient handling of a complex array of material collated from the previous Central Commission at Citeaux with almost 150 votes taken by the Regions since. All was done in a spirit of openness, respect and fraternity and resulted in the formulation of a comprehensive agenda for the two parts of the General Chapter which, God willing, will take place in 2022.

Gratitude was expressed for the handling of several difficult issues which demonstrated the “very agile rhythm of the meeting” according to one participant. Another said that the Central Commission could be “inventive, capable and adaptable when necessary,” and both gave gratitude for these gifts. It was particularly interesting to hear from one technician who accompanied the meeting when he said he was “amazed at how we could wait in silence for the solution to appear.... and greatly appreciated the vision.”

A round of thanks expressed by the AG included appreciation of his confreres at the Generalate for their care and attention during his illness, for the planning and preparation of the Central Commission and for their understanding of his frailty. He thanked everyone for attending to his request to resign, which he feels is right both for himself and the good of the Order.

As regards the meeting itself, D Eamon said all who rendered service did a great job and he was grateful for their work. His sense was that everything had gone well, that there was a good pace, excellent ambiance and a great facility of relating.

Finally, he gave thanks for the work of the Regions and to all who had made this meeting both possible and effective.

Appendix i

**Abbot General's Opening Speech to the
Central Commission Meeting
Rome, 22nd November, 2021**

I wish to welcome all of you, members of the Central Commission, interpreters and secretaries to this meeting of the Central Commission here in Rome at the Pontifical Theological Faculty of Saint Bonaventure, commonly called the "*Seraphicum*", the international study centre of the Friar's Minor Conventual in Rome, (Via del Serafico, 1, 00142 Roma). It's 'claim to fame' now, so to speak, is that it is just about five hundred metres from the abbey of Tre Fontaine, the place of the martyrdom of St Paul.

The role of the Central Commission is to prepare the agenda and related matters for the General Chapter, which will take place in September of next year, *Deo volente!* However, at this meeting the question of the date of the General Chapter will be affected by another element of life, in this case, my life.

At the end of September, I was back in Ireland on a visit to my monastery and while there I had what was probably a TIA (a transient ischemic attack) which, broadly speaking is a hiccup in the blood supply to the brain which for a minute or maybe less, left me not knowing where I was and why I was where I was. This happened in the street and passed over and I got on with whatever I was doing but when I got back to Rome, I saw a doctor about what had happened and I am still undergoing tests.

What is obvious to me is that my memory is going and that it is time to leave my position as Abbot General. However, the Abbot General has to offer his resignation to the General Chapter and once accepted, an election follows for a new Abbot General. And so, the point of this story touches on this meeting because one of the functions of the Central Commission is to fix the date of the General Chapter. Given my health situation it would seem best to have a General Chapter, at least for those purposes, as soon as possible. But the details will be an item on the agenda of this meeting. So, now the matter is in the hands of the moderators.

May the Lord bless the work of this meeting and all the participants.

Fraternally,

Dom Eamon Fitzgerald OCSO

Abbot General

Appendix ii

Report from the Central Secretary of Formation to the Central Commission of 2021

I appreciate the time that the members of the Central Commission dedicate to this meeting as well as the possibility of meeting them by looking at their faces. I pray for your works during these days.

I have not yet reached five years of making solemn vows, and without having been the Regional Secretary for Formation (RSF) this service was proposed to me. Two days ago, an elderly nun, one of the founders of Hinojo, asked me what the secretary was for... Sister Marie's primary indication was to take into account what the *Ratio institutionis* 70 asks for. I understand that this meeting consists of a "review" of my activity. I would also like it to be a means to express the concerns and interests of superiors or communities in the field of formation, to stimulate or guide the activity of the RSFs and eventually the service of the new Central Secretary for Formation (CSF).

Fundamentally, I have tried to continue with the Newsletters that the previous secretary had conceived to spread the different courses and meetings held by the various regions. At the beginning of the service, the AIM requested a list of initiatives on the formation field, in which they could collaborate. The information I received I copied them at the end (below). Occasionally I was able to report on a short course from the OCist and not much else. Some superiors appreciate the information, but most of them I do not know if they have received it. It is possible that my messages end up in the "unwanted" (spam) to be mass mailings. Either way they are published on the website. To tell the truth, I don't find Newsletters very useful, other than to have an overview of what others have done, but I don't know if it enriches any of the other communities.

