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Conference Spanish Regional

SAINT MARY OF CHARITY
OF TULEBRAS

June 21 - 26 - 2022



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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Abstention
AG	Abad General
CCSB	Congregation Cisterciense de S. Bernardo
C. CST.	Constitution, Constitutions
GC	General Chapter
CM	Monastic Commissioner
CC	Central Commission
CCSB	Congregation Cisterciense de San Bernardo
CMix	Mixtes Commissions
CR	Conference(s) Regional(s)
CO	Cor Orans
EST	Estatuto
EACF	Estatute of Accompaniment to Fragile Communities
M.	Mother
MA	Monasterio Asistencial
OCSO	Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance
P.	Father
PI	Parent Immédiat
PREM	Regional Monasticate Study Plan
RE	Conference Spanish Regional Conference
SF	Training Secretariat

PARTICIPANTS

Superior

P. Isidoro M^a ANGUITA, President
M. Isabel RIVERO, Vice President
P. Carlos GUTIÉRREZ, Moderator
M. Pilar GERMÁN, Moderator

P. Fco. Javier URÓS
P. Juan José DOMINGO
P. Enrique TRIGUEROS
P. Roberto DE LA IGLESIA
P. Antonio M^a MARTÍN

M. M^a Victoria SANZ
M. Esther MUÑOZ
M. M^a Luisa GÓMEZ
M. Encarnación LLUCH
M. Stella Maris VENEZIA
M. Martina BENITO
M. Ana MONEO
M. M^a de los Ángeles DE FRUTOS, Abbess President of the CCSB

Delegate Monastery

P. Carlos M^a ANTUNES
Sister Lourdes ÁLAVA

Monastery

Huerta
Vico
Sobrado
Alloz

La Oliva
S. Isidro
Oseira
Cardeña
Zenarruza

Tulebras
Arévalo
Ávila
Benaguacil
Carrizo
La Palma
Armenteira

Sobrado
Armenteira

Guest

Dom Bernardus PEETERS, Abbot General

Secretariat

P. Paco RIVERA, from Huerta, Secretary
Guillermo J. IMBERT, of Cardeña, bursar.

With about three months to go before the second part of the General Chapter (=GC) 2022, the Spanish Regional Conference (=RE) has met in its modality of only superiors, plus the two delegates to the GC, at the Monastery of Santa Maria de la Caridad de Tulebras from June 21-26, 2022.

Isidoro M^a ANGUIA, from Huerta, president of the SR, in the Eucharist of the first day of the Regional Conference meeting, addressing the participants said that *"... in life there are moments of special importance... The attitude we take in those moments will be crucial; either for things to change or at least so that we can face them with dignity giving them a salvific meaning. There is no doubt that today we are, in our Order, in one of those moments as well as the Church. Shaken and confused, we do not know very well what to do. The Pope has proposed to us the path of synodality so that we listen and allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit that dwells in our midst. But the most important thing will be the attitudes we adopt, since they will depend on us, not the results we obtain. Two are the attitudes that I believe we should encourage: conversion and being proactive. Our sincere commitment to conversatio, lived in our communities, is crucial. Without it our laments and efforts will be completely useless. Community conversatio putting Christ at the center, from the heart, sincerely, fostering fraternity and communion. We know this but it is difficult for us. We know it but our ego resists. We know it but it seems as if the bad spirit sows the weeds that make us be at odds with each other in the heart of the community. Community communion passes through the centrality of Christ: mercy, reconciliation, mutual trust, creating spaces of fraternity and peace that reflect our prayerful life. We are at a crucial moment that we should live, also as a Spanish Region and in our communities, as an occasion. To go to the essential: Christ; fraternity, communion, humility, poverty. We are being stripped, not to be annihilated but to go to the essential. One of the temptations we have is to try to fill the emptiness however we can. And today the world offers us a multitude of means that influence us negatively, such as over-information, over-stimulation or the immediacy of technology. It is a great test for all of us not to fall into the trap. But Christ is sufficiently in the center not to fall. But there is also another attitude we need to cultivate in these difficult times. It is not enough to be defensive, seeing ourselves buffeted by the evidence, trying to justify our situation in multiple ways. We must be proactive in our world. We have something to share and present without complexes. It is not enough to be relics of a glorious past. We must bear witness to what we have seen and heard. To offer what we have received because it springs from the need to share it. A monastic evangelization. But evangelization. Let us be bold and not self-conscious; let us be proactive and not fearful. The Spirit of the Lord continues to act beyond what happens to us. Let us not wait until we have ten coins to negotiate, it is enough if we have one. Some have come a long way in a very short time, like St. Aloysius Gonzaga, whom we celebrate today. May he share with us his courage, the courage of love given to the point of giving his life, the courage of a seeker and communicator."*

Isidoro M^a ANGUITA, from Huerta, began the first session by greeting all the participants. Juan José DOMINGO, Abbot of San Isidro and Sr. Lourdes ÁLAVA, as substitute delegate of the SR for the GC, because the delegate who had been elected, Sr. M^a Ángeles GIL de PAREJA, from La Palma, is helping the sisters of San Bernardo (Burgos).

As for absences, Fr. Isidoro pointed out that Fr. Abdón RODRÍGUEZ, from Escalonias, could not come for health reasons. Finally he pointed out that Dom Bernardus PEETERS, Abbot General (=AG) has been invited and will be accompanied by Fr. Raphaël GARCÍA, secretary of the Abbot General, who will act as interpreter since Dom Bernardus does not know our language. The GA is coming from the Regional Conferences of Canada and the United States and this will be the last one before returning to Rome. The objective of the GA is to take the pulse of the Order before the second part of the GC.

I. TOPICS SPECIFIC TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER

1. EVALUATION OF THE FIRST PART OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2022.

The evaluation began with a positive evaluation of this first part of GC 2022, since the capitulars had not met for a long time, there was a high participation with a new spirit, a lot of joy, an attitude of listening, many new people producing a feeling that the Order is already in the hands of others and that they come with a strong push. And all the participants responded very well. It was valued to have done all the work that had been done (election of the GA, councilors of the GA, the Commission of the Immediate Pastors...). The unity that there was at the time of the election of Dom Bernardus as the new GA was also highlighted, especially for the approval, *ad experimentum*, of the Statute for the Accompaniment of Fragile Communities and the Suppression of a Monastery (=EACF). The service role played by the Law Commission was also highlighted. The strong presence of members of the SR in different commissions was noted. And the functioning of the cloud as a support to expedite the work of the GC was optimal. The incorporation of professional translators who knew the technical language very well was positively valued, and although it costs money, having a good service in this area is very much appreciated.

Negative that the voting machines, on the first day, were not loaded, wasting a lot of time. And that although a lot of time and work was dedicated to the study of the state of the Order, in the end no conclusion was reached.

Some were struck by something that was not seen in this first part of the GC, although it was said that it would be addressed in the second part of the GC, and that is the "novel" experience that is being carried out at the Tre Fontane Monastery. Another wondered if this first part of the GC was necessary, as it could have been done online, the EACF could have waited a few more months, and if the GC minutes are indispensable.

2. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF FRAGILE COMMUNITIES AND CLOSURE OF A MONASTERY.

The theme is presented by M. Ana MONEO, from Armenteira. Ana MONEO, from Armenteira (see appendix i, page 35 and following).

The assembly then proceeded to discuss the topic, focusing the dialogue on two main points. On the one hand, doubts were clarified about the figure of the Monastic Commissary and the possibility of appointing a lay person in charge of the fragile community under the supervision of the Monastic Commissary. The other point that was clarified was the question of the stability of the members of the suppressed community (nn. 22 and 23 of the EACF). What was discussed was the requirement, on the part of the EACF, for the community that accepts members coming from a suppressed community to express their will and commitment through a vow, but without a prior probationary period.

This was followed by a dialogue in groups based on two questions proposed by the Coordination Committee. The conclusions of the groups were as follows:

1. WHAT DOES YOUR COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE VIS-À-VIS WHAT IS SAID IN THE FRAGILE COMMUNITIES STATUTE?

- All communities have recognized their fragility and precariousness.
- Some have a small number of active monks/monks.
- In general, there is a lack of vocations, but everyone remains hopeful and some communities find it difficult to recognize their fragility.
- At the formative level for the novitiate: some communities have their own resources; others make use of the structures offered by the SR (Internovitiate); others recognize that there is no formative capacity in the community, for which reason they would be open to send the candidates to another monastery for a period of time, in addition to taking advantage of the Internovitiate.
- The liturgy is carried out with dignity. Some communities have reworked the liturgical books, simplifying them.
- Work: some communities are trying to promote their products.
- External lay personnel: it is a very necessary resource, especially for the care of the sick, although some monasteries have reduced it due to the death of the friars. They are also used for cooking, tourism, gardens....
- Economy : need to reduce expenses and need for external assistance.

2. WHAT PROPOSALS OF THE STATUTE CAN BE USEFUL TO US?

- Recourse to a superior *ad nutum* from outside the community.
- Consider the possibility of having a Monastic Commissary instead of a Pontifical Commissary, if the Statute is finally approved in the second part of GC 2022.
- The possibility of merging with another community is not considered because each member remains at home.
- Some communities already have a Commission for the Future.
- To resort to a Pastoral Visit when a Regular Visit is not possible.
- To go mentalizing to the members of the community on the adaptations that are needed so that they are not imposed on us. For example the work and the economy to the capacity of the community without breaking the monastic rhythm; or to adapt the buildings, the regular places and the liturgy. Some community is oriented to resort to the Assistance Monastery.

Dom Bernardus Peeters, AG, pointed out that what can best help us to face the reality of our communities is to look at their quality of life. That is the advantage of the EACF: to look at the quality of life of the community. That is the first step. So it is not a question of the number of members or buildings, but of evaluating the quality of fraternal relationships, of prayer, of *lectio divina...*, and from there to start working.

On the other hand, Dom Bernardus continued, there are young superiors who are totally abandoned, who are in charge of a community in which there are no members to delegate the various responsibilities. This makes them overburdened and incapable of rendering the service for which they have been chosen. The best option he sees is collaboration between monasteries. To help each other to recover quality of life, because those superiors do not have quality of life: they do not pray, they do not read, they do not stop to help their communities to survive....

3. HOUSE REPORTS.

The reports of each house were then read in plenary assembly. After the reading of the report, the assembly was given the option to ask for clarifications. Subsequently, the reports were studied in the working groups.

4. PREPARATION OF THE REGIONAL REPORT FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2022.

Carlos GUTIÉRREZ, from Sobrado and M. Encarnación LLUCH, from Benaguacil, presented a draft of the Regional Report to the GC, which was studied in the assembly and several corrections were proposed. Finally the corrected text is presented to a vote by a show of hands and is approved unanimously.

REPORT FROM THE SPANISH REGION **GENERAL CHAPTER ASSISI SEPTEMBER 2022**

Our fragility is helping us to discern what is a priority in Cistercian life and is offering us the opportunity to grow in interiority in the various areas of our community life: liturgy, lectio, the timetable, the balance of the day, community dialogues, fraternal relationships, tolerance of adverse situations, communion with the pain of humanity, economy. The initiatives of assistance and formation in the Region were appreciated, and the difficulty of accompanying communities in extreme need was noted.

There is a growing sensitivity to the proposal of synodality. The growing fragility is seen as an opportunity to look always with mercy and understanding to the brothers, to encourage more listening and to strengthen mutual trust through dialogue. All of this calls for seeking spaces for a true encounter that favors this growth in communion in fraternal life. There is an urgent need to strengthen and promote fraternal dialogue in order to banish the remaining vestiges of a pyramidal community structure, so as to live more in accordance with the ideal of synodality.

The time forced by the pandemic has prompted the adaptation of community life to the different particular situations in relation to structural changes such as: the refectory, flexibility in food, liturgy, care for the sick, recourse to the Monastery Assistance, help from lay personnel, involvement of the brothers in the various tasks of a community nature, greater involvement of the lay fraternities in economic and administrative management, etc.

The vocation movement is precarious in the Region. The communities are questioning their own responsibility in this regard, while at the same time they are encouraged to assume the reality with patience and without obsessions. In most of them, this movement is scarce or non-existent. In some,

it has been older people who have not persevered. In others, they feel blessed with persevering vocations in community.

In spite of the vocational difficulties, the SR continues to work in the diffusion of our charism in gratuity. For this purpose, a commission for the transmission of the charism was created a few years ago, which tries to motivate the communities in this sense and to put them in contact with vocational pastoral agents in different dioceses and Christian movements, in addition to other activities.

Some communities are opening up to welcoming people for short periods of time (from a week to a few months), allowing them to share their lifestyle with the community. People who do not necessarily have vocational concerns, but do have some spiritual sensitivity.

The communities are grateful to the SR for: the visitation of brothers and sisters; that she is active and attentive to the needs and formation of the monasteries; that some superiors are entrusted with tasks of great responsibility in the Order.

Several questions were raised, such as: the need for a chaplain, confessors, chantre, formators...; the possibility of various communities joining into one, sharing what they still have, in order to facilitate mutual help and revitalization; that there be greater collaboration in selling monastic products from our monasteries, for example, by promoting our own brand.

Formation is considered to be very important. It helps to grow in the monastic vocation and to unite us more and more to the Lord. The juniors and novices have a very well structured formation. The formation that is offered to us both in the region and in the Order is taken advantage of and valued. The formation courses are very positively valued, specifically the PREM and the Internovitate, which are a great experience for the students, not only in academic matters, but also in integral formation, and in which now communities of Latin America also participate. Also the courses for formators. In some monasteries the two volumes of *Experientia* have been studied and dialogued, which have been very enriching. The formation plan *Sapientia Amoris* is also important for ongoing formation and is studied freely. The online courses, of the Order and of the Region, are of great benefit and have an important participation.

5. REGIONAL CONFERENCES.

Juan José DOMINGO, from San Isidro (see appendix ii, page 42 and following).

After the clarification of some of the doubts of the participants, various interventions were made in which different proposals were made for a greater involvement in the government of the Order. Dom Bernardus PEETERS, Abbot General, pointed out that when reflecting on the delegations that can be granted to the Regions we tend to think of juridical structures and perhaps the most important thing is to speak of more collaboration and openness among the members of the Order. Are we looking for a change of structures or more collaboration, Dom Bernardus asked. And he proposed a better use of the Central Commissions, as an extended council of the Abbot General, taking advantage of the current digital media. Finally, Dom Bernardus said that he is asking for help from the Regions to carry out the mandate of vote 31 of the Cistercian Central Commissions 2019 in which he asked the new Abbot

General and his Council, before the General Chapter, to make proposals related to the structure and functioning of the Council of the Abbot General.

