



Conference

Spanish Regional

SANTA MARÍA LA REAL DE OSERA

May 20 - 25 - 2025



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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Abstention
AG	Abbot General
CCSB	Cistercian Congregation of St. Bernard
C. CST.	Constitution, Constitutions
GC	General Chapter
CM	Monastic Commissioner
CC	Central Commission
CCSB	Cistercian Congregation of Saint Bernard
EEC	Spanish Episcopal Conference
CMix	Joint Commissions
RC	Regional Conference/s
CO	Cor Orans
EST	Bylaws
EACF	Statute of Accompaniment to Fragile Communities
FSH	Summa Humanitate Foundation
M.	Mother
MA	Monasterio Asistencial
OCSO	Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance
P.	Father
PI	Immediate Parent
PREM	Regional Monasticate Study Plan
RB	Rule of St. Benedict
RE	Spanish Regional Conference
SF	Training Secretariat

PARTICIPANTS

Superior

P. Roberto de la IGLESIA, President
 M. Pilar GERMÁN, Vice President
 P. Carlos GUTIÉRREZ, Moderator
 M. Isabel RIVERO, Moderator

Monastery

Cardeña
 Tulebras
 Sobrado
 Vico

P. Fco. Javier URÓS
 P. Juan José DOMINGO
 P. Francisco Rafael de PASCUAL (delegate)
 P. Juan M^a de la TORRE
 P. Isidoro M^a ANGUITA
 P. Antonio M^a MARTÍN

La Oliva
 S. Isidro
 Viaceli *Commissariat*
 Oseira
 Huerta
 Zenarruza

M. M^a Carmen ETCHEGARAY
 M. Esther MUÑOZ
 M. Encarnación LLUCH
 M. Stella Maris VENEZIA
 M. Carmen Jesús SERRANO
 M. Ana MONEO
 M. M^a de los Ángeles de FRUTOS, Abbess President of the CCSB

Alloz
 Arévalo
 Benaguacil
 Carrizo
 La Palma
 Armenteira

Delegate

P. José Luis GALIANA
 Sr. M^a TÉLLEZ

Monastery

Cardeña
 Vico

Guest

D. Marco Antonio MALDONADO, GA Board member

Secretariat

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

With a little more than three months to go before the celebration of the General Chapter (= GC) 2025, the Spanish Regional Conference (= RE) has met in its modality of only superiors, plus the two delegates to the GC, in the Monastery of Santa María la Real de Osera from May 20 to 25, 2025.

Roberto de la IGLESIA, from Cardena, president of the RE, in the Eucharist of the first day of the Regional Conference meeting, addressing the participants said that *"... the peace of Jesus is not like the peace of the world. The peace of Jesus, the peace of the Christian does not seek the overcoming of everything bad, the causes of pain... The peace of Jesus is a committed, troubled peace, which has gone through Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. That is why the peace that he leaves us as an inheritance is not the peace of calm, but the peace of struggle, the peace of effort, the peace that overcomes the Evil One, the Prince of this world. The monastic life, as part of the Christian life, is affected by all this. It is not a life that seeks peace, tranquility, but quite the opposite. It is well known the phrase of Alfred of Rieval who said that if you enter a monastery, you enter a battlefield. At the beginning of our work this RE in this community of Osera that welcomes us so generously, Jesus tells us not to be afraid to face reality, to face life, in short, to face whatever we have to face. Because He is with us not in the moments of tranquility but on the contrary, in the difficulties, but in order to move forward and to extend the Kingdom of God in the world. It is to become aware of what the Christian life is and therefore the monastic life. Trying to live a peace as the world gives it, living with calm and tranquility is contrary to the peace that Jesus brings. Obviously all this implies letting ourselves be moved by the Spirit of God, which is the gift of Easter par excellence. We must therefore be open to the Spirit and ask him to enlighten us."*

Roberto de la IGLESIA, from Cardena, began the first session by thanking the community of Osera for hosting the Regional Conference (=RE) and greeting all the participants. He then welcomed M. M^a Carmen ETCHEGARAY, superior of Alloz, after the affiliation of the community to the Monastery of La Palma; and Mr. Marco Antonio MALDONADO, advisor to the Abbot General (=AG).

He also encouraged those present not to lose sight of the vision of the Order in the Church and in the world with a broader and more universal outlook, keeping in mind the digital reality and artificial intelligence, as well as being open to listening to the Holy Spirit.

I. TOPICS SPECIFIC TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER

1. HOUSE REPORTS.

The reports of each of the houses were read in plenary assembly. After the reading of each report, the assembly was given the option to ask for clarifications. Subsequently, the reports were studied in working groups. To facilitate dialogue in the groups, the following questions were posed:

- 1. What points would you highlight, positive and negative, from the reports studied?**
- 2. How do we deal with the challenges we perceive?**
- 3. To bring to light and highlight the good practices of each community.**
- 4. Importance of the superior's leadership and shared leadership.**

The following conclusions were drawn from the dialogue of each group: As for the negative aspects of the reports of the houses, the increasing fragility of the monasteries, to varying degrees, was noted, with a notable increase in the average age, which in most is above seventy years.

There is also a generalized decrease in vocations, and sometimes nonexistence, which is also linked to a general lack of perseverance in the few who enter, so that, even in monasteries where there are vocations, there is not a proportionate vocational relay between those who leave or die and those who enter. According to a survey, only three percent of Spanish girls and 8 percent of Spanish boys have a spiritual restlessness (they practice their faith), so there is no social quarry conducive to the emergence of vocations. Added to this lack is the departure of solemnly professed young people, which aggravates the situation of communities with few members. The result of all this is the overload to which some members of our communities are subjected and this, at times, leads to instability.

On the positive side, it is noted how the monasteries assume their precariousness without discouragement, in a dignified manner, and that it is an opportunity for greater cohesion and community collaboration, sharing poverty in common. Also, there is an effort to improve formation in different ways, and it is noted that within the RE there is a strong collaboration in this sense and there is a mutual openness among the monasteries to collaborate in different ways. Vitality is perceived in our communities: such as fidelity to the life of prayer, interest in the care of the houses, a hopeful attitude, to renew the monastic life and to accept solitude.

There is a real interest in initial and ongoing formation; in the care of the elderly; generosity, despite the precariousness, in continuing to provide services to other houses. The decrease in the number of dependent elderly confreres allows the communities to lead a more balanced life. And the improvement in the functioning of the houses and in observance, order and discipline is evident in the return of an elected superior.

The hard life experiences of some communities have revived and strengthened their members, feeling revalued, having in general a good community atmosphere, without losing the awareness that we still need to grow, open to welcome, to give and to receive.... without forgetting our essence in fidelity to monastic values. Necessity, not infrequently, awakens the ingenuity and economic creativity.

With regard to the perceived challenges, several questions were raised: first of all, how to deal with vocations. There are few, but we cannot simply accept everything that arrives because there are none. Without speaking of rare people or with pathologies and lack of aptitude for a spiritual or community life, most of them are adults in years, who already come with many intellectual, cultural, religious or social influences, which are difficult or impossible to change and that sometimes are refractory to a reception of the charism, because they are already very ready to enter into a formation and assimilation of the different. This raises the problem of the generational relay and the transmission of the charism

to those who enter: the need, the difficulty and the way to do it. Likewise, the question of the incardination of the community in the local church was mentioned, where there is a difference in the way of understanding the ecclesial in the monastic life. On the other hand, the fact of the growing increase of pilgrims in some monasteries with the risk of overflow, and the influences and conditioning that this can bring about, was mentioned. Besides the challenge of the cultivation of a true spiritual life and of a prayerful relationship with God, because the lack in this sense is at the base of many relationship problems. There is no community, nor fraternity without people of prayer, who live a monastic life only on a human level, but who do not have or have lost a true relationship with God. The women's communities are looking for solutions to the lack of chaplains, through the help of diocesan priests and by holding celebrations of the Word. In order to continue caring for the elderly and attending to their frailty, without overburdening the community, external personnel and volunteers are used. We continue to grow in synodality and community inclusion, remembering that fraternity must always be above the law. May our life be coherent in order to be a witness.

As good practices of each community, it was pointed out that they continue to promote integral formation and prayer life; that all the communities take care of their fraternal relationships, in some cases seeking help from an external professional in concrete matters; normally problems are faced, without leaving it to time or inertia to solve them; the older brothers continue to be faithful to the charism, increasing their prayer time, being a light in this needy world, and live in peace; renovations are being carried out to adapt the buildings to current needs.

Finally, and already related to the theme of leadership, a word that some did not like, there is the challenge that in every community there should be at least one head, someone who is capable of ensuring the service of authority. In dealing with leadership, but which is also part of the challenges, the importance of fostering critical thinking in the communities, both at the individual and community level, was highlighted, so that neither the superior nor the community become endogamic, and that it helps to go out of where we are used to, to unite sensibilities, to raise questions, to broaden horizons and to be able to live the charism in an updated way, seeing what is convenient, or not to live.

It was also said that several factors are involved in the way authority is exercised: what the RB and the CST say, the superior's personal way of being (liberal, authoritarian, etc.) which is superimposed on the legislative, and also the reference models that each one has according to the experience he/she has had. The mode of leadership is also a challenge, because the model has changed. In the past, authority was not shared, and today it is understood as service, but this is still a challenge and a challenge.

Also very important is the possibility of shared leadership through the various councils and commissions that meet conveniently. For this reason, the existence of chapter meetings and dialogues is key. When a community does not have an abbot or abbess and there are no chapters or dialogues, there is no community life.

The following vote was taken from all these dialogues and their sharing in the plenary assembly:

VOTE 1: WE WOULD LIKE THE FOLLOWING TEXT TO APPEAR IN THE REGIONAL REPORT: "FOLLOWING THE ENCYCLICAL FRATELLI TUTTI WHICH HELPS US TO REDISCOVER THE CONCEPT OF CHARITY AND THEREFORE OUR CO-RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN THE ORDER (CF. D. BERNARDUS, MUSTARD 2024), THE RE IS OPEN TO COLLABORATION AND MUTUAL ENRICHMENT ON FORMATION WITH OTHER HOUSES OF THE ORDER".

YES: 15

NO: 1

ABS: 1

ACCEPTED PROPOSAL

2. PREPARATION OF THE REGIONAL REPORT FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2025

José Luis GALIANA, from Cardena, and Sr. María TÉLLEZ, from Vico, have been chosen as editors of the Regional Report for GC 2025, who will collect notes during the celebration of the RE and will finalize the report after it. The report will then be sent to the superiors so that they can make the appropriate annotations.

3. NEW ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE ORDER

The subject was presented by Dom Isidoro M^a ANGUITA, from Huerta (see appendix I, page 30 and following).

After the clarification of some doubts of the participants, there were several interventions where he asked for clarification on the different acts of extraordinary administration. Fr. Isidoro indicated that when a community of the Order is going to carry out an act of extraordinary administration that exceeds the amount fixed by the Spanish Episcopal Conference (1,500,000 €), it must ask permission from the Holy See. When the amount of the act of extraordinary administration exceeds 50% (750,000 €) of that amount, permission must be requested from the GC. In the RE of 1974 it was established that when the act of extraordinary administration exceeds 10% (150,000 €) of the amount fixed by the EEC, permission must be requested from the Conventual Chapter. In this case, however, Emmanuel Cottineau, bursar of the Generalate, proposes that it be 20%.

The Statute of the Temporary Administration, in n° 27 paragraph d. indicates that *"...each community should determine in conventual Chapter, the acts of administration for which the advice or the consent of either the conventual chapter or the economic council is required"*. This should be done for amounts not exceeding 10%, which in the case of Spain would be 150,000 €.

4. MINIMUM NUMBER FOR THE CONVENTUAL CHAPTER

The subject is presented by Dom Juan José DOMINGO, from San Isidro (see appendix ii, page 39 and following).

The next step was the clarification of doubts, especially in relation to the loss of the active voice in the Conventual Chapter.

5. TRAINING NEEDS AND REVISION OF THE *RATIO*

Carlos M^a ANTÚNEZ, from Sobrado and Secretary of Formation of the RE.