The exchange with the RSFs has been very limited, with some I might say non-existent; it jumps out in the contributions that appear in the "publication". Two RSFs have been elected superiors and I believe they have not yet been replaced. Others, it seems that in this time they have not carried out training activities at the regional level, perhaps due to the pandemic, for which several meetings were suspended. There are secretaries who report on courses involving some communities of other monastic families. Personally, I discover a lot of material in magazines and even meetings, conferences that I didn't know were held until I saw them there. I imagine that these meetings are undertakings that do not involve the SRF and that is why I have not heard from them. I trust that each community makes the efforts in their possibilities to form their nuns/monks in their way of life. And also, in that there are nuns and monks who try to do their best to communicate what fills their lives. The novice directors (masters) have an enormous responsibility to receive new vocations, and accompany them on the journey of faith, immerse them in the Cistercian tradition and seek the decolonization of the ideas that prevail in contemporary culture.

At the level of initial formation, the number of members involved is increasingly reduced, and ongoing formation follows, in my view, personal interests. There are factors that you already know better than I do, such as technological and economic possibilities, distances, languages (translations) and the state of the communities that affect the efforts and attention/care that can be provided in the field of formation. The costs of courses organized abroad are not accessible to everyone, I am thinking, for example, of English-speaking formators.

I have not received comments about the *Experientia* program, which may indicate that the communities had already finished it or had no major impact. At REMILA level, the pandemic was the occasion for some communities to just take it into account. The contributions received and published as Supplements were

much lower than expected, at least by p. Casey. There are some suggestions for the Central Commission (Br. Gregory, Sr. Graciela, Fr. Jean-Marc).

<https://ocso.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Supplementary-Volume.pdf> (pp. 35-37)

<https://ocso.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Supplementary-II.pdf> (p. 3)

Communities in Africa cannot always have access to the web, for example. The interests of this region have developed in the field of human and Christian formation, not so much at the level of content around monastic life. The Spanish communities have their stable, annual and biannual scheme, with the PREM and a short course on a Cistercian father. The French-speaking communities are very in touch with each other, at the moment I have not heard practically anything from them. The situation is similar with Oriens.

I wonder if it would not be more “practical and effective” if someone in the Generalate paid attention to formation, in a stable way. More information arrives there, the situation of the communities is known, as well as the members of the Order who can collaborate with them. The course for new superiors is organized there, in which the CSF does not have any participation. The activities organized by houses of superior studies, in case they were interested in inviting us, are more likely to arrive there than to an unknown monk, in charge of the formation secretariat.

I have no proposals to present to you, just some ideas that respond to personal interests.

In relation to the cause of the doctorate of **Saint Gertrud** attention to her teaching could be proposed at the community level. I understand that the Order still supports this request, I do not know what state it is in and what interest it arouses in the nuns and monks.

For the new generations and recent foundations, it could be valuable at the level of the liturgy to rescue the traditions of the **Cistercian rite** that can still be practiced today and that are being forgotten.

F. Michael Casey gave me two suggestions: one regarding the teaching and practice of **Cst. 16**, especially in light of *Fratelli tutti*. The other suggestion revolves around **spiritual abuse**. He has reviewed the *Dysmus de Lassus* book, published on CSQ. It would be necessary to see how this issue is reflected in the communities, taking this book as the base text. The superior of the Carthusians could be invited to the General Chapter, although I think the General Chapter wants to reduce the number of oral speakers.

Thank you.

f. Mauricio Tavella

Sent to AIM

RE:

Internoviciado masculino y internoviciado femenino - es un plan de formación para postulantes y novicios/as que se desarrolla en el Monasterio Cisterciense de Monte Sión (Toledo) durante cinco encuentros de dos meses cada uno.