6. IMMEDIATE FATHERS AND MOTHERS. ABBESS GENERAL VICAR.

The topic is presented by M. Pilar GERMÁN, from Alloz. Pilar GERMÁN, from Alloz (see appendix iii, p. 47 ff.).

Afterwards, doubts were clarified and it was seen that the great difficulty that exists in the Order with respect to the Immediate Pastors obliges us to give concrete solutions in the structure of filiation as well as in the delegation of the Regular Visitations.

7. SYNODAL PROCESS OF THE ORDER.

Roberto de la IGLESIA, of Cardaña (see appendix iv, p. 51 ff.).

Once the theme was presented, the dialogue in the assembly began. The first thing was to clarify that synodality is a desire to live as a Christian; it is a way of being Church. It is not about peaceful coexistence or simply letting oneself be heard. It is about seeking what God wants. It is a way in which the Spirit is listened to in the communities. It is a silent revolution. God is at the beginning and at the end of the synodal journey, so prayer must always be in the middle. It is also necessary to listen to the other, to have a time of reflection and then to listen to each other again. The journey itself is important.

Then some participants wondered how the synodal journey would be carried out in the Order. If there would be a series of themes proposed to the communities so that after dialogue they could make a synthesis that would be sent to the GC. And if this were the method adopted, who would be in charge of elaborating these questions; what would be their objectives and goals.

Dom Bernardus indicated that in the first part of GC 2022, by means of a vote, the GA was asked to begin a synodal process in the Order. He is currently looking at how to do this, although he does not want to limit it to the juridical structures of the Order. A balance must be sought in the GC, between pastoral care for the superiors and the life of the Order. The first step is to listen to the superiors, but they must also listen to each other in their desires. The synodal process is not a survey, it is not about producing documents, but it has to touch the life of the Order; it is about living a conversion to become synodal communities in all areas, although this will take many generations. The Spirit is there, but it is necessary to listen to him.

8. PREVENTION AND ACTION PROTOCOL FOR THE ABUSE OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS.

Antonio M^a MARTÍN, of ZENARRUZA (see appendix v, page 54 and following).

This was followed by clarification of doubts and correction of errors. It was requested that it be reviewed by experts in the field.

II. ISSUES SPECIFIC TO THE RE

1. ELECTIONS OF THE RE.

The following have been selected:

LITURGY COMMISSION:

COORDINATING ABBESS: M. Ana MONEO, from Armenteira

PRESIDENT: Sr. M^a Presentación LITE, of Tulebras.

MEMBERS: Fr. José Luis GALIANA, from Cardaña

Sr. Lourdes ÁLAVA, of Armenteira

We ratified Sister Olga Celina, from Benavente, for the CCSB.

SINGING COMMISSION:

COORDINATING ABBESS: M. Encarnación LLUCH, from Benaguacil

Brother Joaquín LÓPEZ, of San Isidro

Sister Gema MARCOS, of Carrizo

Brother José M^a MANZANO, of Huerta

We ratify Sister M^a Isabel GALLEGO, from San Clemente (Seville) for the CCSB.

In conformity with section III.2. of the Statutes of the Commission of Chant, the SR has delegated M. Encarnación, of Benaguacil, Abbess coordinator of the Commission, the election of the president once the members of the Commission have been consulted.

PUBLICATIONS COMMISSION AND *CISTERCIUM*:

COORDINATING ABBOT: Fr. Enrique TRIGUEROS, of Oseira

PRESIDENT: Fr. Miguel M^a VILA, of San Isidro.

MEMBER: Sr. M^a Carmen ETXEGARAY, of La Palma

We ratify Sr. Rocío LUQUE, from Villamayor for the CCSB.

DIRECTOR OF *CISTERCIUM*: Antonio GARCÍA

EDITOR OF *CISTERCIUM*: Br. Joaquín LÓPEZ, of San Isidro

ADMINISTRATOR OF *CISTERCIUM*: Br. Guillermo J. IMBERT, of Cardaña

2. PORTICUS AND SPECIALIST PROGRAM IN DISCERNMENT LEADERSHIP FOR ECLESIAL ORGANIZATIONS (LiDE).

Roberto de la IGLESIA, from Cardaña, informed the assembly about the project to help the contemplative life in Spain sponsored by the PORTICUS Association, based in Amsterdam. He indicated that a program of help has been carried out among several people of different charisms (about 15) on which they have been working for about a year and a half. The program is pending approval by

this organization. The program would last three years, in which they would assume the economic part. And they would help us in the following areas:

- Formation in leadership and discernment. For this there is already a program at the Pontifical University of Comillas, especially for active religious life.
- The management of the monastery closures, care for the elderly, creation of profitable jobs, sale of monastic products... For this there is a company, also with Catholic roots called SOUL 21, which is already helping CONFER for the active religious life and is also carrying out a project for the contemplative life.
- Outward communication to make our life known and inward communication to improve community relations.

Another part of the project, very novel, is that there is a pretension to create a kind of CONFER for the contemplative life. It is something that is being promoted from Rome, especially by the Secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Bishop José Rodríguez Carballo; and here in Spain it is being promoted by the Spanish Episcopal Conference, from the Episcopal Commission for Consecrated Life. PORTICUS has offered to allow several members of the contemplative life to participate in the monastic "CONFER" that they already have in Kenya.

On the other hand, M. Pilar GERMÁN, from Alloz explained what the **SPECIALIST PROGRAM IN DISCERNMENT LEADERSHIP FOR ECCLESIAL ORGANIZATIONS (LiDE)** consists of. This program arises from the invitation of Pope Francis to synodality and to walk also in a synodal way, communities and institutions. The LiDE program is a semester and is established with one session per month (from Wednesday to Friday) with a duration of eight teaching hours per day. The idea is that this can be transferred to the need for contemplative life. The course is approached from an experiential point of view, that is, it is about letting yourself be affected and let it shape you from the inside. Because it is not a question of knowledge but of something that has to change inside. Because we are not really going to be able to help others in a synodal journey if we do not first do this preliminary work on ourselves. And also it is a spiritual work, before starting there must be a previous contact with God. This is the only way to see what God's will is for the community at this moment and in this situation. It is to be constantly listening to the Spirit, listening to what is moving in my heart.

3. REPORTS OF THE COORDINATING ABBOTS AND ABBESSES.

3.1. Training Secretariat

Carlos M^a ANTUNES, of Sobrado, presented the report.

SF REPORT TO THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

June 21-26, 2022 - Tulebras

Training Secretariat

The Formation Secretariat is made up of the secretary, Carlos M^a, from Sobrado, and the members: Paula, from Armenteira; Rosa Ana, from San Bernardo de Burgos and Christian, from San Isidro.

Since the last SR, the Secretariat held its annual meeting on June 18-19, 2022, in Viaceli. The Abbot coordinator of formation, Roberto, from Cardeña, participated in the annual meeting and accompanies the activity of the Secretariat.

PREM

Since the last meeting of the SR, two workshops have been held: in Cardeña (October 2021) and in La Oliva (April/May 2022). After two years of online classes, the students value very much the fact of meeting again in person. The atmosphere among them is really good. It is a very heterogeneous group, where there are excellent students and others with many difficulties, some with many social skills and others very shy, however, you can feel the care to integrate everyone. In the last PREM a new delegate was elected, Jesús María, from La Oliva.

There are currently 35 students enrolled in the PREM: 28 nuns (22 from the CCSB and 6 from the OCSO) and 7 monks (6 from the OCSO and 1 from the OSB). The vast majority are ordinary students. About half of the students have 90% or more of their work done. The great challenge remains the care of individual study and the completion of assignments. The confinement that some communities had to undergo has been of great benefit in the area of studies.

Since October 2021 two brothers from Los Andes (Venezuela) are taking some subjects. Given the circumstances, they are not required to attend the classes, so, in addition to the notes, we are sending them the audio recordings. The superior of Novo Mundo (Brazil) has also asked us to have a solemnly professed confrere from his community do the PREM studies. In principle, he will join in the next semester, attending the classes in person. Both superiors, first of all, contacted the President of the RE.

In the last two semesters it has been necessary to call on some outside professors: Carlos Gil, from the University of Deusto (Synoptics and Acts), Eduardo Toraño, from the University of San Dámaso (Theological Anthropology) and Luciano Audisio, from the Faculty of Theology of Granada (Sapiential Writings). Of the professors of the Order, Diego Romera, from Huerta, taught for the first time the sacraments of "Penance and Anointing of the Sick" and José Antonio Gimeno, from San Isidro, "History of Modern Philosophy". It is also important to note that Juan M^a de la Torre, from Oseira, one of the founders of PREM, will teach his last subject in the Easter semester of 2023. It is now, in the present, that we have to start preparing the teaching staff for the coming years. Even if among the few male students there are some very good ones, it is time to end the mentality that specialized studies are exclusively for them, especially for those who will be ordained. At the moment 80% of the students are nuns and everything indicates that this percentage will remain. Most of these students are foreigners. Among them there are excellent students. And it is still difficult to deal with a simple but essential procedure to take the degree exam, which is the homologation of studies. If we want the teachers to be preferably monks or nuns, as the *Statute of the courses of the Monasticate* says, we have to look differently for those who are now students.

San Dámaso University

Since last year the Congregation for Catholic Education (CEC) did not approve the Statutes of our Center of Studies because it considered them incomplete, this year, on March 7, we resubmitted the report requesting the renewal of affiliation and, as an integral part, the corrected Statutes (appendix) and the Plan of Studies according to the *Instruction on the Affiliation of Institutes of Higher Studies* of the CEC of December 8, 2020. On March 29, the Board of the Faculty of Theology of San Damaso approved the documentation submitted and the University then sent it to Rome. We await the approval of the CEC. The Dean of the Faculty, Gabriel Richi, has been very close to us throughout this process and always available to collaborate.

Novice masters course

Last week, between June 11 and 17, we held a course for novice masters at the Monastery of Viaceli, with the theme: *The cloister and the yearning of the human heart: initiation into the Cistercian monastic life*. The objectives were to reflect and share on how we are doing initial formation, how it is to form in the current situation of the communities and how we are proposing the charism to those who come to our monasteries, either in person or virtually. The evaluation of the course in terms of content and atmosphere among the participants was unanimously positive. A brief summary of the course will be sent to all superiors. A negative note was the small number of participants (eight, one of whom was a Benedictine).

The next course is scheduled from June 8 to 14, 2024, with the theme: *Healing from within*. The theme was proposed by the participants of the last course. It will have two parts: the first, *Healing for fraternal relationship*, and the second on some essential tools for this healing - silence and solitude, prayer and lectio - values that we often take for granted and are not always so, as some of the formandi who spoke to us in this year's course reminded us.

Cursillo on Cistercian Fathers and Mothers

On November 15 and 17, 2021, we held via Zoom the course on Guerrico de Igny, with Antonio Maria, from Zenarruza. This workshop was a little smaller than the previous ones. Those of us who participated appreciate it positively and thank Antonio Maria for his work. The participation, counting the number of communities that connected, was lower than in previous years.

The first part of the course on William of Saint Thierry, given by Juan M^a de la Torre, from Oseira, is scheduled for November 7, 14, 21 and 28 (Monday afternoons in November). The second part (4 afternoons) will be in February 2023. In total there will be 16 classes of 50 minutes.

The November 2023 workshop will be on Isaac de Estrella. We have not yet invited the speaker.

Basic training in nursing

We asked for help from the community of the Brothers of San Juan de Dios in Granada for a course on dementia or on caregiving. They made us a training proposal encompassing the two topics -*Learning to take care of oneself to take better care*- which is taught in 5 sessions of two hours, face-to-face or online. If there is interest on the part of the communities, we could try to carry it out in January 2023.

Afterwards, some doubts were clarified and the following votes were taken:

VOTE 1: WE WISH THAT ALL THOSE WHO BEGIN THE PREM IN THE CENTER OF STUDIES OF THE MONASTICATE OF THE RE/CCSB, PRESENT, UPON ENROLLMENT, THE DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR ACCESS TO THE UNIVERSITY. THOSE WHO DO NOT PRESENT IT WILL BE CONSIDERED EXTRAORDINARY OR HEARING STUDENTS.

YES: 15

NO: 0

ABS: 2 ACCEPTED PROPOSAL

VOTE 4: WE WISH TO APPROVE THE REGULATIONS OF THE REGIONAL CURRICULUM OF THE MONASTICATE (PREM).

YES: 17

NO: 0

ABS: 0

UNANIMOUS

3.2. Liturgy Commission.

The report was presented by M. Ana MONEO, from Armenteira.

LITURGY COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LITURGY COMMISSION OF THE RE
Monastery of Santa María de la Caridad de Tulebras, November 16 to 20, 2021.

Members:

H. Presen Lite. President of the Liturgy Commission.

H. Lourdes Álava. Vocal.

P. José Luis Galiana. Vocal.

H. Olga Celina Orellana. Member (absent)

During the Eucharist on the morning of the 16th, when those who were to arrive had already arrived and were reunited with the local community, we began the work of the commission.

We began our work remembering what was pending: the subject of the "Missal" and the status of the prayers of the Martyrs of Tibhirine, and of Blessed Cyprian Michael Tansi, sent for the second time to the Generalate for processing at the Congregation for the Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments. We contacted Dom Juan José, then advisor to the Abbot General, and he told us that they had not yet been presented, since there had been personnel changes in the Congregation and it did not seem to be the right time, preferring to leave it for January 2022.

Later, as everyone knows, Dom Juan José was elected abbot of San Isidro de Dueñas and we do not know if the prayers were finally presented or if they were left to the new Procurator of the Order or to Dom Marco Antonio, the new Spanish-speaking advisor to the Abbot General, or if they were left at the bottom of a drawer.

The Music Commission had asked us to *approve the* texts that they wanted to set to music for later use as entrance chants. These texts coincided with the *Entrance Antiphons* proposed in the third typical edition of the Roman Missal.

Reviewing what the General Ordination of the Roman Missal says about the entrance chant:

47. When the people are gathered, the entrance song is sung as the priest advances with the deacon and ministers. The purpose of this song is to open the celebration, to promote the union of those gathered and to introduce their spirit into the mystery of the liturgical season or feast, as well as to accompany the procession of the priest and the ministers.

