

**MINUTES OF THE  
ORIENS REGIONAL MEETING 2024**



**MAY 7-13, 2024  
OUR LADY OF SUJONG  
TRAPPISTINE MONASTERY  
SOUTH KOREA**

## **ORIENS REGIONAL MEETING OF SUPERIORS 2024 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

Abbot-General, Dom BERNARDUS Peeters

Secretary to the Abbot-General, Father RAPHAEL Garcia-Pelayo, Citeaux, Generalate

	<b>Community</b>	<b>Superior</b>	<b>Delegate</b>
1	PHARE	Dom FRANCISCUS Yoshimoto, Superior ad nutum	
2	LANTAO	Dom PAUL Kao	
3	RAWASENENG	Dom ALOYSIUS Gonzaga Rudiyat	
4	KOPUA	Dom NIKO Verkleij, Superior ad nutum	
5	TARRAWARA	Dom STEELE Hartmann	
6	GUIMARAS	Dom KEVIN Lipasan	
7	OITA	Dom RAPHAEL Shioya Hisashi	
8	LAMANABI	Dom ANTONIUS Anjar	
9	KURISUMALA	Dom SEVANAND Ennamprayil	
10	TENSHIEN	Mother JOHANNA Abe Makiko	
11	NISHINOMIYA	Mother VERONIQUE Shibata Mariko	
12	IMARI	Mother ALBERICA Ueno	
13	NASU	Mother SCHOLASTICA Okubo Kaoru	
14	AJIMU	Mother GERTRUDE Ikebe	
15	GEDONO	Mother CORNELIA Ellis Lisnawaty	Sister JOHANA Aleta
16	SUJONG	Mother EMMANUEL Hong	Sister STELLA Eun Jung Kim
17	ROSARY	Mother GORETTi Qin	
18	MATUTUM	Mother GIOVANNA Garbelli	Sister ROXANNE Acaylar
19	KUNAMBETTA	Mother MARY ANN Kiriyanthan Devassy	
20	MACAU	Mother CATERINA Mazarrelli	

### **Interpreters**

Father DAVID Lavich, Spencer, Japanese Sub-Region Secretary for Formation

Sister BONA SunYoung Yu, Sujong

Brother JOSEPH – MARIE Cassant Permana Putra, Rawaseneng

Mrs. Kumiko Arimura

### **Secretary**

Sister ANNA MARIE Ando, Matutum

## Table of Contents

Participants	3
Votes	4
Introduction	7
Sharing on the Abbot-General's Opening Conference	8
Evaluation of the GC 2022	13
On the possible introduction of permanent Mothers Immediate	14
On the Financial Visitation	19
On the Renewal of the Financial Entities of the Order	20
On Affiliation	22
On the Points for the Preparation for the GC 2025	23
Regional Matters	28
Auto-Critique	29
Closing Words of the Abbot – General	30
Appendices:	
A: Schedule of the Oriens Regional Meeting	
B: Abbot-General's Opening Conference to Oriens	
C: Document for the Financial Visitation	
D: Slides from 'Towards a Renewal Financial Entities'	
E: Document from the Commission on Mutual Solidarity	
F: Report from the Oriens Secretary of Formation	

**VOTES FOR THE CENTRAL COMMISSION**

**VOTES 1-6, 23 VOTES; 20 SUPERIORS, 3 DELEGATES  
VOTES 7-18, 21<sup>1</sup> VOTES; 18 SUPERIORS, 3 DELEGATES**

**Vote 1.** We wish to make Mothers Immediate permanent in the General Chapter 2025.

**YES 11 NO 11 ABSTAIN 1 REJECTED**

**Vote 2.** We wish to proceed in an *ad experimentum* way in regard to Mothers Immediate.

**YES 21 NO 2 ABSTAIN 0 ACCEPTED**

**Vote 3.** We wish to explore further the possibility of every monastery having both a Father Immediate and a Mother Immediate.

**YES 13 NO 5 ABSTAIN 5 ACCEPTED**

**Vote 4.** We wish for the communities of the monks to be able to form affiliation with another community, as the nun's communities are able to do.

**YES 21 NO 0 ABSTAIN 2 UNANIMOUS ACCEPTED**

**Vote 5.** We wish to support the Kunnambetta community's elevation to the simple priory.

**YES 23 NO 0 ABSTAIN 0 UNANIMOUS ACCEPTED**

**Vote 6.** We wish to continue the Regional Report at the General Chapter.

**YES 9 NO 14 ABSTAIN 0 REJECTED**

**Vote 7.** We encourage communities needing a Father Immediate to look to African, Asian and Latin American houses for their new Father Immediate or Mother Immediate.

**YES 19 NO 0 ABSTAIN 2 ACCEPTED**

**Vote 8.** We encourage the members of the commissions of the General Chapter to be varied for each Chapter, to ensure a wider experience of the Order's international membership.

**YES 16 NO 4 ABSTAIN 1 ACCEPTED**

**Vote 9.** We urge the General Chapter to ensure that members of the newly elected coordinating commission are representative of our worldwide Order.

**YES 21 NO 0 ABSTAIN 0 UNANIMOUS ACCEPTED**

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<sup>1</sup> Votes 1-6 were taken on May 12 while Votes 7-18 were taken on May 13. Mo. Caterina and Dom Gonzaga were not present for Votes 7-18. Mo. Caterina (Macau) had to leave late afternoon of May 12 to attend the grand procession of Our Lady of Fatima in Macau which culminates in their monastery; Dom Gonzaga had to leave early on May 13 due to a sudden change in his flight schedule.

**Vote 10.** We encourage the Abbot-General and his council to look at how communities might be helped to train new interpreters and translators.

**YES 21 NO 0 ABSTAIN 0 UNANIMOUS ACCEPTED**

**Vote 11.** We would like to be given time to discuss the conference of the Abbot General during the General Chapter.

**YES 20 NO 1 ABSTAIN 0 ACCEPTED**

**Vote 12.** Some other ways to spiritually enrich ourselves at the General Chapter include the following:

- One or two-day retreat at the beginning of the Chapter
- To start each day with a period of common Lectio
- To have breaks for prayerful silence periodically during each day
- To make more use of the spiritual heritage of Assisi, such as we did with Vespers with the Poor Clares at the last Chapter.
- To try to keep the focus off our problems, and focus instead on solutions.
- To continue with the testimony of younger members during the General Chapter as we did at the last Chapter.

We would appreciate the adaption of any or all of above suggestions.

**YES 21 NO 0 ABSTAIN 0 UNANIMOUS ACCEPTED**

**Vote 13.** We want to listen to the experience of Mothers Immediate at the General Chapter of 2025.

**YES 21 NO 0 ABSTAIN 0 UNANIMOUS ACCEPTED**

**Vote 14.** We would encourage the Central Commission to examine the possibility of live-streaming of the opening and closing Masses, the conferences of the Abbot General, and any other spiritual input.

**YES 17 NO 0 ABSTAIN 4 ACCEPTED**

**Vote 15.** We would like each community of the Order to bring their own delegates to the General Chapter, if they wish.

**YES 13 NO 2 ABSTAIN 6 ACCEPTED**

**Vote 16.** We would like the Central Commission to investigate what the possibilities are for more active input by individual monks and nuns using social media and the like, so as to let the Chapter know just what kind of interaction with the whole Order is possible.

**YES 15                      NO 3                      ABSTAIN 3                      ACCEPTED**

**Vote 17.** We would like the Central Commission to consider the possibility of a visual addition to the written House Report.

**YES 14                      NO 3                      ABSTAIN 4                      ACCEPTED**

**Vote 18.** We would encourage the Central Commission to look at the use of Artificial Intelligence to provide translations of the less official documents of the Chapter.

**YES 21                      NO 0                      ABSTAIN 0                      UNANIMOUS ACCEPTED**

## Introduction

All the superiors of the communities of the Oriens Region were present at this regional meeting. The presence of the Abbot-General was a significant blessing and for which everyone was grateful. He was accompanied by his secretary, Fr. Raphael Garcia – Pelayo. Interpreters for the Indonesian, Korean and Japanese language were present.

Bad weather on the day of arrival in Busan closed Gimhae International Airport, catching some off-guard: the President of the region, Mo. Giovanna (Matutum), and the rest of the Matutum contingent did not arrive till late evening on the 7<sup>th</sup>, missing the first day of the meeting.

The weather was cool but the hospitality of the Sujong community was very warm and fraternal, which contributed greatly to a climate of cooperation and openness at our meeting. Their Sujong choir prepared hymns in Latin and English, to permit wider participation in the Liturgy. The plenary sessions began with the Little Hours being prayed alternately in four languages: English, Japanese, Korean and Indonesian.

Special greetings were extended to superiors who were attending their first Oriens regional meeting: Dom Francisco, *superior ad nutum* of Phare and Mo. Joanna, abbess of Tenshien, and to those who were attending in a new capacity: Dom Antonius, now Titular Prior of Lamanabi, and Mo. Alberica, now Abbess of Imari. Delegates from Gedono, Matutum and Sujong were also acknowledged, and hopefully, we will be more delegates at future meetings.

Dom Steele (Tarrawara) and Mo. Gertrud (Ajimu) were tasked with formulating the votes for the Central Commission. Votes were taken on accompanying voting sheets. Dom Steele (Tarrawara) was also appointed to review the minutes.

The schedule of the meeting is provided in *Appendix A*.

## Sharing on the Opening Conference of the Abbot-General

The President of the Region asked the Abbot-General (AG) to give an opening conference for the Oriens regional meeting. *(See Appendix B for full text. Translations are available in Japanese, Indonesian and Korean).*

The sharing that followed expressed gratitude for the AG's very inspiring conference, which provided a hope-filled view of the Order by pointing out of the Holy Spirit's work within the Order. The AG also gave some pointers as to how we might move forward as individual communities and as a region.

**Dom Francisco:** I tried to pay attention, to really listen to your conference. I was impressed by the way the difficult, negative aspects were balanced by the more positive things in the Order. We usually only hear the negative things. The reality includes both the positive and the negative. Seen together, we can see where the signs of hope lie. I will take this text with me and will reflect more on it.

**Mo. Mary Ann:** I am happy to hear the title, the Holy Spirit, as in these days we are preparing to receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The AG spoke of 'the marvels of God'. We need to shift our focus from what is lacking to what is hope-filled. If we focus on what is lacking, then the Holy Spirit is lacking and Hope is lacking. We need newness, a newness from within that only the Holy Spirit brings about.

**Dom Steele:** I liked the thought expressed at the end about the paschal candle. For, during this last Easter season, I too, was moved by the Easter candle. It is light in the darkness, and like it, we are called to shine in a dark world where it is night. The other thing that struck me about the candle is that it stands up straight and tall; we are called to be upright, to stand up and shine and not be afraid. To be a light shining in our dark world, what we have to do is take our confidence from the words of the Gospel.

**Mo. Gertrude:** I noted the AG's quotes from Pope Francis, when he speaks of the renewal that comes about from a contemplative focus: *'Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community.'* I find it interesting that you brought up these points today as we celebrate our Martyrs of Atlas. It's not just a matter of one person giving up his/her life, but the work of the community. It is the discernment a community makes about the road ahead that can change the person. These martyrs teach us how to acknowledge and change our mentality.

**AG:** I gave only five places where the Holy Spirit is working. Yet there are other places where the Holy Spirit is at work, one is certainly in the inheritance we have from the monks of Tibhirine. As an Order we are unaware of the great impact that our martyrs have in the world. In December last year, we attended a Congress in Madrid. We listened the whole week to all sorts of different witnesses, especially to young people, university students. It surprised me greatly and moved me a lot to learn how these brothers are touching their lives – they are artists, people from the business world, community-building people, people from so many different areas. There were also surprising discoveries: a musician has found more than 1000 music pieces by Dom Michel. He had a talent for music. But the brothers didn't ask him to sing in the community; they didn't acknowledge the gift that he had. According to the professionals, these musical pieces are of a very high standard and quality. Here we see the



truth of real community life, and this makes the witness of the martyrs so close to ours. Community life is certainly a place where the Holy Spirit is working.

**Mo. Emmanuel:** What impressed me most about your conference is your description of the five activities of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Order. I would like to emphasize what you said: that what sets us free from the prison of self-concern is the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Mo. Veronique:** I received support and energy from the AG's conference. The AG visited us in April. Our community has always been worried that we are becoming smaller and smaller. The AG told us, "No, you are not that small." Up to that moment, we were becoming gloomy at the prospect of becoming yet an even smaller community, but your word gave us hope. Whenever dark thoughts come upon us, we forget the Holy Spirit. This year we have taken for our theme: joy and a lightness of spirit.

**AG:** I visited the four communities in Japan in April. I have come to know their fragility, but they have the courage to face that reality in a very gentle way. It's a confirmation of what I was saying: if we become negative, we forget the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Mo. Giovanna:** The first point I want to speak about is on '*embracing vulnerability*' –we tend to talk about vulnerability and fragility in terms of aging communities, but there is also vulnerability and fragility in younger communities. This is the law of life: if we don't accept to die, we refuse to be born. The word '*embracing*' struck me. If the community can embrace the vulnerability of each member without being scandalized, but as the presence of the Lord come among us with His wounds, then maybe there is hope for renewal in the community. The wounds of the other are also ours. It's difficult: we don't want to suffer, and we don't want the suffering that comes from others. Yet it may be through this suffering that we are saved. We say, "This sister is difficult," or "This sister makes the community suffer so much." This problem of embracing our wounds is clearer in the younger ones, because they are full of wounds ... coming from their family, and from the wider society.

The second point is on the '*growing awareness of the complementarity...*' We ought to be grateful for this. It is an experience of life. For example, if a Father Immediate does a regular visitation with a female co-visitor, it is much easier to find solutions for life. I am grateful that this sort of co-responsibility is becoming more common. It was the ORIENS region that started this reflection on '*shared responsibility*'. It is growing more and more, little by little.