1. Training survey

In the Central Commission of Chile (2024) an *ad hoc* commission was elected to make a study of formation needs. To begin the study, the commission sent to all the communities two questions (1. Positive things, in the area of formation, in the communities / Regions / Order | 2. What needs to be improved?). Carlos M^a presented the synthesis of the 135 responses that the Commission received (about 75% of the communities of the Order participated in the survey), using a PowerPoint presentation.

2. Updating the *Ratio Institutionis*

The Central Commission of Chile (2024) requested, through a vote, that the General Chapter consider the revision of the *Ratio Institutionis*. In the responses to the "Survey on Formation", several communities also expressed this desire. In February 2025, the Abbot General convoked all the regional secretaries of formation for a meeting in June, at the Monastery of Valserena, to study the text of the *Ratio* and to propose revisions that would serve as a basis for discussion at the General Chapter. In preparation for this meeting, the Abbot General asked the regional secretaries to send a report to the Generalate with the proposed revisions of *the Ratio* by May 15. Fr. Carlos M^a presented the synthesis of the reports of the regional secretaries of formation and made a brief presentation of what some Church documents of recent years say about formation in religious/monastic life, specifically: *Vultum Dei quaerere* (2016), *For new wine new wineskins* (2017), *Cor Orans* (2018) and *The Art of Seeking the Face of God* (2019). These documents contain valuable insights that will certainly be taken into account in the process of revising the *Ratio Institutionis*.

The appropriate clarifications were then made.

6. DURATION OF THE MANDATE IN OUR ORDER

The topic is presented by Dom Juan José DOMINGO, from San Isidro (see appendix iii, page 42 and following).

This was followed by clarification of doubts.

7. IMMEDIATE MOTHERS

M. Ana MONEO, from Armenteira, presents the topic (see Working document for GC 2025 Immediate Mothers).¹

This was followed by clarification of doubts.

8. PAPAL RESCRIPT

Dom Isidoro M^a ANGUITA, from Huerta, presents the subject (see appendix iv, page 49 and following).

This was followed by the clarification of doubts. Fr. Juan José DOMINGO, of San Isidro explained the procedure and the necessary documentation to provide in the case that the elected as abbot does not want to be ordained priest. Pointing out that the most delicate point is that the non-priest superior, not being able to exercise as ordinary of his monks, the functions of ordinary will have to be done by another one who does have the functions to be able to act as ordinary. Even so he does not see difficulty in that there are abbots who are not priests.

9. REDISTRIBUTION OF REGIONS

The subject was introduced by Dom Marco Antonio MALDONADO, GA Counselor (see Annex V, p. 55 et seq.).

This was followed by the clarification of doubts. The debate revolved around the possibility of joining the RE to other regions. It was noted that the lack of knowledge of other languages and cultural differences could make such a union quite difficult. It was also pointed out that the Regional Conferences are basically a pastoral meeting and therefore do not have juridical competencies. If it is a pastoral aid, it is normal that the closest ones, due to their cultural homogeneity, collaborate. Another element that would generate more difficulty would be the creation of more structures.

10. PLACE OF THE EUCHARIST IN OUR LIFE

M. Pilar GERMÁN, of Tulebras, presents the topic (see Working Document for GC 2025 The Daily Celebration of the Eucharist in our Order, in the present context).²

Then, the clarification of doubts proceeded. In the dialogue, it was noted the growing difficulty, which will increase with the passage of time, for the feminine communities to have a chaplain of the Order who can attend to the pastoral needs of the nuns.

¹ Consult in the private area of www.ocso.org

² Consult in the private area of www.ocso.org

11. HARMONIZATION OF OUR CONSTITUTIONS

Dom Isidoro M^a ANGUITA, from Huerta, presents the subject (see appendix vi, page 59 and following).

This was followed by clarification of doubts.

II. ISSUES SPECIFIC TO THE RE

1. ELECTIONS OF THE RE.

The following have been selected:

COORDINATION COMMITTEE:

MODERATOR: M. Isabel RIVERO, from Vico, until the NOE 2027

TRAINING SECRETARIAT:

SECRETARY OF FORMATION: Sr. M^a Ángeles OSÉS, of Armenteira, until the RE of 2027.

LITURGY COMMISSION:

COORDINATING ABBESS: M. Ana MONEO, of Armenteira

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

MEMBERS: Fr. César MAÑUECO, from Oseira

Sr. Lourdes ÁLAVA, of Armenteira

CCSB MEMBER: Sr. Olga Celina, from Benavente (proposed by M. Angelines de FRUTOS, Abbess President of the CCSB).

SINGING COMMISSION:

COORDINATING ABBESS: M. Encarnación LLUCH, from Benaguacil

Brother Joaquín LÓPEZ, of San Isidro

Bro. Rafael ESCOBAR, of Sobrado

Brother José M^a MANZANO, of Huerta

M^a Isabel GALLEGRO, from San Clemente (Seville) (At the proposal of M. Angelines de FRUTOS, Abbess President of the CCSB).

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

PUBLICATIONS COMMISSION AND *CISTERCIUM*:

COORDINATING ABBESS: M. Isabel RIVERO, de Vico

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

VOCAL MALE: Fr. Enrique TRIGUEROS, of San Isidro

FEMALE VOCAL MEMBER: Sr. María TELLEZ, from VICO

VOCAL CCSB: Sr. Rocío LUQUE, from Villamayor (proposed by M. Angelines de FRUTOS, Abbess President of the CCSB).

DIRECTOR OF *CISTERCIUM*: MR. Antonio GARCIA

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

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

2. REPORTS OF THE COORDINATING ABBOTS AND ABBESSES.

Training Secretariat

The report was presented by Dom Isidoro M^a ANGUITA, from Huerta.

Report for the Regional Conference : 20-25 May 2025 : Oseira

Training Secretariat

The Formation Secretariat is made up of the secretary, Carlos Maria, from Sobrado, and the members: Rosa Ana, from San Bernardo de Burgos, Christian, from San Isidro, and Maritza, from Tulebras.

Since the last Regional Conference, the Secretariat held its annual meeting on July 7 and 8, 2024, in San Isidro, where we welcomed Maritza, a new member, and Isidoro, the new abbot coordinator of formation, both elected at the Regional Conference of Las Huelgas in March 2024.

Since the Abbot General summoned the regional formation secretaries to begin the process of revising the *Ratio Institutionis* and asked them for a report on this topic, the Formation Secretariat held an online meeting on March 15, 2025 to share their vision of the *Ratio*. For this meeting we invited Maria Fernanda, novice mistress of the Internovitiate.

In the Central Commission of Chile (2024), Carlos Maria was elected member of an *ad hoc* commission to study the formation needs of the Order and to clarify the role of the Central Secretary of Formation. Last January, the Abbot General communicated to the Order that he had accepted the resignation of the Central Secretary of Formation and, as a temporary solution, appointed the *ad hoc* commission as the commission responsible for formation and Dom Marco Antonio, his advisor, to head the commission.

CEM (Center for the Study of the Monasticate)

Since the last Regional Conference, three workshops have been held: in La Oliva (April 2024), in Huerta (October 2024) and in Las Huelgas (May 2025). The number of students continues to fall. In this last course, which ended on May 15, 20 students participated, although 22 are enrolled: 17 nuns (15 from the CCSB and 2 from the OCSO) and 5 monks (OCSO). As a whole, the present group of students is less prepared for this level of studies. There are some students who have difficulties in understanding the subjects. Even so, in general, they show interest in the classes and some of them make an effort to present their work. There are 6 students who do not present work or hardly present any, although not all of them are enrolled as listeners. The atmosphere among the students is good: there is a good relationship and a spirit of collaboration.

As of October 2023 we are adding two online classes to each core subject, which should function as tutorials. They require prior preparation on the part of the students so that they can submit questions, doubts or ask the professor for clarification. There is not always a good participation in these classes.

Last January a student took the exam for the Bachelor of Theology and failed. She dedicated herself to preparing for the exam, had no difficulty with the written test, but was blocked in the oral test. She is encouraged to retake the exam.

Novice masters' course

Culture of good treatment and prevention of abuses in formation: Practice good zeal with the most ardent love (RB 72,3) - was the theme of the course for masters of novices of 2024, given by Antonio Carrón de la Torre, OAR, professor of the Institute of Anthropology of the Gregorian University, from July 1 to 6, in the monastery of San Isidro.

Course program: Culture of good treatment in community contexts; Risk and protective factors to prevent personal and institutional vulnerabilities; The challenge of abuse of conscience and spiritual accompaniment; Stages of the Church's response to the abuse crisis and future challenges; The prevention of digital abuse in consecrated life.

Nineteen monks and nuns participated: 9 from the OCSO, 6 from the CCSB and 4 from the OSB. In addition to the speaker's presentations, there was ample time for group sharing and plenary dialogue. The evaluation was very positive.

Ongoing community training (online)

Continuing the training on the **Cistercian heritage**, in November and December 2024, Roberto, Abbot of Cardeña, gave an introductory course on St. Elredo of Rieval. He presented the biography of Elredo and introduced us to the main works of the author.

In addition to the OCSO and the CCSB, some communities of REMILA and the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Bernard of Castile of the Cistercian Order participated. All the communities have access to the videos of the sessions and some attended the training on tape.

Ana Laura, from Hinojo, has already agreed to give us a course on St. Gertrude. The program has not yet been defined.

Since the formation of the novice masters aroused a lot of interest and the topic of abuse prevention and increased care in community relationships is a central point of formation for all monks and nuns, the Secretariat of Formation decided to invite Antonio Carrón de la Torre, OAR, to give an online formation open to the participation of all the members of the communities, under the title: "**Caring and taking care of ourselves in community life**". During 4 sessions of 2 hours each, in the month of March 2025, the speaker presented the following topics: Culture of good treatment in our life and mission; Power, authority, obedience in Consecrated Life; The culture of prevention in the Church; The impact of digital life in Consecrated Life.

The videos are available and the respective links were sent to all communities.

Health care training (online)

In May 2024 we held a Training in Psychogeriatrics: *Course on mental disorders in the elderly*. This training was developed within the scope of an agreement between the RE and the Sisters Hospitallers of the Province of Spain and was coordinated by Drs. Manuel Martín and Manuel Sánchez, both psychiatrists working in Sisters Hospitallers' Centers.

Eight topics were covered in 2-hour sessions: Mental symptoms in old age: their importance and how to recognize them; Cognitive impairment and dementias: the reality of the problem, how it is detected, how it evolves; Cognitive impairment and dementias: how they are treated, how they are cared for; Mood disorders: depression, bipolar disorder. The problem of suicide; Anxiety and sleep disorders; Thought disorders: psychosis, schizophrenia, paranoia; Difficult personalities: personality disorders in old age; Pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments. The role of the caregiver.

In addition to the communities of the RE and the CCSB, the course had a wide participation of other communities of contemplative life: Carmelite, Augustinian, Benedictine, Poor Clare, Dominican, among others. In total, about 60 communities participated. The videos are available and were shared with the communities.

Meeting of Regional Training Secretaries

The Central Commission of Chile (2024) has requested with a vote that the General Chapter of 2025 put the revision of the *Ratio Institutionis* on the agenda. The Abbot General convoked the regional formation secretaries for a meeting to study the text of the *Ratio* and propose revisions that will serve as a basis for discussion at the General Chapter. The meeting will take place at the Abbey of Valserena from June 13-20, 2025.

This was followed by the clarification of some doubts. It was pointed out the perplexity of some students regarding certain professors selected to teach the subjects and there was a discussion on the need to take a level exam before access to the PREM. Subsequently, the following votes were taken:

VOTE 3: WE WOULD LIKE THERE TO BE A TEST TO EVALUATE THE STUDENTS' ABILITY TO TAKE THE PREM.

YES: 16 NO: 0 ABS: 1 **ACCEPTED PROPOSAL**

VOTE 4: WE WISH THE TEST REFERRED TO IN THE PREVIOUS VOTE TO CONSIST OF THE COMPREHENSION OF A TEXT IN SPANISH.

YES: 15 NO: 0 ABS: 2 **ACCEPTED PROPOSAL**

2.2. Liturgy Commission.

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

LITURGY COMMISSION

Members:

H. Presen Lite. President of the Liturgy Commission.

H. Lourdes Álava. Vocal.

H. Olga Celina Orellana. Vocal.

P. Cesar Mañueco. Vocal.

Guest: Fr. José Luis Galiana.