48. It is sung either alternately between the singers and the people or, in the same way, between a cantor and the people, or all by the people, or all by the singers. Either the antiphon with its psalm as found in the Graduale Romanum or in the Graduale simplex, or another chant appropriate to the nature of the sacred action, of the day or of the liturgical season, the text of which has been approved by the Conference of Bishops, may be used.

If there is no opening hymn, the faithful or some of them or a lector will read the antiphon proposed in the Missal, or else the priest himself, who may also adapt it as an opening monition (cf. n. 31).

And about the communion song:

87. The antiphon of the Roman Gradual, with or without its psalm, or the antiphon with the psalm of the Graduale Simplex, or some other suitable chant approved by the Conference of Bishops, may be used for Communion singing. It is sung by the choir alone, or by the choir with the people, or by a cantor with the people.

On the other hand, when there is no chant, the antiphon proposed in the Missal may be said.

It can be said by the faithful, or only by some of them, or by a lector, or in the last case by the priest himself, after communion, before distributing Communion to the faithful.

We understood that the antiphons that are indicated in each celebration of the Missal, and on their corresponding days, are not to be sung but to be recited.

What is proper to be sung, according to the OGMR, are the texts that appear in some of the graduals (Roman, Simplex or Cistercian -in our case-) that not infrequently coincide with the antiphon proposed in the Missal. For this reason we include some translations of the parts that did not coincide.

A few dates later, Fr. José María Manzano, as president of the Music Commission, consulted the Liturgy Commission of the EEC on the subject and was answered with generous documentation by the person in charge of music of the same, Mr. Oscar Velado. In summary, he said that if the Graduals were also updated, the texts of these would coincide with the entrance and communion antiphons proposed in the Missal.

In conclusion, the 12 pages of our work were of little use.

As always we are grateful for the motherly welcome of the Abbess and the sisters of the community of Tulebras.

A few months after the meeting of the Commission, last May, we put a face to the new technician of the Liturgy Commission of the EEC, Don Ramón Navarro, priest of the diocese of Cartagena-Murcia, willing to help and collaborate in whatever we need and pleasantly surprised that how we work on these issues.

3.3 Music Commission

The report was presented by M. Encarnación LLUCH, from Benaguacil.

REPORT OF THE MUSIC COMMISSION OF THE RE

The Music Commission of the Spanish Region met for the last time, June 10-15, 2019 at the Royal Monastery of San Clemente in Seville. At this meeting all the work was finalized and it was proposed to continue with the musicalization of the entrance and communion antiphons of the Missal. With the pandemic everything came to a standstill.

José María de Huerta has sent some work to the composers. Fr. Juan José Domingo is also participating in the composition work. They want to meet in November. The date and place will be determined.

3.4. Publications and *Cistercium* Commission

Enrique TRIGUEROS, of Oseira, presented the report.

Dear abbots:

I am writing to you as the head of the Publications Commission, which now has two tasks: the Cistercian Library and the Cistercian Magazine *Cistercium*.

CISTERCIAN LIBRARY

Enrique Trigueros, Mother M^a Carmen Echegaray and myself are responsible for the Cistercian Library on behalf of the OCSO. On behalf of the CCSB is Sister Rocío de Villamayor.

We have not met since last year, we will meet in June 2021 in the monastery of San Miguel de las Dueñas.

From then on we followed the marked itinerary:

Erick Varden's book, *The Explosion of Loneliness*, was edited, came out and is being a publishing success, thank God.

Originally, the edition of the Sermons of St. Bernard to the Song of Songs was to have been published during the first quarter of 2022. The difficulty of the paper we use and, we are told by the publisher, the consequences of the war in Ukraine have forced us to delay the edition until this very week when it has been released and will arrive at your monasteries.

This fall we will publish a study-guide by Dom Bernardo Olivera on Bernardo, Guerrico and Elredo. The text is being corrected and, God willing, we will have it for sale in November.

Fr. Tomás is still working on the sermons of St. Alfred, but the difficulties of his health are conditioning his iron will, but we hope that soon he will have the edition ready, since the text is already fully translated.

Also in preparation is the *Parabolarium* of Galnd de Reigny. The sisters of the Sacred Order of the Monastery of Casarrubios have offered to prepare the edition with its index of citations and its thematic index.

We also plan to publish *The Seven Ways to Love* and the *Autobiography of Beatriz de Nazareth* with a prologue being prepared by yours truly.

The last work of Charles Dumont's trilogy, which was very well translated by Mother Carme Echegaray, is being worked on, but the multiplicity of Father Andrés Barrón's work prevents it from being done with more agility.

There are still pending works: a biography of Mother Angelica of Port Royal that Sister Rocio de Villamayor is working on and a book by Erick Varden that Fr. Roberto de la Iglesia is translating, this book will be published as soon as it is translated and corrected due to the contracts, because the more time passes the less advantageous for us due to the contracts.

Jose Gerardo Bermell has made a translation of the Little Book of Proverbs by Galand de Reigny. Someone is needed to correct and retouch the translation due to the uniqueness of the medieval Latin, compared to the classical Latin with which he usually works.

Our idea is to publish two books per year, which we have been doing since we started this task. We are also aware that it was our obligation to meet before the SR, not due to laziness or carelessness, but because the responsibilities of each of the members have prevented us from setting a date convenient for all of us. We hope that as the community work commitments are solved, we will be able to organize ourselves better.

CISTERCIUM MAGAZINE

Regarding the Cistercium Magazine, we have been able to meet the different people in charge. We have to point out the success in putting Antonio García Flores as Director because he is doing an enormous work with a lot of illusion and desire to take the magazine forward. I attach the summary of his activity that he has made us because I believe that he can explain it better than anyone, due to the professionalism with which he has made this change of stage according to the guidelines that we have been given.

I am also enclosing the new bylaws for your review and approval.

I am very grateful and recommend myself to your prayers.

Miguel Maria

Monk of San Isidro de Dueñas

Antonio García, director of the magazine *Cistercium*, then addressed the assembly:

PRESENTATION OF THE *CISTERCIUM* MAGAZINE

The magazine *Cistercium* was founded in 1948 with the aim of strengthening the bonds of fraternal union between the different houses of the SR, cooperating in the ongoing formation of the communities and promoting among the monks and nuns the interest and study of the Cistercian heritage as well as of the monastic history and spirituality.

We are conscious, therefore, that *Cistercium* is oriented especially towards a very concrete public, our communities and, also, to other orders and religious congregations, and the editorial line of the magazine has always kept this in mind. In fact, many monks and nuns of our houses have collaborated throughout all these years writing articles to publish in the

magazine. However, we have noted that in recent times the presence of Cistercian authors has decreased significantly.

That is why one of the main objectives we have set for this new stage of the magazine is to encourage our monks and nuns to collaborate actively with studies and unpublished works on our heritage, to take advantage of talks or spiritual exercises that they give in their monasteries or elsewhere and adapt them to a "publishable" format and share them with the rest of the communities, etc. If the monasteries themselves do not get involved in something that is theirs, it will simply disappear. And the truth is, it would be a shame after so many years of work and sacrifice on the part of our monks and nuns.

In this sense, we are considering the possibility of including in one of the two annual issues a section dedicated to formation in our communities. It would be a sort of chronicle of what is being done in the different monasteries for their integral formation (spiritual exercises, courses, participation in conferences or congresses), since we believe that knowing what is being done in some monasteries can serve as an orientation for other communities.

On the other hand, we would like to recall that for many years *Cistercium* has been open to the participation of lay researchers who contribute with works to deepen the knowledge of the various areas that make up the heritage of the Order (spirituality, history, music and liturgy, art and architecture, books and literature, etc.) and have helped the management team of the journal by being part of the Editorial Board.

Many lay people come to our magazine interested in aspects of medieval Cistercian spirituality (mystics like Gertrude of Helfta and other northern European nuns are now the subject of numerous studies), but they are also attracted to more modern personalities of the Order, for example, Thomas Merton or the brothers of Tibhirine. But they also come in search of news about the history, art and architecture, libraries, music, etc., of our monasteries. And although in recent years the presence of works on these subjects has diminished both in quantity and quality, we want *Cistercium* to be considered an important source of diffusion of our heritage and, through it, of evangelization.

This combination in the same publication of spirituality and Cistercian culture makes our magazine a *rara avis*, and we believe that precisely this duality makes it richer and more interesting. There are already magazines that deal exclusively with themes of monastic spirituality, and there are good ones, such as *Cuadernos monásticos*, and to make clones, copies or convert *Cistercium* into a sort of *Selections of theology* but in monastic, that is, a compilation of articles already published in other magazines, books, etc., would not make any sense, it would not be worthwhile.

We want to promote this double aspect of which we have spoken -formation of the monks and nuns and diffusion of the patrimony-, trying that the works that are published are not only unpublished, but also of quality. An article, be it on spirituality, history, art or documentation, must comply with adequate quality standards: originality, rigor, correct writing, adequate expression, etc. If we want to offer a good formation to our communities, we must not "lower the bar".

In order to achieve this goal, we have seen the need to have two work teams to help us in this task.

Editorial Board

It is composed of monks and nuns of the Cistercian family, as well as lay experts in the different areas that make up our heritage. Traditionally, the monks and nuns members of the Editorial Board were from the OCSO and the CCSB, however, in order to broaden the fraternal bonds between the Benedictine and Cistercian orders, we wanted to have a member of the O. Cist and a member of the OSB as well. Cist and another from the OSB.

In addition, given the essentially formative nature of the journal, we believe that the permanent presence of the Secretary of Formation of the EN is essential.

The tasks carried out by the members of the Board shall be:

- Review and evaluate the articles we receive for possible publication. In the case of articles on monastic spirituality, the monks and nuns would be in charge.
- Propose topics that can be dealt with in future issues, bearing in mind that one of the main objectives of the magazine is to cooperate in the ongoing formation of the communities and the dissemination of our heritage.
- Assist in finding people to develop articles.
- To give news of any interesting books that are coming out about the Order or other topics that may be of interest for the formation of the monk.
- If possible, write an article. It is not mandatory.

The Editorial Board, elected by the new editorial team, is composed of:

P. Carlos Maria Antunes, OCSO

P. Paco Rivera Jiménez, OCSO

Bro. Carolina Cardozo, CCSB

Bernat Forcá, O. Cist.

M. Ernestina Álvarez Tejerina, OSB

Ms. Carmen Rodríguez López (University of León)

D. Eduardo Carrero Santamaría (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona)

Ms. Ana Suárez González (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela)

D. Ghislain Baurý (Université du Maine)

With the desire to find new ways to help the formation of our communities, from the Editorial Board we have begun to change some aspects of the magazine's web page. First of all, we have restructured some tabs and added content, such as 'Cistercian Links' and we are still working on the 'Magazine' tab. However, the one we are most interested in for training purposes is the 'Editorial Fund', which we want to reorganize as soon as possible.

Scientific Committee

It is composed of monks and also university professors, people linked to the scientific and academic world, and specialists in the history of monasticism in its most diverse aspects, from spirituality to art and architecture.

The tasks carried out by the members of the Committee shall be:

- Check, if we deem it necessary, the originality of the articles received and evaluate them in order to ensure that they meet the necessary quality standards. Plagiarism and consultation of electronic resources of dubious scientific rigor, e.g. Wikipedia, should be avoided by all means.
- Invite recognized members of the national and international academic community to publish their work in the journal.
- Promote its dissemination in national and international academic circles.
- Propose topics to be addressed in future issues.
- To contribute with their presence so that our magazine can become a reference for all those who wish to study and investigate the Order's heritage in Spain.

The Scientific Committee that we have chosen for this new stage of *Cistercium* is composed of:

Brother Antonio Manuel Pérez Camacho, OCSO

P. Alfredo Simón Pérez, OSB

Ms. Catarina Fernandes Barreira (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, IEM)

D. Carlos de Ayala Martínez (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)

Mr. Jesús Criado Mainar (University of Zaragoza)

Mrs. Ana Maria Tavares Martins (Universidade da Beira Interior)

Mrs. Sonia Petisco Martínez (University of La Laguna)

D. Luís Rêpas (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, IEM)

Mr. José Luis Senra Gabriel y Galán (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

In this desire to promote the dissemination of our journal in the scientific and academic world, we have opened our own profile in Academia.edu, an academic social network whose main objective is to attract scientists (also institutions, publishers, journals...) from all over the world and offer them an online platform where they can share and disseminate their research work and publications (books, articles, reviews, participation in congresses and conferences, etc.) immediately and free of charge, and where they can meet other researchers working in their same discipline.

In our case, we have begun to "upload" the indexes and older issues of the journal in pdf format -since many of them are not easily available in public and university libraries-, as well as the new publication standards.

The next issue of *Cistercium*, No. 279 (2022), has been prepared in part by Fr. Francisco R. de Pascual, who had thought of a monographic issue dedicated to St. Benedict, although the new editorial team has preferred that it cover more topics. It will include the following works:

- The configuration of the monk with Christ: his mystagogical process in Chapter LVIII of the Rule of St. Benedict (José Luis Villacís Moscoso, OCSO).
- St. Benedict: "Silence that becomes voice", audible silence (Ernestina Álvarez Tejerina, OSB).
- Exhortations on the Rule of St. Benedict according to Fr. Alonso de Silva y Arteaga (Francisco Rafael de Pascual, OCSO).
- St. Gertrude the Great: an original and perfectly orthodox feminine theology (Maria Augusta Tescari, OCSO).
- Sources of a poem by Baltasar Joan Balaguer, prior of Santa María de la Valldigna (Lluís Ramón Ferrer).
- An 18th century *Breviarium Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* of the Congregation of St. Bernard of Portugal, in the light of the breviaries of the Congregation of Castile (Joaquín López Serra, OCSO).
- Of lightning and its "perpetual memory" in Santa María de Sobrado (XVII - XIX centuries) (Ana Suárez González).
- A reflection on a line of research in relation to the cultural history of the Cistercian Order, regarding classical letters (Lorenzo Martínez Ángel).
- Thomas Merton and antipoetry: Modern man facing interculturality and translation (Matías Gabriele and Verónica Mastrodonati).

In addition, there will be book reviews on spirituality (prayer and poverty), the history of monasticism in medieval Spain, the history of the monastery of La Oliva, the liturgy of the Order, etc.

STATUTE OF THE MAGAZINE "CISTERCIUM".

I. Nature and purpose

CISTERCIUM is a journal of the Spanish Regional Conference (=RE) integrated in the Publications Commission (=CP).

2. CISTERCIUM is a journal of information, research and dissemination of monastic topics, especially of the Cistercian heritage.
3. The periodicity of the journal is every six months.