Pope Francis' comment that '*the contemplative life is co-responsible for the life of the Church*' opens up our communities. In the monastery, we see the need for such spiritual life. In the questions on the synodal process, a point came up about what we can do for young people in the monastery.

On going back to [resurrecting] the past: I remember Dom Juan Jose's question at the last new superior's course, "If we have to throw away the observances, how will our communion take flesh?" Of course, I do not want to go back to the past, but maybe we need to reflect on it, otherwise, we risk not being faithful to what the Lord is asking.

*A clarification: Mo Mary Ann asks for clarification on the last point of Mo. Giovanna, on going back to the past.*

**Mo. Giovanna:** I don't want to go back to the past. But on the other hand, we have to admit that we are undisciplined, not as '*observant*' as before. Some people say that if we are more

observant, we will get more vocations. This is just an illusion. On the other hand, how do we live the monastic life in the Holy Spirit? We need to be clearer. What does living the observances mean?

**AG:** The danger of talking about observances is that we tend to become museums. We do something because it has always been like that. But there is no life. We can say, “We are very observant; we are very silent”. Some communities observe the rule on silence perfectly. But in the silence, they kill each other. The silence is only horizontal. There is no connection with God nor with the community. I don’t want to have a monastic life without observances; but they need to serve life. It is easy to say, ‘let us go back to the observances.’ I don’t like the attitude that says we have lost the observances. All the important observances are in our constitutions. But do we use them? There is no need to go back, we need to go ahead.

**Mo. Gio:** We should not label communities as: ‘observant’ or ‘not observant’.

**AG:** A postulant told me, ‘Father, I know why the Order has no vocations. In our community, we have a dormitory. I told him I know of certain communities who have dormitories stricter than yours.

**Dom Steele:** Going back to the past is really an inability to articulate what we are trying to do. When we can say what we are trying to do, observances will come. We do not have to resurrect the past. On requiring circumcision and so forth of new converts [going back to old ways], St. Paul in his letters says, ‘That’s not the way.’

**Mo. Giovanna:** On the question of vulnerability, it is about facing our fears. Going back to the past means avoiding our fears.

**Dom Anton:** “Let us not be afraid to listen! Let us not be afraid to speak!” This is something that I always say to my community. Sometimes we are afraid to express something, because we are too pessimistic. We are afraid to fail before we even try to do something. I also realized that, in the many times when I asked my community to do something and it fails, this is how we learn to move together and to move forward. It is very certain that the Holy Spirit does find a way to make us listen through our falls and mistakes. We live on the island of Flores where there are many Catholics – but the life of prayer is not strong. Our mission there is simple: to persevere in praying together.

**Mo. Cornelia:** I am very grateful in listening to all of this on vulnerability, observances, co-responsibility, etc. In all these, what we need is conversion, that personal conversion we are trying to do in our community. We often speak about vulnerability, beginning with the older sisters who are more open about their vulnerability. This moves the community, especially the younger members, to accept their weaknesses and to accept one another. It is also the way to live the observances, to live communion. How do we as a community arrive at having the same aim – this is none other than the Lord. This is the way to live our mission. People come to our monasteries and see us living in communion. If we can live together with all our weakness, this is the work of the Holy Spirit. We need to be reminded that Christ is the center of our lives. We need to be aware of our identity as daughters of the Order.

**Mo. Caterina:** We learn from our Vitorchiano filiation, which gave to the Order so many foundations. We often think that to make a foundation, to send so many people, we have to

be rich, to be mature – but in reality, the people who are sent are normal people, sinner, not so-adult. But these people receive a vocation to transmit life in another situation.

This is what happened to us, a small group in Macau. We are limited in many ways, but we try to live our monastic life with all our heart. It is our great mission to the people of Macau, to the diocese. Praying together in the Church is attractive even for non-Christians. People may not know about observances, but people do recognize a community that is praying. We are in special location in China, where we can still pray in a public way. It is a great privilege. As also for Lantau. We are smaller and we are in a city.

**Mo. Cornelia:** About Rosary, I visited Rosary for the first-time last year. I was very impressed by Rosary. They live together in a difficult situation. They have many struggles, but they want to continue to stay together. They have one aim: to make the Lord present. They are aware of their mission: to live the common life. I saw much suffering, but this make their life fruitful.

**Mo. Goretti:** I am grateful for this picture of the Order, of the workings of the Holy Spirit in the Order, that the AG gave. It is like a mirror from which we can see ourselves clearly. We are often tempted to focus on the negativity, rather than focus on the work of the Holy Spirit. I want to share about the work of the construction of the new building. Many times, the work was stopped because of the government. But through the help of our friends who were very generous, especially the architect, the work proceeded. We experienced a lot of support from the Bishop and the local church. We have now enlarged our limited space. The refectory was enlarged, and 20 cells were added. The whole community was grateful, and it was much involved in the work of construction. We did not have any guarantee that the construction would continue, or even if it might be finished, for at any time it could always be torn down. The Bishop helped a lot. In our impossible situation, it was a big miracle for us. We had a thanksgiving mass once it was finished.

A reason the construction was necessary was in order to welcome back home three of our sisters after 4 ½ years in Matutum. We are very grateful to Mo. Giovanna and the community of Matutum for this. We also thank Mo. Cornelia who helped Dom Paul in our visitation, and for welcoming 2 sisters in Gedono for the renewal of their monastic life. The visitation was very much appreciated, especially the conferences and the dialogue. We are grateful to Dom Paul who is always available, even during the difficult COVID situation. Each time he comes for a solemn profession, he brings a brother with him; it is a good exchange. Sr. Paula from Star of Hope also attended the last solemn profession (Divine Mercy Sunday). Wherever she went, she exclaimed “So big!”– the sisters were quite surprised. Then they realized that Macau is much smaller than us, that we are not the smallest community. This was a surprise for the sisters. They woke up to our reality, seeing it from a different angle. We now have a monastery, but before, like Macau, we also lived in the Bishop’s house. Now, after several years of transition, vocations are coming in. One junior, one novice, one postulant came during COVID time, and two more candidates want to know more of our life.

We now have three guestrooms. Some perpetually professed sisters from other congregations want to come for retreat, and they even want to join us. But I told them no, for we each have our own vocation. Our bishop wants to have his annual retreat with us – with the priests and nuns even though it is so crowded. He wants the experience of a living church.

*'The courage to listen and the courage to speak'* After many years of difficulty and interruption, we finally resumed dialogue within the community. We had no time because of the construction, and I had to process my visa, etc. Our last dialogue was very beautiful. We desire to have more regular dialogue. Each one feels accepted, even though the other may not agree with what is said.

The conference of the AG is a precious gift for the community. Many sisters asked me for the circular letters of the AG. The community is eager for the teaching of Dom Bernardus.

**Dom Paul:** I am very grateful for the AG's Conference and for the sharing this morning. I would like to emphasize the value of the monastic observance and practice. What Mo. Giovanna said about, going back to the old times, is very meaningful for the old community of Lantao. Our community has different generations. The oldest Fr. Benedict is 106 and the youngest is 30 years old. Our dialogue touched on the topic of monastic practice, not only about the dormitory but also about the chapter of faults. Another point is on the observance of silence. All generations have a problem with the observance of silence. Now we talk more about silence and communication. Another important thing is the practice of charity. In our community, younger generations respect the elderly. It is part of our culture. I think it is a good example of charity. The community is the source of transmission of our monastic life.

**Dom Raphael:** It was very interesting to hear from Mo. Goretti. I am happy to know more about your community. I want to share what is happening in Rosary with my community; it is very impressive. Will that be alright? Would such sharing pose some danger for your community? *(Mo. Goretti responds, it is all right.)*

**Sr. Roxanne:** I am very enriched by the sharing. It is very interesting for us younger ones; it is a concern for us. It would be very helpful for us to have this in the community. About going back before Vatican II, at this moment I am more interested in going back to the identity of our true Cistercian charism. If I am to talk to students about who we are, I want to understand who we are from the lens of our Cistercian Fathers. Monasticism in the medieval times is timeless; mother is expounding it to us in a way that takes account of reality. When I learned about St. Bernard's teachings, my mindset was also changed. I am a person more attracted to technological things, as most young people nowadays are, because of the influence of secularism. But the writings of the Cistercian Fathers attract me. Through them, Holy Spirit really speaks to us, to the churches.

**Mo. Giovanna:** Just a small remark on the community of Oita giving a part of their land to the Muslims. Thank you for this; it teaches us to be more open.

**Dom Raphael:** I want to share about the Muslims in Japan. Twenty years ago, there were no Muslims in Japan. Gradually, because of the need in Japan for young workers, Japan opened itself to foreigners. The Catholic population grew, and now the presence of Islam is becoming more visible. It is difficult for Japanese to know how to relate with foreigners, especially with Islamic people. One doesn't know how to approach them. It is only about 150 years ago since Japan opened itself to Christianity. Christians were looked upon with suspicion and they had to be careful about how they acted in society. The first ones endured some persecution. Those from the other religions, Buddhists, Shinto, were the ones more open to the Christians. Christians know how it is to be a minority and to be persecuted. In earlier times, we needed all the help we could get. So now, we are trying to help the Muslims in Japan.

## **Evaluation of the General Chapter of 2022**

The AG encouraged and assured everyone to speak freely and truly, as only then can we make improvements for the General Chapter (GC). He reminded all not to mention only problems but also to suggest solutions.

### ***A) Venue***

- Not all the capitulants can be housed at Domus Pacis, some stayed in hotels that are a long way off from Domus Pacis, and in one of the venues, there was a lot of noise.
- The food was simpler, and this is better. But no place for coffee before Lauds or Mass.

### ***B) Schedule***

- The schedule was very good.
- Not everybody had Sunday afternoons free as some commissions needed to work in those times.

### ***C) On the Study of the House Reports***

- Some of the new superiors had some difficulty in the study of the house reports, as they were not acquainted with the context and the history of some issues. It would be good if there is some preparation for new superiors before the General Chapter. The AG confirmed there will be an online course of preparation before the GC.
- Can the study of the house reports be made more pastoral and spiritual? Some felt that this study was task-oriented, too concerned with finishing on time.
- Since the authority of pastoral care lies with the FI, the commission has only limited capacity to give direction to a community. It was suggested that the superior and the FI be present for the study of their house reports.

### ***D) On the Regional Reports***

- The AG suggested that the regional reports contextualize the house reports. But as Oriens is such a vast geographical region, some felt that our regional report cannot provide an adequate context for any of our house reports. It was asked, if our Regional Report might be written during the Oriens regional meeting before the Central Commission, rather than just before the GC as it is usually done, to have more time. Do other regions have the same problem? These matters were put into a vote on whether the Oriens region was in favor of continuing with the regional reports at the GC.

## **On the possible introduction of permanent Mothers Immediate**

The AG presented the working paper on Mothers Immediate (MI), which was requested from the Law Commission (LC) by Vote 22 of the GC 2022.

The paper explored the possible introduction of permanent “Mothers Immediate”, in the light of developments in the Church and of the current situation of our Order.

Presently there are female superiors acting as Fathers Immediate (FI), and there are female superiors acting as delegates of the FI. There is a distinction between these two functions. For both, their exercise of responsibility is temporary; they are not permanent.

### ***Female superiors acting as FI for nuns:***

- Mo. Dominique of Soleilmont – for Laval and Nazareth
- Mo. Isabel of Val D'Igny – for Bonneval and Baumgarten
- Mo. Marie Christine of Rivet – for Blauvac
- Mo. Ann Emmanuel of Blauvac – for Fons Pacis

### ***Female superiors acting as FI for monks:***

- Mo. Brigitte of Tautra – for Bethlehem
- Mo. Marie of Glencairn – for Mt. Melleray, Roscrea, Mellifont
- Mo. Jo of Whitland – for Bolton
- Mo. Caterina of Nazareth – for Aiguebelle
- Mo. Pascal of Arnheim – for Schiermonnikoog
- Mo. Rebecca of Mississippi – for New Melleray

Our General Chapter has evolved from its situation before Vatican II, when the Abbesses were under the jurisdiction of the GC of the abbots. Then, Assemblies of Abbesses were introduced. In the new Constitution of 1990, we became a single Order with two interdependent GCs. Then, we had mixed GC. Finally, in 2011, we had one single General Chapter.

This must also be seen in the light of recent developments in theological understanding, that authority in the Church derives from an office and not from ordination. This was one of the major developments of Pope Francis' pontificate. He has made it possible for non-clerics to be major superiors in an institute of clerical life. He has appointed women to high positions in several Dicasteries. Authority is not based on ordination, but on the office that a person holds.

These make it possible to think about the possibility of permanent MI, which we can accept or reject. If accepted, what will be the consequences? What changes will be required in our Constitutions?

In canon law and in our constitutions, there are no obstacles to a nun fulfilling the function of a FI. The document of the LC enumerates the points for and against permanent MI.

Allowing the possibility of MI will mean that everything in the constitutions of the monks about FI will be included in the constitution of the nuns. For example, for the monks, when a foundation becomes autonomous, then automatically, the FI is the abbot of the founding house. If there are to be MI, then the abbess of the founding house automatically should be the MI of the foundation. There is no canonical reason against that.

Or for the monks, in the case of a *sede vacante* the FI assumes responsibility for the community. But for the nuns, it is the prioress who assumes the responsibility, the FI plays no role. This would mean, for the monks, that the prior should assume this responsibility.

There is also a tradition in the Order, though nothing is written about it, that when there is *sede vacante* in the mother house, the FI also assumes responsibility for the daughter houses. Phare, for example, will soon be *sede vacante*, because there will be an election. At that moment the FI of Phare, Dom Steele, will take responsibility for all the Japanese houses. Some legislation about this should be incorporated.