From June 4 to 7, 2024 the members of the Liturgy Commission met in the monastery of Cardeña. In the SR of Las Huelgas (March 2024) Fr. Cesar de Oseira entered as a member, taking the place of Fr.

After the appropriate greetings and introductions, Fr. Cesar was updated on the work done and the work in progress; the state of the missal and the comments of the Abbot General in the last RE on the subject.

The commission has a "cloud" linked to its e-mail where the work of the last 12 years and some materials recovered from before are deposited, as well as various liturgical materials, links to courses... available to the communities (even if no one asks us for them).

In parallel to the Missal "on hold", the commission began working on the improvement and completion of the book: LITURGY OF THE HOURS OF THE CISTERTIAN HOLY DAYS. The readings that we are doing of the last Blessed of the Order were provided, often, with urgency, they are the ones that we are all using normally, but they can be improved and expanded giving more options for each celebration, just as those already existing in that book, which can be enriched.

In particular we find a homily of Dom Erik Varden on Blessed Cyprian Tansi preached in the abbey of Gethsemani, for whose use we asked his permission, and he answered us in a few minutes affirmatively and very grateful for the fact. It has already been translated and will soon be available to the houses. We also worked on Blessed Gabriella, St. Raphael, the Martyrs of Algeria... We will take the opportunity to review this book in general.

Friday 7th was spent in a "practical" ceremony, participating in the Eucharist and procession of the Curpilllos, a local feast of Burgos, which is celebrated in the Monastery and neighborhood of Huelgas, and then sharing a table and a pleasant after-dinner conversation with the community. That same afternoon some of them left for their monasteries.

We thank the brothers of Cardeña for their fraternal welcome.

Then, some doubts were clarified. A question was asked about the actual status of the approval process of the Cistercian Missal by the Dicastery of Divine Worship. Regarding the section on the use of readings, from current authors, for the second nocturnal, it was indicated that these should be taken from the works of the Fathers of the Church, or hagiographic (history of the lives of the saints) or from some ecclesiastical writers according to number 64 of the General Ordination of the Liturgy of the Hours. Subsequently the following vow was taken:

VOTE 2: WE WISH THAT A MEMBER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO EXPEDITE THE APPROVAL OF THE CISTERCIAN MISSAL BY THE HOLY SEE.

SI: 17 NO: 0 ABS: 0 UNANIMOUS

2.3. Music Commission

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

REPORT OF THE MUSIC COMMISSION OF THE RE

The Music Commission continues with the work of musicalization of the entrance and communion antiphons of the Missal, as we already mentioned in the minutes of 2024, since in 2019 the Music Commission finished the work of composition of the elements of the Liturgy of the Hours.

In August 2017, it was determined to set these entrance and communion antiphons of the Missal to music, taking up the initiative of the commission already expressed at the meeting held in San Pedro de Cardena in 2007.

This work began in 2022. We have already set to music the Sundays of Advent and the solemnities and feasts of Christmas with the saints of this season. Last year we composed Ash Wednesday and the Sundays of Lent and Holy Week.

This year, in June, we will gather, God willing, to see Easter and the Solemnities of the Lord in Ordinary Time.

The entrance and communion antiphons already sung in some monasteries are being added to the new compositions, since only a few words have been changed by the new translation. In most of the antiphons, two versions are being left for the communities to choose the one that best suits their possibilities.

This material is completely optional, since it is possible to sing the text of the Missal or any other chant.

It is a desire of the commission to musicalize the strong times, solemnities and feasts, which we hope to carry out even with the limitation that we have. At the moment we are 4 members and we are grateful for the generous collaboration of Fr. Juan José Domingo who continues to contribute compositions.

For the time being, nothing has been delivered to the communities, as we are waiting to finish the work in order to make a PDF book and not send loose files that end up getting lost.

Since we meet once a year, we hope that in two or three more meetings we will have everything finished. It remains to be decided if we will also musicalize the antiphons of Ordinary Time.

Appropriate clarifications are made at the assembly.

2.4. Publications and *Cistercian Publications Commission*

The report was presented by M. Isabel RIVERO, from Vico.

The Cistercian Library-Publications Commission met on August 28, 2024 at the Monastery of San Pedro de Cardena, in the presence of Sr. Maria from the Monastery of Our Lady of Vico, Bro. Ismael from the Monastery of San Pedro de Cardena as a guest, Sr. Rocío from the Monastery of Villamayor as a member of the CCSB, Fr. Enrique from the Monastery of San Isidro de Dueñas and Bro. Miguel María from the same Monastery of San Isidro de Dueñas. At this meeting we took stock of the work and the forthcoming publications.

During this time, as a novelty, we must point out the presentations of books that we have made on the initiative of the Fonte Group Publishing House, formerly called Monte Carmelo. Presentations were made of the books by Cardinal Bona, *Guide to Heaven*; by Michael Casey, *Strangers to the City* and by Erik Varden, *On Christian Conversion*.

We have met again in the Monastery of San Isidro de Dueñas on March 31, 2025 the whole Commission of Publications, so much the Magazine Cistercium as the Cistercian Library, being present Antonio García Flores, director of the Magazine; Brother Joaquín of the Monastery of San Isidro de Dueñas, as editor; Brother Guillermo of the Monastery of San Pedro de Cardena, as administrator of Cistercium. Also present were the members of the Cistercian Library: Sister María from the Monastery of Our Lady of Vico; Sister Rocío from the Monastery of Villamayor de los Montes, as member of the CCSB; Father Enrique Trigueros from the Monastery of San Isidro de Dueñas; Brother Miguel María from the same Monastery. This commission was presided over by M. Isabel of the Monastery of Our Lady of Vico, whom we thank for her presence and interest.

The Revista Cistercium will present its own minutes, independent of this one, which will strictly adhere to the Cistercian Library.

First we took stock of what needs to be published and it is either ready or in preparation:

- Sermons of St. Elredo, translated by Fr. Thomas, which will be published before the summer.
- For autumn we are preparing the edition of the book of The Cistercians of Guido Cariboni. A very good book where the evolution of the Order in the first two centuries can be seen, especially in internal juridical matters and the composition of the General Chapter.
- Enrique is working on it. There have been many hands involved in this work and this, rather than lightening the load, makes the final writing heavier and more complex.
- Sister Rocio de Villamayor is preparing and finalizing a biography of Mother Angelica de Port-Royal, a very interesting biography about one of the most famous and controversial characters of our Order.
- Dom Bernardo Olivera has given us a very practical work-guide to help us read William of Saint-Thierry, we have no objection to it, only the temporary one, it will have to wait, at least, until 2027.
- We continue to work with Galand de Reigny, we have two works translated by two different friars and a diversity also in the success of the translation. We have entrusted

the revision, correction and preparation of the edition to the brother of Sister Maria de Vico. He is a retired Latin teacher and is willing to collaborate free of charge.

- Salvador Sandoval continues to work with the works of Cardinal Bona, he has four small works in progress and they will be published two by two.
- Roberto de Cardeña is translating a book on *Lectio Divina* by Michael Casey. Due to contracts with the publisher, this book, as soon as it is translated and corrected, will be published before the previously established order.
- We are going to commission a layman who frequents our guest houses and is well known to Mother Augusta, José Antonio Elizondo, to translate a biography of Fr. Romano Botegal of the Monastery of Tre Fontane and hermit, who is currently in the process of beatification.
- We also have translated by Father Mariano Ballano the doctoral thesis of Michael Casey on St. Bernard, which remains in the queue of work to be edited.

We know that this order is merely a scheme susceptible to many changes according to the eventualities and urgencies that arise during these months. They are merely orientative to know which direction we are taking.

We have made a reflection on the presentations of these last months, in general we believe that it is better to prepare a delayed interview with different characters; and with the help of a specialist friend in these areas, prepare a kind of documentary and present it both on YouTube and in QR code.

We also regretted that after so many corrections and re-readings some books come out with errors that have been corrected in the drafts and have not been registered in the last hand, which is the work of the publisher. We have spoken about this with Fr. Oscar (O.C.D.) and he has explained to us the difficulty he has with the personnel. For our part we are going to do everything possible to avoid this, making as many revisions as possible while working with the WORD format, before being transferred to PDF where only the printer has access to the changes.

We thank you for your trust and are open to any collaboration and suggestions. We entrust ourselves to your prayers and pastoral care.

CISTERCIUM MAGAZINE

The following matters were discussed:

- Editorial board.

As we pointed out in the presentation to the meeting of the RE held in Tulebras in 2022, one of the objectives of the new editorial team was that all members of the Cistercian family should be represented, and today we can say that we have achieved this:

- OCSO: Carlos M^a Antunes (Sobrado) and Francisco Rivera (Huerta).
- CCSB: M^a Fernanda Solís and Yurani L. Garnica (Benavente).
- O. Cist: Bernat Forcá (Poblet).
- Congregation of Castile: M^a de las Nieves Heredia (Huelgas de Valladolid)

On the other hand, on the part of the Benedictine family, we have the help of M. Ernestina Álvarez, of the Carvajalas of León. Ernestina Alvarez, of the Carvajalas of Leon.

In addition to these brothers and sisters, representatives from the academic world (University of Santiago de Compostela, University of León, Autonomous University of Barcelona and Le Mans Université) are also participating.

All of them are of great help not only in reading and evaluating the articles we receive, but also some of them show their availability and generosity by writing articles or reviewing books.

- New sections.

In the first meetings held by the team, we raised the possibility of introducing some permanent sections, in addition to the classic section for articles, which we now call 'Studies'. There are two of them:

- **Patrimonio Cisterciense**, to present different aspects of Cistercian history through or from the image of a piece of the Order's heritage in Spain, preferably from 'living' monasteries. So far we have published -I also include the issue coming out at the end of June- three:

- Arcón de Carrizo (preserved in the Diocesan and Cathedral Museum of Astorga).

- Medieval stained glass windows in Spanish Cistercian monasteries, including those preserved in Las Huelgas de Burgos.

- Foundational scenes in the royal tombs of Las Huelgas de Burgos and Huelgas de Valladolid.

These three works have been carried out by two members of the Editorial Board and by the editor of the magazine, and in the last two we have had the help of both communities, who opened the doors of their monasteries and gave us all the facilities to take the necessary photographs.

In this sense, we believe that the collaboration of the different monasteries that conserve the pieces to be studied is absolutely necessary. As we are aware of the difficulties encountered by some researchers or scholars in gaining access to the cloister and being able to take photographs of the objects, we thought that perhaps if the members of the editorial team (the director, either alone or accompanied by one of the three monks who make up the team) took the photographs, the communities might feel more comfortable giving access to a monk of the Order than to someone "from outside".

- **Cistercian Archives.** We wanted to recover a tradition of the magazine; the publication of important documentary sources for the study of the Order as a whole or of a monastery in particular. The transcriptions of the documents will always be paleographic, following some norms that we have elaborated from the Editorial Board, and adaptations or updates to contemporary Spanish will not be accepted, in such a way that they can serve as a base for historical, artistic, etc. studies.

The next issue will include a paper dedicated to the archivists of the Congregation of Castile, prepared by a member of the editorial board.

- New cover.

The different changes that we have introduced in the interior of the magazine, were orphaned if we did not face other changes in its exterior. We decided that it was necessary to revise the cover model and after studying all the designs that Cistercium has had throughout its history, as well as those of other magazines of the Order and others of similar character, we have chosen to simplify the design to the maximum and, in addition, to maintain always the same, in such a way that it is easily identifiable.

A cream color has been chosen for the background, similar to that of a cowl. On the front side only the name of the magazine will appear, which recovers the original spelling - CISTERCIUM- in dark maroon, the names of the three main subjects it deals with -history, art and spirituality- in brown, and the number, year and months, also in brown. Only the Order's coat of arms will appear on the back as a watermark.

All the participants in the meeting gave their opinion and, finally, their approval to this new design.

- New website.

The possibility of renewing the design of the web page and adapting some parts to the new cover design was raised.