PREM (Plan regional de estudios del Monasticado) - se desarrolla a lo largo de 11 semestres lectivos (5 años y medio), en régimen semipresencial, con las asignaturas filosóficas y teológicas propias del Ciclo Institucional de Teología, añadiendo alguna más propia de nuestro carisma, como Padres Cistercienses, Institución y Documentos primitivos cistercienses, Derecho de Religiosos y Constituciones, y dando una gran importancia a la Patrística dividida en tres asignaturas distintas a lo largo del ciclo. Los monjes y monjas empiezan el PREM

después de su Profesión Temporal. Desde el año 2005 el PREM está afiliado a la Facultad de Teología de la Universidad de San Dámaso (Madrid).

Curso de maestros/as de novicios/as – Se realiza cada dos años, durante una semana, con temáticas de interés para los formadores.

Cursillo de Padres Cistercienses – se realiza cada año, durante cuatro días, abierto a la participación de todos los monjes y monjas. En cada año se elige un autor cisterciense y se invita un ponente para exponer la materia.

Reciclaje de Superiores – se realiza todos los años, durante una semana, con temática y ponente elegidos por los superiores.

Oriens region: we have currently the Experientia Vol 1. and Vol. 2 programs for all the monks and nuns of the Cistercian Order. I believe the Experientia program is ongoing in the English-speaking sub-region of the ORIENS region and had been translated into a few languages.

NED region:

Purely regional there are no mentionable initiatives. There is though a collaboration between all the Dutch speaking monasteries in the Netherlands and Belgium that live under the rule of St. Benedict. This body is organising initial formation in an excellent way (VONK) and also takes care of permanent formation. The best thing you can do is to bring the AIM in contact with the president:

M. Martha osb abdis@olvabdijjoosterhout.nl

En France, les 4 régions (CNE, REI, Récif et un peu la REM) travaillent assez ensemble.

Notamment, nous organisons des sessions pour les Formateurs franco-germanophones en lien avec la Famille Cistercienne tous les 2 ans, et des sessions de Spiritualité cistercienne, également tous les 2 ans. Par ailleurs nous stimulons les monastères de nos régions francophones en les inviant à partager leurs initiatives en matière de formation dans leur communauté, cela permet de diffuser les propositions pour l'année en cours et aussi d'élargir la palette des noms d'intervenants possibles dans divers domaines (Ecritures Sainte, Spiritualité Cistercienne, Patrologie, Philosophie, Ecclésiologie, Liturgie, Sciences humaines, Musique).

Les 3 secrétaires travaillent ensemble. En 2018, nous avons fait un audit de la formation, il a pu être discuté (ou pas) dans les différentes Réunions Régionales. Les grandes orientations étaient d'alterner entre une session de formation à la spiritualité cistercienne et une session des formateurs de la Famille Cistercienne de manière à n'avoir qu'une session par an. Cela permet de s'ajuster aux besoins et, surtout, offre la possibilité pour les frères et sœurs de prendre part à ces sessions compte tenu d'autres propositions et des situations communautaires.

La grande difficulté, en raison de la situation des communautés, est d'arriver à avoir des frères et sœurs qui s'inscrivent aux sessions. La session des formateurs de la Famille Cistercienne fonctionne très bien, c'est aussi un lieu de communion.

Appendix iii

A Synthesis of Responses from Communities Affected by the Appointment of a Delegated Father Immediate

At the General Chapter of 2017, a number of delegated Father Immediates were appointed temporarily.

According to a list drawn up by the *ad hoc* Committee appointed, twenty-three communities were sent a questionnaire to invite them to comment on their experience. Of those twenty three, fifteen responded.

Ten houses were unwilling to accept a definitive change:

- One house doesn't want to change their Father Immediate, but accepts the delegated Father Immediate for a limited time.
- Two do not want a definitive change but want their current Father Immediate.
- One is satisfied with the delegation, but doesn't want any definite change.
- One doesn't wish to change, because of the great geographical, linguistic and cultural distance.
- The Sisters of one house are not willing to change but their Abbess is ready for a definitive change.
- One house wishes to retain its former paternity and that house accepts the commitment to continue as its Father Immediate.
- Three houses had not had any experience of a delegated Father Immediate.