Then there is a difference in the abbatial election of the monks and nuns. For the monks, all the superiors of the male daughter-houses have a vote in the election, but the nuns do not have this legislation. So, if you have a female FI in a monk's community, she cannot vote in that election. A nun cannot vote but a monk can; there is an imbalance in the legislation. Do we skip that in the monk's constitution or add it to the nuns' constitution? Or we could also leave it as it is.

What do we do with existing communities? A change of filiation is always possible. If the community wants to change filiation, the consent of the conventual chapter and the consent of the community of the incumbent FI and the new FI is required. Then, the GC has to approve it.

At the end, the AG reminded everybody to focus on the central question:

***Do we want to have Mothers Immediate in the life of the Order?***

The discussion that followed covered the following points.

***A) On making MI permanent at the next GC***

- We spend all our time issuing delegations. We'll do far better to recognize the reality of our situation, grasp it, and make the changes necessary.
- We could do nothing, and so buy more time to look at the situation, by extending this time of personal delegation of nuns as FI, which is outside our tradition of paternity. It would be better to come up with an *ad experimentum* proposal, so that we can implement and try out this new situation of paternity – a female *community* assuming paternity of a daughter house, and then to evaluate that. With the present Delegations, only the superior of the house is involved – but with our tradition of paternity, the Mother House is involved. This cannot be evaluated in the present arrangement.

- Many communities have no FI. In the future, more and more communities will experience this. If a monk's community will not accept paternity for a nun's community, we do not have to hesitate to have MI. We all need to be prepared for many changes – in constitutions, in filiations.
- Since it is no longer possible to provide FI for many communities, the Order must discern the signs of the times. The law should serve life.

***B) On extending the period of temporary MI to provide more time to consider the meaning and implications of permanent MI***

- We need time to discern deeply the meaning of this. This is something to do with the roots of our Order. And there is a kind of sacramentality to it; it is somehow related to priesthood. The FI can collaborate with a nun's community. We need time to explore the concrete form of collaboration. It would be better to wait, to find a way to continue with what we have been given.
- The key point is the change from temporary to permanent. We need more time to do the discernment. There are 'experiments' of MI going on in the communities in Europe, America and Ireland, they can share with us the positive and negative aspects of their experience.
- I desire to continue to face these difficult situations in a creative way, without turning it into legislation. Maybe we can look to collaborate more at the level of the Regions.

***C) On the issue of paternity/maternity/filiation***

A point was raised that our understanding of paternity/maternity must be clarified since the issue of FI/MI is connected to the filiation tradition of our Order.

- A more basic issue behind the MI/FI is filiation. Now a MI is just delegated, but what does it mean for a community to take on the filiation of another house? At the moment, our founding house is our motherhouse. And in some senses, the Cistercian life that we have really comes from our motherhouse. In some senses, the FI sees if the life going on in our house is in continuity with what they gave to us. Having to change motherhouses, how do you decide? Who else, then, can say whether the light shining in our house is in continuity with what was handed on? It becomes more difficult to see if you start changing houses. It gets back to the whole question of mission. The filiation is a particular strain of the OCSO mission – e.g., Roscrea, Vitorchiano, there is something that flows along in that particular river that is true. We cannot just throw it all out, but by having a fruitful discussion, on what it means to take on the paternity of a house, we can see better what we're changing. It is really more about communities than about persons.
- If everything is personal, it changes our concept of paternity. Normally, it is a community who takes the paternity of another community. The FI is the personification of that paternity. In all these cases of temporary MI, there is no longer



any paternity; there is only a person-in-charge of another community.

- In creating MI, we are creating two distinct lines of filiation, one male line and one female line. This maybe a first step to splitting the Order. Unity is so important for us.
- Are we just making decisions for communities in trouble or are we reconstituting female filiations?

***D) On having both a FI and a MI***

An idea was put forward by Dom Steele (Tarrawara) that instead of having a FI or a MI, all communities should have both.

- It is desirable to have a relationship with the founding house, there will be transmission of life. I felt this with Vitorchiano. I can understand that a community of nuns may want their founding house as their MI.
- An advantage of having both a FI and a MI is for regular visitations. You would have two persons who know the journey of the community. When the need to delegate a Visitation arises, there is already somebody there who can be delegated. Or if needs be, they can perform a joint visitation.
- It would also stop us from developing along two separate channels, and bind us together more concretely in ways that crisscross.
- This brilliant idea is already a reality for us, Gedono and Lantao, in accord with the Charter of Charity. The relationship with the founding house is never finished. It is very life-giving.

***Questions & Other Comments:***

*What is the historical background of this tradition? (i.e. of the superior of daughter-houses voting in the abbatial election in the mother house)*

- When Citeaux made their foundations, they considered the superiors as part of their Coventual Chapter. At present, this will pose problems if a community is small and they have seven daughter-houses; the power of those daughter-houses will be stronger than the community.

*If the MI are only temporary, will they be changed from time to time?*

- Yes. It will only be attached to the person per se and not to the office.

*How do you think the Holy See will react to the changes in our constitutions and statutes if we introduce MI in our Order?*

- The changes will be accepted without any problems, since there is nothing in canon law against MI.

*What is the main criteria for making a decision between permanent MI and temporary MI?*

- If it is a temporary MI, we always need to delegate her to act as FI. This can present problems. For example, the communities of Ireland were all FI of one other. When there was *sede vacante* in all the houses, there was no FI to delegate. They could also go back to the founding house, but they were founding houses of one other. In that case, the AG and his council appointed an FI, (Mo. Marie of Glencairn), but that is outside the structure of filiation. If we make that permanent, we will no longer have this problem. Glencairn will be the MI, not Mo. Marie but the Abbess of Glencairn. The three communities enter into the filiation of Glencairn.

*If I delegate Dom Raphael, for example, as FI, is that official or personal?*

- A delegation is always personal; you cannot delegate to non-existing person. If the office of Dom Raphael ends, his successor doesn't inherit the delegation.

*If an Abbess cannot make a visitation to a community of monks, how do currently appointed MIs do the visitation?*

- They require a delegation from the AG, to assume the functions of the FI.

*Can we discuss this matter of MIs with our own communities?*

- Yes, it is an essential topic, you should bring it to your communities. It is a point that comes directly from the GC which the regions should discuss.

*I am a chaplain of nuns. The FI couldn't come for the solemn professions, so I asked him, "Does he nominate me?"*

- The solemn profession of nuns should be celebrated in the presence of the FI if possible. The formula of profession states "*in the presence of \_\_\_\_\_*" but the monks do not have that. If there will be a MI, she can be present at the solemn profession; a priest can preside over the Mass. Even if a bishop presides, the FI should delegate the bishop.
- As regards the chaplain of nuns, our situation now is completely different than in 1990 when we created the constitution. The FI plays a role in the appointment of the chaplain. Now in almost all situations, it is the abbess who is searching for a chaplain and she is capable of presenting that chaplain to a bishop. In the present legislation, the Abbess goes to the FI; the FI goes to the local bishop, then the FI goes back to the abbess.

*Does the clause "if possible" mean that even if he doesn't delegate, I can still do it?*

- He should delegate.

*Why should the FI delegate the bishop?*

- To keep the link of the filiation. By making solemn profession, the sister enters into the life of the filiation.

*Our country is very clerical. The bishop is always invited. What do we do if both the Bishop and FI are present for the solemn profession?*

- Let the bishop preside the celebration but at the moment of solemn profession, the FI should preside.

*How about for the blessing of an Abbess? Should a bishop do the blessing?*

- There is a big misunderstanding there. The one responsible for the blessing of an Abbess is the AG. If the bishop gives the blessing, he should have received the delegation.

## **On Financial Visitation**

At the last GC, many communities had problems with finances. This, together with the restructuring of the finances of the Order, was brought to the attention of the AG and his council. They worked on this problem and concluded that our Order has a very good statute on Temporal Administration. However, not many communities are making good use of it.

In this statute, all the communities of the Order must have a financial audit every four years by an external expert. This “*Audit*” translates as “*financial or economic visitation*” in the present language of the Church.

At the last GC, the AG enjoined all communities of the Order to have a financial visitation before the GC of 2025. This was not asking something new from communities, but just reminding them of this provision in the Statute of Temporal Administration (TA).

Dom Emmanuel, in the Central Commission (CC) Online-meeting, presented a document on how a financial visitation is to be done. (*Appendix C*) It was compiled from examples given by other monastic congregations.

The financial visitation is not just about figures, but also about how finances are being managed to serve our charism. Much of the information and the documents that it requires, should, normally be at hand. Such questions as: What is the exact property owned by your community? Is there a financial council? Who is on the financial council? Does the financial council really meet? Is there accountability to the community? Not many communities have a financial council; it is an obligation. In many communities, the pastoral council is also the economic council. It’s not always wise to do that, but it depends on circumstances.

It must help the community to have a clear idea of their financial situation.

This economic visitation is also a kind of check to see if the community is following the Statute on Temporal Administration. It can be done by any external, qualified person, but having a professional conduct the audit might overlook the communal dynamic in accountability.

In conclusion, The AG reminded all superiors of their responsibility for the finances of their respective communities.

**Questions:**

*Do the foundations also have to do the financial visitation?*

- Yes, a foundation is an official recognized community of the Order.

*Supposing all the communities do this financial report, how will this affect the working of the GC?*

- It doesn't affect the GC, unless there are many communities with problems. The financial report is presented to the community. If the auditor is not the FI, he/she should send that report to the FI. You don't have to send the financial report to the AG.
- Only if there is a problem, it should be reported to the AG and his council. This is also not practiced. And we arrive at the GC and discover big problems in certain communities.

*The FI who does the visitation, sees all the books. And he makes the visitation card. Why is this separate thing coming out now?*

- It is based on experience. Ideally, the FI should check the finances. But many FIs honestly say that they have no knowledge of finances. They just sign the accounts. There are also many cases, and this is shocking, that communities refuse to hand over the accounts to the FI. Again, this financial visitation is not something new, it is in our statute on TA.

*Is it possible that more than one person – one a financial expert, and another person who can look at the dynamics of the community – to conduct this financial visitation?*

- Ideally, the financial visitation should precede the regular visitation so that the audit can be communicated to the FI. But since for many communities, this is a new practice most of the communities will have it separate from the regular visitation. The important thing is results of the audit be sent to the FI. Also, the person who conducts the financial audit should be knowledgeable of the financial laws and regulations of that country.

## **On the Renewal of the Financial Entities of the Order**

During the CC online-meeting, the AG gave a PowerPoint presentation of the new structures and functioning of the financial entities of the Order. Since some wanted more clarification, the AG further explicated it during the Oriens meeting, using some slides of the above-mentioned PowerPoint presentation. (*Appendix D*)

This restructuring was in response to Vote 76 at GC of 2022 part 2 requesting the Abbot General and his Council, together with experts, to renew the structure and functioning of the financial entities of the Order (Commission of Aid, Commission of Finance, and the Generalate), in consultation with the members of these entities.

Over the years, practices evolved that gave rise to a lack of accountability, clarity and

transparency regarding the finances of the Order. The AG and his council came up with a new structure. It is composed of three entities which together compose a new Commission on Finance of the Order.

He gave a brief overview of the workings of these entities or sub-Commissions, namely, the sub-Commission of Investments, the sub-Commission of Mutual Solidarity and the sub-Commission of the Generalate and the Order.

The **Commission of Investments** is in-charge of the capital of the Order. This capital was created from the proceeds of the sale of Monte Cistello. It pays for the extraordinary expenses of the Generalate such as building repairs. Every year, it will give a certain percentage to the Commission of Mutual Solidarity.

The **Commission of Mutual Solidarity** is the former Commission of Aid. This commission has sent a letter to the communities of the Order on their new way of working. (Appendix E). The funds they have are very low. The communities of the Order, who formerly gave large sums for individual gifts to communities, are no longer able to do so. This gives a more realistic view of the finances of the Order and can prepare us for the future.

The **Commission of the Generalate and the Order** takes care of the ordinary running of the Generalate including the travels of the AG and his council.

The AG emphasized the role of the Bursar of the Order who acts as liaison between these sub-commissions. Though, the Bursar of the Order is mentioned in our statute of TA, the GC has never appointed a Bursar. The Bursar is delegated by the AG to deal with the finances and reports to the GC.

The AG also explained the composition and membership of these three sub-commissions. He noted that all the continents are now represented in the Commission of Finance. While grateful for former members of the Commission of Finance, Dom Isaac, M. Genevieve-Marie and Dom Malachias were asked to step down to make way for the new structure.

Presently, the members of the new Commission of Finance are appointed. When their appointments come to an end, the GC will elect the members of the Commission of Finance. They will have a maximum term of 6 years, with no possibility of re-election.

This new structure is *ad experimentum* until GC 2028.

### **Questions:**

*Dom Emmanuel is very important. Does he have a 6-year term or an unlimited term?*

- It is better not to speak of Dom Emmanuel, but to speak of the Bursar of the Order. For the moment it is Dom Emmanuel, but his term ends at the next GC. If he is re-elected, he can continue. If he is not elected, we have to fix a term or find another person.
- According to canon law, every institute should have a general bursar of the institute. He should be a member of the council of the AG.

*How does a community ask for money?*

- We have four categories to request for financial assistance: health, formation, construction, daily life. Requests must make clear into which category your request falls. If you want a new car because the Abbot needs a new car, that doesn't fit into any of the categories; it is not possible. You cannot make any request without the approval of the FI. You need to be honest about whether you are asking other communities for money; if you are, the Commission of Mutual Solidarity will not give you anything.

*The annual contribution to the generalate?*

- The annual contribution provides for the daily expenses of the generalate. It is also used for the travel expenses of the AG and his council.

*If we want to ask money from the Commission of Mutual Solidarity, do we have to be a member of that commission?*

- Every community can ask the Commission of Mutual Solidarity for help – from the level of foundation to Abbey.
- If a community with a project of foundation needs support, the project of foundation cannot ask for help directly, but the founding house can.