Also discussed was the need for both the director and the administrator of Cistercium to be able to incorporate news, images, etc. themselves, without having to resort to the person who is currently in charge of this.

More work needs to be done on this point.

- Price of the magazine.

Despite the increase in the price of paper, it was decided to maintain the price of the magazine, both for the new issues and for those of recent years.

If someone asks us for back issues or single articles in pdf, we will not give them for free, as doing this would be like devaluing the magazine, but we will be able to make some special price.

- Publication of the proceedings of the Colloquium on the martyrs of Algeria held in early December 2023 at the University of Comillas in Madrid, in **the number 283 (July-December 2024)**. Thanks to the collaboration of the scientific committee *Les écrits de Tibhirine*, we have had the good fortune to publish all the papers in Spanish.

We firmly believe that it will become an obligatory reference work for all those who wish to approach the study of these martyrs, and especially of the seven brothers of Tibhirine.

- Need for monasteries to get involved and collaborate with the journal.

This is by no means a new point. Although it has been addressed on previous occasions, we believe it is necessary that:

- The monks and nuns who are part of the Editorial Board should participate more actively and, if they cannot write articles or reviews, at least find out who can do them or indicate which books they think would be good to review.
- Those in charge of choosing the readings for the refectory can encourage the reading of the magazine in their communities by choosing articles that may be of interest to all, that have been written by one of their brothers or sisters or that deal with topics related to the history and art of their monasteries.
- We will advertise Cistercium in the monastery stores. Taking advantage of the change of covers we are going to prepare an advertisement sheet for the magazine as well as for the collection 'Cistercian Library' so that tourists or people who come to the stores to buy pasta, wine, cheese, porcelain, etc., can see that the Order also publishes books and magazines.
- The brothers and sisters of the Order should write articles on spirituality. It is not a question of writing novel and spectacular works of research, but that they can collaborate in the permanent formation of the communities and nourish the readers spiritually in a simple way.

One option that we believe is feasible is, for example, that abbots and abbesses convert into articles the monastic conferences and talks they give in their communities, and the same goes for those brothers and sisters who give spiritual exercises both inside and outside their houses. Juan Maria de la Torre will publish in the next issue a synthesis of his work on Cistercian anthropology and its expression in the architecture of the monasteries, and Fr. Enrique Trigueros is preparing an article based on some spiritual exercises he has recently given. We trust that other superiors will also be encouraged to collaborate with us.

Finally, we request that the different communities facilitate access to their monasteries to the members of the editorial team to take photographs of the rooms and pieces that they preserve, as well as to their archives, in order to be able to nourish the two new sections: Cistercian Archives and Cistercian Heritage.

Appropriate clarifications are made at the assembly.

2.5. ASSISTANCE MONASTERY

The report was presented by Dom Isidoro M^a ANGUITA, from Huerta.

ASSISTANCE MONASTERY REPORT

There are currently 25 people in the Monasterio Asistencial, with an average age of 85.75 years (not counting Miguel Ángel).

Since the last RE - a year ago - there have been two deaths: Fr. Agustin (Huerta) and Sr. Socorro (Cistercian). Sister Claire also left as novice mistress at the Nazareth monastery. Fco. Rafael as chaplain, Sr. Agripina (Benaguacil), Fr. Jesús (Zenarruza) and soon Sr. Joanna (Arnhem... USA) will arrive.

There is a good atmosphere in the house and the residents are well cared for. M. Ana takes care of the internal dynamics of the community and Brother Miguel Ángel of the material management. Until February 1 we were also handling all the management of the geroculturists, but the complexity of work in various areas (legal, accounting, management, coordination, etc.) has prompted us to seek greater external support, which has been done with the Summa Humanitate Foundation (=FSH), as the RE and the CCSB have already been informed in the online meeting we had a few months ago. Before we could not think about any of this because we did not have enough income to be able to even evaluate this solution. Today the MA cannot be maintained only with the pensions received, because in the last years the salaries have increased by 60% and the staff has increased. But with the small monthly contribution of some monasteries (6,200 euros per month) and the aid for dependency that we have obtained (3,136 euros per month), which we hope will increase at least twice as much since we are associated with a company that manages residences (FSH), we hope to be able to continue to move forward, but everything is very tight. For this reason we continue to remind you that any donation will be well received. To give you an idea, at the moment we only have about 50,000 euros in the bank and we have to pay FSH 25,000 euros monthly, in addition to the rest of the ordinary expenses.

FSH is an entity created to assist in the care of the elderly in the religious and priestly spheres, among other areas. It currently manages some 80 religious and priestly residences in Spain. Behind it are members of the Communion and Liberation movement.

With the approval of the RE and the CCSB (online meeting of January 9, 2025) we have signed with them a contract for one year renewable, according to which we subrogate all the employees, except the gardener, thus ceasing to be employees of the MA to belong to the FSH. They carry out all the labor and administrative management, while we maintain the housekeeping of the house. It has meant a greater increase in economic expenditure (25,000 euros per month without counting the extras), but it has taken a great weight off our shoulders and the work of the geroculturists is better managed. This means that we will always be financially tight and in need of outside help, at least until we achieve a total increase in dependency assistance.

Although the FSH carries out all labor management, it acts in close relationship with the MA managers, jointly making decisions that impact the community. A professional nurse has been hired and is present five days a week. She is the one who performs the ordinary medical care, takes care of the first aid kit, medical appointments, etc., and is the coordinator of all the geroculturists, making the work charts and supervising their

performance. There is also an area manager who brings together various residences and supervises monthly the work progress of the M.A. There is another manager at the national level. Likewise, they have a global structure for all the residences with legal, management, HR and personnel selection departments, social work for dependency processing, occupational risk prevention, etc. They also provide guidance on dietetics, safety, ensure the training of employees, etc.

The contract signed with FSH only covers the ordinary labor scope, but the MA must assume the extras for dismissals, salary increases, absenteeism, cleaning and laundry supplies and products, as well as food and catering, repairs, etc.

Appropriate clarifications are made at the assembly.

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

José Luis GALIANA, of Cardena, presented the report.

REPORT COMMISSION FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE CHARISM

Members: Fr. José Luis Galiana.

H. Rafael Escobar.

H. Melissa Restrepo.

H. Paula Tellez.

Guest: Br. Guillermo José Imbert.

On June 17 - 19, 2024, after several attempts and changes of dates, the members of the Commission for the Transmission of the Charism in the monastery of Cardena. Sister Paula Téllez excused her absence due to a positive case of covid.

After the appropriate greetings and introductions, we took the pulse of the current situation of the commission, the road travelled and the actions to be taken in the near future.

P. Roberto, Abbot of Cardena and President of the RE commented on what was expected of this commission as discussed at the last RE.

Clarifying the name and mission of this commission was a necessary first step.

We share material that had been collected, as discussed in the RE of Las Huelgas (March 24).

There was talk of preparing 'something' that would reach the communities... calendar, prayer, bookmarks... the WEB and the presence in social networks...

We commented on the Congress of Vocations (Madrid, February 2025) Materials, prayers, celebrations, possibility of attendance... We began to work on the "Work Cards"... In a second telematic meeting at the end of July we continued with the work on the "Work Cards".

The result was sent in time to the organization of the congress with the proposal that the members of the Commission be invited to the meeting, as had been done with other congregations of active life. This proposal became a personal invitation to some abbots and abbesses, who later declined the invitation. So it was neither the Commission nor (all) those invited.

At Christmas, material was sent to the communities with a letter of request... to which there was never any response from any house... this is not very encouraging. We remain at your disposal: sercisterciensecomision@gmail.com

The appropriate clarifications were then made.

3. ECONOMICS OF THE RE

ECONOMY OF THE RE

Guillermo de Cardena, presented to the Assembly the economic situation of the Spanish Cistercian Regional Conference for the last fiscal year 2024, focusing his explanation on five areas: **FINANCIAL SITUATION, RE, CISTERCIUM, CISTERCIENSE LIBRARY** and **B.A.C.**, graphically summarizing everything in an **OVERALL RESULT**.

Although the overall result shows a slight negative balance, this is nothing more than the recovery of courses, both face-to-face and on-line, and thus compensates for all the part collected and not used after the pandemic, which, although the fee was not collected in the two subsequent years, the money collected in this field was not "spent" either. This indicates that the RE currently has a good fund to pay for courses and other occasional expenses, whether training or not, without any problem and with a view to maintaining it in the long term.

All publications (Cistercium, Biblioteca Cisterciense and BAC) continue to show a healthy profit, which allows us to continue working on the new image and structure of Cistercium towards a more professional profile in terms of internationality but closer in terms of the variety of its sections, thus being of a specialized scientific range but at the same time easy and enjoyable to read; Biblioteca Cisterciense can ensure all its future publications; and BAC will be able to reprint out-of-print issues without affecting the economy in any way.

Finally, as was also said last year, the results of the year should be seen in relation to other years, since some years have more expenses that are recovered with the profits of other years, always resulting in a positive and very comfortable recovery that allows peace of mind and security to continue working both in improving training and publications and, of course, always thinking of the communities.

Appropriate questions are clarified at the assembly.

4. OTHER SUBJECTS

Dom Isidoro M^a ANGUITA, from Huerta made the following proposal to the assembly:

Faced with the historical situation in which the communities find themselves, it is good to be prepared. When a monastery closes there are things of special value, not only the artistic ones that will remain in the same place, even if the community disappears, but others and especially the archives of these communities. The archives are the history of our heritage and of our communities. Therefore, the issue is how to protect our archives. The idea would be to have a place for those communities that are going to close, thus centralizing the archive of the documents of those communities. An archive that can be ordered and that we can pass on to our successors the history and the most valuable things that we have. It would be about documents with the history of the communities, not libraries.

After the appropriate clarifications, the following vote was taken:

VOTE 5: WE WISH TO CONTINUE TO REFLECT ON THE CREATION OF A DOCUMENTARY ARCHIVE FOR THE MONASTERIES OF THE REGION.

YES: 14

NO: 1

ABS: 2

ACCEPTED PROPOSAL

5. SELF-EVALUATION AND CLOSING OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

All those present thanked the community of Osera for their welcome and hospitality. They also highlighted the beauty of the liturgy and how it invited each of the participants to prayer. In addition, the work done by the Coordination Commission, in a family atmosphere and facilitating the participation of all, was thanked. And the presence of Dom Marco Antonio MALDONADO was valued very positively, for making the GA present in his desire of closeness to the Order.

Some of the participants positively emphasized the closeness and trust in the RE in the face of the costly and heavy challenges that must be faced, and for which the support of all is necessary.

M. Angelines de FRUTOS, abbess president of the CCSB wanted to highlight the ample time given to the study of the reports of the houses; and she emphasized the call of the Lord to remain with the essential, deepening the formation of the communities and placing the Lord at the center.

Dom Marco Antonio MALDONADO, GA Councilor, thanked for the invitation to participate in this Regional Conference and highlighted the fact that the interventions of the participants were clear and synthetic, thus making the sessions more dynamic; and the fraternal and joyful atmosphere that reigned throughout the RE.

Finally, DOM Roberto de la IGLESIA, from Cardena and president of the RE highlighted how the Holy Spirit has been enlightening the participants in making certain decisions. He also indicated how the study of the reports of the houses has served to take the temperature of the communities of the RE

in which he highlighted two elements: precariousness and vitality with a great solidity in the living of the monastic life.

Our next meeting, March 2-7, 2027 (arrive on the 1st for dinner and leave on the 8th after breakfast).

ANNEXES

THE RENEWAL OF THE STRUCTURES AND OPERATION OF THE ORDER'S FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

At the time, the need was seen to clarify the economic structure of the Order for greater transparency and understanding, introducing the appropriate modifications. The GA and its Council were commissioned to carry out this work of restructuring, taking effect *ad experimentum* until it is submitted for approval at the GC of 2028. This work was completed at the end of 2023 and sent to all superiors, so everyone can read it to get a better understanding of the situation. I will limit myself to a brief summary.