II. Composition

CISTERCIUM has an Editorial Team, an Editorial Board and a Scientific Committee.

2. The Editorial Team is composed of the Director, the Editor and the Administrator plus the President of the COP.
3. The Editorial Board is composed of the Editorial Team plus such other members as it may elect.
4. The Regional Secretary for Formation and a sister of the Cistercian Congregation of St. Bernard shall be permanent members of the Council.
5. Members of the O. Cist. and the O.S.B., as well as experts in Cistercian heritage, may also be members of the Council. Cist. and the O.S.B., as well as experts in the Cistercian heritage.
6. The Scientific Committee is composed of specialists in monastic heritage.

III. Election of members

The members of the Editorial Team are elected by the SR for three years. They may be reelected.

IV. Abbot/ess Coordinator

The Abbot/ess Coordinator (cf. *Statutes of the SR*, IV.3) acts as liaison between the Journal and the SR through the President of the PC, to whom he/she informs of the activities and work of Cistercium.

V. Functions

Cooperate in the ongoing formation of the SR.

2. To stimulate and promote among the monks and nuns an interest in the study and dissemination of the Cistercian heritage as well as monastic history and spirituality.
3. To establish bonds of fraternal union between the Benedictine and Franciscan Orders.

4. To become a source of knowledge and dissemination of the Order's patrimony.
5. To publicize activities and events of the EN in the area of training.

VI. Funding

CISTERCIUM is financed by subscriptions and contributions from the SR houses.

2. The accounts of CISTERCIUM shall be sent by the Administrator to the Editorial Team for its approval and submitted to the SR for approval.

VII. Meetings

The Editorial Team shall meet at least twice a year, once for each issue. The President shall take the minutes of the meeting, which shall be incorporated into the Minutes of the COP.

Appropriate clarifications are made at the meeting. The following votes are taken:

VOTE 5: WE WISH TO APPROVE THE CORRECTIONS MADE TO THE BY-LAWS OF THE PUBLICATIONS COMMISSION.

YES: 16 NO: 0 ABS: 1 ACCEPTED PROPOSAL

VOTE 2: WE WISH TO APPROVE THE STATUTE OF THE CISTERCIUM MAGAZINE.

YES: 17 NO: 0 ABS: 0 UNANIMOUS

3.5. WELFARE MONASTERY

Isidoro M^a ANGUITA, of Huerta.

ASSISTANCE MONASTERY REPORT

As of December 31, 2021, there were 17 sisters in the MA, in addition to M. Venancia as superior and Sr. Claire, from the monastery of Echourgnac, who has been collaborating in the activities carried out by the elderly women for almost three years.

Last year 1 sister died and the year before 3. The average age is 87.5 years (excluding M. Venancia and Sr. Claire).

There are currently 8 employees, of which 6 are employed full time and 2 part time.

For the MA economy to be balanced, 3 pensions per employee are necessary. Therefore, 4 interns would be needed to be able to maintain the MA. Revenues have dropped significantly and electricity has quadrupled.

It would be good to find a balance so that income can cover expenses.

Appropriate clarifications are made in the assembly. Fr. Isidoro asks the communities to make some income in favor of the MA so that it can be maintained without external help.

3.6. COMMISSION FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE CHARISM AND VOCATION MINISTRY.

The report was presented by M. Pilar GERMÁN, from Alloz.

REPORT COMMISSION FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE CHARISM

This task entrusted to us presents us with the challenge of how to transmit the treasure of our vocation, without worrying about our poverty. What can we glean from our spirituality from simplicity, so that it may challenge the people of today? Our monastic vocation is a free gift that favors the encounter with Christ, root and fullness of our life. It is imperative that the testimony of Christ in our own life be the main motivation of engagement to our charism (Come and see).

That is why celebrating our vocation is important, because it is to celebrate the experience of God's love. That leads us to be happy with what we are and what we do, that is, it is to celebrate the diversity of our community, experiencing all its richness. It is to live the happiness of the other. With this we also rekindle our own vocation, foster fraternity and share our life from our Christian journey. In short, it is a matter of offering what we have received, sowing so that the Lord may make its fruits bear fruit. Going further is not a commitment, it is a grace. The spirit will enable us to be instruments that will lead others to be true "Seekers of God".

This experience is translated as "vocational culture": that is, a set of ideas, criteria and behavioral guidelines that lead us to live and transmit our life as a response to God's call:

- the gratuitousness of receiving our vocation as a gift
- openness to the mystery of God's love
- the ability to question oneself and to question oneself thoroughly every day
- the trust
- generosity
- the responsibility

In reality, these elements are at the basis of the Christian proposal and without them, any attempt to realize a worthwhile life would be impossible.

The "vocational culture" joins other important elements in our life:

- the community
- prayer-celebration,
- training

- the service.

The active commitment of each confrere and community will make it possible for the project to come alive and take root in a dynamic and contagious way in our lives. We are decidedly committed to a pastoral ministry that will arouse, promote and accompany the response of today's men and women in their journey.

JOBS:

Web: already under construction

Collection of material: You have already collected some of it.

Diocese: Contact has been made, now we have to send material and guides of monasteries to be included in excursions for young people and schools. We spoke with one of the people in charge and you propose to do work camps (gardening, cleaning, etc.) combining it with the experience in our life (trades, monks' welcome).

PEJ: European Youth Pilgrimage, we have been given the space to attend from August 1 to 7. The Portico of Glory is the reference point for a catechesis, since the young pilgrim will be presented with the announcement of the good news: the beauty of life as a vocation (vocational kerygma).

The Statutes of the Commission for the Transmission of the Charism and Vocation Ministry were then presented:

STATUTE OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE CHARISM AND VOCATION MINISTRY (=CCV)

I. Nature and purpose

The CCV of the Spanish Regional Conference (=RE) is a team to make our charism known and to promote vocation ministry in the communities.

II. Composition

The CCV is composed of two members of the SR and one Sister from the CCSB. One of the three members is the President; the others are members of the CCV.

III. Election of members

The members of the CCV are elected by the SR for three years and can be re-elected. The Sister of the CCSB is presented by the Abbess President of the CCSB and confirmed by the SR.

IV. Abbot/ess Coordinator

The Abbot/Coordinator follows the work of the CCV and informs the EN of the activities of the same. He/she may participate in its meetings, of which he/she will be informed in advance (cf. *Statutes of the EN*, IV.3).

V. Functions

1. Propose concrete actions in our region with the communities that wish to do so.
2. Promote a vocational culture in our communities.
3. Collect and develop material and make it available to the communities, providing guidance to those who request it.
4. Create initiatives to help and facilitate the communities in vocation ministry, since they are the main agent.
5. Collaborate with other vocation ministry agents and existing initiatives.
6. Work in synergy with the novice master of each house, or another brother or sister designated by their abbot or abbess as responsible in this area.
7. Use the media as a means of transmitting our spirituality.
8. Collaborate with the Secretariat of Formation and Publications in the area that unites us.

VI. Meetings

1. The CCV shall meet once a year, and whenever necessary.
2. The President, in agreement with the members, may invite to the meeting those specialists they consider necessary to collaborate and help in the topics they are working on, as well as to have the advice of those they believe can provide guidance to their studies.
3. The President shall take minutes of the meeting, which shall be sent to the communities of the SR, as well as inform them of all the activities of the CCV.

Dom Bernardus, AG, told the assembly that he was very happy to hear about this Commission. It is a question that touches all the Regions, many of which need support in this matter, and with this Commission the SR gives life to the whole Order. But this work needs two "legs", the AG continued commenting: one, which is to go outward to transmit life but not to forget the communities, which would be the second leg. The communities need help both in promoting a culture of vocations and in praying for vocations. Communities need to learn to pray for vocations. On another note, he suggested that for all the initiatives to be carried out through the network, professionals should be called in. In the first place because we monks do not have enough knowledge, and secondly because we do not have enough time, which makes it easy to make mistakes. Finally he indicated that if something is going to be organized for young people, it should be organized with young people and not only for young people.

After the appropriate clarifications, the following vote was taken:

VOTE 3: WE WISH TO APPROVE THE STATUTES OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE CHARISM AND VOCATION MINISTRY.

YES: 17

NO: 0

ABS: 0

UNANIMOUS

4. REPORT OF THE MALE AND FEMALE INTERNVITIATE

Paco RIVERA, of Huerta, presented the report.

INTERNALVITIATE REPORT FOR THE TULEBRAS 2022 NETWORK

We are writing this report to be presented to the SR to be held in Tulebras, starting on June 21, 2022. A little less than a year after having made, and also presented to the SR, a review of the online formation that we have had during the time of confinement due to Covid-19, we want to contribute in this note what has been of special importance during these months in this type of formation for the novices.

During this time, from September 2021 (date of the last SR) to the present, two courses have been held in both Internovitiates, online. The first course for novices had just begun when we presented the previous report (09/2021), and was concluded on November 3. The second began on February 16 of this year 2022, and ended on April 8; with a complementary course on writing and methodology from May 16-20; the farewell and closing was held on the 27th of the same month. The first novitiate course was held from October 4 to December 22, 2021; and the second from April 4 to June 18.

Attendance is quite punctual; if a brother is not going to participate, he usually sends an e-mail to communicate his absence. The interferences that usually present these means of transmission are few, although we try to solve them in the most diligent way possible.

As a main point, regarding the operation of the courses in the female Internovitiate, it should be noted that, although we would like to start as soon as possible with the face-to-face meetings, we do not plan to return with them until the year 2023, so the next course is already thought to be held online. In the organization of these courses, Sr. M^a Fernanda counts on the unconditional help of Sr. Rosa Ana, but for the face-to-face courses it will be necessary to complete the formation team. As for the male Internovitiate, the return to face-to-face courses is not foreseen in the medium term due to the scarcity of those in formation (2 confreres from Cardeña) as well as the impossibility of the Master to be away from his community for 4 months due to the responsibilities assumed and the current fragility of the community.

Course participants.

In the female Internovitiate, despite the fact that there have been several inevitable departures in these first stages of formation, and that several novices are concluding their courses (in this last course two sisters finished), there are new incorporations, so that the number of participants remains between 27 and 30 formands per course.

Several houses have participated, as well as the sisters of the Encounter in Mexico. After participating in the formation course with D. Bernardo, and seeing that it is possible to follow the Zoom transmission without much interference, they asked us to participate fully in the next course, so they were added as new participants. They have brought a lot of vitality to the group, and have united bonds of fraternity.

We detail the houses that have participated in the last course:

MONASTERY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
St. Clement of Seville	2
The Incarnation of Cordoba	3
Talavera de la Reina, Toledo	1
Calatravas Moralarzal, Madrid	5
Vico, Arnedo	1
Valladolid	1
St. Bernard of Burgos	2
Villamayor de los Montes, Burgos	5
Gradefes, León	3
Armenteira	1
Benavente	2
The Mexico Encounter	2

In the male Internovitiate, 5 formandi participated in the course of the last semester of 2021 and 6 in the second semester of 2022. In this last course, two novices from the Monastery of Novo Mundo (Brazil) have joined.

Monasteries that have participated in the last course:

MONASTERY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Cardeña	2
El Paraíso	2
Novo Mundo	2

Teaching staff and course content.

Regarding the content of the courses already completed, we are pleased to have offered, almost in its entirety, the established program, under the possibilities and limitations of doing it digitally.

José Luis Villacís from the community of El Paraíso and the brothers from Huerta: Br. Antonio Manuel Pérez and Enzo Gadea and Fr. José M^a Manzano. We also wish to count on the presence of sisters in the formation of the novices.

Acknowledgments

We do not want to end without thanking all those who have collaborated with us in the formation of new vocations, and for their ability to adapt to the plan we developed. Among them we thank the RE for providing us with what is necessary for the "on-line" courses to go ahead; to the communities, whose efforts allow the friars in formation to nourish themselves and attend the classes.

Without further ado, we ask for your prayers,

Sister María Fernanda Soriano (Benavente)

Sister Rosa Ana Izquierdo (S. Bernardo, Burgos)

P. José Ignacio Manzano (Orchard)

P. Paco Rivera (Huerta)

5. ECONOMY OF THE RE

ECONOMY OF THE RE

Guillermo de Cardeña, presented to the Assembly the economic situation of the Spanish Cistercian Regional Conference for the last fiscal year 2021, focusing his explanation on five areas: **FINANCIAL SITUATION**, **RE**, **CISTERCIUM**, **CISTERCIENSE LIBRARY** and **B.A.C.**, graphically summarizing everything in an **OVERALL RESULT**.

After the pandemic, as there were no on-site courses, it was decided not to charge the 2021 EN fee because the one charged in 2020 yielded a very large surplus that allows sustaining the expenses of this fiscal year, of the current 2022 and, surely, of the next one. At the end of the year, some on-site courses were resumed, so they represent an expense, added to the rest of the usual expenses of the EN, without a compensation in this respect, financially speaking, but which is covered in accounting terms with what has already been collected in the previous fiscal year.

Both Cistercium and Biblioteca Cisterciense are gradually losing subscribers, but this does not cause losses in terms of publishing costs; Cistercium has not increased subscription costs for years and Biblioteca Cisterciense reduces expenses in publishing the necessary number of copies, reprinting if necessary, but always with assured sales by Monte Carmelo, as occurs with the books of St. Bernard in the B.A.C.

The importance of disseminating the publications by the communities and especially on their web pages, at least by creating a link to that of Cistercium, was once again recalled. It is also requested that the Publications Commission also accept the small part of the decision on the B.A.C., now that it also includes Cistercium, bringing together all the publications in a centralized way.

Appropriate questions are clarified at the assembly.

7. SELF-EVALUATION AND CLOSING OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

All those present thanked the community of Tulebras for their hospitality. The presence of the GA and his interventions, which for most of the participants were provocative and very suggestive, were particularly exciting.

M. Angelines de FRUTOS, abbess president of the CCSB wanted to highlight the fluidity and transparency with which this Regional Conference was carried out, emphasizing with Fr. Enrique TRIGUEROS, from Oseira, the amount of documents produced by this SR.