*The poor communities can no longer ask rich communities for financial support?*

- They can but it is not encouraged. If they do, they cannot ask anymore from the Commission of Mutual Solidarity.

## ***On Affiliation***

For the nuns, affiliation is already existing law in *Cor Orans*. If two communities of nuns want to affiliate with each other, they can do so. But there is no legislation to permit this for the monks. The LC has to put 'affiliation' in our Constitutions. And we will need to go to the Holy See for approval. Until recently, our Order has had no experience of it.

One project of affiliation is now underway in our Order: the community of Alloz is being affiliated with the community of La Palma. This means that the conventual chapter of the community of Alloz will be suspended. Any candidates for Alloz will have to go to La Palma for their formation.

No discussion has been done on affiliation, as it was only a matter of deciding whether our Region wanted to introduce this into the Constitution of the monks. The matter was formulated into a vote.

## On the Points for the Preparation for GC 2025

A fruitful and lively discussion transpired on the points for the preparation for the GC 2025, which the AG and his council enjoined the communities of the Region. Many communities of Oriens had already held dialogues to discuss these points, and their delegates presented syntheses of these dialogues.

### **A) On Smaller Communities**

Four communities in the Oriens Region have less than 10 members: Kopua, Kunambetta, Macau, Oita. The AG noted that it was a good thing, for us as a Region, to be aware of these situations — even if concrete forms of support cannot be found immediately.

#### **KUNAMBETTA**

*What is your situation at the moment? How do you really feel about your situation? What kind of concrete help are you looking for?*

- Since 2010, we have been six members. We try to live not to be too concerned with the numbers, but just to live the Cistercian life as best as we can. Chambarand was closed and they had 25 members. We learn how to live the Cistercian values in a small community; we try to live lectio and liturgy with the number that we are. We never think that we are big or small. Spiritually, we are going ahead in living the Cistercian spirituality. For you, we are small; but we don't think of ourselves as a small community. For us, it is important just to be a living presence in the Church of Kerala. Mo. Cornelia said that they are 40 members, and that sometimes they cannot breathe. We are six members, and we try to live our life with that number. But at the same time, we also need the support of the Order and of our region.

*According to Cor Orans, if a community doesn't reach a certain number of members within a certain number of years. . .*

- The main reason is immigration issues; the Belgian sisters are not allowed to stay permanently. They have one observer who has since become a postulant. Their life together is prayerful, full of energy. I don't see any reason why we should not support their application to become simple priory. It will resolve the situation that *Cor Orans* raises.
- Kunambetta is a good example where we shouldn't look at numbers, because the community is full of hope and full of life. It's true, the Belgian sisters cannot fully live in the place because of immigration policies. I am very impressed by how the two communities are dealing with that situation. Another reason to go ahead is to give closure to the past. We all know that this is the elephant in the room. The present Kunambetta community was born of a very difficult history. This needs to be taken into account when looking at the present state of the community. This will help them to move ahead. We can free them from their past. This is not to deny the past, but to affirm the present reality of the community.
- I was very impressed with the efforts that Mary Ann has made to heal those wounds; and they are in a good place now.

### **MACAU**

We are the second small community of Oriens. We are 10 members. According to the criteria of our Order, we are a small community – but in Macau we are considered a big community! Religious communities in Macau generally have only 3 or 4 members. Presently, our motherhouse is in the process of asking that we become an autonomous house. We are full of hope – Star of Hope – that our presence in Macau can continue. The diocese of Macau is very supportive. The uncertainty is that we are in China. Until they refuse to allow us to stay, we will remain there. The community of Rosary is an example for us. From the region we receive life, and from our motherhouse and our ‘fatherhouse’ – and our future fatherhouse, Lantao. From the beginning, Lantao has helped greatly. We are in Macau because of Lantao. At the beginning of our foundation, Dom Anastasius was the Abbot of Lantao; he supported us in every way. But also, now with Dom Paul. It is important for us to belong to the region – to be part of the region. If we have some problem, Gedono is always ready to help.

### **OITA**

In this region Oita has suddenly become a small community, with 9 members. Among the nine, there are 2 priests, I and another priest who is 82 years old. When I am away, the 82-year-old becomes very busy. Our FI is Phare, and we receive a lot of help from Phare. From Oita to Ajimu is only 15 mins by car. Among the Japanese houses, Oita and Ajimu are the poorest of the communities. Since the poor understand each other very well, we receive a lot of help from Ajimu. There are many Vietnamese sisters in Ajimu – full of life and zeal – we receive this from them. There is no mutual financial help but there are other forms of help. So, we have a mother and a father.

- Ajimu came from the island of Miyako with only 10 members, with no hope of vocations, of life. With a lot of help and support, we moved to where we are now, near Oita. We received a lot of help from them both material and spiritual. It was good for us to move near a monastery of monks.

### **KOPUA**

Kopua has also joined the list of communities with 10 or less than 10 persons. We have three professed monks of Guimaras who changed their stability to Kopua. Since I am not getting any younger, the time has come for me to offer my resignation. Hopefully, one of those Filipinos can take my place. We have three priests, but one is 90 years old, the other has Parkinson’s disease. I remain the only active priest. We hope we can remain in New Zealand, where we are quite popular and with no one wanting us to close.

### ***B) On the criticism that the Order is too ‘Euro-centric’***

We have to grow in mutual listening across cultures. We need to acknowledge the differences in mentality, culture, educational and family background.

Our desire for continuous formation and transmission is a desire to be more involved in the



## Order and for greater synodality.

While recognizing that our roots are in Europe, and grateful for the life and material help that we continually receive from Europe, there is a sentiment that the Order has not sufficiently separated itself from its former mentality, which still tends to view or present things in a Western way.

The AG confirmed that a shift has taken place in the Church, and that the Order has been late in making this transition. The region believes that this shift is gradually taking place.

- It was my first time to attend the GC. I found things were formulated and presented in a way too European. But things like that will gradually change. In Japan, missionaries are now mostly from the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia, and no longer from Europe as before.
- The Indonesian church has experienced great changes, especially in the life of the congregations and the Orders. Some of the Superior-Generals of these congregations now come from Indonesia, and this has had a great impact on the life of the mission.
- Our Order is not so far behind. Our procurator is Chinese. He also has some background in Western thinking. Yet, he is very firm in his Hong Kong Identity. He can be a bridge between east and west.
- In terms of synodality, all the continents now sit at the Order's table of government.

In an open and sincere discussion, some concrete instances were cited that either belied or justified this criticism.

- The majority of our houses are in Europe, and most of them are diminishing. It is right that they be given some attention.
- Non-European capitulants need to take more time in preparing for the GC than their European counterparts, due to limitation in time and language. It often takes longer for them to travel to the GCs. There is a gap. A delegate from Azul had to prepare two months before the GC.
- We all come together in the GC, but the reality is that most come from Europe and most of our GCs take place in Europe. It is a good thing that the CC will be in Chile.
- In my commission, I shared about our postulant who is 24 years old. I was questioned whether we can give formation to a person of 24: "Weren't we too old?" But if the same thing were to happen in a European community, no one would see it as problem.
- I feel that when there is a scandal in an African community, it is much talked about. But when a scandal happens in a European community, no one says anything.

- At the GC, there is room for everyone. If one is not ready to assume responsibility, that is not the problem of European origin. We need to acknowledge the reality that we need to learn to take responsibility, and not feel threatened by Europeans. We propose a proper formation at the intellectual and human level.

The AG stressed that it is time for the Oriens to give the Order. It is time for Oriens not only to receive, but also to give, to have the courage to give life. Are we thinking of MI because of the lack of FI? But do we search for FIs in Oriens, or REMILA or Africa? Or only in Europe or America where there are none, and so we think of a need for MI? Are we ready to accept FIs or daughter-houses from Africa, Asia or Latin America?

***Some concrete suggestions were put forward on how to respond to this criticism:***

- At the last GC, there was an informal meeting of the filiation of Tilburg. I had a closer encounter with the superiors from Africa. Since then, I have maintained contact with them. This makes our filiation in the Order stronger. Therefore, I suggest that during the GC, aside from formal meetings in the commissions, we can also have informal gatherings or meetings of filiations.
- We, in Asia, have the responsibility to learn languages. When a missionary goes to a certain place, he/she has to learn the local language. It is an experience of disappropriation. I am not against using translations, but knowing the language facilitates interpersonal relationships.
- We are the only community in Korea. Can there be a commission for isolated communities? This commission can send resource persons to the isolated communities to transmit the Cistercian patrimony or to form translators.
- We need to take the time to prepare for the GC in order to participate more.
- The composition of the commissions is always the same; it can cause a lack of openness. In the 5<sup>th</sup> commission, there were many Asians. It gave a completely different view of the problems. New compositions of commissions would help.
- We were taught to question ourselves — as a region are we open to this? Decentralization is a political word. Politics should not happen in our Order. We have to choose the common good; not our personal good.
- How did this criticism arise? Its roots are in the African region. At GCs, their experience is that Africans are blamed for all things that have gone wrong in the Order. For many years, they haven't said anything about it. Now, we have a new group of African superiors, and they are very aware of their identity. They are now standing up and saying, "It is enough."

***C) On a more spiritual and life-giving content to the GC***

The region suggests the following:

- Start with a one or two-day retreat, to give some rest to superiors.

- Give time to discuss the conferences or any other spiritual input.
- Take advantage of the spiritual heritage of Assisi, as we did in the last Chapter, praying Vespers with the Poor Clares.
- Bring up positive things to uplift hope and enthusiasm; look at solutions to problems together instead of focusing on the problems themselves.
- Include testimonies from the younger members of the Order, which open our horizons to how the charism is lived in different continents.

***D) On greater participation of the communities in the GC***

The region suggests the following:

- Live-stream the opening and closing mass, and the conferences, or do a video recording for those with difficulty of access to live-streaming due to time differences or lack of facilities.
- Give the possibility for each community to bring a delegate to the GC, if they wish.
- Explore possibilities for active participation via social media of individual monks/nuns, for example, chatbox.

***E) On the general secretary for formation, translators, support staff for GC, councilors***

*On the General Secretary for Formation*

The region suggests the following:

- Fr. Samuel of Tarrawara
- Fr. Justin of Mokoto
- Fr. Michael Casey of Tarrawara

Fr. Samuel of Tarrawara has declined the nomination by email, as he is finishing his doctorate, but gladly offered his services for the GC 2025.

*On translators*

The AG shared the increasing difficulty of finding translators, and how it can slow down the proceedings of the GC and Regional Meetings. He asked the opinion of the region on having less important documents be translated by machine (AI) translation apps like DeepL.

A concern was raised about the security and privacy of these apps. DeepL Pro, the paid version, provides a security and privacy policy. There is also a possibility for having our own dictionary where we can put in terms particular to our Order, such as Father Immediate, Central Commission, etc.

*Two suggestions were put forward regarding translations:*

- Aside from preparing translators, we can prepare a translation app for our Order's use. It will be more secure than applications from the Web.
- Set up a commission for translation and interpretation, which could then also be used in formation.

*On Councilors, personnel for the Generalate, support staff for the GC*

The AG mentioned the need for a for a new bursar and a new porter/portress for the

generalate. There is also a need for support staff at the GC: typists in the three languages, a general secretary, a second secretary, an infirmarian and translators. Suggestions are welcome and names may be submitted to the AG. The AG asks the superiors to be open to give monks/nuns from their respective communities when requested. For the councilors, it is far too early to mention names.

## **Regional Matters**

### **A) The Oriens Region**

Can we truly evolve into one Region without having subregions? Or should the two subregions evolve into separate Regions? And how often should the Region meet?

To guide our region in its deliberations on our Regions, the AG recalled *Cst. 81: "The regional conferences foster communion and fraternal cooperation within each geographical area and in the Order as a whole."*

At the end of our discussion, the region deemed that the time was not yet right to make decisions on the first two questions and decided to remain with the current situation: of One Oriens region composed of two subregions, the Japanese-speaking subregion and the English-speaking subregion. It holds a plenary meeting before the Central Commission to prepare for the next General Chapter, a short meeting right before the GC, and sub-regional meetings for pastoral sharing in the year following the GC, and in which the members of the other subregion can also participate.

### **B) Regional Secretaries for Formation**

The Regional Secretary for Formation for the English Subregion, Fr. Samuel (Tarawara) submitted a formation report which was read in plenary. (*Appendix F*). He was re-elected for another 6-year term, which he happily accepted.

Fr. David, the Regional Secretary of Formation also gave a report in plenary. He asked not to be re-elected; he deems that the Japanese region should choose someone from among their communities. Though several names were suggested — Mo. Cecilia (Tenshien), Fr. Aloysius (Phare), Br. Thomas (Phare) Sr. Bernarda (Nasu), Sr. Agnes (Imari), Sr. (Ajimu) — no definite election was made, and the matter was deferred to the next regional meeting, just before the GC, when Fr. David's term ends.

### **C) Regional Secretary**

Sr. Anna Marie (Matutum) was re-elected as Regional Secretary for both subregions.

### **D) Delegates of the Oriens Region to the GC 2025**

It is the turn of Gedono and Kopua to send delegates for the region to the GC of 2025:

Sr. Aleta (Gedono) and Bro. Aelred (Kopua).

***D) Dates and Venues of Meetings***

The dates and venues of regional and sub-regional meetings of superiors and of formators were to be decided at this meeting. Suggestions were put forward and votes were taken by a show of hands. The results are as follows:

*Oriens Regional Superiors Meeting before General Chapter 2025*

Domus Pacis, Assisi

30 August - 1 September 2025

Arrival Date: 30 August 2025

*Oriens Regional Formators Meeting in 2026*

Guimaras, Philippines

15-23 May 2026

Arrival Date: 15 May 2026

Departure Date: 23 May 2026

*Sub-Regional English-Speaking Superiors Meeting in 2026*

Gedono, Indonesia

1-9 September 2026

Arrival Date: 1 September 2026

Departure Date: 9 September 2026

**Auto-Critique**

Dom Kevin gave a full report to the Region of the situation in his community of Guimaras. The Region expressed its support and encouragement to the community of Guimaras, and to Dom Kevin for the immense responsibility he presently carries.