GC 2022 vote 76 says: *We ask the Abbot General and his Council, together with experts, to renew the structure and functioning of the financial entities of the Order (Aid Commission, Finance Commission and the Generalate), in consultation with the members of these entities.*

PLACET: 142 NON PLACET: 7 ABSTAIN: 2

There will now be a single finance commission presided over by the Abbot General and made up of three sub-commissions and 9 members in total (the Bursar of the Order coordinates everything):

FINANCE COMMITTEE

- **Investment Subcommittee** (manages the capital of the Order)
 - Bursar of the Order (*D. Emmanuel*)
 - Member elected by the GC (max. 6 years) - *D. Steele de Tarrawarra* (2022-2028)
 - Member elected by the GC (max. 6 years) - *Mr. Clement de Kokoubou* (2022-2028)
- **Generalate Subcommittee** (manages the ordinary administration of the Order and Generalate)
 - Bursar of the Order (*D. Emmanuel*)
 - Bursar of the Generalate (*Br. Javier de San Isidro*)
 - Superior of the Generalate (*D. Anastasius of Lantao*)
- **Mutual Solidarity Subcommittee** (collects, studies and evaluates requests for assistance).
 - Bursar of the Order (*D. Emmanuel*)
 - GC elected member (max. 6 years) - *M. Pascale de Arnhem* (2022-2028)
 - Member elected by the GC (max. 6 years) - *Mr. Pedro de Miraflores* (2022-2028)
 - GC elected member (max. 6 years) - *M. Kathy de Redwoods* (2022-2028)

Each year the Finance Commission will decide to give a percentage (now 3%) of the Order's Capital to the Mutual Solidarity sub-commission.

All donations received by the Mutual Solidarity sub-commission in excess of 25,000 € will go directly to the Order's Capital.

Each year an external audit must be carried out and the Bursar of the Order will present an annual report of each sub-commission and a consolidated report of the Finance Commission.

The bursar can be a monk of the non superior Order, or a lay person if approved by the GC.

MINIMUM NUMBER TO FORM A CONVENTUAL CHAPTER

Votes Central Commission 2024

Vote 70: We wish to place on the agenda of the 2025 General Chapter the issue of the minimum number of solemnly professed required to form a conventual chapter (Cst 37).

PLACET 21 ; NON PLACET 2; ABSTAIN 0. **Proposal accepted.**

Vote 71: We ask the Law Commission to draft a working document on this subject.

PLACET 21; NON PLACET 1; ABSTAIN 1.

I. Initial considerations

1. Our constitutions do not establish the minimum number of members (solemnly professed) of a monastery in order to constitute a conventual chapter, even though CIC c. 632 requires that proper law precisely determine its composition.
2. As a guideline, some references can be taken from our own law:
 - a. The statute of foundations establishes the minimum number of members for a foundation to acquire autonomy (cf. n. 15).
 - b. The constitution of the conventual chapter is the main manifestation of the autonomy of the monastery (cf. C. 37).
 - c. When the number of solemnly professed members is reduced to five, the community loses the right to elect a Superior (Cf. Est 39.2C). This norm has its source in the universal legislation for the nuns (Cf. Cor Orans, nº 45). The right to elect a superior is one of the principal collegial acts of the conventual chapter in a monastery.

II. A look at the common rules of canon law

1. The CIC of 1983 in Book II, Title II, "Of Religious Institutes" (cc. 607-709) does not establish the minimum number of members of a monastery in order for it to constitute a conventual chapter.
2. Subsidiarily, it is necessary to refer to the CIC, Book I, "General Norms", Chapter II "On Juridical Persons", (cc. 113-123).
 - a. C. 115 establishes that in the Church juridical persons are either corporations ("universitates personarum", community of persons) or foundations ("universitas rerum", mass of goods).

"Can. In the Church juridic persons are either corporations or foundations.

§ The corporation, for whose constitution **at least three persons are required**, is collegial if its activity is determined by the members, who, with or without equal rights, participate in the decisions according to the law and the statutes; otherwise, it is non-collegial.

§ 3. The patrimonial juridical person or autonomous foundation consists of goods or things, spiritual or material, and is directed, according to the norm of the law and of the statutes, by one or more natural persons, or by a college."

- b. From this it can be deduced that according to c. 115 § 2, the conventual chapter is a corporation, a collegial juridical person³, for whose constitution a minimum of 3 members is required .⁴

III. Some conclusions

From the juridical point of view, the conventual chapter cannot be constituted with less than 3 members:

1. This is a minimum established in the general norms of canon law that guarantees truly collegial decision-making.
2. Since the collegial will is formed by the vote of its members, the solemnly professed members of the conventual chapter must have not only legal capacity (determined by their status as solemnly professed and stabilized with the right to vote) but also the capacity to act (sufficient cognitive capacity to make decisions) .⁵
3. In our own law, if it is so decided, it would be possible to establish a minimum to be able to constitute the conventual chapter that would be superior to the 3 members required by universal law, for example, a minimum of 5 or 6 solemnly professed members:
 - Advantage:
 - It would constitute a larger college for collegial deliberations and decisions.
 - Disadvantage:
 - Vital communities with a future perspective but with only three solemnly professed members with the right to vote would lose the right to form a conventual chapter and, therefore, the exercise of their autonomy (for example: admission to profession or change of stability, acts of extraordinary administration, etc.).

³ Cf. DE PAULIS, V. *Consecrated Life in the Church*, Madrid 2011, pp.249-253.

⁴ Canon law took this rule from an ancient principle of Roman law that was intended to ensure a majority when making decisions.

⁵ The possibility of proceeding to a limitation in the capacity to act of persons is not a foreign option to the legal systems, however, the legislator is repugnant to any rule that can restrict the free exercise of rights (*odious matter*). In this sense, the Code of Canon Law is no exception, which could explain the absence of a rule aimed precisely at such a limitation in situations where, either because of mental illness or advanced age, the person is unable to provide certain services, or is not even capable of carrying out an adequate psychological process for making a decision by means of the corresponding discernment. In these circumstances the limitation of the capacity to act can be presented as a necessity (Cf.

MAGDALENA MIGUEL, Laura, *Limitation of the capacity to act in members of Life Institutes Consecrated*, *Revista Española de Derecho Canónico*, Vol 77, n. 189,2020, pp. 909-935).

IV Proposal for new bylaws to be included in our own bylaws

1. A new statute is proposed, EST 37 D, which establishes the minimum number of members for a community to have a conventual chapter:

EST 37.

A minimum of three members, including the major superior of the community, is required to constitute the conventual chapter.

A. ter, which, taking up the general norm of universal law in CIC c. 119 and what is regulated in EST 37.D, establishes the *corum* necessary to be able to proceed to a vote of the conventual chapter:

EST 36.2.A. ter

A valid vote of the conventual chapter requires the presence of **the majority of those who must be summoned⁶ and the presence of a minimum of three capitulars .⁷**

⁶ Cf. CIC can. 119, 1^o and can. 119 2^o: "praesente quidem maiore parte eorum qui convocari debent".

⁷ Cf. CIC can. 115 § 2 and EST 37.D "Universitatis personarum, quae quidem nonnisi ex tribus saltem personis constitui potest".

Provision and Removal from Office - Mandates and Age Limits

I. Introduction

Votes of the Central Commission

The Central Commission, meeting in June 2024, formulated the following vows in relation to the elected offices in the service of the Order as a whole, and various details concerning this service:

Vote 34

We included in the agenda of the 2025 General Chapter the topics of mandates, number of mandates and age limits for the Abbot General, councilors and members of the commissions of the Order.

Vote 35

We asked for a working paper on the issue of the 34th vote.

Vote 36

We entrust this working document to a 2-person ad hoc committee.

Vote 37

We will deal with this issue by extraordinary procedure.

Legislation

The Abbot General

Universal Law (CIC 1983) provides as follows:

Can. Superiores ad certum et conveniens temporis spatium iuxta naturam et necessitatem instituti constituentur, nisi pro supremo Moderatore et pro Superioribus domus sui iuris constitutiones aliter ferant.

§ Ius proprium aptis normis provideat, ne Superiores, ad tempus definitum constituti, diutius sine intermissione in regiminis officiis versentur.

§ Possunt tamen durante munere ab officio amoveri vel in aliud transferri ob causas iure proprio statutas.

Can. Superiors are to be appointed for a determined and suitable period of time, according to the nature and needs of the institute, unless the constitutions establish otherwise with regard to the Superior General or the Superiors of an autonomous house.

§ Proper law should provide by means of suitable norms that Superiors appointed for a determined period of time shall not hold government positions for a long and uninterrupted period of time.

§ They may, however, be removed from the office they hold or transferred to another office for causes determined by proper law.

OCSO Constitutions (June, 2024)

C. 83 Election of the Abbot General

1

The Abbot General is elected by the General Chapter. The one who obtains the absolute majority will be considered elected. The election is for an undetermined period of time. It does not need confirmation. The elected one must be or have been Abbot in the Order, in a restrictive sense.

EST 83.1.A The elected person must be at least forty years of age.

EST 83.1.B The Abbot General retains stability in his monastery and may exercise there all the rights that are compatible with his office. If an Abbot during his term of office is elected Abbot General, his see becomes vacant from the moment of acceptance of the new office.

2

In order for the resignation to be valid, it must be accepted by the General Chapter.

EST 83.2.A The Abbot General presents his resignation from office to the General Chapter nearest to his seventy-fifth birthday.

C. 84 The Council of the Abbot General

1

The Abbot General is assisted by a Council in the performance of his pastoral duties, which has jurisdiction over the affairs of monks and nuns, as determined by law.

EST 84.1.A The Council consists of five members. Four members, proposed by the Regional Conferences, that is to say, two monks and two nuns, and elected by the General Chapter. Their term of office lasts six years, so that at each General Chapter half of them are renewed. The fifth member, either monk or nun, is chosen for a three-year term, at each General Chapter, by the Abbot General and the other councilors already elected. They are chosen to be experts and also capable of understanding the different cultures. They must be at least forty years of age and ten years of solemn profession in the Order.

The Law Commission (Statute of the Law Commission, 2013).

2.

a)- The Law Commission is composed of five members with expertise in law.

b) - Two monks and two nuns are chosen by the General Chapter and the position that lacks is provided indifferently of one or another Branch by the four members already elected.

c) - Among the members elected by the General Chapter, there is at least one male and one female capitular.

3.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman are elected by the Commission.

4.

The term of office ends at the end of the second General Chapter following that of his election.

II. The facts of the case

1. The office of a Supreme Moderator who exercises a service as Abbot General and who effectively functions as vicar of the highest authority in our Order, namely the General Chapter of abbots, abbesses and other superiors, is established by universal and proper law, and supported by the tradition of our Order.
2. The Abbot General, according to Const. 82, is "a bond of unity within the Order, fosters good relations between the communities of monks and nuns and is the vigilant guardian of the patrimony of the Order, ensuring its growth. Above all, he must be a pastor who promotes the spirit of renewal in the communities". His service is, therefore, a service in which he governs and guides at the same time, exercises authority and shepherds with attentive pastoral solicitude.
3. Since this particular service of authority is exercised for the good of the whole Order and of the local communities that constitute it, and takes into account all the brothers and sisters in all their many and varied circumstances, their joys and their trials, the Abbot General, to enable him to share the charism of government and pastoral care in a way that is effective and, for him, a service not unduly burdensome, enjoys the assistance, support and advice of brothers and sisters who, by their close association with him as counselors and advisors, collaborate with him in a particular way.
4. At the present time, this specific service of cooperation is exercised by the members of the Council of the Abbot General and by the members of the Juridical Commission of the Order, as well as by other commissions to be established as the needs may require.
5. All these officers in the service of the Order acquire their offices by action of the General Chapter, or according to the prescriptions of the Statute that governs their constitution as *coetus* of operation.
6. While election or nomination to a particular office or function is clearly established, current circumstances now call for renewed consideration of the length of time of service (term of office), the number of terms a single monastic may or should accept, and the age at which an office must be relinquished.
7. This document aims to suggest relevant criteria that can be used to review current practice in these areas, and to provide proposals that allow for effective ministry, continuity in work and service, and change of membership ensuring continuous renewal.

