

**Order of Cistercians
of the Strict Observance**



GENERAL BOOKLET
for the General Chapter of 2017

DOMUS PACIS ASSISI

Casa Franciscana di accoglienza
Piazza Porziuncola, 1
06081 Santa Maria degli Angeli
Assisi / PGItaly

6 – 27 September 2017

†
ORDO
CISTERCIENSIS S.O.
—
ABBAS GENERALIS

Rome, June 6th 2017

Prot. N° 543.17

CONVOCAZIONE DEI MEMBRI DELLA CAPITOLO GENERALE DEL 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

With this letter I convoke all those who, by right or invitation, in accordance with the provisions of C. 78 of our Constitutions, to the General Chapter of Abbots and Abbesses of the Order which will take place at Domus Pacis, Piazza Porziuncola, Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi, from September 6-27, 2017.

The work of preparation for this General Chapter 2017 has been going on for some time now and is entering into its final phase with still much to do. I take this opportunity to thank the members of the Order who are already helping with the preparatory work and those who will help, by providing services of one sort or another for this General Chapter. I thank the communities of these brothers and sisters who have made them available for this service.

I ask all of you to pray for the success of this General Chapter, that is, that it may profit the lives of the participants and help all our sisters and brothers to walk more gladly in the way of God's commandments and in holiness of life.

May Our Lady of Citeaux to whom we entrust the work of this General Chapter help us to be attentive to what the Spirit is saying to the churches of our Order today, so that we may be authentic witnesses of her Son.

Fraternally in his Spirit,



Eamon Fitzgerald
Abbot General

II - PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2017

1. Arrival

The General Chapter begins the morning of Wednesday, September 6. The participants are invited to arrive at the **Domus Pacis Assisi**, the previous evening, Tuesday, September 5. Those who are coming from outside Europe may arrive Monday, September 4.

Already you have received by email all the practical information. If you have not already done so we will ask that you send us your travel information as soon as possible, **not later than July 15**. The information can be sent by fax or email to the secretariat of the Generalate.

Perugia (16 km) is the closest airport to Assisi. The capitulants who indicate their arrival time at Perugia will be met at the airport and brought to Domus Pacis. Others will have to arrange their transportation personally.

The airport at Perugia is small but there are a number of direct flights daily from some of the major cities in the northern Italy.

The capitulants who arrive at the principal airport in Rome – Fiumicino – can reach Domus Pacis at Santa Maria degli Angeli by road (about 3 hours) or by train (The commuter train is available from Fiumicino Airport to Rome – Termini, the main rail station, frequently. From Termini to Assisi there are frequent train departures).

According to the responses received, transportation will be organized to leave from **Fiumicino** on Monday, September 4 and also on Tuesday, September 5.

The meeting will end the afternoon of Wednesday, September 27. All except the secretaries and those who have responsibility for redacting the minutes, are expected to leave the following day, Thursday, September 28.

2. Residences

All the sessions and all the commission meetings of the General Chapter and all the meals will be at Domus Pacis Assisi. Lauds and Eucharist will be celebrated in common in Domus Pacis. The other offices, celebrated in linguistic groups, will also be in Domus Pacis.

About fifty (50) capitulants will have their rooms at the Sisters of the Child Jesus residence, which is near to the Domus Pacis Assisi.

All rooms in Domus Pacis Assisi and at the Sisters of the Child Jesus have telephones. Both places have internet access.

The two residences bill for the use of the phone to each individual resident at the end of the General Chapter.

3. Climate

It will be beautiful! ... At the same time it would be prudent to have some warm clothing.

Here are the addresses for Domus Pacis Assisi for all the communications during the General Chapter :

**Capitolo Generale Trappisti
Domus Pacis Assisi
Piazza Porziuncola, 1
06081 Santa Maria degli Angeli – Assisi / PG Italy**