Everyone expressed their gratitude for the presence of the Abbot-general. Many felt that it provided great support and guidance during the meeting.

All were very grateful to the community of Sujong for their very warm, generous and fraternal hospitality. Their welcome to the Region was exceptional.

The increased participation during the meeting was noted. There seems to be more cooperation and unity more than before.

The great diversity in Oriens – many countries and cultures – was seen as a great richness. Focusing more on the positive aspects of the Region, rather than concentrating too much on its negative side, and to take responsibility for what we have heard, was recognized as a good way forward.

### **Closing Words of the Abbot-General**

The AG thanked the Oriens Region for its invitation. He expressed his joy at being present, and in coming to know the region and how its functions.

He conveyed his gratitude to the community of Sujong for the excellent way they welcomed the region. He thanked the three moderators, Mo. Giovanna (Matutum), Dom Raphael (Oita) and Dom Antonius (Lamanabi), and the three interpreters - irreplaceable by artificial intelligence!

He expressed his hope for the region, and for the Order. He enjoined all to hold onto that hope and to continue to work together. He concluded by quoting some words of Mo. Scholastica, which touched him: 'Take responsibility for one another.' "This," he said, "will be the next stage for the region to achieve."

**APPENDIX A**

**SCHEDULE OF ORIENS REGIONAL MEETING  
SUJONG, 7 – 13 MAY 2024**

Day 1 Tues 7 MAY	Day 2 Wed 8 MAY	Day 3 Thurs 9 MAY	Day 4 Fri 10 MAY	Day 5 Sat 11 MAY	Day 6 Sun 12 MAY	Day 7 Mon 13 MAY
8:30 – 10:00  <i>Dom Raphael</i>  Announcements Orientations (Sr. Josepha of Sujong) Introductions	8:30 – 10:00  <i>Dom Raphael</i>  Opening Conference of the AG  Sharing on the Opening Conference of the AG	8:30 – 10:00  <i>Mo. Giovanna</i>  Cont. of discussion on MIs	8:30  Departure for Donguibogam Village (Korean Medicine Expo Park and Museum)	8:30 – 10:00  <i>Dom Raphael</i>  Cont. on the Questions for GC 2025 from CC Online Meeting	8:30 – 10:00  <i>Dom Antonius</i>  Presentation of Votes 1-6  Votes 1-6	8:30 – 10:30  <i>Mo. Giovanna</i>  Monastery Tour  Presentation of Votes 7 – 18
<b>MORNING BREAK</b>				<b>MORNING BREAK</b>		
10:30 – 11:30 Evaluation of the GC	10:30 – 11:30 Sharing on the Opening Conference of the AG	10:30 – 11:30 AG on Financial Visitation  Questions		Cont.	10:30 – 11:30 Regional Matters	10:30 – 11:30 Report from Japanese Sub- region Secretary of Formation
<b>LUNCH &amp; SIESTA</b>				<b>LUNCH &amp; SIESTA</b>		
2:00 – 3:00  Introduction of the AG on the Questions from the CC Online Meeting	2:00 – 3:00  AG on MI Working paper	2:00 – 3:00  AG on the Renewal of the Financial Entities of the Order  Question		2:00 – 3:00  Cont.	2:00 – 3:00  Nomination/Ele ction Of Regional Secretary and Regional Secretary of Formation	2:00 – 3:00  Votes 7 -18  Finalization of Dates & Venues of Regional Meetings)
<b>AFTERNOON BREAK</b>				<b>AFTERNOON BREAK</b>		
3:30 – 4:30	3:30 – 4:30 Discussion on MIs	3:30 – 4:30 On the Questions for GC 2025 from CC Online Meeting		3:30 – 4:30 Cont.	3:30 – 4:30 Report from English Sub- region Secretary of Formation  Dates & Venues of Regional Meetings	3:30 – 4:30 Report of Dom Kevin on Guimaras  Auto - Critique
<b>VESPERS &amp; SUPPER</b>						
Meeting with Sujong Community						

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CREDO IN SPIRITUM SANCTUM, DOMINUS ET VIVIFICANTEM.**

#### **I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE LORD, THE GIVER OF LIFE *How the Holy Spirit is at work in the life of the Order today.***

*Oriens meeting, Sujong 7 May 2024*

Brothers and sisters,

*"They (The disciples of Jesus) were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. "* This text from the Acts of the Apostles<sup>2</sup> is used in the liturgy as the communion of the Eucharist on the day of Pentecost: *"Repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto, loquentes magnalia Dei, alleluia."* In this opening conference of the ORIENS MEETING 2024, I want to speak about the '*magnalia Dei*', 'the marvels of God' in the present time when God has called us, in our concrete communities, to live out our vocation to holiness in the Order and its specific charism. As I travel along the communities of the Order, time and again I get to witness the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the communities, in the concrete lives of our brothers and sisters. For if anything is certain it is that the Holy Spirit is at work in our Order even today - and perhaps especially today. Let us therefore speak of these 'marvels of God'!

This opening statement may surprise you because we are so used to talking to each other about all those difficult situations in the Order, in our communities and in the lives of individual brothers and sisters. We are so used to talk a lot about the lack of vocations, the lack of sufficient Fathers Immediate, the many requests of dispensation of vows, the sexual abuse, the abuse of power and conscience, the suppression of communities etc., etc. All these realities so dominate our lives that the danger is that we get caught in self-concern and selfpity. We too easily forget to also see the positive, recognize the signs of the times and thank God for His constant activity. Precisely this gratitude should be our first response. Some young members from a community of the Order recently expressed it very well in a letter to me: *'Please, help us to shift our focus from what is lacking in our community, in the Region and the*

*Order to what blessings exist now. Please, emphasize the positive and give us hope!'*

Many of us think that God has abandoned us at this time when we are called by the same Lord to live the Cistercian charism. One easily recognizes the psalmist's complaint when he sees the ruined Jerusalem: *"O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins. They have left the corpses of your servants as food for the birds of the sky, the flesh of those devoted to you for the beasts of the earth. They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem, and no one is left to do the burying. We have become the reproach of our neighbors, the scorn and derision of those around us. How long, LORD? Will you be angry forever?"*<sup>3</sup> The times we live in are perceived as bad by many.

Regularly I get letters from concerned people inside and outside the Order who think we should return to the experience of monastic life as it was before Vatican II. Return to the Latin liturgy with its unified, ancient liturgy and beautiful Gregorian chants! Only then will new vocations flourish because just look at the traditionalists inside and outside the Church! People write to me about a desire to restore the

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 4, 31

<sup>3</sup> Ps 79:1-5



old customs of the Order. Back then, everything was clear and above all strict. Now we no longer honor our name as Cistercians of the Strict Observance because there is no discipline and asceticism is far from it. People sometimes write to me in the name of Our Lady to listen more attentively to her messages given at several places in the world. Only then will there be vocations and a future for the Order.

On the other hand, I receive letters from brothers and sisters who just don't know it anymore. Where should we go from here? They see a return to the past as a false hope or as a temptation to escape reality. However, they do not see the future because the negativity of the current experience of the Church, the world, and the Order clouds their vision. They yearn for new paths but feel trapped in the darkness of the present. They expect more initiative from me, from the Order to undertake something new.

But no one writes to me about the work of the Holy Spirit in the present time. Does the Holy Spirit no longer work then? And if the Holy Spirit no longer works then neither do the Father and the Son because their activity may be different but at the same time inseparable. With this focus on vocations and survival we may be lost our faith. Perhaps this is the big problem today that we are no longer able to discern where the Spirit of God is blowing. Jesus *"answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' In the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but you can't discern the signs of the times!"* (Matt 16:2-4). We lose ourselves in side-effects and make peripheral phenomena the center of everything. Only when we can see and name the working of the Holy Spirit in our day, we can also identify where the opposite - the reality of evil - is at work. Unfortunately, in our day, many turn that around, resulting in an unhealthy focus on the devil's efficacy at the expense of the working of the Holy Spirit who, by virtue of our baptism, is operative in every baptized person. *"Let us never yield to pessimism, to that bitterness that the devil offers us every day<sup>4</sup>."*

When St Bernard preaches to his brothers on the day of Pentecost, he tries to make visible to them what is invisible because *"Today is the feast day of the Holy Spirit, on which the Invisible became visible<sup>5</sup>".* In this conference, let me try to make visible where the Invisible Spirit of God is at work in the life of the Order today. He is the Lord in whom we believe, the Giver of Life! I do this only to proclaim His great deeds and not to pat ourselves on the back because *"Not to us, LORD, not to us but to your name give glory for your loving kindness, and for your truth's sake<sup>6</sup>."*

### **The Holy Spirit at work in the life of the Order today**

Looking at the life of the Order right now, I see the Holy Spirit actively present in the following five movements:

1. In the courage of embracing our vulnerability
2. In engaging in innovative collaborations
3. in the new life of (the projects) of foundations
4. In a growing awareness of the complementarity of men and women in the Order
5. In the actual lived co-responsibility

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<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis: Audience with the College of Cardinals, Friday, 15 March 2013

<sup>5</sup> Pent 1.1

<sup>6</sup> Ps 115,1

Perhaps there are several more to point out, but these suffice for the moment. The purpose of this conference is to give thanks to God for the great things He is doing today among us through the work of the Holy Spirit and to give you, at the same time, some information about the life in the Order. We need what Pope Francis calls in *Laudato si*: *'the grateful contemplation of the world'*<sup>7</sup> or in the words of *Evangelii gaudium*: *'we need to look with a contemplative gaze'*<sup>8</sup>. It is a *'different way of looking at the reality'* to *'gather the positive and sustainable developments'*<sup>9</sup>.

**1. God's Holy Spirit does great things in the courage of embracing our vulnerability** Since the General Chapter of 2002, we have been discussing the theme of fragility in the Order and in our communities. A discussion that, through many detours, finally led, in 2022, to the acceptance of the new Statute for the Accompaniment of Fragile Communities and the suppression of a community (SAFC). A discussion that has gone through all the well-known phases of: *'shock and reluctance to believe it; an attempt to "bargain" and an irrational longing to somehow "avert" or negate the painful event, followed by an inner struggle sometimes involving feelings of rage and revolt; and moments of resignation - before we finally achieve the peace of reconciliation - accepting the reality'*<sup>10</sup> Which are the 5 stages of the announced death.

The new Statute is truly the work of the Holy Spirit and in the past two years that we have been working with it now, it shows already its good fruits. It helps communities, and therefore the Order as a whole, to face fragility with courage. Through the Statute, the Holy Spirit has made us realize that fragility is no longer seen as a threat but truly as a participation in the Paschal Mystery.<sup>11</sup> It helped us distance ourselves from a monastic life in which vulnerability was not allowed and in which we often hid behind a misunderstood autonomy. Much telling is a legend which tells us that the devil once tried to fool Saint Martin of Tours into worshipping him by appearing to the saint dressed in fine clothes and jewelry and claiming to be Our Lord. Martin spotted the devil's ruse immediately, saying, "Where are your nails marks? Where is the wound in your side? When I see the marks of the Passion then I will adore Him." Without the wounds, Martin knew it was not Jesus<sup>12</sup>. After all, the devil knows no vulnerability!

In the past two years, I have been privileged to meet many communities who dare to face their fragility with courage. In the council, we are sometimes greatly impressed by this courage. We see an increase in the quality of visitation cards but also in the house reports given to the regional meetings. People are open and honest and dare to ask the right questions. Vulnerability is faced not only regarding the question of a community's future but also regarding economy, community life, full and active participation in the liturgical and communal life, not to mention vulnerability in individual lives of brothers and sisters, and even of superiors.

The new Statute sees in the vulnerability of communities an opportunity to choose life, possibly resulting in a revitalization of the community. If this revitalization is not possible then the new Statute even puts the closure of a community on the line. Closure, sometimes unavoidably, allows a community to enter the dying of the grain to bear fruit. A fruitfulness that is invisible and which we do not know but in which, thanks to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, we may believe.

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<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato si*, 214.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 71.

<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato si*, 114.

<sup>10</sup> T. Halik, *Touch the Wounds*. p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> SAFC 3.

<sup>12</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *On the life of St. Martin*. C. 24.

The new Statute is a great help for the superiors, the Fathers Immediate, and the communities to choose life in their fragility. Perhaps the most striking feature of this Statute is the new figure

of the Monastic Commissary<sup>13</sup>. His/her first and main task is to search for new life together with the fragile community. His/her main task is revitalization, making the search for God and life again central. A good example in this regard is the work of Dom Guillaume, Monastic Commissary of Latroun (Israel). Together with the brothers of both Latroun and the mother house, Sept Fons, he has been able to revitalize the community. Another example is the work of Dom Rufus, Monastic Commissary of Mount Melleray, Roscrea and Mellifont (Ireland). These communities are now trying to come to a union and already have a common novitiate in addition to one superior and one council for the three communities.

There are also examples of monastic commissaries who, having done everything, came to the conclusion with the community that closure is inevitable. In the end, then, it is about living, and dying with dignity. I am thinking here of the good and hard work of M. Genevieve-Marie, monastic commissary of the Nuns of Notre Dame de l'Assomption (Canada). The blowing of the Spirit in these difficult and painful situations is often not a gentle breeze. It is the storm on the lake in which the enticing voice of Jesus sounds: *"Take courage! It is I! Don't be afraid."*<sup>14</sup>

Currently, there are 11 communities in the Order with a Monastic Commissary. Among the monks: Westmalle, Oelenberg, Mount Melleray, Roscrea, Mellifont, Latroun, Oseira, Snowmass, Las Escalonias and Myrendal. With the sisters: Assomption.