III. Synodality and Co-responsibility

1. First of all, it must be recognized that, in many respects, the Order's practice regarding the selection of officers who serve integrally in the Order already reflects the Church's renewed experience of synodality.
2. The selection is made after a healthy debate, consideration of present and future needs, the necessary qualities to be sought in each candidate, the availability and willingness of the brothers and sisters called to a new service, all in a discernment guided by the Spirit that seeks to provide

adequate supports and wisdom for the life of the members of the Order and the general lived charism of the Order itself.

3. Synodality depends on the reality of allowing all to participate according to their specific gifts and the charismatic service that each one can offer, always united in a shared vision of the mission. In this sense, no one is excluded from service, but all have the possibility of serving according to the needs currently felt and the gifts that each one has been given.

IV. Proposals for consideration The Abbot General

1. At present, there is no fixed indication in the Constitutions and Statutes that provides definite parameters for the term of office of the Abbot General, unless he submits his resignation to the General Chapter closest to his seventy-fifth birthday.
2. Given the increasingly demanding scope of the Abbot General's service, which constitutes a global ministry requiring personal exercise of office before communities and individuals, and the accelerating and challenging pace of change with respect to many of our communities, their complex needs and the ongoing discernment for some regarding their future, it is charitable and desirable that the Abbot General's service be set within realistic parameters.
3. Moreover, increasingly aware today of the health of the whole person in all its dimensions-physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and more-it is to be recommended that, after a certain period of service to the whole Order, a monastic-whether Abbot General, a member of his Council, or a member of a Commission-be free to return to that life which first attracted him to the Order, and to the ordinary, hidden monastic environment of his own local Community.
4. It cannot be ignored that, given the constant development of the Order out of its traditional centers into new and younger churches, our present reality strongly suggests that such development be reflected in the personnel called to ministries of governance and council within the Order. Thus, by reaching out to developing communities, providing adequate formation and opportunities, the Order embraces the variety of gifts given to the Order by the Spirit.
5. More defined boundaries in the holding and exercise of offices will allow for a greater and more diverse representation of office bearers, which will undoubtedly benefit the Order as a whole, celebrating, as it would, the richness of our cultural and religious experience and formation.
6. That said, we cannot ignore that service in a particular office must be supported by an adequate and appropriate formation that adapts the monastic to the assumed office. The manner in which such training is carried out and how the necessary experience is acquired must be an integral part of any provision. While office-holders will leave office after a specified number of terms, in general, continuity in the work of the Council or Commission should be considered, so that a bridge is created between the interaction of one *coetus* and the next.

TABLE OF VARIOUS PROPOSALS

INDEFINITE TERM	CLEAR MANDATE		
	A	B	C
	<p>He is elected for 9 years.</p> <p>He may not be reelected for another consecutive term.</p>	<p>He is elected for 6 years.</p> <p>He may be reelected for 6 more years.</p> <p>He may not be reelected for another consecutive term.</p>	<p>He is elected for 9 years.</p> <p>He may be reelected for 6 more years.</p> <p>Cannot be reelected for another term consecutive term.</p>
Indefinite permanence	Maximum tenure: 9 years	Maximum permanence: 12 years	Maximum permanence: 15 years.
The AG submits his resignation at the GC closer to his 75th birthday.	The AG submits his resignation at the GC closer to his 75th birthday.	The AG submits his resignation at the GC closer to his 75th birthday.	The AG submits his resignation at the GC closer to his 75th birthday.
<i>Comment:</i> Current <i>status quo</i> with its advantages and disadvantages	<i>Comment:</i> Ensures moderate continuity of service.	<i>Commentary:</i> The term of office of the Abbot General is the same as that of the abbots for a definite period of time, but with the limit of one re-election for a second term.	<i>Comment:</i> Offers the possibility of a continuity of service similar to that of the last abbots general.

The Council of the Abbot General

1. The councilors of the Abbot General, observing the norms already established in the proper law, will exercise their functions for a term of office not exceeding six years.
2. One proposal in favor of a longer term would be to offer the possibility of re-election for a second term of six years. At present, it does not seem desirable to serve as a GA councilor for more than twelve consecutive years.
3. If Proposal 1 is chosen in exceptional circumstances, to be determined and approved by the General Chapter, the councilor elected Procurator General may have his term of office extended for three years, after which time his term would ipso iure expire, and another councilor would have to be elected to that office.
4. A member of the Council of the Abbot General who reaches the age of seventy-five years between General Chapters shall complete his term of office until the next General Chapter, after which he shall be automatically deprived of his office.
5. In any case, it is good to maintain the criterion of successive renewal of councilors to ensure a certain continuity (cf. Const. 84.1.A).
6. It seems appropriate to maintain the practice that the fifth councilor, a monk or nun, be elected by the Abbot General and the other four councilors elected for a period of three years (cf. Const. 84.1.A) to ensure the presence on the council of experts and persons capable of understanding the various cultures and official languages.

The Law Commission

Given the specific service that the members of the Law Commission exercise on behalf of the Order, it is imperative that adequate training be provided to those who are to assume such service, and that at least one of the commissioners be in possession of a degree obtained in a Faculty of Canon Law of a recognized Catholic University.

1. In compliance with the norms set forth in the Statutes on the Law Commission, the members of the Commission must be elected for a term of six years, in such a way that half of the members of the Commission are replaced at each General Chapter.
2. The chairman and vice-chairman of the Law Commission serve for a term of three years, which may, if the Law Commission votes accordingly, be extended for a further three years.
3. After two successive three-year terms, the Commission shall elect a new chairman.
4. A former chairman of the Law Commission may be re-elected for a single three-year term after the term of office of his successor has expired.
5. Election of the members of the Law Commission:

Proposal A: A member of the Law Commission may not serve more than two terms of three years each, either individually or consecutively.

Proposal B: The members of the Law Commission are elected for a term of six years ("The term of office ends at the end of the second General Chapter following their election", Statutes of the Law Commission n. 4), excluding consecutive reelection.

In both of the above proposals, it is necessary to evaluate whether there is a practical possibility for the Order to accept and implement these proposals, which are intended to avoid prolonged stays, given the competence required to sit on the Law Commission.

6. What was said above about the chairman of the Law Commission also applies to the vice-chairman of the Law Commission.

The Finance Committee

Given the specific service that the members of the Finance Commission exercise on behalf of the Order, it is imperative that adequate training be provided to those who are to assume such a service, and that they have some experience in dealing with financial matters at the managerial level.

Other Commissions in the service of the Order

A general Rule could be drafted and added to the Constitutions or Statutes that deals in general with the commissions or specifically with certain commissions, in the sense that:

1. The members of the Commissions established permanently in the Order, and which are not merely ad hoc commissions, are to be elected by the General Chapter for a term of six years, in such a way that half of the members of the commission are replaced by each General Chapter.

Resignation of Commissions

1. A member may resign his office at any time, his resignation to the General Chapter or, when the Chapter is not in session, to the Abbot General, who, having heard his Council, shall consider and judge the request.
2. The General Chapter accepts this resignation by a vote of an absolute majority.
3. A member of a Commission who reaches the age of seventy-five years between General Chapters will complete his term of office until the next General Chapter, after which he will be automatically deprived of his office.
4. When a vacancy occurs, for any reason, in a Commission, it is up to the Abbot General, having heard his Council and the members of the Commission, to appoint another to fill the vacancy until the next General Chapter.

PAPAL RESCRIPT on Major Superiors NON-priests

Summary:

- *Papal Rescript (MAY.2022): gives the faculty that a layman can be a major superior in a clerical religious Institute such as ours. Now it is not so much a question of asking for a dispensation as of the Holy See reserving the right to confirm the election or appointment in certain cases, given the faculty it has granted.*
- *A doubt arose as to who exercises the power of regime (role of Ordinary) if he is a layman. Why?*
 - Because, according to the Law (134 §1), major superiors of clerical religious institutes of pontifical right must be Ordinaries.
 - **"Ordinary" is one who has received the sacrament of Holy Orders (cleric) and has ordinary power by his office⁸** . And the Law (129 §1) says that "the power of regime or jurisdiction is exercised by those belonging to the sacred order". It also affirms, however, that **the laity can cooperate** in the exercise of this power (129 §2).
 - The question is: the major superior can be a lay person, but someone has to exercise the power of regime or jurisdiction in the ordinary way. The Holy See was asked and it responded.
- *Response of the Holy See (AUG.2022):*
 - *The role of the ordinary must be determined by proper law. For example, it can be assumed by the hierarchical superior (Immediate Father).*
 - *In other words, we must clarify it in our own right.*
- *Benedictines (Congr. Sublacense - NOV.2023) acted accordingly by issuing a decree stating:*
 - a. *that **our Congregation adopts the Papal Rescriptum***
 - b. *that the possibility of applying the mentioned Rescript in our Congregation (Sublacense) **is limited exclusively to those who carry out the service of Major Superiors in a monastery sui iuris: abbot, conventual prior, prior administrator; it does not apply to the Visitor nor to the Abbot President. If the lay brother is elected abbot he may wear a pectoral cross and ring.***
 - c. *that in the case mentioned in point b (abbot or titular prior... not a priest), **the role of Ordinary will be entrusted to the hierarchical Superior: the Visitor for monasteries belonging to a Province, the Abbot President for monasteries directly dependent on him.***
 - d. *that, according to C 140, 2^a, **the present decree is valid until the next General Chapter.***

⁸ The Ordinary must be a priest; it is not enough to be a deacon, even if he is also a cleric.

18.05.2022 - **RESCRIPTUM EX AUDIENTIA SS.MI** (cf. Annex)

Repeal (or exception) of canon 588 §2 CIC, which prescribes that the major superior of a clerical institute must be a cleric.

CIC 588 § 2. A clerical institute is an institute which, in keeping with the aim or purpose willed by its founder or by legitimate tradition, is under the direction of clerics, assumes the exercise of sacred orders, and is recognized as such by the authority of the Church.

1. **Local Superior (not Major, e.g., in a Foundation).** The non-clerical member of an Institute of Consecrated Life or Society of Clerical Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right is **appointed Local Superior** by the Supreme Moderator with the consent of his Council.

2. **Superior ad nutum.** The non-clerical member of an Institute of Consecrated Life or of a clerical Society of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right is **appointed Major Superior, after obtaining written permission from the Dicastery** for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life **at the request of the Supreme Moderator with the consent of his Council.**

3. **Abbot, Prior Titular and Abbot General.** A non-clerical member of an Institute of Consecrated Life or of a clerical Society of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right **who is elected Supreme Moderator or Major Superior** in the manner prescribed by proper law **requires the confirmation** - by written permission - **of the Dicastery** for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

4. In the cases provided for in §§2-3, the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life reserves the right to evaluate each individual case and the reasons given by the Supreme Moderator or the General Chapter.

10.08.2022 - CLARIFICATION OF THE HOLY SEE ON THE SCOPE OF THE RESCRIPT (cf. Annex)

- The non-clerical Major Superior **is not** an Ordinary for his own members (can. 134 §1: *By the name of Ordinary in law is understood... for his own members, the Major Superiors of religious institutes of pontifical clerical right and of societies of apostolic life of pontifical clerical right, who have at least ordinary executive power*).
- To the question: "who exercises for the subjects of the non-clerical Major Superior the faculties that the Code of Canon Law attributes to the Ordinary", the following answer is given: *In the event that the Institute intends to make use of the faculty granted by the Rescriptum to appoint or elect a non-clerical Major Superior, it must foresee in its proper law to whom it pertains to exercise the faculties attributed to the Major Superior/Ordinary during the function of the lay Major Superior (for example, a priest Vicar could be indicated). Such norms, obviously, would be approved in conformity with cc. 587 and 631 § 1, unless otherwise disposed by the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.*

11.11.2023 - APPLICATION OF THE RESCRIPT IN THE BENEDICTINES, Sublacense Congr.

Issue a decree with the following points:

- a. that **our Congregation adopts** the Papal **Rescriptum**
- b. that the possibility of applying the mentioned Rescript in our Congregation (sublacense) **is limited exclusively to those who carry out the service of Major Superiors in a monastery sui iuris: abbot,**

- conventual prior, prior administrator; it does not apply to the Visitor nor to the Abbot President. If the lay brother is elected abbot he may wear a pectoral cross and ring.
- c. that in the case mentioned in point b (abbot or titular prior... not a priest), **the role of Ordinary will be entrusted to the hierarchical Superior**: the Visitor for monasteries belonging to a Province, the Abbot President for monasteries directly dependent on him.
 - d. that, according to C 140, 2º, **the present decree is valid until the next General Chapter**.