Five houses would like to accept a definitive change:

- One house accepted the decision of the General Chapter and hopes that it will continue.
- One house didn't answer the questions because of a misunderstanding.
- One house found the experience very positive, but since the temporary arrangement could not continue, they sought a change of paternity which was confirmed by the Abbot General and his Council.
- One house is ready for a definitive change and the three communities concerned have taken a positive vote.
- One house is open to a definitive change. The delegated Father Immediate involved received the appointment with enthusiasm and gratitude.

Comments from communities and Fathers Immediate:

Seven of the houses who responded made specific comments along the following lines:

- expressed shock, amazement and surprise at the way the General Chapter had handled this matter.
- thought the various legal aspects of the appointment of Fathers Immediate had not been sufficiently studied.
- considered the appointment of Fathers Immediate had been carried out without consultation with the communities involved.
- thought the matter had been dealt with in a somewhat arbitrary manner, apparently without foresight or prior planning.

One delegated Father Immediate noted that it would be important for the General Chapter to know, as soon as possible, which communities have questions for their Father Immediate or delegated Father Immediate.

On the other hand, four communities appreciated the decision of the General Chapter or the efforts of the Chapter, to examine the question of the Fathers Immediate and their daughter houses.

Those communities ready to change their paternity expressed their gratitude for the solicitude of the Fathers Immediate who had accompanied them for so many years.

One suggestion received was the possibility of having a monastery of nuns as a Motherhouse in the future.

In one case the Abbot and Community, viewed the experience as *“a grace to have relations with a different culture”* and agreed to provide the service requested of them on a permanent basis, if necessary.

Appendix iv

Letter to the Commission of Aid

Dear Members of the Commission of Aid,

As announced on the Order's website, the General Chapter of 2022 will have two parts: the first in February, the second in September.

The costs of the stay at *Domus Pacis* and travel expenses for two sessions of the General Chapter in one year constitute an extraordinary expense for all the participants.

The Central Commission, meeting in Rome from November 22nd to December 2nd, decided to turn to the Commission of Aid for assistance in this unusual circumstance. If you, as the Order's Commission of Aid, are willing and able to finance the entirety of the first part of the General Chapter in February 2022, we would be extremely grateful.

Of course, as the Order's Commission of Aid, you are also free to ask the houses of the Order to make a special contribution for this purpose. To give an idea of the costs involved, the General Chapter of 2017 came to around €550.000.

We wish you a fruitful meeting in January and thank you for all your excellent work,

The members of the Central Commission
Rome, December 1st, 2021

Appendix v

SUMMARY OF VOTES

Vote 1: We wish to have a General Chapter in February 2022 to accept the resignation of the present AG and to elect a new AG.

YES 21 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 2: We wish to hold the General Chapter of 2022 in 2 parts, in February and in September.

YES 20 NO 3 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 3: We wish to elect the 2 new councillors of the AG in February 2022.

YES 14 NO 7 ABS 1 No Vote 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 4: We wish to hold the General Chapter of February 2022 in *Domus Pacis* in Assisi.

YES 19 NO 2 ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 5: We ask the AG and his Council to seek the permission of the Holy See to allow superiors who cannot travel to Assisi to vote by proxy in the February 2022 election of the AG.

YES 14 NO 7 ABS 1 No Vote 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 6: We confirm vote 24 of the CC meeting 2019, which says: “*We ask the Regions to submit a text of not more than 3,000 characters, expressing their view of the AG’s role in the light of their present needs and expectations.*”

YES 8 NO 15 ABS

Proposition rejected

(If this vote is not accepted we proceed to vote 7)

Vote 7: We wish to have Regional Reports including general statistics of the Region at the GC September 2022.

YES 22 NO 1 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 8: We wish to hold regional meetings on the first day of the GC in February 2022 in preparation for the election.

YES 23 NO ABS

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted, we proceed to vote 9)

Vote 9: We wish that each Region give a brief report in the aula.

YES 21 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 10: We wish to have an afternoon of prayer and silence on the eve of the election of the AG.

YES 22 NO ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 11: We ask the AG and his Council to seek the permission of the Holy See to allow superiors who cannot travel to Assisi to vote by proxy in February 2022 for the new members of the Council of the AG.