In the application of the new Statute, the Holy Spirit is truly at work. He helps us as an Order and as communities to free ourselves from the prison of self-concern. This requires courage, which is not possible without the Holy Spirit. *"The secret of his heart is laid open through the clefts of his body"* (Patet arcanum cordis per foramina corporis) according to St. Bernard<sup>15</sup>. The Holy Spirit teaches us in the present time to face with courage the fragility to reach the secret of God's heart: the Paschal Mystery!

### **God's Holy Spirit does great things in innovative collaborations**

Thomas Merton wrote in *New Seeds of Contemplation*: *'If your regard contemplation principally as a means to escape from the miseries of human life, as a withdrawal from the anguish and the suffering of this struggle for reunion with other men in the charity of Christ, you do not know what contemplation is and you will never find God in your contemplation. For it is precisely in the recovery of our union with our brothers in Christ that we discover God and know Him, for them His life begins to penetrate our souls and His love possesses our faculties and we are able to find out Who He is from the experience of His mercy, liberating us from the prison of self-concern'*.<sup>16</sup>

The great fruit of the Holy Spirit that we currently see in the Order is a growing collaboration, *'liberating us from the prison of self-concern'*. Communities, as well as individual superiors, Regions are seeking collaboration with each other more than ever and are willing to help each other. This

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<sup>13</sup> SAFC 10; St. 34bis

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 14:27

<sup>15</sup> commentary on the Song on Songs, 61.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, p. 92.

willingness to help each other has characterized our Order from its beginnings, with the Carta Caritatis and all other structures like filiation and Fathers Immediate but the current experiences of vulnerability allow new initiatives and other structures to flourish, "*because wounds and pains become openings and occasions for a new vision*".<sup>17</sup>

Is the Holy Spirit not at work in the help some brothers of Guimaras are giving to Kopua? Instead of making a new foundation, did not the Holy Spirit inspire the community of Esmeraldas to help the communities of Geronde, El Rosal, Carrizo and Fons Pacis? In western France, the communities belonging to the filiation of La Trappe are trying to seek more cooperation with each other through regular meetings of superiors and their bursars, cooperation regarding formation (initial and ongoing formation), joint retreats. On Schiermonnikoog, the monks try to shape together a monastic life that transcends the boundaries of different monastic spiritualities by praying the Divine Office with a small group of Carmelites. I am also thinking here of the regional nursing home Monte Sion of the Spanish monasteries together with the Congregation of Las Huelgas. How was the Holy Spirit not palpable during the General Chapter of the Congregation of Las Huelgas in 2023 where there was not only the courage to face vulnerability but also the openness to greater and innovative cooperation between communities by accepting the figure of affiliation? Since the Covid 19 pandemic, hasn't the Holy Spirit opened to us the positive possibilities for online meetings, especially formation sessions?

It is good to see that communities are not (anymore) afraid to ask for a Commission for the Future, according to the Statute on the Accompaniment of Fragile Communities. This commission can be a good help for a fragile community to experience the brotherhood and care of the Order. Even in large regions, this commission for the future has now penetrated (Guimaras ORIENS – Kokoubou RAFMA). People no longer hide behind distance, language barriers and cultural differences, etc. I am thinking here of the commission for Guimaras. This commission even brings together different cultures and shows that we all have a responsibility to each other. Aren't all these collaborations the work of the Holy Spirit? As a result of having the courage to face our fragility, new and innovative initiatives around solidarity are emerging. The help the sisters of Sora (Panama) received from the communities of the Order after they had to leave Nicaragua made a deep impression on everybody, not least on the sisters themselves. "*Offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Pay your vows to the Most High!*" (Ps 50,14)

I was also impressed by the brothers of Oita who donated part of their cemetery to the local Muslim community. In many communities, I also see a sharing of their own fragility with people around the monasteries. The brothers of Mokoto, inspired by the Holy Spirit, show everyone inside and outside the Order that with God there is no standing of person but that everyone can knock on the door of the monastery as a guest, because "*I came as a guest, and you received Me*".<sup>18</sup> They set up their monastery and property to receive 25,000 refugees. Many monasteries in Europe have taken in refugees from the Ukraine. All these, and many other examples, are in line with Pope Frances' encyclical Fratelli tutti: "*Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community.*"<sup>19</sup> These acts of solidarity are not against our contemplative vocation but are the consequence of it.

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<sup>17</sup> H. Nouwen, The Wounded Healer, p. 94.

<sup>18</sup> RB 53, 2; Matt. 25;35.

<sup>19</sup> Pope Frances, Fratelli tutti, 116.

I often see this renewed collaboration in communities that take seriously, not only the cry of the poor but also the cry of Mother Earth and, in agreement with *Laudato si*<sup>20</sup>, open themselves to renewed collaboration with the earth in their daily lives and work. Here too, the wounds and fragility of creation have become openings and opportunities for a new vision.

**3. God's Holy Spirit does great things in the new life of (the projects) of foundations** Amid all the fragility of communities and the closure of some communities, it is remarkable to see that the Order is currently engaged in five projects of foundations. In Senegal, the community of Sept Fons (France) is engaged in a project of foundation at the request of the abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Keur Mousa. He wanted a greater diversity of Benedictine life in Senegal. Currently, there are eight brothers in Badi (Senegal) and some Senegalese brothers have already made solemn profession in Sept Fons. The community of Sept Fons is asking the Central Commission of June 2024 for official recognition of this project of foundation. (+ in Vietnam)

In Columbia, the community of Humocaró (Venezuela) is working on a project of foundation in El Rosal, north of the capital Bogotá. The sisters have been living in this place for several years and have already set up a good economy. They enjoy the trust and support of the local population. However, the current housing is too small. Two sisters from Esmeraldas have joined this project.

In Nigeria, the community of Awhum in Akokwa has a project up of foundation. Because of the Covid 19 pandemic, this project could not yet be recognized by the Order as an official foundation. It is planned to do so during the 2025 general chapter.

Since 2023, the community of Rawaseneng (Indonesia) has had a foundation project on the island of Kalimantan.

These new projects testify to new life and the willingness of communities to pass on and enculturate the Cistercian charism in a new environment. Here the Holy Spirit is at work in a special way 'in fulfilling the mission of evangelization, in a monastic manner, as the contemplative presence of the Church' (C. 68.1).

As Pope Francis made clear to me during an audience, it testifies to courage that our Order, inspired by the Holy Spirit, took seriously its mission of evangelization in a monastic manner' by having its last two officially recognized foundations take place in Europe. Precisely there, in this most secularized part of the world, Palaçoulo (Portugal) and Munkeby (Norway) became witnesses of the Church's contemplative presence, each in its own way.

Do not all these new Cistercian communities testify to a strong desire, with all kinds of forms of new life and new connections? Which are constantly at risk of breaking and failing. Even in that new life, fragility is always present.

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<sup>20</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato si*, 44.

#### **4. God's Holy Spirit does great things in the complementarity between monks and nuns within the structures of the Order**

Opinions on the document *Cor Orans* vary widely in the Church and among contemplative nuns worldwide. The document unintentionally put great pressure on the unity between monks and nuns in our Order. However, the General Chapter of 2022 showed that *Cor orans* became for us a reason to affirm and even strengthen the complementarity between men and women in our Order. If the family is the natural community where the complementarity between man and woman is fully realized, the Order is increasingly becoming a family within which this complementarity is realized as a visible sign of that invisible mystical body: the Church.

To better understand the work of God's Holy Spirit on this point, I recommend everyone to read and meditate on Pope Francis' catechesis on this point. He says e.g.: *"Experience teaches us: to know oneself well and mature in a harmonious way, man needs reciprocity between man and woman. If this does not occur, one can see the consequences. We are made to listen to each other and mutually help each other. We can say that without mutual deepening of this relationship - in thought and deed, in feeling and work, and also in faith - neither one nor the other can deeply understand what being a man and a woman means.... We have not yet deeply understood what the feminine genius can teach us, what the woman in society and also us can teach: the woman can see things differently, which completes the man's thinking. It is a path to be taken with more creativity and courage."*<sup>21</sup>

Thanks to the Holy Spirit, our Order is walking this path and, since the last General Chapter, for example, we see female superiors acting as Father Immediate of communities of nuns and even of monks. So far, experiences are positive, and we see that these female superiors are exercising their duties with great competence. Their experience is positive but also that of the brothers and sisters entrusted to their vigilant care. Currently, there are 4 female superiors acting as a Father Immediate for 6 community of nuns<sup>22</sup> and 6 female superiors for 8 communities of monks.<sup>23</sup>

We also see that it is not a problem for female superiors to participate fully in commissions for the future or commissions for the suppression of a community. However difficult and vulnerable, the communities of Tre Fontane and Aqua Salvie in Rome are - in my opinion - a prophetic experiment that should count on more support from the Order in terms of manpower (especially from the monks). Especially in this important place in Rome, in the heart of the Church, the witness of the complementarity of monks and nuns is of great importance. In two places in the Order, a sister is now also serving as formator for monks in the initial formation (Tre Fontane – New Melleray). Yet another example of how the Spirit opens new, and surprising paths, which until recently we thought unthinkable and even undesirable.

As a Church and as an Order, we are still at the beginning of this road, and it will require much more creativity and courage from all of us. A road that can only be taken by continuing to listen to each other in dialogue and prayer. A recent study of the Order's statistics shows that with the current decline in both the number of monks and nuns, the Order will have as many monks as nuns by 15 September

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<sup>21</sup> Pope Francis, Audience 15 April 2015.

<sup>22</sup> M. Dominique of Soleilmont for Laval, Nazareth; M. Isabelle of Val d'Igny for Bonneval, Baumgarten; M. Marie Christine of Rivet for Blauvac; M. Anne-Emmanuel of Blauvac for Fons Pacis

<sup>23</sup> M. Brigitte of Tautra for Bethlehem; M. Marie of Glencairn for Mount Melleray, Roscrea, Mellifont; M. Jo of Whiteland for Bolton; M. Katharina of Nazareth for Aiguebelle; M. Pascale of Arnhem for Schiermonnikoog; M. Rebecca of Mississippi for New Melleray<sup>23</sup> Cst. 4

2025 (during next GC). After that date, nuns will be in the majority. A situation not seen since the 13th century. What will this mean for the future of the Order?

**4. God's Holy Spirit is working in an increasing awareness of co-responsibility in the communities.**

The current fragility of communities all around the world has also made us all realize that there is a shared responsibility of all members of a community and of all communities of the Order<sup>23</sup>.

Is it not the work of the Holy Spirit that He is, at this moment, causing all communities to reflect on this theme of co-responsibility? Our structures may be synodal, but do we really make use of them? Precisely in our fragility lies a call to shared responsibility.

The danger of vulnerability is to shut oneself up in one's own world, cutting oneself off from belonging not only to the larger human family, but also to the community of the Church and of the Order. We see (often) this spirit of isolationism not only in small communities but also sometimes in large and vital communities. The latter are vulnerable in their large numbers and the belief that they are better than others. They lock themselves into a world of their own in which the Constitutions of the Order are used at will. This is not the co-responsibility that God's Spirit wants to give to us today as a gift to truly be a visible sign of unity in diversity in the world as the Body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is currently inspiring communities of the Order to reflect on how coresponsibility is lived out in community governance. In this sense, the Abbot General's call to have an economic visitation before the 2025 General Chapter can be understood. Such an economic visitation is not so much a visitation on the financial situation of a community but mainly to gain an insight into the co-responsibility that all in the community have for the economy at the service of the Cistercian charism. Who makes the decisions on the economy? Is there a financial council? Are there limits set by the community on the spending of those responsible? What is the state of accountability? This economic visitation is an aid to making communities more aware of shared responsibility so that our economy is truly at the service of the charism and does not take on a life of its own apart from our vocation.

This shared responsibility, like the complementarity of monks and nuns is based on our baptism. More and more, the Holy Spirit makes us realize that it is not our own will, our profession, our priesthood that is the basis of our monastic life but only baptism. The baptism we share with all our brothers and sisters inside and outside the community. Thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit, we are rediscovering the grace of baptism in this time of the synodal process in the Church. It makes us monks and nuns more convinced that we are on the road together with all the baptized persons. Each of us has our own vocation but all the special gifts that come from the one baptism complement each other and need each other. As contemplatives, we have our mission amid the pilgrim people of God. It is the Holy Spirit who invites us today to rethink our mission in communion with all the baptized persons in the Church for the sake of the world.

In this re-thinking of our mission, we need to hear the voices of everyone. The Holy Spirit is inviting us today in our Order to become more sensitive for the silent voices outside the Western world. One of the fruits of the Synodal Church is that we learn to be more open for each other. It is a challenge, inspired by the Holy Spirit, for the western communities to listen more. But for the others is the challenge, inspired by the Holy Spirit, not to be afraid to speak! Let us not be afraid to listen! Let us not be afraid to speak! For me, here lies a task for the ORIENS region in our Order. Your region is by

nature a collection of a rich diversity in cultures, languages, and origins. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit given to the Church in Asia is its 'sense for interconnectedness of the human community'<sup>24</sup> You can help the Order to be more attentive to this interconnectedness, being relational in unity and diversity by patiently listening to each other.

## Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, as an Order we are also part of the mystical body of Christ. Yes, this mystical body is fragile. The vision of St. Martin of Tours has shown us that fragility belongs essentially to the Church, the body of Christ. Thomas Merton uses the image of the Body of Broken Bones in this context. We see the body of the Risen Lord but with its obvious wound marks. In those wounds, in our fragility, doors to a new future open, inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is the Risen Lord who in and through this vulnerability gives us his Spirit. A Spirit of courage. A Spirit of collaboration. A Spirit of new life! A Spirit of complementarity. A Spirit of coresponsibility.

