

2nd Chronicle of the Casa mid-May - early June 2022

Here is some news to share from the first part of Dom Bernardus' journey from Regional Meeting to Regional Meeting. We are making extensive use here of our Abbot General's report of the trip:

The following themes were proposed to the participants:

- To share the house reports, and the dreams of the representative of each house for the Order, as a first step of listening to each other in the process of synodality requested by the General Chapter. This request came from Dom Bernardus who shared it in this way: "During the first part of the General Chapter, I read Pope Francis' book on **the importance of dreams**. He wrote it during the pandemic. 'To come out of a crisis, we must have the courage to dream,' he wrote. Because dreams show the reality from which we begin to invent. Once this is done, a decision can be made for the future. This decision is the result of discernment, of careful observation. Once the path has been chosen, the dream also leads to action. For the Pope, dreaming is **seeing - choosing - acting**. I found this to be a good method to present at Regional Meetings. All the Regional Meetings worked hard on it. Each in their own way. I am collecting all these dreams and hope to give something back at the beginning of the second part of the Chapter."

First, here are some notes on the Isles, Wal6, and Oco France meetings:

The Isles Regional Meeting May 20-25, 2022:

The Isles Region brings together:

- our 6 communities in Ireland: Bethlehem, Bolton, Glencairn, Mellifont, Mt. Melleray and Roscrea
- our 4 communities in Great Britain: Caldey, Mt. St. Bernard, Nunraw and Whitland
- our two Norwegian communities: Tautra and Munkeby.
- two guests, Bernardines of Esquermes.

We met at Brownshill in the Southwest of England in a monastery of the Bernardines of Esquermes who welcomed us with splendid hospitality. The Cistercian fraternity between our Orders has been confirmed over the years. In particular, we had the joy of the participation of Mother Elizabeth Mary, their new Prioress General who, we hope, will visit us in Assisi.

This was the first Region to present their dreams. It was a major step in the in-depth sharing that allowed for a collaborative project for the Irish men's houses, facilitating cooperation for the three who wish to do so and freedom to continue their journey for the other two. Using the Statute for Fragile Communities, a common Monastic Commissary was proposed who will oversee the houses, will appoint a local superior, allowing each one to remain in place as long as possible, while also helping each other through a common house of formation, and even through a shared management of the economy. The Commissary, the three priors plus two external members will compose the common Council.

A meal gave us the opportunity to get to know at leisure the twelve sisters who welcomed us there, and the novitiate for England which has recently moved in.

Wal 6:

After England, we flew to Brussels. We were faster than our luggage, which was carefully delivered two days later. We first stopped by to visit briefly our 6 sisters in Chimay for Vespers and a festive meal before staying at the Abbey of Scourmont. Arriving early allowed us to rest and meet one or another of the brothers, before the meeting of the 6 Walloon Superiors:

- Brialmont, Chimay and Soleilmont for the nuns,
- Orval, Rochefort and Scourmont for the monks.

Small numbers and simple sharing throughout these two days. Dreams and cooperation were also on the menu, almost as a matter of course. Listening to the dreams, we realized to what extent each Region had its own personality which contributes to enrich the whole. The communities are increasingly seeking to cooperate.

After Scourmont, crossing France from East to West, we went to the Benedictine Abbey of St. Wandrille (formerly Fontenelle), near Rouen, NW of Paris, to meet their Abbot, Dom Jean Charles Nault, Apostolic Visitor of Sept-Fons. It was a positive and constructive information meeting in an open atmosphere about the work done with the community and how the Order can be involved in the upcoming election on August 6. The Abbey, although numbering nearly 90 brothers, has only four who have ever experienced an election, as Dom Patrick has been the superior since 1980!

The meeting of **OCSO France** took place at Val d'Igny, near Reims, NE of Paris this time. A five-star welcome with most of the sisters in the forecourt waiting for us for the Office of Vespers.

The French communities are spread over three regions: CNE, REM and RéCif. However, questions linked to the French geographical and legal system make these annual trans-regional meetings desirable. Of the twenty-four superiors, twenty-one were present. We note that Covid still predominates here and there and sometimes confuses things. We must continue to take it into account. After the house reports, the French superiors also shared their dreams. This gave the meeting a completely different dynamic: they became aware of their common responsibility for the Cistercian charism in France. The desire for cooperation between the communities that are geographically closest was delightful to see. The occasion was propitious for a deep reconciliation to open up a fraternal future also between our communities.

We were able to share a coffee in community with the group of the youngest sisters and some of those from the assisted living Unit. It was a joy to see again so many known and loved faces, reunited over the years, of the re-foundation of one community out of four in the North-East of France. Added to these are some new sisters from Clairefontaine, and a postulant who is finding her way there.

The conclusion of this first part of the visit to the Regions is that it is pleasant to dream: it allows us to discover ourselves on a more existential, deeper level, and engenders a profound mutual respect.

This opens the desire to get closer to each other and thus to mutual help between communities. Finally, to dream is to come out of everyday life, sometimes in the mist of uncertainties, and to dare to express what we desire for our Order.

We will soon see, in our third Chronicle of the Casa, the second part of the Regional Meetings:

- in Canada with a visit to our sisters of the Assumption, then
- in the United States visiting Snowmass and Santa Rita, before the Meeting on the Pacific Coast and finally,
- the Spanish Meeting in Tulebras with a visit to our sisters in Vico.

Until soon!