POSSIBLE CHANGES IN OUR LEGISLATION

This new faculty granted by the Holy See should be included in our law, since the Holy See itself stated that the non-clerical Major Superior is not an Ordinary for his own members: *In the event that the Institute intends to make use of the faculty granted by the Rescriptum to appoint or elect a non-clerical Major Superior, it should foresee in its proper law to whom it pertains to exercise the faculties attributed to the Major Superior/Ordinary during the function of the lay Major Superior (for example, a priest Vicar could be indicated)* (Prot. n. 17795/2022 Dicasterium de Legum Textibus).

The Central Commission 2024 in Chile asked the Law Commission (votes 66 and 67) to study possible changes in our legislation:

Vote 66

We ask the Law Commission to study possible changes in our legislation in light of the papal rescript of May 18, 2022, on the possibility of a non-cleric being a major superior of a clerical institute of pontifical right.

PLACET: 21 NON PLACET: 2 ABSTENTIO: 0 proposal accepted

Vote 67

We wish to place this topic on the agenda of the 2025 General Chapter, which will be dealt with by ordinary procedure.

PLACET: 19 NON PLACET: 4 ABSTAIN : 0 proposal accepted

Proposed new text for C.34 (monks)

C. 34: The government of the Abbot

1. The **Abbot-priest** is the major superior and has ecclesiastical power of regime, both internally and externally.

EST 34.1.A (no change)

The Superior of a monastery that is still part of the founding house has delegated power, which in turn can subdelegate.

EST 34.1.B (no change)

The Superior ad nutum, referred to in Article 39.2.B, enjoys his own ordinary power as the major superior of an autonomous community.

2. The **non-priestly** Abbot is a major Superior according to the norms of Law. According to the spirit of the Rule of St. Benedict, he has full authority in temporal as well as spiritual matters. The function of Ordinary will be entrusted to the Immediate Father and, if he is not a priest, to the Abbot General.

(NB: The first part of the new par. 2 is taken from the Constitutions of the nuns. The Dicastery for Legislative Texts has confirmed that a non-cleric does not exercise the function of Ordinary).

Proposed new text for C.39.6 (monks)

C. 39.6

The election is confirmed by the Abbot General. Each re-election requires a new confirmation. If a brother is elected **who is not a priest**, the Abbot General does not confirm the election until he is sure that the elected brother wishes to receive the order of the priesthood and possesses the qualities required by Universal Law to receive the priesthood. **If this brother does not want to receive the priesthood or does not possess the qualities required by Universal Law, the Abbot General follows the procedure established by the Holy See.**

Another option of C.39.6

*The election is confirmed by the Abbot General. Each re-election requires a new confirmation. If a brother is elected **who is not a priest and does not wish to receive the priesthood or does not possess the qualities required by Universal Law, the Abbot General follows the procedure established by the Holy See.***

In the other cases (superior of a foundation or annexed house, superior *ad nutum*, Abbot General) it would be sufficient to put it in the *Vademecum*, since it does not affect the actual wording of the constitutions:

- In the case of the appointment of a **lay superior *ad nutum***, prior permission is required from the DIVCSVA requested by the GA and its Council.
- In the case of the appointment of a **local lay superior** (e.g. a foundation or annexed house), the Abbot General and his Council must intervene by making the appointment .⁹
- In the case of the election of a **lay Abbot General**, confirmation with prior license from the DIVCSVA is required, appointing a priest Vicar for the cases in which he would need to act as Ordinary.

It would be necessary to correct the *Vademecum* according to what is approved in the G.C. Specify in the *Vademecum* (Election, Immediate Father) the possible cases in which the figure of an Ordinary is needed to act as vicar of the Abbot, knowing that his role is merely functional, since the Abbot himself is the decision maker.

It would be necessary to modify the ritual of the blessing of a lay Abbot following the text of the blessing of an Abbess.

⁹ The "local superior" of which the Rescript speaks is thought for the congregations of active life, where there is no intermediate figure between the Provincial and the Supreme Moderator. In our Order we have the figure of the Immediate Father. For that reason we could ask the Holy See to allow us to use this figure for the appointment of a local superior who is not a priest without having to go to the Abbot General and his Council.

FACULTIES OF MAJOR SUPERIORS WHO HAVE THE STATUS OF "ORDINARY" BY VIRTUE OF BEING MAJOR SUPERIORS OF A CLERICAL INSTITUTE OF PONTIFICAL RIGHT

The Code recognizes a set of faculties (rights and obligations) of major Superiors of clerical institutes of pontifical right as Ordinaries endowed with ecclesiastical power of government, both internally and externally (canons. 134 § 1 and 596 § 2). This set of faculties is an expression of the function of teaching, sanctifying and governing the community at the head of which he has been placed and presupposes the exercise of legislative, executive or judicial power, unless otherwise expressly established by the proper law of the institute:

- to grant letters of resignation for the diaconate and presbyterate to its members (1019 § 1);
- The faculty to initiate a penal process by opening the investigative phase when he has probable knowledge of a crime (can. 1717 ff.);
- The power to establish penalties (can. 1319), to apply them (can. 1341) and to remit them (can. 1355 ff.);
- faculty to judge the internal causes of the institute itself (can. 1427 § 1 and § 2);
- faculty to dispense from ecclesiastical laws, even those reserved when it is difficult to have recourse without grave harm to the expectation (can. 87 § 2);
- the faculty to prohibit the use of privileges granted to the Institute or by the Holy See to a particular place;
- faculty to authorize the assumption of public civil offices foreign to or contrary to the religious state, to administer the goods of the laity, (can. 285 § 4);
- the faculty of being able to dispose of the alms of the Masses that have been combined or trinitated (can. 951 § 1);
- faculty to dispense from irregularities and impediments (can. 1047 § 4);
- faculty to permit oratories (can. 1224);
- faculty to bless sacred places, except for the dedication of churches (can. 1207);
- the power to supervise and issue instructions on the administration of goods within the sphere of its jurisdiction (can. 1276);
- to present a proper religious as rector of the Church of the institute (can. 557 § 2);
- faculty to hear the confessions of its members by virtue of their office (can. 968 § 2) and to authorize others to hear them.
- License for priests who are members of the institute to use the licenses to hear confessions granted to them by the local Ordinary (can. 969.1) includes the possibility of moderating them and establishing conditions for their exercise.
- Granting *nulla obstat* for the publication of books, as well as for new editions; (can. 832)
- Faculty to restrict or remove the faculty of preaching from priests or deacons; (can. 764)
- Grant letters to celebrate mass in any place;
- To allow the Eucharist to be kept in some oratory or church other than the principal see;

- the Superior General can reduce the obligations of Masses and legacies (can. 1308 § 5);
- the Superior General can grant the indult of abandonment of the Institute to religious in temporary vows (can. 688 § 2).

III.10. Redistribution of Regions (CENTRAL COMMISSION 2024-CHILE)

Our World Order is multicultural and multilingual. We need to address its division into regions, improve the proportional equality of influence and broaden the perspective of cultural diversity. It has been suggested that our smaller regions enjoy more spontaneous and fraternal relationships, deeper and simpler exchanges, and better pastoral care, but the reduction in their number is negatively affecting their smooth functioning.

Our larger regions, which are geographically distant and culturally diverse, struggle with the need for translation and interpretation and do not have sufficient opportunities to meet.

To address the current imbalance, two suggestions were proposed:

- a. Create larger Regions in Europe and maintain the current Regions as sub-regions for pastoral meetings. In RAFMA, ORIENS and REMILA, geographically and culturally closer sub-regions could be created.
- b. Create Regions of linguistic similarity to ensure interculturality, but with much less need for interpretation/translation.

Another suggestion to ensure equality was the creation of norms for the functioning of the Regions, for example, the attendance and role of delegates, which would be the same at all regional meetings. This would allow delegates to potentially forge interregional and intercultural links, while facilitating the expression and reception of different perspectives throughout the Order.

The proposal to draft a working paper on this topic was approved. M. Regina (Abakaliki) and D. Steele (Tarrawarra) were elected and agreed to carry out the task.

Vote 57

We wish to place on the agenda of the General Chapter 2025 the issue of the redistribution of the Regions and their functioning.

PLACET 22 NON PLACET 1 ABSTAIN ABSTENTIO Proposal accepted

Vote 58

We ask that a two-person commission draft a working document on this subject.

PLACET 15 NON PLACET 8 ABSTAIN ABSTENTIO Proposal accepted

Vote 59

We ask that a three-person commission draft a working document on this subject.

Vote 60

We want this issue to be dealt with by extraordinary procedure.

PLACET 18 NON PLACET 5 ABSTENTIO Proposition accepted

Vote 61

We want this issue to be dealt with by ordinary procedure.

Suggested topics for reflection:

- Create larger Regions in Europe and maintain the current Regions as sub-regions for pastoral meetings. In RAFMA, ORIENS and REMILA, geographically and culturally closer sub-regions could be created.
- Create Regions of linguistic similarity to ensure interculturality, but with much less need for interpretation/translation.
- The attendance and role of delegates, which would be the same at all regional meetings. This would allow delegates to potentially forge inter-regional and cross-cultural links, while facilitating the expression and reception of different perspectives throughout the Order.

OCSO Regions

OCSO REGIONS - 2025				
REGIONS	NUM. OF MONAST	MONKS	NUNS	President Co-president / Vice- President Secretary of Formation
CNE Centre Nord Europe	12	6 Acey Cîteaux Monts des Cats Orval Rochefort Scourmont	5 Brialmont Chimay Laval Soleilmont Val d'Igny	D. Pierre-André, Cîteaux (P) M. Dominique, Soleilmont (P) Mr. Beatrice, Laval (S.F.)
CAN sous-région (Canada)		1 Val N.-D.		
ISLES Region of the Isles	10	7 Bethlehem Bolton Caldey Mt. St. Bernard Munkeby Nunraw Silence	3 Glencairn Tautra Whitland	D. Malachy, Roscrea (P) Mr. Sarah, Glencairn (S.F.)
NED Région Néerlandophone	11	7 Echt Myrendal Schiermonnikoog Sint Sixtus Tilburg Westmalle Zundert	4 Arnhem Klaarland Maria Frieden Nazareth	M. Katharina, Nazareth (P) M. Guido, Zundert (Vice-P) D. Albéric, Schiermonnikoog (S.F.)

ORIENS Orient Asia Pacific	19	9 Guimaras Kopua Kurisumala Lamanabi Lantao Oita Phare Rawaseneng Tarrawarra	10 (11) Ajimu Gedono Imari Kunnambetta Macau Matutum Nasu Nishinomiya Sujong Tenshien	M. Giovanna, Matútum (P) D. Raphaël, Oita (Co-P) P. Samuel, Tarrawarra (S.F) P. David Lavich, Spencer (S.F.)
RAFMA African Region Madagascar	19	11 Awhum Bàdi Bamenda Illah Kasanza Kokoubou Koutaba Maromby Mokoto Nsugbe Victoria	8 Abakaliki Ampibanjinana Butende Clarté-Dieu Kibungo L'Étoile-N.D. Mvanda Soke	D. John Bosco, Victoria (P) M. Hortense, Clarté-Dieu (Vice-P) Mr. Elizabeth, Butende (S.F.) Justin, Mokoto (S.F.)
RE Spanish Region	18	9 Cardeña Huerta La Oliva Las Escalonias Oseira San Isidro Sobrado Viaceli Zenaruzza	9 Alloz Arevalo Armenteira Avila Benaguacil Carrizo La Palma Tulebras Vico	D. Roberto, Cardeña (P) M. Isabel, Vico (Vice-P) P. Carlos María, Sobrado (S.F.)
RéCiF Cistercian Region Francophone	10	5 La Trappe Port-du-Salut Bellefontaine Bricquebec Timadeuc	5 Les Gardes Rivet Échourgnac Campénéac Cabanoule	D. Thomas, La Trappe (P) M. Soazig, Campénéac (Vice-P) Mr. Agnès, Campénéac (S.F.)
REI Région Europe Israël	8	4 (5) Sept-Fons Tamié Latroun Nový Dvůr	4 Baumgarten Fille-Dieu Donnersberg Gérondé	D. Samuel, Nový Dvůr (P) M. Magdalena, Donnersberg (Vice-P) D. Samuel, Nový Dvůr (S.F.)
REM Europe Region Méditerranée	12	5 Aiguebelle Atlas Boschi	7 Blauvac Bonneval Fons Pacis Naší Paní	M. Maria Francesca, Valserena (P) Mr. Fatima, Valserena (S.F)

		Frattocchie Tre Fontane	Palaçoulo Valserena Vitorchiano	
REMILA Mixed Region Latin America	14	7 Blue Jacona Jarabacoa Los Andes Miraflores Novo Mundo Paradise	7 Boa Vista The Encounter Esmeraldas Fennel Humocaro Quilvo Sorá	M. Mariela, Quilvo (P) D. Florencio, Jacona (Vice-P.) H. María Antonia, Humocaro (S.F.)
USA Region United States	14	10 Berryville Conyers Genesee Gethsemani Guadeloupe Mepkin New Melleray Spencer Vina	5 Crozet Mississippi Redwoods Santa Rita Wrentham	M. Kathy, Crozet (P) M. Sofia, Wrentham (Assit. Moderator) D. Joseph, Berryville (Assit. Moderator) Mr. Pamela, Wrentham (S.F.) M.Kathy, Crozet (S.F.)