I am grateful that, as Abbot General, I can experience the work of the Holy Spirit in the vulnerability of the Order. This gives really hope! The Holy Spirit is propelling us towards a deeper and better understanding of our vocation in the present time. Perhaps it is time for us to try again to find words to formulate our mission in the Church and the world today in order to give direction to our lives. To formulate that mission, we need each other! We need the Holy Spirit!

This year during the Easter Vigil, I was particularly struck by the words uttered by the priest when he blesses the Paschal candle, "*Through His holy and glorious wounds, may Christ our Lord guard us and keep us*". During this prayer, he presses into the candle the five gilded grains of incense, symbolizing Christ's five transforming and healing wounds, using them to inscribe the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet in remembrance of the cosmic greatness of the Risen One, which encompasses time and space: "*Christ, yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega, all time belongs to Him*" .... Suddenly I realized that this paschal candle is not only Christ Himself, but this is our Order, fragile in time and space but its flame is still burning, thanks to the Holy Spirit, still giving light in the darkness. Lumen Christi! Deo Gratias!

The Holy Spirit is Lord and He is the Giver of Life. Life we may receive in abundance from Him. Let us not lose our faith in the work of the Holy Spirit! Let us be grateful for that and live from it. May Mary, the Bride of the Holy Spirit, lead us in that gratitude for our present life. May she help us with her intercession to shape the gift of life to the praise and honor of God's name and to the salvation of all Creation.

*All times belong Him! We live in a time full of grace!*

Sujong, 7 May 2024

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<sup>24</sup> Final Document of the Asian Continental Assembly on Synodality, 16 March 2023, 2. "*Through the systems of beliefs, values, and symbols vary from place to place, the interconnectedness of the human community draws the Asian people together. The Asian value of being relational (with God, self, other human beings, and the cosmos) brings with it the unity of the human family and the unity of the peoples of Asia.*"



**APPENDIX C**

**Outline of a financial audit report**  
(FROM AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION  
PRESENTED BY DOM EMMANUEL TO THE CC ONLINE MEETING)

Financial audit  
XX Abbey  
00 April 20xx - 00 April 20xx  
Community Audit Board  
P.  
Brother

**A. Common information**

*1. Introduction*

The purpose of this report is to provide a general overview of the economic and financial situation of the communities, in preparation for the canonical visit that will take place in the x th quarter of 20xx.

The last audit was conducted in October 20xx by Fr.

The audit covers the following points:

1. the Abbey of xx,  
diocese of xx 2.

Monastery of St. xx,

Diocese of xx

Information provided

by:

Xxx Abbott

Xx

x

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Xx

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*2. Notes on the recommendations of the last financial audit in 20xx*

XX Abbey

... (done, partially done, not done)

Xx Monastery

... (done, partially done, not done)

*3. Monastery statistics*

Xx Abbey

00 Solemnly

professed priests 00

Solemnly professed

brothers 0  
Temporarily  
professed brothers.  
0 Novices  
0 Postulants  
0 Aspirants  
The average age of the community is XX  
00 Active monks  
00 Monks in training  
00 Retired monks  
00 Monks outside the community  
00 Full-time  
employees  
00 Part-time  
employees

*4. Audit and control*

The Finance Committee

The Finance Committee meets ...

The members of the Finance Committee are: Abott, Prior, Cellarer, Brother Xx, P.

xx Other economic commissions...

*The Economic Council or the Council of the Superior approved by the conventual chapter defines the maximum amount that officers may spend, without additional authorization: Abbot up to x,000 EUR, Cellarer up to x,000 EUR,*

*Solemn profess up to xx,000 EUR.*

Conventual Chapter from xx.001 EUR.

This was ratified on xx.xx.20xx.

Accounting system used... and by whom.

Internal control The external audit was conducted by... (company name).

B. Legal status

All documents are complete (Incomplete). ...

Legal status of the organization

Xx Abbey

Founding documents:

Legal title/status

Registered as a not-for-profit charity,

Registration number: 000 issued on 00.00.20xx

Tax exemption

documents of

... Ref N°.

SM/00/00/00

Validation period 00.00.20xx to 00.00.20xx

...

Legal status of company or organization

Social institutions

Xx Abbey

All forms of official commercial companies in the country where the monastery is located: N°, Date of registration.

Legal contracts with the diocese and/or other religious congregations Xx Abbey

Contract with the diocese ...

Land ownership documents (title deeds)

Xx Abbey

1. Farm XX n° 00, deed n° 000/20xx,

surface area: 0,00,00

Hectares, Purchase price

\$0.000

...

Water rights

...

Insurance policies...

Retirement policies ...

Medical insurance ...

Financial institution contracts

(including credit cards) and signature policies)

XX Bank

Credit or loan cards ....

Fund management by ....

Testament of the monks

...

Employment contracts

...

Lease contracts

...

Legal disputes

No legal disputes (Legal disputes:

...) Weapons and permits

(firearms permit)

### *C. Finance*

#### 1. Current financial situation

The exchange rate used in this report is 00.00. This is the average rate for 20xx according to ecb.eu. The audit began at monastery xx on 00 April 20xx.

#### TWO-YEAR BALANCE SHEET AND INCOME STATEMENT

Assets	20xx	20xx-1
Fixed assets	0.000 €	0.000 €
Cash and banks	0.000 €	0.000 €
Congregation fund	0.000 €	0.000 €
Foreign purchases	0.000 €	0.000 €
Receivables	0.000 €	0.000 €
	0.000 €	0.000 €
Liabilities	20xx	20xx+1

Capital	0.000 €	0.000 €
Father & Brother Donations	0.000 €	0.000 €
Fund	0.000 €	0.000 €
Liabilities	0.000 €	0.000 €
	0.000 €	0.000 €
Profits/Losses	20xx	20xx-1
Monastery income		
Interest	0.000 €	0.000 €
Pension	0.000 €	0.000 €
General donations	0.000 €	0.000 €
	0.000 €	0.000 €
Monastery expenses		
Abbey economy	0.000 €	0.000 €
Personal expenses	0.000 €	0.000 €
Other expenses	0.000 €	0.000 €
Administration fees	0.000 €	0.000 €
	0.000 €	0.000 €
Total loss/profit	0.000 €	0.000 €
Monastery activities		
Agriculture	0.000 €	0.000 €
Butcher's shop	0.000 €	0.000 €
Other workshops	0.000 €	0.000 €
Utilities	0.000 €	0.000 €
Loss Monastery activities	0.000 €	0.000 €

All figures concerning the monastery's activities are based on the figures ...

## 2 Observations and analysis of financial visits

Xx Abbey

...

Xx Abbey activities

- xx Workshop

...

*D. Financial*

*indicators Expenses*

- Community expenses
- Expenditure on social activities
- expenditure on pastoral activities
- Necessary and future investments and risk management
- other

Income

- Revenue from own operations
- income from donations, pensions / retirements
- income from investments (rents, investments)

Evaluation criteria

- The community's expenses must be covered by the work of the monks.
- Percentage of donations or investment income in overall budget
- Standard of living in relation to the environment, e.g., gross expenditure per monk compared to a teacher's salary, or rather the country's legal minimum wage.
- Long-term evaluation of investments (at time of visit)
- Financial reserves must cover the monastery's expenses for one year.
- Sustainability of income and expenditure - Evaluation of continuing loss activities

E. Report on loans and debts

Xx Abbey

Loans: 00.000 EUR Bad

debts:

...

F. Future financial policies

Annual budget

...

5-year financial plan

...

Master investment plan

...

Title deed (monastery Xx)

All the land on which the monasteries are built.

Annual monastery expenses

Xx Abbey	0.000 EUR	0.000 EUR
----------	-----------	-----------

Losses in all workshops and agriculture (activities)

Xx Abbey	0.000 EUR	0.000 EUR
----------	-----------	-----------

Annual expenditure on social institutions

Xx Abbey	0.000 EUR	0,000 EUR
Financial commitments	0.000 EUR	0.000 EUR
	0.000 EUR	0.000 EUR

We recommend the following amounts for Stable Assets: ...

H. Recommendations

Xx Abbey

...

Xx Monastery

...

I. Concluding remarks. We thank the Abbott ...

J. Signatures

Xx Abbey, Place 00 April 20xx

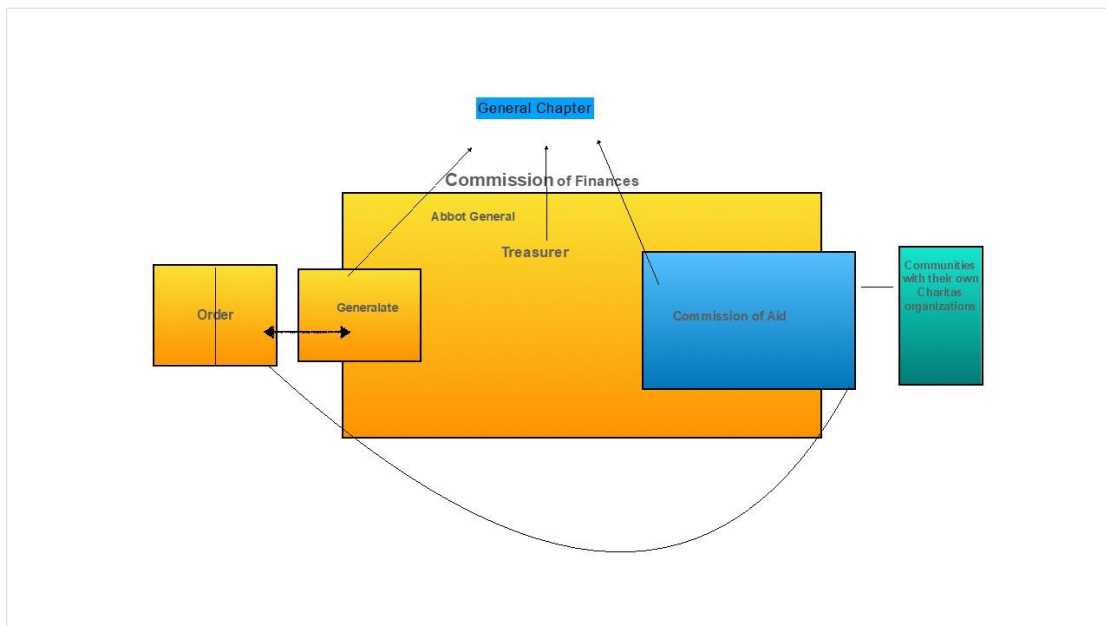
**APPENDIX D**

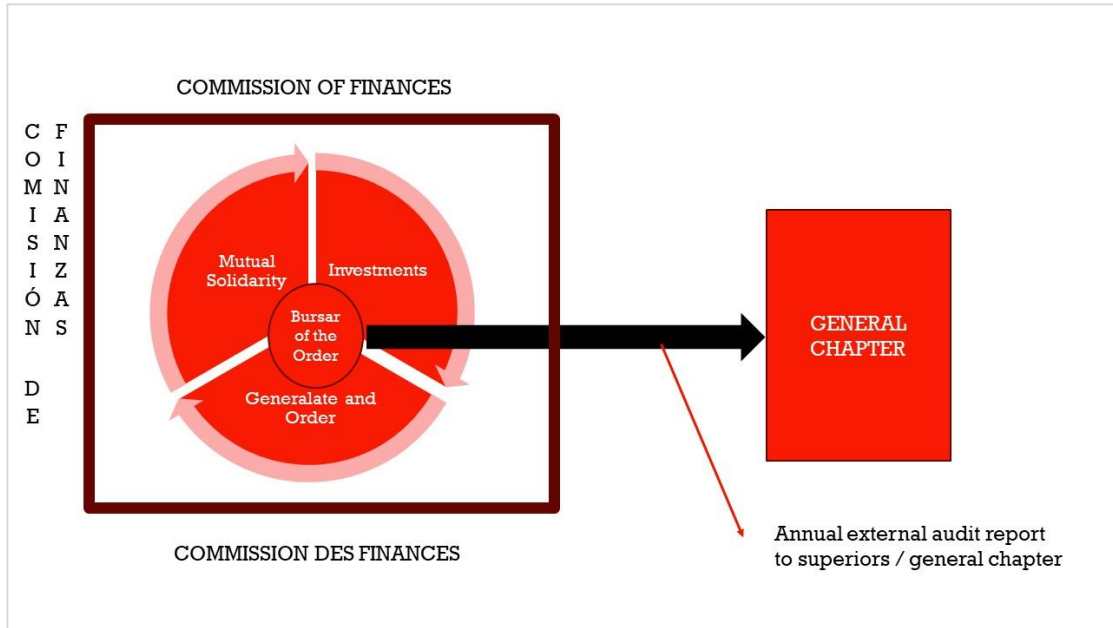
**SLIDES FROM *TOWARDS A RENEWAL OF FINANCIAL ENTITIES* PRESENTED BY THE ABBOT - GENERAL TO ORIENS**

**General Chapter,  
2022/2, vote 76**

- **Vote 76:** We ask the Abbot General and his Council, together with experts, to renew the structure and functioning of the financial entities of the Order (Commission of Aid, Commission of Finance, and the Generalate), in consultation with the members of these entities.
- **Vote 76 :** Nous demandons à l'Abbé Général et à son Conseil, en collaboration avec des experts, de renouveler la structure et le fonctionnement des entités financières de l'Ordre (Commission des Aides, Commission des Finances et Maison Générale), en consultation avec les membres de ces entités.
- **Votación 76:** Pedimos al Abad General y a su Consejo que, junto con expertos, renueven la estructura y el funcionamiento de las entidades financieras de la Orden (Comisión de Ayuda, Comisión de Finanzas y el Generalato), en consulta con los miembros de estas entidades.