Finally, Dom Bernardus PEETERS, Abbot General, addressed the assembly and made the following points:

- ① He thanked the hospitality experienced both in the community of Tulebras and in the SR.
- ② The dreams shared by the superiors, at his request, were very personal, so he got an idea about the life of the communities and the superiors, and the reports from the houses were of high quality. All this indicates that there is a lot of life in the SR; and life consists in being faithful, joyful and caring for one another. And all this was something to be thankful for.
- ③ The dreams of the superiors coincided above all in wanting to live an authentic Cistercian life. To say what we are and live what we say we are. Dream of a simpler life, yes, but missed some reference to the encyclical *Laudato si* both in the reports of the houses and in the "dreams".
- ④ Although the SR has a lot of structures and there is a strong desire and willingness to cooperate, he acknowledged that it is difficult to find new forms of cooperation or to go a step beyond what is done so far; and he noted that he would have liked a real and open conversation on that topic. For example, the fact that in many communities the superior is also the novice master, and there was no further discussion on how to form the novice masters. He also appreciated that the SR addressed the issue of abuse in a serious way.
- ⑤ Many of the SR communities are small, between 7 and 10 members, but this is not a problem. And the quality of life in them is good. Our presence can be done with small communities, but a greater interconnection is necessary so that the superiors and other community leaders do not have a greater workload, thus preventing the laity from taking power without due control.
- ⑥ In spite of what was said in the previous point, he did want to put on record that he was concerned about the female communities because of their age and the responsibilities and services they have to adopt. And for that reason he encouraged to make use of the EACF to guarantee the quality of life. The EACF is not a norm to close monasteries but it has the purpose of choosing life.
- ⑦ He is worried about the SR that we are isolated and that we are not taking care of our mission because of the reduction of communities. It is normal, in times of crisis, to be tempted to withdraw. Everyone tries to solve his own problems. But there is a certain danger of isolation so he invited us to try to look for cooperation beyond our Region, what can REMILA mean for the EN? And vice versa.
- ⑧ Regarding the Commission for the Transmission of the Charism, he indicated that it should transmit the Cistercian life externally and also internally. This Commission is a good way to avoid the danger of isolation. And it would be good for us to share our life with the whole Order.
- ⑨ She proposed as a very concrete way of cooperating and of great help to alleviate the filiations of Cardeña and Viaceli, to delegate the pastoral care of the feminine houses of this filiation, to an abbess. It could be a step in the direction of the Immediate Mothers, but it could also be a concrete contribution of the SR to the discussion on this topic in the Order. We will do something concrete and others will be able to learn from our experience.

⑩ He concluded with the image he took with him from this EN: the beautiful church of Tulebras. Nothing is straight in that church, and if you look at it too much, you end up dizzy. Although it is a fragile building it has stood the test of time and "it rains flowers from heaven". And flowers, but also people need air, light and water. The church, even if it is dark, lets in light and air. And it is nice that the doors of the monastery are always open. Thank you. Let us continue to live our Cistercian charism but open to others, to the Order, to the world and to the Church.

Our next meeting, March 12-17, 2024 (arriving on the 11th for dinner and departing on June 18 after breakfast).

ANNEXES

Annex i - Report by M. Ana MONEO, from Armenteira.

VOTES OF THE G.C. 2022 FIRST PART

VOTE 22

WE WISH TO INCLUDE IN PARAGRAPH 10 OF THE STATUTE: "THE GC AUTHORIZES THE IMMEDIATE PARENT TO APPOINT A MONASTIC COMMISSARY TO OVERSEE THE CARE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE MONASTERY. COMMUNITY SO THAT THEY CAN CONTINUE TO LIVE LIFE TOGETHER IN THE FULLEST WAY POSSIBLE. POSSIBLE. IN SOME EXCEPTIONAL OR URGENT CASES, THE GC MAY APPOINT THE PARENT AS THE PARENT. AS MONASTIC COMMISSARY".

YES 121 NO 4 ABS 2 PROPOSAL ACCEPTED

* Votes 23 and 24 are mutually exclusive. This vote requires a two-thirds majority to be accepted.

VOTE 23

WE WISH THAT THE TEXT ON THE SUSPENSION OF THE EXERCISE OF A COUNTRY'S AUTONOMY PARAGRAPH 10 COMMUNITY TO READ: "THIS VOTE OF THE GC REQUIRES A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY".

YES 55 NO 70 ABS 3 REJECTED PROPOSITION

The vote has been rejected; therefore, we will proceed to the next vote, 24.

This vote requires a two-thirds majority to be accepted.

VOTE 24

WE WISH THAT THE TEXT ON THE SUSPENSION OF THE EXERCISE OF A COUNTRY'S AUTONOMY PARAGRAPH 10 COMMUNITY TO READ: "THIS VOTE OF THE GC REQUIRES AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY".

YES 111 NO 14 ABS 2 PROPOSAL ACCEPTED

This vote requires a two-thirds majority to be accepted.

VOTE 25

WE APPROVED THE TEXT OF THE STATUTE FOR ACCOMPANYING FRAGILE AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES.

SUPPRESSION OF A MONASTERY AND RELATED CONSTITUTIONS: CST 67, CST 34BIS, CST 60 *AD EXPERIMENTUM*.

YES 122 NO 3 ABS 2 PROPOSITION ACCEPTED

VOTE 29

WE ASK THE LAW COMMISSION TO REVIEW THE TEXTS, SUBMIT THEM TO THE AG AND ITS COUNCIL AND, IF NECESSARY, TO

IF THEY DEEM IT APPROPRIATE, REQUEST A SUBSEQUENT REVIEW BY THE LAW COMMISSION. THE CAPITULARS WILL RECEIVE THE REVISED TEXTS BEFORE GC 2022 PART 2.

YES 123 NO 2 ABS 1 PROPOSAL ACCEPTED

* Votes 30 and 31 are mutually exclusive.

VOTE 30

WE WISH TO APPROVE THE TEXT OF CST 67, CST 34 bis, CST 60 AND THE STATUTE ON AND THE SUPPRESSION OF A MONASTERY BY A MONASTERY FOR THE SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURE IN THE CG, PART 2, SEPTEMBER 2022.

YES 87 NO 34 ABS 5 PROPOSAL ACCEPTED

We move on to vote 32 which is the last vote.

VOTE 32

WE REQUEST THAT, DURING THE SECOND PART OF THE GC, EXPERIENCES BASED ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS STATUTE.

YES 117 NO 6 ABS 5 ACCEPTED PROPOSAL
Based on the last working document of the IC (2019-Scourmont), this revised statute takes into account the contributions of the Commissions and the votes taken by the GC 2022-1st part in order to be voted at the 2nd part of the GC 2022 by simplified procedure (VOTE 30).

Modifications and additions are shown in **bold and underlined**.

Statute for accompanying fragile communities and suppression of a monastery

Introduction

1. When a community is faced with increasing fragility, it is encouraged to face the situation realistically. Every community of the Order, on every continent, may have to face this fragility at a given moment in its history. In this case, it is important that the community does not withdraw into isolation under the pretext of its autonomy, but that it sees itself "recognizing itself in the truth of a communion that is always open to encounter, dialogue, listening and mutual help" (cf. VDQ 29). The *Charter of Charity* also teaches us to seek and accept concrete help "so that we may all live in one charity" (CC III.2).
2. "With a spirit open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit" the community "actively and humbly" discusses its situation (cf. C. 36.1). All are called to mutual care, collaboration and obedience. "The light of faith is especially needed in these times to see that, through these difficult periods, the heart is being formed by the personal and communal experience of the cross, death and resurrection of Christ" (*Ratio* 54).

Creative solutions are needed in these situations.

I. Awareness of fragility

3. In the first place, it is the responsibility of each community, under the direction of its superior, to look realistically at its situation, not only from the human point of view, but above all from the point of view of faith. An experience of fragility must be accepted as an invitation from the Lord to choose life by entering into the paschal mystery.
4. In the spirit of the Gospel, communities should not be afraid to accept outside help, from the Immediate Father, the Region, the Abbot General, the General Chapter, or others. Elements to consider in evaluation and discernment may include:
 - the number of monks or nuns;
 - the age profile of the community;
 - if he has the necessary vitality to live the monastic life;
 - the community's capacity for formation and governance;
 - the dignity and quality of the liturgical, fraternal and spiritual life of the community;
 - the value of the community's witness and its communion with the local Church;
 - if its economic structure is sound;
 - whether the buildings are suitable for the current community.

These elements must be considered in an integral manner, in a global and balanced perspective and in the context of the particular community.

5. In a situation of increasing fragility in his daughter house, the Immediate Father must have the courage to help the superior and the community to face this reality. The Regular Visit is the most suitable instrument for this purpose (Stat VR 15).

II. Pastoral measures and collaboration

6. Helping the community to face its situation, the Immediate Father proceeds with great tact and charity, trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit in each person and in the community. Together they will look for ways to help the community live the fullness of the Cistercian *conversatio*. These might include:
 - ✦ become aware of the changes in society, the reality of young people and the need to change training methods;
 - ✦ adapt the buildings, liturgy, schedule, work and economy to the size and capabilities of the community;
 - ✦ changes of officers; assistance through personnel from other communities or from outside the Order (e.g., for health care, finances);
 - ✦ work to promote better communication in the community or to promote reconciliation among its members;
 - ✦ the search for other forms of assistance within the affiliation or the Region;
 - ✦ creation of a Commission for the Future.
 - ✦ **One can also envision a form of "affiliation" as described in *Cor orans* (54-64).**
7. The success of these measures depends largely on the cooperation and willingness of all involved (community, superior, Immediate Parent).

III. Advanced frailty: special measures

8. If, after all these efforts, the situation of fragility persists, the superior or the Immediate Father, or a Commission of the General Chapter, or the Abbot General, will bring the situation to the particular attention of the General Chapter. If the Immediate Father judges that the community can no longer form new aspirants, he asks the General Chapter to suspend its right to receive aspirants, in accord with Est. 79.
9. The General Chapter will appoint a Commission for the Future **which will include the Immediate Pastoral Father** and which will replace any existing Commission. The purpose and mandate of this new Commission will be specified by the General Chapter. It will include ensuring the proper management of the temporal goods of the monastery, in conformity with the Constitutions and the civil law of the place, and safeguarding them in light of the possible future closure of the monastery.
10. If the situation of the community still does not improve, the General Chapter, at the request of the Immediate Pastoral Father, can proceed to suspend the exercise of the autonomy of the community. This vote of the General Chapter requires an **absolute majority**. The General Chapter authorizes the Immediate Father to appoint a monastic commissary to oversee the care of the members of the community so that they may continue to live life together as fully as possible. This commissary, who may be from within or outside the Order, is a major religious superior with limited authority as defined in the letter of appointment. He or she will report regularly to the Immediate Father. If this person is not already a member of the Commission for the Future, he or she will become a member at the time of appointment as monastic commissary.

In some exceptional or urgent cases, the General Chapter may appoint the Immediate Pastoral Father as Monastic Commissary.

11. The monastic commissary does not need to live in the monastery. He/she may appoint another person to take care of the daily needs of the community; the latter may be a member of the community, another member of the Order, a member of another religious institute, or a lay person (~~such as a business manager or a caretaker~~).
12. The monastic commissary chooses at least two persons as advisors, who may be from within or outside the community. When necessary, these advisors function as councils of the monastic commissary. The conventual chapter is suspended, except for acts of extraordinary administration and for the vote referred to in n. 17. The monastic commissary keeps the members of the community informed and listens to their opinion on matters of importance.
13. The suspension of the exercise of autonomy does not change the relationship of filiation. The Immediate Father continues to assist and support the monastic commissary of his daughter house in the exercise of his office (cf. C. 74.1). All the rights and obligations of the Immediate Father towards the daughter house remain intact, including that of the Regular Visitation.
14. (~~If the community whose autonomy is suspended~~) If the community whose **exercise of** autonomy is suspended has daughter houses, the Immediate Parent, in consultation with the daughter houses, shall decide how the exercise of paternity shall be carried out.
15. If the situation of the community improves and the community and/or the Immediate Father are of the opinion that the exercise of autonomy can be resumed, one or both of them do so at the General Chapter. The General Chapter investigates the matter and decides whether or not to lift the suspension, which requires a two-thirds majority vote of the General Chapter.
16. Between General Chapters, in cases that cannot be postponed, the Abbot General, with the consent of his Council, has authority to act in the name of the General Chapter in all matters relating to the suspension of the exercise of the autonomy of a community (C. 82.2).

IV. The Suppression Process

17. When, because of special and permanent circumstances, there is no longer well-founded hope that a monastery can develop (cf. PC 21), diligent consideration will be given to whether it should be closed.
18. The local bishop is consulted.
19. When the community has become aware that it must close, the Immediate Father invites the conventual chapter to express its acceptance of this reality through a vote. This **consultative** vote of the community requires an **absolute majority**.
20. To consider the suppression of a monastery, the General Chapter requires a written report from the Immediate Father and the Monastic Commissary, together with ~~their~~ **opinion** on the matter.

21m. Only the General Chapter, by a two-thirds majority, can decide on the suppression of an autonomous monastery.

21f. Only the General Chapter, by a two-thirds majority, can ask the Holy See to suppress an autonomous monastery (CIC 616 §4).

22. After the General Chapter has voted in favor of suppressing a monastery or, in the case of a monastery of nuns, in favor of asking the Holy See to do so, it appoints a **Closing Commission** composed of at least five persons to carry out the suppression. This Commission, which replaces the commission mentioned in paragraph 9 above, gives great pastoral attention to the members of the suppressed house and makes sure that each one finds a community of the Order that will accept him with a view to stability. Each member of the Order has the right and the duty to have stability in a monastery of the Order, with all the related rights and obligations.

23. The community that accepts members coming from a suppressed community will express its will and commitment through a vote. This vote, which requires an absolute majority, is taken at the time of acceptance, not after a probationary period. These new members of a community shall be invited to act prudently in exercising their newly acquired right to vote.

24. When an elderly or sick member of a suppressed monastery must live permanently in any kind of nursing home, a community of the Order must agree to care for him or her until his or her death. He or she acquires stability in this community, but in view of his or her physical absence, the exercise of his or her voting rights may be suspended.

25. The financial assets of the suppressed monastery, respecting the civil law of the place and the will of the founders and donors, follow the surviving members of the community and go, in proportion, to the monasteries that receive them. If these goods are important, a part of them is reserved to help other monasteries of the Order and to respond to the needs of the locality where the monastery is located. The management of this distribution of goods and other elements of the monastery's patrimony (e.g., archives, library) is entrusted to the **Closing Commission**, which oversees the closure. It may be assisted, if necessary, by competent persons who need not be members of the Order.

If the community has debts, the same Commission will pay them out of the financial assets of the Community before dividing them, and if necessary, calling on other communities or the organs of the Order, such as the Aid Commission or the Finance Commission of the Order.