**PROPOSAL FOR THE HARMONIZATION OF SOME POINTS OF THE
CONSTITUTIONS OF MONKS AND NUNS**

The Central Commission 2024 in Chile asked the Law Commission (votes 75, 76 and 77) to begin a study on the points that can be harmonized between the constitutions of the monks and the nuns, proposing a list of these, indicating if some require further study.

The Law Commission meeting in Rome in December 2024 has drawn up a list indicating the most important points (some of which will be dealt with at a later date as they affect issues under study) and a brief list of minor points.

MOST IMPORTANT POINTS:

Est 38.

EST 38.A monks The Abbot's Council shall consist of at least three friars, at least one of whom must be elected by the Conventual Chapter.	EST 38.A nuns The Abbess Council will consist of at least three sisters, one or more of whom may be elected by the Conventual Chapter of the community.
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The difference between the wording of the male and female legislation centers on whether **or not at** least one member of the abbot's or abbess's council must be elected by the conventual chapter of the community.

The intention of this statute seems clear, it wants to indicate the convenience that the community can choose itself some member that belongs to the council of the abbot or abbess. In the case of the monks it is said that it is obligatory, while in the case of the nuns it is left as an option.

It seems desirable that the legislation be harmonized on this point. We propose that Statute 38.A of the nuns be modified according to that of the monks.

Points in favor of this change:

- Harmonizes our legislation
- It seems to better fulfill the spirit of this statute when it was drafted.
- It is in tune with the mentality of synodality that the Church is living.

Points against:

- It is not essential to make the change.
- The superior is less likely to be able to choose a board that is more in line with his or her views.

Voting proposal:

A of the nuns should read: "The Council of the Abbess shall consist of at least three sisters, at least one of whom must be elected by the Conventual Chapter".

Est 39.4.

<p>EST 39.4.A monks When two thirds of the Conventual Chapter so desire, it may elect an Abbot for a definite term of six years. In the following elections, as long as the community does not return to the regime of the abbey mandate for a non-defined term, an absolute majority of the votes is sufficient for the Conventual Chapter to elect an Abbot for a definite term of six years.</p>	<p>EST 39.4.A nuns When the absolute majority of the Conventual Chapter so desires, the Chapter may elect an Abbess for a definite term of six years.</p>
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The present statute has its origin in the possibility of electing an abbot for a definite period of time. It was a change with respect to the previous legislation, which arose after the renewal of the Second Vatican Council, when only abbots for an indefinite period of time, and even for life, were accepted. The way to find a consensus to make possible the figure of an abbot for definite time was not to facilitate this change, demanding two thirds of the votes. The nuns always had abbots for an indefinite term, so they did not experience the same difficulty of change and maintained the requirement of an absolute majority when electing an abbess for an indefinite term.

At present, this possibility is very well established and is seen as a matter of course, with both modalities coexisting according to the wishes of each community.

At this time of harmonization of our Constitutions, it seems desirable that the mode of election of an abbot and an abbess should coincide, opting for the most equitable formula of female legislation.

Points in favor of this change:

- It would avoid an unnecessary difference between the legislation of monks and nuns regarding the election of an abbot or abbess.
- Each community may choose, on equal terms, whether it wishes an abbot for an indefinite or a definite period of time.
- It is in tune with the mentality in the Church where there is a tendency for major superiors to be for a definite period of time, although they are eligible for re-election.

Points against:

- The modification is not essential.
- The monastic tradition is generally inclined throughout history towards an abbacy for an indefinite period of time, although this has not always been the case.

Voting proposal:

We wish that Est 39.4.A of the monks be reworded as follows: "When desired by an absolute majority of the Conventual Chapter, the Conventual Chapter may elect an Abbot for a definite term of six years."

Est 56.3 monks - C. 57 nuns

<p>EST 56.3 monks The profession formula is this: I, brother N., promise my stability, conversion of morals and obedience until death, according to the Rule of St. Benedict Abbot, before God and all his Saints, in this monastery called N., of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance, built in honor of the Blessed Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary, in the presence of Dom. N., Abbot of this monastery.</p>	<p>C 57 nuns The profession formula is this: I, sister N, promise my stability, conversion of morals and obedience until death, according to the Rule of St. Benedict Abbot, before God and all his saints, in this monastery called N., of the Cistercian Order of the Strait. Observance, built in honor of the Blessed Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary, in the presence of Doña. N., Abbess of this monastery, and of Fr. Immediate, Dom N.</p>
<p>C 74 monks <i>Nothing is said here</i></p>	<p>C 74.3 nuns The Immediate Father also presides at solemn professions. As far as possible be available for consultation and advice during the Regular Visitation. He examines the accounts of the monastery during the Regular Visitation.</p>

In the formula of profession of the nuns it is said at the end that it is made in the presence also of the Immediate Father, thing that does not happen in the formula of the monks. Some ask that such a mention be eliminated.

If we ask ourselves the reason for such an inclusion, it seems that it is due to the fact that the C 74.3 of the nuns asks the Immediate Father to preside at the Eucharist of the solemn profession of the sisters, something that does not happen among the monks because the Abbot is a priest. For this reason, he is appointed after the Abbess. But in case he is not present, is not a priest or, in the future, could be an Immediate Mother, it seems that such a mention would be empty of content, so it could be suppressed.

Points in favor of this change:

- No such mention seems necessary.
- It would avoid the aforementioned absurdities.
- The text would be the same for monks and nuns.

Points against:

- The modification is not essential.

Voting proposal:

We wish that in the Est 57 of the nuns the mention to the Immediate Father at the end of the formula of profession be suppressed.

Est 77.2.

EST 77.2.A monks Any friar can send his wishes and suggestions to the General Chapter through the Abbot himself, the Immediate Pastoral Father , the Conference or the regional delegate, or directly through the Abbot General.	EST 77.2.A nuns Any sister can send her wishes and suggestions to the General Chapter through the Abbess herself, the Conference or the regional delegate, or directly through the Abbot General.
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Our legislation allows any monk or nun of our Order to send suggestions to the General Chapter by various means. But curiously in the legislation of the monks it is mentioned as a possibility to the Immediate Father, whereas among the nuns that mention is suppressed. It is not very well understood to eliminate this possibility, that would also affect the Immediate Mothers if finally they are approved, reason why it seems more logical that this mention is included.

Points in favor of this change: - It would equalize the legislation of monks and nuns.

- Given the desire to encourage the General Chapter to be closer to all the communities, there is no reason for the Immediate Father to disappear as a possibility of connection, since he knows the daughter house well.

Points against:

- This is not a really important issue and other avenues can always be used.

Voting proposal:

*A of the nuns should read: "Any sister can send her wishes and suggestions to the General Chapter through the Abbess herself, **the Immediate Father**, the Conference or the regional delegate, or also directly through the Abbot General".*

OTHER LESS IMPORTANT DIVERGENT POINTS

EST 6. Among the professed brothers mentioned above are those who made their profession before the Decree of Unification of 1965. The following will be equipped in to the other brothers and sisters, remaining at except for their acquired rights.	EST 6. Among the professors mentioned are: a. The converted sisters who made their Profession before the Decree of Unification of 1965.
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<p>EST 13.1. If there are cells, the Abbot will determine their use. according to the custom custom. Stay tuned to arranged in such a way that, if necessary, they favor the lectio and prayer of the friars and safeguard the dignity of the person, but do not harm the common life. They are to be simple according to Cistercian sobriety. The Abbot may visit them.</p>	<p>EST 13.1. If there are cells, the Abbess will determine their use according to local custom, but they are not to be detrimental to the common life. They are to be simple, according to Cistercian sobriety. The Abbess may visit them.</p>
<p>EST 15.2 Let the brethren confess their sins to God every day in prayer, and let them frequently go to the sacrament of reconciliation.</p>	<p>EST 15.2 The sisters should confess their sins to God every day in prayer and frequently go to the sacrament of reconciliation. The Abbess is to facilitate this approach.</p>
<p>EST 21. <i>It does not say anything</i></p>	<p>EST 21. The desk is the traditional place to engage in lectio divina.</p>
<p>EST 40. If by event of any illness or other captivity, relegation or exile (cf. , the Abbot is physically or able to exercise his pastoral incumbent upon the ent to investigate and verify state, after the their consult with experts and sent from chapter true, he reports the matter to eral, who with the consent of ay remove said Abbot from</p>	<p>EST 40. If any illness, the Abbess is essentially unable to carry out her duties, it is incumbent upon the Abbot, with the consent of the General Chapter, to be informed and to verify its truth with experts. If it is true, he will report to the Abbot General, and the consent of his council can remove the Abbess from her office. If it is for such as captivity, deportation (can. 412 CIC), it is up to the Abbot, with the consent of the General Chapter to ask the Abbess to resign. If the Abbess refuses, the Abbot, with the consent of his council, to remove the Abbess from her office. The Abbot of the General Chapter will then appoint an Abbot or ask the Chapter to choose a temporary Superior one.</p>
	<p>conventual to choose a temporary Superior one.</p>

VOTES

VOTE 1: WE WOULD LIKE THE FOLLOWING TEXT TO APPEAR IN THE REGIONAL REPORT: "FOLLOWING THE ENCYCLICAL FRATELLI TUTTI WHICH HELPS US TO REDISCOVER THE CONCEPT OF CHARITY AND THEREFORE OUR CO-RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN THE ORDER (CF. D. BERNARDUS, MUSTARD 2024), THE RE IS OPEN TO COLLABORATION AND MUTUAL ENRICHMENT ON FORMATION WITH OTHER HOUSES OF THE ORDER".

YES: 15 NO: 1 ABS: 1 **ACCEPTED**
PROPOSAL

VOTE 2: WE WOULD LIKE THAT A MEMBER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO EXPEDITE THE APPROVAL OF THE CISTERCIAN MISSAL BY THE HOLY SEE.

SI: 17 NO: 0 ABS: 0 **UNANIMOUS**

VOTE 3: WE WOULD LIKE THERE TO BE A TEST THAT EVALUATES THE STUDENTS' ABILITY TO TAKE THE PREM.

YES: 16 NO: 0 ABS: 1 **ACCEPTED**
PROPOSAL

VOTE 4: WE WISH THE TEST REFERRED TO IN THE PREVIOUS VOTE TO CONSIST OF THE COMPREHENSION OF A TEXT IN SPANISH.

YES: 15 NO: 0 ABS: 2 **ACCEPTED**
PROPOSAL

VOTE 5: WE WISH TO CONTINUE TO REFLECT ON THE CREATION OF A DOCUMENTARY ARCHIVE FOR THE MONASTERIES OF THE REGION.

YES: 14 NO: 1 ABS: 2 **ACCEPTED**
PROPOSAL