YES 17 NO 5 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 12: We wish to limit the scope of the GC of February 2022 to the resignation, the election of the AG and 2 members of his Council.

YES 4 NO 18 ABS 1

Proposition rejected

(If this vote is accepted we take vote 13)

~~**Vote 13:** We wish the dates of the GC to be February 6-13 2022 (arrive on the 6th, leave on the 13th)~~

~~YES NO ABS~~

Vote 14: We wish to extend the scope of the GC of February 2022 to include the resignation of the Abbot General, the election of a new Abbot General and two councillors and other topics.

YES 19 NO 3 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted we take votes 15 and 16)

Vote 15: We wish the dates of the GC to be February 6-18 2022 (arrive on the 6th, leave on the 18th).

YES 19 NO 4 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 16: We suggest that the GC of Feb 2022 request that the AG and his Council together with the Law Commission explore with the CICALSAL the implications of *Cor Orans* for our legislation.

YES 22 NO 1 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 17: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC part 2 the request of the community of N.D. de la Merci-Dieu to be incorporated into the Order.

YES 20 NO 4 ABS

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted, we take vote 2)

Vote 18: We wish to treat this topic by ordinary procedure.

YES 19 NO 5 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 19: We wish to form an *ad hoc* commission during this central commission to draw up an alternative plan in the event that the GC part 1 cannot take place.

YES 20 NO 4 ABS

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted, we take vote 20)

Vote 20: We wish this commission to be composed of two people.

YES 19 NO 2 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

Vote 21: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC part 1 Cst 67, C 34bis and the ‘Statute on fragile communities and the suppression of a monastery’.

YES 20 NO 3 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 22: We wish to deal with this topic by extraordinary procedure.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 23: We wish to have a presentation on the role of the AG's Council before the election.

YES 15 NO 8 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 24: We wish to adopt the following procedure for the election of the two new Councillors of the AG at the GC part 1:

- Discussion and nominations within the Regional Conferences
- Presentation of the Regions' nominations in the aula
- Discussion of the Regions' nominations in the commissions
- Election

YES 22 NO 1 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 25: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC part 1 the topic of possible changes to the legislation on the Councillors of the AG.

YES 11 NO 13 ABS

Proposition rejected

(If this vote is accepted, we proceed to vote 26)

~~**Vote 26:** We ask the Law Commission to prepare a working paper on these possible changes to the legislation: for example age limit and the number of terms allowed to the Councillors of the AG.~~

~~YES NO ABS~~

Vote 27: We wish to devote time during the GC Part 1 to exchange in commissions on the present situation of the Order.

YES 18 NO 5 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 28: We ask the GC gathered in Feb 2022 for the first part of the Chapter to elect a commission, similar to the one established at the GC of 2017 regarding Father Immediates in order to gather information and seek solutions to present at the GC 2022 part 2.

YES 22 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 29: We ask the Abbot General and his Council to invite Dom Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori (o.cist) to the GC 2022 part 1 to give a conference.

YES 22 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 30: We ask the Abbot General and his Council to invite Dom Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori to be a witness of the election of the Abbot General.

YES 20 NO 4 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 31: We ask the Abbot General and his Council to invite an abbess to give a conference during GC 2022 part 1 on the revitalisation of our Cistercian values and observances.

YES 22 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 32: We ask the new Abbot General and his Council to invite to the GC 2022 part 2 an expert on the topic of different forms of abuse and their prevention.

YES 20 NO 2 ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 33: We ask the new Abbot General and his Council to invite to the GC 2022 part 2, 2 solemnly professed of the Order between 35-50 years of age to give conferences on what they find most life-giving in the Order today.

YES 19 NO 5 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 34: We ask the new Abbot General and his Council to determine who will be invited as guests to the GC 2022 part 2 and what will be their manner of participation.

YES 23 NO ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 35: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 part 2 the topic of safeguarding against all forms of abuse.

YES 22 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 36: We wish to appoint a commission to draw up a working paper for the GC 2022 part 2 based on the draft of “The Declaration of Principle on Safeguarding Against all Forms of Abuse” and on the input from the Regions.

YES 19 NO 4 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 37: We wish this commission to be composed of 2 persons.