Tel. [39] 075 8043530

Fax [39] 075 8040455

e-mail : domuspacis@assisiofm.org

e-mail for the General Chapter : ocsoroma@gmail.com

III. – PARTICIPANTS

WITH RIGHT OF VOTE

ABBOTS, Priors, Superiors

- Dom EAMON Fitzgerald, Abbot General
- 01 Dom OLIVIER Quenardel, Abbot of Cîteaux
02 Dom GUERRIC Reitz-Sejotte, Abbot of La Trappe
03 Dom NATHANAËL Koninkx, Abbot of Westmalle
04 Dom GÉRARD-MARIE Meneust, Abbot of Melleray
05 Dom JOSEPH Deschamps, Abbot of Port-du-Salut
06 Dom JEAN-MARC Chéné, Abbot of Bellefontaine
07 Dom ERIC Antoine, Abbot of Aiguebelle
08 Dom PATRICK Olive, Abbot of Sept-Fons
09 Dom DOMINIQUE-MARIE Schoch, Abbot of Oelenberg
10 Dom CHARLES Robilliard, Superior *ad nutum* of Bricquebec
11 Dom MARC-ANDRÉ Di Péa, Abbot of Mont-des-Cats
12 Dom GINEPRO Riva, Abbot of Tamié
13 Dom MANU Van Hecke, Abbot of Saint Sixtus
14 Father DONAL Davis - Delegate of Mount Melleray
15 Dom ERIK Varden, Abbot of Mount Saint Bernard
16 [Achel]
17 Dom BENOIT Briand, Abbot of Timadeuc
18 Dom ELIAS Dietz, Abbot of Gethsemani
19 Dom MARK Scott, Abbot of New Melleray
20 Dom ARMAND Veilleux, Abbot of Scourmont
21 Dom HUGUES Chapelain of Seréville, Abbot of Les Neiges
22 Dom PIERRE-ANDRÉ Burton, Abbot of Désert
23 Dom BERNARDUS Peeters, Pontifical Commissary of Mariawald (**without right of vote**)
24 [Dombes]
25 Dom GIACOMO Brière, Abbot of Tre Fontane
26 Dom DAMIAN Carr, Abbot of Spencer
27 Dom FRANÇOIS de Place, Apostolic Administrator of Maria Zvijezda
28 Dom JEAN-MARC Thevenet, Abbot of Acey
29 Dom RICHARD Purcell, Abbot of Roscrea
30 Dom BERNARDUS Peeters, Abbot of Tilburg
31 Dom ANDRÉ Barbeau, Abbot of Val Notre-Dame
32 [Délivrance]
33 Dom ISAAC Totorica Izaguirre, Abbot of La Oliva
34 Dom FRANÇOIS-XAVIER, Superior *ad nutum* of Consolation
35 Dom MALACHIAS Huijink, Abbot of Echt
36 Dom ALBÉRIC Brusckke, Abbot of Diepenveen

- 37 Dom JOSÉ Otero, Superior *ad nutum* of Frattocchie
38 [Tegelen]
39 **Absent** : Dom GILBERT Degros, Abbot of Rochefort
40 Dom RENÉ Hascoët, Abbot of Latroun
41 Dom JOSÉ ANTONIO Gimeno Capin, Superior *ad nutum* of San Isidro
42 Dom MARCEL Carbotte, Superior *ad nutum* of Prairies
43 Dom CLEMENT Charbonneau, Superior *ad nutum* of Mistassini
44 Dom ALOYSIUS Yokouchi, Abbot of Phare
45 Dom GUIDO Van Belle, Superior *ad nutum* of Zundert
46 Dom ALEJANDRO Castro, Abbot of Viaceli
47 Dom HUBERT Bony, Superior *ad nutum* of Engelszell
48 Dom BÈDE Stockill, Abbot of Calvaire
49 Dom PAUL Kao, Abbot of Lantao
50 Dom LODE Van Hecke, Abbot of Orval
51 Dom DANIEL Van Santvoort, Abbot of Caldey
52 Dom ALFONSO Lora Astudillo, Superior *ad nutum* of Oseira
53 Dom ISIDORO Anguita Fontecha, Abbot of Huerta
54 Dom JEAN-PIERRE Flachaire, Titular Prior of Atlas
55 Dom ROBERTO de la Iglesia Pérez, Abbot of Cardeña
56 Dom RICHARD Purcell, Pontifical Commissary of Mellifont (**without right of vote**)
57 Dom AUGUSTINE Myslinski, Abbot of Conyers
58 Dom MARK Caira, Abbot of Nunraw
59 Dom BRENDAN Freeman, Superior *ad nutum* of Holy Trinity
60 Dom PETER McCarthy, Abbot of Guadalupe
61 Dom CELSUS Kelly, Abbot of Bethlehem
62 Dom STANISLAUS Gumula, Abbot of Mepkin
63 Dom JOSEPH Wittstock, Abbot of Berryville
64 Dom GERARD D'Souza, Abbot of Genesee
65 Dom ALBERIC Maisog, Superior *ad nutum* of Ava
66 Dom ETIENNE HARDING Mboulé, Superior *ad nutum* of Koutaba
67 Dom GONZAGA Ruidyat, Abbot of Rawaseneng
68 Dom VÉDASTE Vitichomo, Titular Prior of Mokoto
69 Dom NIKO Verkley, Superior *ad nutum* of Kopua
70 Dom STEELE Hartmann, Abbot of Tarrawarra
71 Dom PAUL MARK Schwan, Abbot of Vina
72 Dom JOSEPH Boyle, Abbot of Snowmass
73 Dom JOHN BOSCO Kamali, Abbot of Victoria
74 - , - of Kasanza
75 Dom TIMON Rakotofanomezana, Superior *ad nutum* of Maromby
76 Dom BERNARDO Olivera, Abbot of Azul
77 *Dispersed Cty of Bela Vista*
78 Dom PEDRO Barrientos Montalva, Abbot of Miraflores
79 Dom TIMOTHY Kelly, Pontifical Commissary of Bamenda (**without right of vote**)
80 Dom MICHAEL Ryan, Abbot of Bolton
81 Dom CARLOS Gutiérrez Cuartango, Titular Prior de Sobrado
82 [Iles]
83 Dom GERARD Ingusan, Abbot of Guimaras
84 Dom MARCELLIN Dekadjevi, Titular Prior of Kokoubou