26. This Commission presents a report on its work to the next General Chapter and, in the meantime, keeps the Abbot General and his Council informed of the progress of events.

27. When the closing process has been completely concluded, the General Chapter issues a Declaration of Closure. And then, the work of the Closing Commission comes to an end.



Monastic Commissioner

Can the Immediate Father remove the monastic commissary, or is the authorization of the General Chapter necessary?

Some find a non-resident Monastic Commissary of little value.

It gives the impression that this daily request focuses exclusively on material needs; but a community engaged in a process of reflection on its fragile situation also expects spiritual and human support.

We also question the fact that we can entrust this responsibility to a layperson, can they have a pastoral care comparable to that of an abbot?

If the residence of the monastic commissary is not necessary in an aging community, at least one of his councilors must reside in the community.

Const. 60 and the new stability

On the one hand, it seems unfair to require a probationary period from an elderly person. On the other hand, what is the point of a vote at this point if the community does not know the person?

We believe that a maximum period of 3 years should be established to establish the stability of a brother or sister whose house has been closed. Perhaps a minimum time limit should also be established before the vote of the receiving community, because newcomers are often strangers. Can a community vote to accept new members before having seen them?

What happens if a member of a suppressed community is not accepted in any house? Is it realistic to speak of a "right to stability" in a house of the Order? It is one thing for the Order to have the obligation to take care of a member of a suppressed community, but it is another thing to say that the person has the right to stability in another community.

How is a new member's right to vote limited?

The closing of the novitiate is often a trauma. However, we note that it has already happened that candidates have been sent to another novitiate, only to return to the fragile house.

Annex ii - Report by Fr. Juan José DOMINGO, from San Isidro

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

(Rome 2021 Central Commission, p. 16, votes 46,47bis and 61)

I. INTRODUCTION: PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

When we ask ourselves: *what functions could be given to the Regions in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity?* It is worth bearing in mind the scope of the concept of subsidiarity and its presuppositions.

It is well known that the Church, especially in recent decades, has indicated the following as general and elementary principles of good governance in Religious Life: Information, communion, participation, subsidiarity and co-responsibility.

In fact, these five principles fit very well with the concept of governance in the monastic tradition and with the fundamental texts of our patrimony, especially the RB and the Charter of Charity.

The principle of subsidiarity is above all a principle of competence that indicates which institutional level of government is authorized to act in certain cases. Subsidiarity is also related to the ecclesiology of communion and the principle of collegiality, founded on joint responsibility, without detriment to the principle of hierarchy or authority.

Subsidiarity is intended to promote good governance by entrusting lower levels with the necessary competencies so that they can act without the intervention of higher levels. **Motivation:** because they are closer to the concrete situations to be resolved and know the communities or persons affected better. Therefore, subsidiarity requires a certain degree of decentralization.

Decentralization in the government of a religious institute means, transferring to various corporations or institutions, part of the authority and competence previously held by the central government of the institute. Namely: the supreme governing body (the General Chapter) and the Curia Generalis (GA and its Council).

The application of subsidiarity and decentralization with respect to the organs of government takes on different forms according to the way of being of each institute, and there are notable differences between apostolic RVIs and monastic institutes.

II. SUBSIDIARITY AND DECENTRALIZATION IN MONASTIC INSTITUTES

I focus on those who belong to the so-called "ancient tradition", that is to say, those who belong to the Benedictine-Cistercian tradition.

a. Features

In monastic institutes (call it monastic Order or Congregation, a term used by the CIC) the following characteristics are present:

- Each of the monasteries is autonomous, "sui iuris".
- The houses belong to a monastic congregation.

- This monastic congregation has constitutions and statutes for its monasteries which, as far as government is concerned, moderate the regime of autonomy of the houses.
- There is a central governing body: the General Chapter, with legislative, executive and judicial powers.
- The pastoral supervision of the monasteries is entrusted to visitators who can be: the president of the congregation himself, members of the institute appointed as visitators of the houses of the congregation, or a structure of filiation: mother houses that take on the pastoral care of the daughter houses, in the figure of their superior (Immediate Father).
- There may be other non-governing bodies.

b. Structures of intermediate governing and pastoral oversight bodies

There is a great variety of intermediate organs of government in monastic congregations: while in some congregations they are highly developed, others do not have them or they are reduced to a minimum.

1. **The congregational structure:** a monastic Order may be composed of monastic congregations (this is the case of the Benedictine Confederation and the O. Cist., for example).

In this case: there are general constitutions (a kind of fundamental law or framework law) that all congregations must follow. Each of the congregations is organized as an institute: it has its own constitutions, presiding abbot with his council, and general chapter of the Congregation. Therefore, in reality, the government of the houses depends on the Congregation to which they belong and not so much on the structures of the Order that in juridically responds to a Confederation.

2. **The provincial structure.** A monastic congregation can be, in turn, distributed in provinces (this is the case of the Sublacense-Casinense Congregation, for example).

The provinces are groupings of monasteries that belong to the same geographical area or that have a certain affinity. The purpose of the provinces is to establish an intermediate stay, between the General Chapter and the autonomous houses, that has executive power and that favors the good government of the houses belonging to this province. The structure of a Congregation organized in provinces is:

-
- General Chapter.
 - President of the Congregation with his council.

-
- Provincial chapters.
 - Presidents of the provinces with their Councils.
 - Provincial Visitors.

Autonomous houses "sui iuris".

3. **The structure of filiation.** Another type of intermediate instance, not of government but of pastoral vigilance and communion is the structure of filiation: Mother Houses - daughter houses and immediate Father who assumes the function of regular visitations, pastoral accompaniment,

and the actions in which the constitutions foresee as one of the requisites his intervention or the manifestation of his opinion. Currently the only example of this structure is the OCSO.

III. THE ORGANIZATION OF OSSO WITH REFERENCE TO DECENTRALIZATION AND SUBSIDIARITY.

Is the OCSO a decentralized Order, and are there any intermediate governing bodies in the OCSO, rather than simply consultative or collaborative bodies?

Government agencies:

In order to answer this question, we must first ask ourselves: Do governing bodies exist in the OCSO between the autonomous house and the General Chapter (GA and its Council, which make governing decisions between General Chapters)? The answer is: no. The autonomy of government is local and the organ of government for the whole Order is the General Chapter. There are no intermediate levels of government.

Pastoral instances:

However, in terms of pastoral vigilance there is a great decentralization, given that the pastoral care of the houses responds to the structure of Paternity-affiliation. This decentralization in many occasions does not have the characteristic of geographic or cultural proximity (the Immediate Father and his daughter house can be of different cultures and be at a great geographic distance).

The General Chapter is the sole instance of general government without intermediate instances.

It is the General Chapter that possesses the power for the whole Order, without prejudice to the fact that each monastery is autonomous and exercises autonomy according to the constitutions. C. 72.2 "The ecclesiastical power of government for the whole Order resides in the General Chapter according to canon 596.2 of the CIC. It is exercised by the Abbots with the cooperation of the Abbesses according to canon 129 § 1 and 2." And according to the Charter of Charity, the Cistercian communities are united among themselves by the bond of filiation (C. 73).

There are no structures that correspond to a province, nor other chapters other than the General Chapter or the conventual chapter. That is to say, there is no such thing as a group of several houses canonically erected by legitimate authority that forms an immediate part of an institute, under a collegial (provincial chapter) and personal (provincial) superior (cf. CIC, can. 621).

The Immediate Father is only the major superior of his own monastery. In the monasteries of his filiation he is entrusted with pastoral supervision (which he exercises principally by means of the RL and also by other secondary means). As described in dealing with the nature of the filiation, the filiation is expressed in "mutual help and support" (C. 73). Therefore, the Immediate Father does not have functions of government over the houses of his filiation (except in the case of a vacant see in monasteries of monks C.39 1/m).

Among the Assemblies of Superiors, regulated in Chapter II of the Constitutions (CC 77-81), namely: General Chapter, Central Commission and Regional Conferences, only the General Chapter has the power of government.

IV. NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCES

The very wording of C.81 is very illustrative:

"The communities of the Order are grouped into Regions, approved by the General Chapter. These Regional Conferences foster communion and fraternal cooperation in their geographical area and throughout the Order. Regional Conferences may be composed of both monks and nuns."

Therefore, the function of these associations of superiors is to foster communion and fraternal cooperation. They are not bodies of intermediate government nor can they make any kind of pastoral decisions regarding the houses.

In the three statutes that correspond to this constitution (Est 81A, Est 81.B, Est. 81C) it is stated:

- Which are very useful to prepare for the CC and GC
- That they are organs of dialogue to deal with current and common problems even if they are not of the whole order and affect the houses of the Region or others.
- Send one or two members to the CC (which is also not a governing body).
- They may send one or two delegates to the GC
- They can participate in meetings of other Regions and establish "a dialogue among the different nations and peoples that increases the esteem for the common patrimony of the Order" (Stat. 81 C).

In short, the Regions are **bodies for dialogue, consultation and collaboration** in various areas, generally within the same geographical region (training, economic or legal advice, initiatives to promote heritage, etc.). No governing function. No direct pastoral function over the houses.

In addition, the regions are very different from each other in their configuration:

Geographic. While some are composed of houses that belong to the same country or delimited geographical area, in others, the geographical distance between the houses is very large and there are also notable cultural differences.

Level of collaboration. While some regions have a high level of collaboration and common projects that effectively serve the needs of the monasteries in the Region, in others collaboration and common projects are scarce or not easy to implement.

V. COULD THE REGIONS ASSUME INTERMEDIATE FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT AND PASTORAL OVERSIGHT OVER THE HOUSES THAT COMPOSE IT? HOW? IS IT ADVISABLE?

This issue is related to the structure of Sonship and the idea that we are in a new situation that requires new structures:

- While for some the structure of affiliation no longer functions in the Order: it corresponds to another time and is not effective today, it must be replaced by another structure in which the Regions could have the leading role,
- For others, the idea that the Regions should assume the functions of government and pastoral oversight is inadmissible: it is a kind of "congregational" movement that erodes the unity of the Order

and departs from the spirit of the Charter of Charity, where it is clear that the structure of affiliation is the original one.

- Few contemplate the possibility that the Region could assume functions similar to those of a monastic province.

If it is desired that the Regions take on governance and pastoral oversight competencies this can be:

- **By its own power:** it would mean a change in our law, in such a way that the Regions would assume some functions that at present correspond to the General Chapter, the Abbot General and his Council or the Immediate Father.

It involves redesigning some aspects of our own law. Introducing greater decentralization, broader application of the principle of subsidiarity, changes in competencies, and the introduction of an intermediate governing body.

- **By vicarious or delegated power:** this would mean that our law foresees that the various current authorities can delegate to the Regions.

It assumes that the Regions as such are considered suitable subjects to receive delegations or to act vicariously in government decisions and in the RL, pastoral supervision of the houses.

- **Mandatory consultation with the Regions.** Another issue is that the Regions could be more active bodies of authorized interlocution with respect to the General Chapter, the Council of the Abbot General (participating in some sessions on certain occasions) or with respect to the Immediate Fathers. Consultation with the Regions could be established as a prerequisite for making certain decisions.

VI. CONCLUSION

It seems appropriate to open a debate on:

- Whether it is opportune to **grant powers** to the Regions. That is to say: that the regions be an intermediate governing body between the autonomous houses and the General Chapter, as established by law.

- Whether the Regions should be a **mandatory body for consultation prior** to decision making with respect to those who have the competence to act.

- Whether the Regions should continue to limit themselves to being a kind of association for dialogue and cooperation among the houses that make up the Region and to prepare for the General Chapter.

Annex iii - Report by M. Pilar GERMÁN, de Alloz Pilar GERMÁN, from Alloz

IMMEDIATE PARENTS

For a long time, one could say, we have been talking about the figure of the Immediate Pastoral Father. Documents have been drawn up, documents have been discussed in General Chapters, the Central Commission, the Regions... but the problem persists. In the General Chapter of 2017 we were faced with a critical situation that needed a concrete and immediate response. For this purpose an *ad hoc* commission was constituted which in record time had to find a solution. In a way, this has marked a turning point and has made us aware that the issue must be addressed in depth and not only provide palliative care.

In the document Annex Immediate Parents I have gathered, in a very succinct way, what I have found most relevant and that can help to a constructive reflection.

C. 73 states:

/According to the Charter of Charity, the Cistercian communities are united among themselves by the bond of filiation. According to tradition, filiation takes juridical form in the function of the Immediate Father. Paternity and filiation are expressed in mutual help and support.

/According to the Charter of Charity, the Cistercian communities are united among themselves by the bond of filiation. According to tradition, filiation takes on juridical form in the particular relationship of a community of nuns with a monastery of monks, whose Abbot acts as the Immediate Father of the nuns. Paternity and filiation are expressed in mutual help and support.

I think most of us would agree with the first sentence of this constitution. But it is the second part that specifies how it is carried forward that raises different questions and requires a creative response.

For many years, at least in the EN, we have reflected on the possibility of having Immediate Mothers as well. The response did not have much echo and sadly the women themselves were the most reluctant to do so. Times and mentalities have changed. In the last GC there have been voices that have brought up the subject again for two main reasons.

- Given the precarious situation and the closure of male homes, it is becoming increasingly difficult to perform their role as Immediate Parents.
- But above all, and independently of the situation described above, because the Order is made up of men and women and, therefore, we must assume a more active role within the structures of the Order, as is happening in the rest of the Church.

I propose three questions to reflect on:

- I think that the structure of filiation, Immediate Parent, is a structure of the past and, should we go to something new? What?
- I think that this structure of affiliation is still valid, but that it requires a change so that it can continue to provide its services. What do I propose?
- What do I think about introducing Immediate Mothers into the affiliation structure?

IMMEDIATE PARENTS

CENTRAL COMMISSION ROME 2021

"Greater involvement of the abbesses

In the Central Commission of 2019, the proposal to include in the agenda of the General Chapter the temporary delegation of the paternity of a monastery of nuns to an abbess was rejected. The real issue was, in fact, not the idea of entrusting the regular visitations, but the pastoral charge, to the 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.

Vow 59: In order to encourage greater involvement of the abbesses in the Regular Visitations and in pastoral accompaniment, we recommend that the Immediate Pastoral Fathers Commission, refer to vow 77 of GC 2017.

YES 20 NO 1 ABS 1 Proposal accepted".