YES 20 NO 1 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

Vote 38: We wish that the topic of safeguarding against all forms of abuse be treated by extraordinary procedure.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

Vote 39: We ask that for the GC 2022 part 2, a private audience with the Pope be requested.

YES 11 NO 9 ABS 4

Proposition accepted

Vote 40: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 part 2 the question of the care of absent members with a view to providing pastoral guidelines.

YES 22 NO 1 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 40 bis.: We wish that this topic be treated by ordinary procedure.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 41: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 part 2 a revision of C. 40 by which the AG acts ordinarily as Vicar of the GC in resignations for reasons of age.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 42: We ask the Law Commission to prepare a working paper on this topic.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted, we proceed to vote 42)

Vote 43: We wish this topic to be treated by ordinary procedure.

YES 22 NO 2 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 44: We ask the Coordinating Commission to seek ways of avoiding absences in the commissions while the house reports are being studied.

YES 22 NO ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 45: We ask the Abbot General to appoint M. Marie of Glencairn as Pastoral Assistant for the community of Mellifont until the GC 2022 part 2.

YES 21 NO ABS 3

Proposition accepted

Vote 46: We wish to put on the agenda of the GC 2022 Part 2 the study of the role of the regions in the light of the principle of subsidiarity.

YES 17 NO 6 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 47: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 part 2 the request of the Canadian Region to become a sub region of CNE.

YES 24 NO ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 47 bis. We wish this issue to be dealt with under the ordinary procedure.

YES 24 NO ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 48: We wish to celebrate Vespers in *Domus Pacis* in the same way we celebrate Lauds (in the three languages).

YES 19 NO 4 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 49: We wish to continue to celebrate Lauds and the daily Eucharist in *Domus Pacis*.

YES 19 NO 1 ABS 4

Proposition accepted

Vote 50: We ask that a booklet be prepared (in the three languages) for Lauds and Vespers for both parts of the General Chapter.

YES 22 NO ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 51: We ask the AG and his Council to appoint a Master of Ceremonies for the Election and Installation of the new Abbot General.

YES 22 NO ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 52: We wish to invite Regional Delegates to the General Chapter 2022 part 1.

YES 3 NO 19 ABS 1

Proposition rejected

Vote 53: We ask that the GC 2022 part 2 consider the reestablishment of the Liturgical commission of the Order.

YES 20 NO 3 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

(If this vote is accepted, we take the following vote)

Vote 54: We wish that this topic be treated by ordinary procedure.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 55: We ask that the name of the Founding House of each monastery (if known) be included in the *Elenchus*.

YES 20 NO 2 ABS 2

Proposition accepted

Vote 56: We wish to place on the agenda of the GC 2022 Part 1 the election of the members of the Commission of Aid.

YES 18 NO 3 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

Vote 57: We make an extraordinary request to the Commission of Aid to finance the cost of the GC 2022 part 1.

YES 20 NO 1 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

Vote 58: We wish to celebrate Lauds and Mass in the Basilica for the opening and closing of the GC 2022 if circumstances allow.

YES 16 NO 5 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 59: In order to encourage a greater involvement of Abbesses in Regular Visitations and pastoral accompaniment, we recommend that the Commission on Fathers Immediate, refer to vote 77 of the GC 2017.

YES 20 NO 1 ABS 1

Proposition accepted

Vote 60: We ask the presidents of the Regions to gather information from the communities on how they studied and benefitted from the *Experientia* program, and send it to F. Mauricio of Azul, the Central Secretary of Formation.

YES 17 NO 2 ABS 3

Proposition accepted

Vote 61: In the context of the synod on synodality we ask that a reflection on the functioning of the Regions in the light of the principle of subsidiarity be given time in the commissions of the GC 2022, part 2 a first step in the process.

YES 19 NO 3 ABS

Proposition accepted

Vote 62: We ask that we adopt the following procedure for the election of the AG at the GC part 1 in 2022:

- Dialogue and nominations within the Regional Conferences
- Presentation of the Regions' nominations in the aula without discussion
- Discussion of the Regions' nominations in the commissions
- Election

YES 22 NO ABS

Proposition accepted