PLACET 142
NON PLACET 7
ABSTENTIO 2





- MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION OF FINANCES (9 members)**
- ABBOT GENERAL**
- MEMBERS SUBCOMMISSION INVESTMENTS**  
 Bursar of the Order - (*D. Emmanuel*)  
 Member elected by GC (max. 6 years) - *Dom Steele Tarrawarra (2022-2028)*  
 Member elected by GC (max. 6 years) - *Dom Clement Kokoubou (2022-2028)*
- MEMBERS SUBCOMMISSION GENERALATE / ORDER**  
 Bursar of the Order - (*D. Emmanuel*)  
 Bursar Generalate - (*Br. Javier San Isidro*)  
 Superior of the Generalate - (*Dom Anastasius Lantao*)
- MEMBERS SUBCOMMISSION MUTUAL SOLIDARITY**  
 Bursar of the Order (*D.Emmanuel*)  
 Member elected by GC (max. 6 years) - *M. Pascale Arnhem (2022-2028)*  
 Member elected by GC (max. 6 years) - *D. Pedro Miraflores (2022-2028)*  
 Member elected by GC (max. 6 years) - *M. Kathy Redwoods (2024-2028)*

Bursar of the Order

- Can be a monk or nun, not a superior of the Order
- A member of the Abbot General's Council (preference)
- With the consent of the General Chapter a lay person

- Peut être un moine ou une moniale, mais pas un supérieur de l'Ordre.
- Un(e) membre du Conseil de l'Abbé Général (préférence)
- Avec le consentement du chapitre général, un laïc

- Puede ser un monje o una monja, no un superior de la Orden
- Un miembro del Consejo del Abad General (preferencia)
- Con el consentimiento del Capitulo General un laico



- He/She is appointed by the Abbot General and gives regular account to him
- He/She attends all the meetings of the Commission of Finance and the sub commissions and has active and passive voting right
- He/She is responsible for the annual reports of the sub commissions and the consolidate annual report
- He/She is responsible for the report to the General Chapter
- He/She is responsible for the annual control of an external auditor

- Il est nommé par l'Abbé Général et lui rend compte régulièrement.
- Il assiste à toutes les réunions de la Commission des finances et des sous-commissions et dispose d'un droit de vote actif et passif.
- Il est responsable des rapports annuels des sous-commissions et du rapport annuel consolidé.
- Il est responsable du rapport au chapitre général
- Il est responsable du contrôle annuel d'un auditeur externe.

- Es nombrado por el Abad General y le rinde cuentas regularmente
- Asiste a todas las reuniones de la Comisión de Finanzas y de las subcomisiones y tiene derecho de voto activo y pasivo.
- Es responsable de los informes anuales de las subcomisiones y del informe anual consolidado.
- Es responsable del informe al Capítulo General.
- Es responsable del control anual de un auditor externo.

### Subcommission Investments

- The task of this sub commission is to manage the capital of the Order
- The investments have to be under the management of the bursar of the Order.
- A Statute has to be set up for this sub commission

- La tâche de cette sous-commission est de gérer le capital de l'Ordre
- Les investissements doivent être gérés par l'économe de l'Ordre.
- Un statut doit être établi pour cette sous-commission.

- La tarea de esta subcomisión es gestionar el capital de la Orden
- Las inversiones tienen que estar bajo la gestión del economo de la Orden.
- Hay que establecer un estatuto para esta subcomisión

### Subcommission Order and Generalate

- This sub commission has the duty to manage the ordinary administration of the Order and the Generalate.
- A Statute has to be set up for this sub commission

- Cette sous-commission est chargée de gérer l'administration ordinaire de l'Ordre et du Généralat.
- Un statut doit être établi pour cette sous-commission.

- Esta subcomisión tiene el deber de gestionar la administración ordinaria de la Orden y del Generalato.
- Hay que establecer un Estatuto para esta subcomisión

## Subcommission Order and Generalate

- This sub commission has the duty to manage the ordinary administration of the Order and the Generalate.
- A Statute has to be set up for this sub commission

- Cette sous-commission est chargée de gérer l'administration ordinaire de l'Ordre et du Généralat.
- Un statut doit être établi pour cette sous-commission.

- Esta subcomisión tiene el deber de gestionar la administración ordinaria de la Orden y del Generalato.
- Hay que establecer un Estatuto para esta subcomisión

## Subcommission Mutual Solidarity

- The name Commission of Help has to be changed into Mutual Solidarity because of the confusion with the commissions of help/future of the Statute on the accompaniment of Fragile Communities
- The task of this sub commission is to collect, study, judge and follow up the request from the communities for financial assistance.

- Le nom de la Commission d'Aide doit être changé en Solidarité Mutuelle à cause de la confusion avec les commissions d'aide/future du Statut sur l'accompagnement des Communautés Fragiles.
- La tâche de cette sous-commission est de collecter, d'étudier, de juger et de suivre les demandes d'aide financière des communautés.

- Hay que cambiar el nombre de Comisión de Ayuda por el de Solidaridad Mutua debido a la confusión con las comisiones de ayuda/futuro del Estatuto sobre el acompañamiento de las comunidades frágiles.
- La tarea de esta subcomisión consiste en recoger, estudiar, juzgar y seguir la solicitud de ayuda financiera de las comunidades.

## Subcommission Mutual Solidarity

- The bursar of the Order is the only one who is dealing with the accounts of this subcommission. He/she will transfer the money to the communities, after the approval of the subcommission
- A Statute has to be set up for this sub commission

- L'économe de l'Ordre est le seul à gérer les comptes de cette sous-commission. Il/elle transfère l'argent aux communautés, après approbation de la sous-commission.
- Un statut doit être établi pour cette sous-commission.

- El ecónomo de la Orden es el único que se ocupa de las cuentas de esta subcomisión. Él/ella transferirá el dinero a las comunidades, tras la aprobación de la subcomisión.
- Hay que establecer un estatuto para esta subcomisión

## Subcommission Mutual Solidarity

- Every year the Commission of Finance will decide to give a certain percentage (now: 3%) of the Capital of the Order to the subcommission of Mutual Solidarity.
  - All donations to the subcommission of Mutual Solidarity above 25.000 euro/dollar will go directly to the Capital of the Order, unless a community decides otherwise. .
- Chaque année, la Commission des finances décidera de reverser un certain pourcentage (actuellement : 3%) du capital de l'Ordre à la sous-commission de la solidarité mutuelle.
  - Tous les dons à la sous-commission de la solidarité mutuelle supérieurs à 25.000 euros/dollars iront directement au capital de l'Ordre, sauf si une communauté en décide autrement.
  - Cada año la Comisión de Finanzas decidirá dar un cierto porcentaje (ahora: 3%) del Capital de la Orden a la subcomisión de Solidaridad Mutua.
  - Todas las donaciones a la subcomisión de Solidaridad Mutua superiores a 25.000 euros/dólares irán directamente al Capital de la Orden, a menos que una comunidad decida lo contrario.

## conclusion

- This new structure will take effect from 1 January 2024 ad experimentum
  - The Commission of Finances and the sub-commissions will draft internal statutes to be approved by the abbot general and his council so soon as possible.
  - The General Chapter 2028 will evaluate the new structure.
- Cette nouvelle structure prendra effet à partir du 1er janvier 2024 ad experimentum
  - La Commission des Finances et les sous-commissions rédigeront des statuts internes qui devront être approuvés par l'abbé général et son conseil dans les meilleurs délais.
  - Le Chapitre général 2028 évaluera la nouvelle structure.
  - Esta nueva estructura entrará en vigor el 1 de enero de 2024 ad experimentum.
  - La Comisión de Finanzas y las subcomisiones redactarán estatutos internos que deberán ser aprobados por el abad general y su consejo lo antes posible.
  - El Capítulo General 2028 evaluará la nueva estructura.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Criteria: Commission of Solidarity**

Rome, January 24-25, 2024

- Areas of need that the Commission considers are the following: formation, health care, livelihood, construction (Statute of the Commission of Solidarity, 2.3).
- Opinion of the Father Immediate is to be given in a written letter.
- Inform the Commission if other communities or organizations have been contacted, list who and how much money received so far.
- Follow the Statute on Temporal Administration (27-d) and Constitutions 43-44. Permission of the conventual chapter is needed, depending on the amount of money requested.
- Priority is given to the daily, concrete life of the community.
- Annual requests are possible but not for more than 3 years. After 3 years it will be referred to the Abbot General and his Council, who can refer it to the General Chapter.
- There is a maximum amount of money that can be given for each request. We evaluate this amount each year in terms of how much money has been donated. The ceiling could be more, or it could be less.

#### **Criteria Guiding the Commission's Decisions:**

- Importance is placed on needs of persons over buildings.
- We try to give money in each category: formation, health care, livelihood, construction.
- We don't give loans or pay debts.
- Requests for construction: priority is given for reparation and infrastructure.
- If a community asks a second time for new building construction, less priority will be given to the request unless we have sufficient funds.

## COMMISSION OF SOLIDARITY

FORM FOR REQUESTS FOR AID - *valid as of January 2024*

### A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Elenchus number:

Name and Address of the Community requesting aid:

Father Immediate:

Number of Members in the community:

### B. CONTACT PERSON OF THE MONASTERY

Name and function of the person supervising the project and with whom we will be in contact:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:                   @

### C. CATEGORY OF THE PROJECT:

Formation       Health care       Livelihood       Construction

Brief account of the project:

**D. COST OF THE PROJECT**

1. Total Cost of the project:
  - in local currency:
  - in euros            or US dollars
  
2. Total amount requested from the Commission of Solidarity:

**E. FINANCES**

Finance plan:

- what will be your own contribution?
- loans:
- help:
- donations:

To which houses of the Order have you already asked for money?

Have you contacted other organizations? Which ones?

When do you need the money?

*Complete the following according to the nature of your project.*

**F.1 FORMATION**

1. Which course and where?
  
2. What is the duration of the course?
  
3. How many monks/nuns of your community follow this formation?
  
4. When does this formation start?
  
5. When does this formation end?

**F. 2 health care**

1. What is the reason for asking help?
2. When do you need it?
3. Is this a onetime request?

**F. 3 livelihood**

1. What is the reason for asking help?
2. When do you need it?
3. Is this a onetime request?

**F. 4 CONSTRUCTION**

1. Please add to this form:
  - a detailed description
  
  - Plans
  
  - Photographs
  
  - Estimates or quotations
2. When do you need it?

**G. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS**

*(Please send in with this form the following documents)*

- Letter with the opinion of the Father Immediate
- If necessary, the vote of the conventual chapter (*Cst 43-44*)
- The balance sheets and the profit and loss statement of the Community of the last three years.
- Bank information (see annex)
  
- in case of a construction project the required documentations (*see F. 4*)

**The completed form and all the documents must be sent to:**

**Dom Pedro Barrientos. E-mail: [commission.of.solidarity@gmail.com](mailto:commission.of.solidarity@gmail.com)**

BANK DETAILS ATTACHMENT

Monastery Name:

Elenchus Number

In which currency do you want to receive the money? Euro US Dollar.

- Name and address of your bank account

Name of your bank account = Account holder

- Name and address of your bank:

-IBAN: (International Bank Account Number)

- BIC: (= Bank Identifier Code) SWIFT address

- Correspondent bank, if applicable

In addition, please send us a bank statement.



**APPENDIX F****REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY OF FORMATION**

**Fr. Samuel (Tarrawara)**  
**(English-speaking Sub-Region of ORIENS)**

**1. Total of monks and nuns in formation as of 2 April 2024**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Monastery</b>	<b>Postulants</b>	<b>Novices</b>	<b>Juniors</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.	Gedono	1	5	4	10
2.	Guimaras	1	0	0	1
3.	Kopua	1	1	1	3
4.	Kunnambetta	1	0	0	1
5.	Kurisumala	1	0	0	1
6.	Lamanabi	1	3	2	6
7.	Lantao	1	0	3	4
8.	Macau	0	0	3	3
9.	Matutum	2	1	5	8
10.	Rawaseneng	3	1	1	5
11.	Rosary	1	1	3	5
12.	Sujong	3	0	1	4
13.	Tarrawarra	0	1	2	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>54</b>

The sub-region has 16 postulants, 13 novices and 25 juniors. The total number of monks and nuns in formation is 54. All the monasteries in the sub-region have vocations. With three monasteries, Indonesia has the largest number of people in formation (21 people). In terms of gender, 31 women and 23 men are in formation. However, the age profile information is not available.

**2. Formators Meetings**

In June 2023, we had our first Regional Formators Meeting at Rawaseneng since 2018. All the monasteries in our region were represented. We shared our formation reports and gathered in small groups for discussion for the first few days. Our guest speaker, Fr Yulius Sunardi SCJ presented lectures on safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults.

Matutum will host the Sub-Region (English-speaking) Formators Meeting in September 2024. Mother Giovanna from Matutum will present talks on “Formation as a Means of Revitalization”. Fr Joseph from Tarrawarra will share his thoughts on “Spiritual Accompaniment according to the Monastic Traditions and Contemporary Insights”.

### 3. Joint Formation or Gathering

At the last Regional Formators Meeting, it was suggested that monasteries within the same country or neighbouring countries could organise joint formation for those in formation. Monasteries like Rawaseneng and Gedono have organised such events. Last January, those in formation at Tarrawarra and Kopua participated in a formation week at a Benedictine monastery in Australia.

#### Fr. David (Spencer-Nasu) (Japanese Sub-Region of ORIENS)

Fr. David who was present as interpreter for Japanese – English, gave the following report on the monks/nuns in formation in the Japanese region.

No.	Monastery	Aspirants	Postulants	Novices	Juniors	Total
1	Phare	0	0	0	0	0
2	Tenshien	0	0	1 (J)	0	1
3	Nishinomiya	0	0	0	0	0
4	Imari	1 (J)		1 (J)	3 (1 J, 2 V)	4
5	Nasu	1 (J)		1 (J)	2 (J)	4
6	Oita	0	0	0	0	0
7	Ajimu		1 (V)		3 (V)	4

J = Japanese, V= Vietnamese

The sub-region has 14 members in formation, all women. Of the fourteen, 8 are Japanese and 6 are Vietnamese.