GENERAL CHAPTER 2017

"The last vow refers to the work we have done on the Immediate Father (point VI of the General Book, pp. 32-34):

1. "Seek collaboration within the Mother House itself". We have already seen that this has been done with Genesee, as the Abbot delegates his Prior to make a visit. This is possible.
2. "Seek collaboration within the affiliation."
3. "Seek collaboration within the Region."
4. "Seek collaboration with nuns." This was mentioned a lot yesterday afternoon.
5. "A special and permanent Visitor could be appointed with abbatial powers for the houses of a specific Region". We talked about this yesterday as well.
6. "Some of these possibilities can be tested and explored". We would like to see point VI implemented, i.e.: there is nothing mandatory, but after the discussions we have had in the Commissions and in the classroom, it seems necessary to encourage as much as possible to collaborate in a new form of shared authority that perhaps has not been exercised much so far

VOTE 77: WE ENCOURAGE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSALS IN NO. VI OF THE WORKING DOCUMENT ON THE IMMEDIATE FATHER.

YES 155 NO 4 ABST. 4 Proposal accepted

GENERAL CHAPTER 2022 1ST PART

Intervention of Dom Juan José

The last Central Commission that met at the Seraphicum from November 23 to December 1 of last year, 2021, took a vote, which is vote 28, and this vote reads as follows:

"We ask the General Chapter meeting in February 2022 for the first part, that is, now, to appoint a Commission similar to the one that was established at the General Chapter of 2017 regarding the Immediate Pastors, to gather information and seek solutions, to present its report at the second part of the General Chapter of 2022." YES:22, NO:2, ABS:0. Proposal accepted.

1. Seek information, gather information on the effects (positive, negative or undefined) of the *ad experimentum* solution organized by the ad hoc Commission of the previous General Chapter of 2017.
2. That he seek solutions, which is the most difficult thing: to seek solutions, to that which requires a change of orientation or a novelty with respect to what had been foreseen in the General Chapter of 2017; and that, in addition, when he finishes his work, he present a report with the conclusions in the second part of the General Chapter in September.

We could say that the filiation, the Immediate Father, is somewhat in question.

- Some among us, not only the younger ones but also among the more experienced, older ones, think that this structure is a structure of the past, that it worked well in the past, but now we have to go to something new because the circumstances in recent years have changed a lot, and the situation of the Order in recent years has no comparison with what it was 30 years ago.
- There are others among us, not only old and old but also young, who believe that this structure of affiliation, which is a very important structure within our constitutions and our law, is still valid, but something must be changed or some flexibility or some kind of improvement must be given to it so that it can continue to provide those services that, according to the tradition of the OCSO, it has provided.

The Council of the Abbot General, at that time I still belonged until a few days ago, took, very seriously, this situation (the measures taken by the *ad hoc* Commission of the GC 2017) and we wanted to make a very broad and very thoughtful survey in its questions, which would affect all the parties involved in one way or another. [...] Therefore, 23 communities were contacted: 8 did not respond and 15 responded. In short, and without going into details, 5 communities accept a change of definitive Immediate Pastoral Father, and 10 communities do not want a change of paternity, but want to keep the one they have, although most of them valued positively the service given to them by the delegated Immediate Pastoral Father assigned to them.

Votes relating to the *Ad Hoc* Committee

VOTE 8 THE MANDATE GIVEN TO THE IMMEDIATE PARENT COMMISSION APPROVED BY VOTE 5 IS TO GATHER INFORMATION AND, ON BEHALF OF THE GC, TO SEEK CONCRETE SOLUTIONS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

YES 92 NO 30 ABS 7 PROPOSAL ACCEPTED

VOTE 10 WE DESIRE THAT THE COMMISSION ON THE IMMEDIATE PARENTS APPROVED BY VOTE 5 BE AN AD HOC COMMISSION OF THE GC MADE UP ONLY OF CAPITULARS, EXCLUDING THE MEMBERS OF THE COORDINATING COMMISSION.

YES 81 NO 41 ABS 7 PROPOSAL ACCEPTED

VOTE 12 WE WISH THAT THE COMMISSION ON IMMEDIATE PARENTS APPROVED BY VOTE 5 BEGIN ITS WORK IMMEDIATELY AND CONTINUE WORKING ON GC 2022 PART 2 IN SEPTEMBER.

YES 108 NO 16 ABS 5 ACCEPTED PROPOSITION

ABBESS GENERAL VICAR

In the first part of the GC the possibility of an Abbess General Vicaress was proposed. Although it was proposed by some commissions, it found an echo within the assembly. The need to define what this new figure would consist of was raised, and the fear was expressed that it could lead to a split in the Order between men and women. This, in my opinion, reveals two things:

- The desire for women to participate more actively in the structures of the Order.
- The need for dialogue to reach a consensus on what this new reality would consist of.

We, as RE, want to implement this figure in the Order?

- What would your role consist of?

"The prophetic complementarity of the male and female branches of the Order also represents a potential for renewal, which can explore new expressions in a new social and ecclesial context. The election of a vicar general abbess has attracted a lot of attention, as well as the weight that the nuns are having in the fundamental structure of the filiation: Couldn't the lack of immediate fathers open the way for "immediate mothers"? On the other hand, the unity lived within the Cistercian Family is also a sign of the times and a source of hope". (Synthesis of the state of the Order).

Annex iv - Report by Fr. Roberto de la IGLESIA, from Cardeña

SYNODAL PROCESS IN THE ORDER

The GC of February of this year took **a vote in which it was suggested to the GA to initiate a synodal process in the Order.**

This vote was broad enough to:

- not force the AG to do so and
- not to give you a specific topic.

A word on synodality.

We have all heard a lot of talk about synodality in recent times, so I don't think there is any need to dwell on the subject. I would just like to remind you of several things.

- First of all, *the theme of the next Synod of Bishops: **For a synodal Church, communion-participation-mission.***
- Secondly, the three verbs used by the pope in his *homily at the beginning of the synodal process*:
 - **to gather together**: to take time to be with the Lord and to favor the encounter between us.
 - **to listen**: to make synod is to place oneself on the same path of the Word made man, to follow in his footsteps, listening to his Word together with the words of others.
 - **discern**: The encounter and mutual listening are not something that ends in itself, that leaves things as they are. The synod is a path of spiritual discernment, of ecclesial discernment, which takes place in adoration, in prayer, in contact with the Word of God.

We can say that these words, as they are explained, belong to the core of our monastic-cistercian vocation.

- I would like to recall the precious *letter that Cardinal Grech, secretary of the Synod of Bishops, wrote to contemplatives* in August 2021 inviting them to the synodal journey. He alluded to 4 words:

- **Listening**: monastic and contemplative life is an "incarnation" of the Word of God heard, meditated upon and interiorized... listening permeates your whole life, beginning with the Word of God in the Sacred Scriptures and ending with listening to the brothers and sisters of the community, and to the men and women of our time.
- **Conversion**: you are "experts" in a state of conversion, both in the positive aspects and in the difficulties that should not discourage...you know well not only the "beauty" of walking together, but also the inevitable difficulties and possible wounds.
- **Communion**: the goal of listening and conversion is communion. In your communities you know well that communion is also the ultimate criterion for discernment and verification of the synodal journey.
- **Prayer**: You have the task in the ecclesial community of carrying out the ministry of prayer, intercession and blessing. In this phase of the synodal process, I do not ask you to pray in place of the other brothers and sisters, but to be attentive to the spiritual dimension of the journey we are about to undertake, so as to be able to discern God's action in the life of the Church. Be "ministers of prayer" who remind everyone in praise and intercession that without communion with God there can be no communion among us.

In the light of these words we can say that we have a mission before the synod, that of being witnesses and animators with our own life of the synodality of the Church and of discerning God's action in this whole process.

Thus understood, we can say that by living what we are we already live synodality.

- Finally, I take a few words from *Pope Francis in his May address to the UISG, the international union of Superiors General*: "I know that you have many concerns, which probably keep you awake at night - the lack of vocations, the constantly rising average age, the abandonment of consecrated life, among others - but I wish that the main concern was how to proceed so as not to abandon the horizon of the mission...."

In addition to actively participating in the synodal process at the local Church level, ***it is very important that the communities, the congregations, make their own synodal journey.*** Many congregations are already doing this. It is an opportunity to listen to one another, to encourage one another to speak with *parresia*, to ask questions about the essential elements of religious life today. It is also an opportunity to let uncomfortable questions emerge.

Special synodal process in the Order.

We can ask ourselves if we want to make a special synodal process in our Order. Special in the sense that we already live the daily synodality. Dom Bernardo Olivera, who is the one who strongly promoted this project in the GC of February, said that since the year 67 with the consultation of the communities for the renewal of the Constitutions nothing of this type has been done again.

Dom Bernardo himself made some suggestions as to the topics that could be discussed:

Organisms of service (filiation and paternity, regular visitations, general chapters, permanent council of the Abbot General, local superiors...) These topics, as important as they are, perhaps do not find sufficient echo in the communities because many do not have experience of them: the GC, the council of the GA, etc.

Perhaps the themes could be extended to spirituality, to the principal values of the Order and their living out today: the prayerful life, *lectio divina*, integral and ongoing formation, silence-separation from the world-communion, etc.

In this process it would be very important the *discernment* that evaluates if what we feel comes from ourselves or from the Holy Spirit or even from the evil spirit. Discernment is not a process of majorities against minorities, but first of all of listening to the Word of God and to the brothers, then of prayerful dialogue and finally of decision. Discernment is something very proper to monastic life, since the Desert Fathers, and which perhaps we have somewhat forgotten.

Pope Francis explains that discernment "does not consist in applying ready-made solutions, but is rather an art: it is the exercise of spiritual intelligence by which we learn to see reality with a contemplative gaze and not to make hasty judgments, discovering in our lives the traces of God's presence." (Catechesis of Pope Francis 18/9/2019).

It should be taken for granted that consultation, listening and discernment would involve all the members of the Order, not only the superiors.

Joint synodal process with the Cistercian family.

The idea of advancing the unity of the Cistercian family by having a joint synodal process among all the Cistercian orders and congregations also came up at the February GC. Dom Mauro suggested that this was

something that could be decided by the GCs of the two major orders to be held respectively in September and October 2022.

Do we want this to happen? On what subject?

If a joint synodal process is initiated, I believe that it should be the achievement of unity among the Cistercian family. Today there are many possibilities for this while preserving each one's idiosyncrasy.

But maybe someone is afraid of this and you could start with a topic with fewer implications.

Annex v - Report by Fr. Antonio M^a MARTÍN, of Zenarruza

PROTOCOL FOR THE ABUSE OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

In preparing this draft Protocol for the Prevention of Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, we have taken into account, among others, the following protocols:

1. *Gethsemani_Sex Abuse Policy* 2010 (*Gethsemani_Sex Abuse Policy* 2010).
2. Miraflores 2020 Protocol for the Prevention of Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults.
3. Protocol of action according to state legislation, written in 2010 by the Civil Legal Service of the General Secretariat of the Spanish Episcopal Conference.
4. Protocol for prevention and response to sexual abuse of minors San Vicente Ferrer School (to see a model made in another type of institution).

Having seen these and other documents, we have taken into account the following criteria in the drafting of this document:

- That our communities are fragile and small, with few monks and nuns.
2. That in them there is no one qualified for such complex and delicate issues, which require knowledge that overwhelms most of us.
3. That what is good, if brief, is twice as good, and what is bad, if brief, is less bad.
4. Make something generic, and at the same time sufficiently clear, so that each community can then adapt it to its own reality.

This has resulted in a brief protocol without a complex structure that would be valid for a company, a school or a bishopric, but which would be a big shoe for the precarious reality of the communities. That seemed to me a bit like the Miraflores protocol. The Gethsemane protocol seems more pastoral, but it is too polarized in the isolation of the culprit, with a superior factotum, without taking into account that he can also be the accused.

Basically, in this protocol only one **structure** is **created** to deal with all the cases that arise, called the Superior's **Team of Advisors**, formed by the superior himself, a monk from the pastoral council, experts from the bishopric (without specifying their number, because it depends on those in each diocese) and, if there is one, the lawyer of the monastery. This team would be in charge of everything, both technical and pastoral. Since, in addition to the superior (and another monk), it is made up of people who are experts in the matter, it is not necessary that the protocol says everything, even how the room in which the superior meets the victim should be (as the ones in Chile do).

Given that the Protocol is not only about prevention, but also about action for specific cases that may arise, I believe that the title should respond to this dual reality. It would be something like this: Protocol for prevention and action for harassment of minors and vulnerable adults.

Finally it must be said that all the protocols I have looked at deal only with sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, but not the other abuses spoken of in Church documents, such as the motu

proprio vos estis lux mundi, which mentions others, such as abuse of conscience and of power. In a discreet way, I have included that as well.

PREVENTION AND ACTION PROTOCOL FOR THE ABUSE OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

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VII Annex 2

I. General considerations

1. The monastery N. is a community of celibate monks in the Catholic Church. The vocation of the monk is to live a life of prayer and work in fraternity according to the Gospel. Sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, whether sexual, psychological, of conscience or of power, will not be tolerated.

2. The monastery N. has developed this Protocol out of recognition of its moral and legal responsibility, out of concern for the truth, for the safety and well-being of victims, and to ensure a fair trial for a monk accused of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults, and to advocate for fair and dignified treatment of the latter.

II. Objectives of this Protocol

The objective of this protocol is to offer a guide for prevention and action that will help our community to prevent and know how to act in cases of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults that may arise, whether or not a formal accusation is made, as well as other types of abuse, violence or mistreatment that may constitute a crime and be subject to denunciation according to civil and ecclesiastical law. Specifically, it is intended to:

a) To deal appropriately with allegations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, and other possible allegations of abuse or mistreatment, seeking a fair resolution, investigating each allegation, establishing a process of investigation and decision-making that takes into account the rights and interests of both victims and defendants.

b) To give a close response to those who claim to have been sexually abused or otherwise criminally abused by a monk of our community.

c) To promote the objectives of the Church by being faithful to the ecclesiastical norms for dealing with the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, and by establishing this Protocol in accordance with the legislation of the Order and Canon Law.

d) Comply with Spanish law, reporting to the appropriate criminal authorities, in the case of credible allegations, in accordance with applicable laws and cooperating with the authorities conducting the investigation of an allegation of abuse.

2. The monastery must offer a warm and safe environment, where the conscience and rights of minors and vulnerable adults are respected, and help in the prevention, monitoring and reporting of possible criminal situations, maintaining the presumption of innocence of the accused, as well as confidentiality while the protocol is being processed and the facts are clarified.

III Legislative framework

1. The Spanish Constitution

The Spanish Constitution mentions the rights of children, the handicapped and sick, and, to a lesser extent, the elderly. These are more specifically referred to in the BOE: Law 6/1999, of July 7, 1999, on Care and Protection of the Elderly. The main texts are as follows:

a) "Children shall enjoy the protection provided for in international agreements that safeguard their rights" (CST 39.4).

b) "The family, as a natural element and foundation of society, is entitled to the special protection of the State. Likewise, the mother, the child, the elderly and the sick and infirm shall be entitled to such protection" (CST 51).

c) "The public authorities shall carry out a policy of foresight, treatment, rehabilitation and integration of the physically, sensorial and mentally handicapped, to whom they shall provide the specialized attention they require" (CST 49).

d) "The public authorities shall guarantee, through adequate and periodically updated pensions, the economic sufficiency of citizens during old age. Likewise, and independently of family obligations, they will promote their welfare through a system of social services that will attend to their specific problems of health, housing, culture and leisure" (CST 50).

e) The BOE: Law 6/1999 establishes measures on prevention of situations of mistreatment and protection for those elderly people who are in a situation of helplessness, senility, illnesses or deficiencies of a physical or psychological nature that prevent people from governing themselves, and which make them worthy of special protection by the Public Administrations.

2. The legislation of the Catholic Church

a) *Motu proprio* of 2019: *Vos estis lux mundi*, on the norms to be followed by the Catholic Church regarding sexual abuse by priests or members of institutes of consecrated life. The text obliges priests and religious to inform the bishop of cases of abuse and cover-up, creates a reporting system and explains how to resolve investigations. Priests and religious are obliged to report to superiors or the competent ecclesiastical authority any allegations of abuse or cover-up of abuse. Reportable offenses extend beyond abuse of children and vulnerable adults and include any type of sexual violence and harassment through abuse of authority.

b) *Vademecum* on processes in cases of abuse of minors (2020), by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on the process to be followed in cases of abuse of minors committed by clerics, which aims to guide those who need to proceed to the discovery of the truth, from the initial complaint to the completion of the process.

c) Book VI of the C.D.C., mainly Title VI on crimes against life, dignity and liberty of man, especially canon 1398 on penalties for sexual abuse of minors and mentally handicapped persons.

d) The "Norms on the Most Serious Crimes Reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith", (2021), articles 6 to 8, on crimes against the sixth commandment committed by a cleric with a minor under 18 years of age or "a person who habitually has an imperfect use of reason".

3. Spanish Episcopal Conference and the diocese of the monastery.

a) Protocol of the Spanish Episcopal Conference of 2010, entitled: **PROTOCOL OF ACTION ACCORDING TO STATE LEGISLATION.**

IV Definition of terms

1. Sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults

Sexual abuse of minors is understood as the use of a minor to obtain sexual gratification, not only through threats or violence, but also through seduction, surprise, deception, blackmail or manipulation, with acts such as: harassment, intimidation with obscene gestures or communications, telephone calls or cell phone messages, e-mails or letters with sexual content, exhibition of the body, touching, forcing to watch sexual material, express performance of the sexual act, and in more extreme cases, subjecting the minor to sexual exploitation and prostitution.

Sexual abuse of vulnerable adults is equated with sexual abuse of minors.

2. Other types of abuse of vulnerable adults

Vulnerable adults are those who are in a helpless situation due to senility, illness or physical and psychological deficiencies, which prevent them from governing themselves entirely or partially by themselves, and who may be subjected to violence or mistreatment, through abuse of authority or other means, leading to criminal and reportable situations. Among them:

- a) Omission or inadequate provision of health and pharmaceutical assistance.
- b) Obstruction of access to medical consultations.
- c) Omission or inadequate provision of scientific and assistance treatment.
- d) Infringement of their right to dignified treatment.
- e) Infringement of their right to privacy.
- f) Obstruction of their right to receive visits.
- g) Provision of services in deficient hygienic conditions.
- h) Forcing against their will to go to or remain in a residential center.

3. Aggressor and victim

a) In the case of minors, the aggressor is an adult member of the community, and the victim is a minor under 18 years of age, involved in a sexual relationship not consented to by him. If the relationship is consensual and the minor is over 16 years of age, there is no civil offense, although there is a canonical offense. The victim's family is also an indirect victim, since it participates in the psychological and moral damage of the direct victim.

b) In the case of vulnerable adults, the aggressor is also an adult member of the community and the victim is an adult who suffers from a mental disability, or other physical or psychological disability that prevents him/her from governing him/herself.

V. Abuse prevention

Prevention measures act when abuse has not yet occurred. Their purpose is to reduce risk factors.

1. Training

a) The main preventive measure is formation in monastic life and spirituality, as well as the fostering of an authentic spiritual and prayer life. When a monk ceases to truly seek God, he easily becomes a slave to his lower passions and can become capable of anything.

b) Training programs shall include affective-sexual education and knowledge about sexual abuse, abuse of power and abuse of conscience, both for minors and vulnerable adults.

c) All this to raise awareness, help raise awareness, train and provide information on the reporting processes, making known the rights of children and vulnerable adults, according to existing civil and ecclesiastical laws.

2. Employees and collaborators of the monastery

a) The selection of employees will be carried out according to rigorous criteria, examining professionalism and criminal records, interviewing the interested parties and conducting the pertinent tests. All must have a negative certificate in the sex offender or abuser registry.

b) At the time of hiring, employees will be invited to sign the written document attached as an Annex, in which they expressly reject any type of sexual abuse and undertake to incorporate the preventive measures contained in this Protocol into their work activities.

c) The human qualities of the monastery's collaborators, whether family members, volunteers or others, shall also be verified, and the precautions contained in this Protocol shall be made known to them.

3. Configuration of the spaces

a) According to the Benedictine tradition, our way of life is cenobitic, in an environmental framework of solitude and silence, with a private enclosure or cloister, reserved for the monks. In addition, it has an inn that functions as a small hotel (and a hostel for pilgrims). In this sense:

a. Minors will not be allowed to enter the enclosed areas or inside the monastery, unless accompanied by an adult.

b. Underage guests will not be admitted to our guesthouse unless accompanied by adults.

b) No applicant under 18 years of age shall be received in our community.

VI. Action protocol

This protocol is especially designed to provide an adequate response in the event that a complaint of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults, or other complaints of violence against them, is received.

Pastoral Commission

a. If the monastery receives news of an accusation, private or public, of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult by a monk of the community, as well as an accusation, private or public, of other types of violence toward a vulnerable adult, whether or not belonging to the community, the pastoral council of the superior will first meet to discuss the matter and see if it is appropriate to implement the actions of this Protocol.

b. Immediate P. is also informed.

2. Team of advisors

c. In the event of a public accusation, or a formal complaint to the civil authorities, against a monk of the community for abuse of minors or vulnerable adults, the superior, after meeting with his council, will bring it to the attention of the bishop and seek the advice of the persons designated in the diocese for such delicate matters.

d. The superior will then form a team of advisors, consisting of the superior himself, a member of his council and the bishopric's advisors.

e. If, in addition, the monastery has an attorney, the attorney may be part of the team, if the superior deems it appropriate, and may participate in the meetings and activities of the team to deal with the case.

f. It is necessary to have suitable lawyers to defend such cases, especially in the event of an arrest, during interrogations and throughout the investigation of the case.

g. The main objective of this team will be to evaluate the allegations of sexual or other abuse against a monk of the monastery, to see if they are plausible and to suggest the pertinent actions. He will be responsible for carrying out all the details of the case.

h. A member of this team shall be designated as spokesperson or interlocutor with the media, the police and any other public authority.

3. Receipt of and response to an accusation or complaint.

3.1. Receipt of the accusation or complaint

Information on the existence of a crime may reach the superior through various channels:

- a) By a private complaint that has not yet been filed with the police, or by hearsay.
- b) By a formal complaint to the police or the public prosecutor's office, the matter being already known to the public.
- c) Because of a confidence or a relationship of trust between the superior or another monk and the person involved.

3.2. Response to the accusation or complaint

a) General considerations

Upon receiving an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or other reportable abuse, the Superior will provide for the pastoral care of the victim, including the offer of counseling and other forms of assistance, as explained in section VI of this Protocol, and may himself, if it seems appropriate, offer personal pastoral care.

2. On the other hand, the superior shall respect the principle of presumption of innocence of the accused until the facts are not proven.

3. The monastery will treat accusations openly, unless the victim requests confidentiality in writing, and the superior will respect the victim's wishes, to the extent that legal obligations permit. The superior's primary concern will be the welfare and rights of the victim and the just resolution of the case.

4. Any public communication will be made by the spokesperson to the media. The monks of the monastery shall not make any further comments to the media.

5. If it is necessary to issue a press release, the information shall be brief, avoiding legal debate, mentioning the facts without making any assessment, showing support, closeness and solidarity with the victim and referring to the right to the presumption of innocence and collaboration with the Administration of Justice.

6. In the event that a legal or financial agreement is reached with the victim, the monastery will not accept any confidential legal agreement with the victim.

7. This Protocol shall apply to any allegation of other sexual acts and, in general, to any allegation of misconduct or other criminal acts under civil or canon law, where the victim was a minor at the time of the alleged criminal conduct, or where the victim was a vulnerable adult.

b) Actions

1. In the case of private complaint, not yet submitted to the police, the following actions shall be followed:

a. The superior, and/or a member of the advisory team, will interview the complainant, accompanied by a witness, to verify the credibility of the facts. A written report shall be made to record the fact.

b. The superior will report to the Immediate Past Master and to the Abbot General and his Council.

c. Said report shall contain, at least, the following data:

i. The complete identification of the complainant and the alleged victim, indicating their addresses and personal contact information;

ii. the identity of the denounced monk;

iii. the chronological and detailed account of the facts and circumstances denounced;

iv. the indication of the means of proof if any;

v. the indication that the complainant and alleged victim have been informed of the canonical procedure and of their rights, such as, for example, to be kept informed, to seek legal counsel and psychological therapy, and to have recourse to the civil justice system for the criminal investigation of the alleged facts.

d. Likewise, the superior will meet with the accused monk to inform him of the accusation and of the steps that will be followed, guaranteeing him the respect of his rights and the presumption of innocence; offering him pastoral help and forbidding him all contact with the accuser, with the presumed victim and his family. A report will be drawn up to record the above.

e. The accused may continue to live in community, under such conditions as the superior deems appropriate, and participate fully in monastic life.

i. If the investigation by the counselors concludes that there are reasonable indications of a criminal act, the superior shall advise the complainant to file the complaint himself/herself with the police or the court, bearing in mind that, if the victim is of legal age, only he/she may file the complaint.

ii. In addition, the superior will ask the monk to take a psychological or even psychiatric test, providing the therapist with all the information regarding the alleged abuse. If the monk refuses to take the test or to provide the superior with the result of the test, the superior will take that refusal into account in considering how to respond to the accusation.

iii. If the monk completes the treatment with a positive evaluation, the superior will consider giving the monk a permanent position in the monastery, with due guarantees.

iv. On the other hand, as a precautionary measure, the superior shall arrange for the monk to be removed from any unsupervised contact with potential victims, or with the public, to ensure that in the future he cannot commit any act of sexual abuse of a minor.

f. When from the facts reported and the inquiries made there is reasonable doubt as to the veracity of the facts, the Superior shall file the proceedings and shall inform the complainants to exercise, if they deem it appropriate, the legal actions they deem appropriate, assuming the appropriate responsibility.

g. In the event that the accusation is against the superior, the interview with the complainant will be conducted by another member of the team of advisors and the report written will be sent to the Abbot General, with a copy to the Immediate Past Prior, through the Prior of the monastery.

h. In this case, the precautionary measures to be taken would be communicated to the superior by the immediate superior, following the guidelines established by this Protocol.

2. In the case of abuse reported directly to the police or in court:

a. The team of advisors will contact the monastery's lawyer, if the lawyer is not a member of the team itself, and the necessary collaboration will be provided to the Police or the Administration of Justice.

b. If the monk has given a statement and has acknowledged the facts, he will be assured the appropriate accompaniment, warning him of the civil and canonical consequences derived from his conduct.

c. The team of advisors, together with the lawyer, will take care of the legal defense, and, until the conviction, the presumption of innocence of the accused will be respected, taking care of his psychological and spiritual state.

3. In the case of knowledge of the crime through a confidence of the perpetrator, the following shall be taken into account:

a. In general, the superior must denounce any crime of which he becomes aware, whether it is committed by a member of the community or by a person outside the community, and must inform the justice system for the good of the victim and, indirectly, for the good of the Church and the whole of society.

b. However, there is no crime of concealment when the facts have been known in the exercise of the priestly ministry, nor is there an obligation to give information to judges or other authorities about persons or matters of which they have had knowledge by reason of their ministry.

c. Nevertheless, he has the obligation to denounce *the next or actual* commission of a crime, even if he has learned of it by reason of or on the occasion of the spiritual direction or confidences of the interested party.

4. Appeal

When the complaint is private and the team of advisors determines that the accusation of sexual abuse is true, the precautionary measures contained in this Protocol will be applied, but at the same

time the monk will be notified of his right of appeal to the Immediate Father, the Abbot General and the Holy See, as provided by the proper law of the Order and canon law.

5. Victim assistance

- a) For assistance to victims of abuse, the advisory team shall designate a person with experience in counseling and dealing with victims of sexual abuse.
- b) This person shall not necessarily be one of the members of the advisory team.
- c) His task will be to listen respectfully and closely to the victim and/or his family, offering them help and resources, both legal, psychological and spiritual; but he will not offer himself as a lawyer, therapist or spiritual director.
- (d) Explain to the victim the community's response to the victim's complaint.
- e) Offer to be present at the interviews that will take place between the victim, the victim's family and the monastery.
- f) Coordinate all communications between the victim and/or the victim's family and the monastery, keeping all parties informed of the progress of the case.

VII Annex

Document to be signed by the employees of the monastery

At _____, to ____ of 20 ____

Mr. _____ with DNI _____, who works as an employee of the Monastery of _____ with DNI _____ and registered address at _____, by means of the present declaration I expressly undertake:

- To show my strongest repudiation and condemnation of all practices involving child abuse, and explicitly those involving physical, psychological and sexual abuse against minors and vulnerable adults.
- To know, respect and promote in my contractual relations with the Monastery of N. the policy of prevention of child sexual abuse that it follows.
- To actively collaborate in the prevention of this type of conduct within the scope of my work.

And for the record, I sign it in my own **handwriting**.