- 85 Dom TIMOTHY Kelly, Pontifical Commissary of Awthum (**without right of vote**)
- 86 Dom BERNARDO Bonowitz, Abbot of Novo Mundo
- 87 Dom RAPHAËL Shioya Hisashi, Titular Prior of Oita
- 88 Dom MARCO ANTONIO Maldonado Jaramillo, Titular Prior of Jacona
- 89 Dom PLACIDO Alvarez Castro Quiros, Titular Prior of Los Andes
- 90 Dom JUAN ANTONIO Sánchez, Titular Prior of Jarabacoa
- 91 Dom FRANCIS Lim, Superior of Shuili
- 92 Brother FRANCISCO Javier Urós Murillo, Superior of Las Escalonias
- 93 Dom LINO Colosio, Titular Prior of Boschi
- 94 Dom ANTONIO MARIA Martin Fernandez-Gallardo, Superior *ad nutum* of Zenarruza
- 95 Dom MICHAEL Santana, Titular Prior of Lamanabi
- 96 Father SEVANAND Ennamprayil, delegate of the Abbot of Kurisumala
- 97 [St Sauveur]
- 98 Dom JESÚS Peñalva Carrillo, Superior of Paraíso
- 99 Dom SAMUEL Lauras, Abbot of Nový Dvůr
- 100 Dom Benedict OKAKPU, Superior *ad nutum* of Nsugbe
- 101 **Absent** : Dom CLEMENS Vialle, Superior of Myrendal
- 102 Dom OGECHUKWU Ibe, Superior *ad nutum* of Illah

Councillors of the Abbot Général

Dom TIMOTHY Kelly, Procurator General
Dom SANTIAGO MARIA Rios
Dom DAVID Lavich

Abbesses, Prioresses, Superiors

- 01* Mother BÉATRICE Blanloeil, Abbess of Gardes
- 02* Mother MYRIAM Fontaine, Abbess of Laval
- 03* Mother ALFREDA Gaudet, Abbess of Assomption
- 04* Mother MARIE JOSÉE Stocker, Superior *ad nutum* of Baumgarten
- 05* Mother ANNE-EMMANUELLE Devêche, Abbess of Blauvac
- 06* [Ubexy]
- 07* Clairefontaine, *in process of closing*
- 08* Mother MARIE-CHRISTINE Vilmain, Abbess of Rivet
- 09* Mother GENEVIÈVE-MARIE Fontaine, Abbess of Echourgnac
- 10* Mother MICHÈLE Cointet, Abbess of Bonneval
- 11* Mother ROSARIA Spreafico, Abbess of Vitorchiano
- 12* Mother MARIE-ROSE Flandre, Superior *ad nutum* of Chambarand
- 13* Mother CATHERINE Pagano, Superior *ad nutum* of Chimay
- 14* Mother ISABELLE Valez, Abbess of Val d'Igny
- 15* Mother CECILIA Aoki, Abbess of Tenshien
- 16* Mother MARIE St-Pierre, Abbess of Bon Conseil
- 17* Mother MARIE-CLAIRE Pauchard, Abbess of la Fille-Dieu

- 18* Mother CHRISTINE Wood, Abbess of Whitland
- 19* Mother MARIE-JOSEPH Dhanger, Abbess of Campénéac
- 20* [La Grâce-Dieu]
- 21* Mother DOMINIQUE Graulich, Abbess of Soleilmont
- 22* Mother PILAR Germàn (of Tulebras), Pontifical Commissary of Alloz
- 23* [Igny]
- 24* Mother MARIE Fahy, Abbess of Glencairn
- 25* Mother VÉRONIQUE Shibata, Abbess of Nishinomiya
- 26* Mother JULIAN Pieters, Abbess of Arnhem
- 27* Mother MAUREEN McCabe, Abbess of Wrentham
- 28* Mother BEATRIJS Peeters, Abbess of Nazareth
- 29* Mother ISABEL Rivero Navarro, Abbess of Vico
- 30* Mother ESTHER Muñoz Martin, Abbess of Arevalo
- 31* Mother MARIA GRATIA Adler, Abbess of Maria Frieden
- 32* Mother CATHARINA Shibuya, Abbess of Imari
- 33* Mother MARIA LUISA Gómez Tejada, Abbess of Avila
- 34* Mother M. ENCARNACIÓN Lluch Mendieta, Abbess of Benaguacil
- 35* Mother ANGELA Toyoda, Abbess of Nasu
- 36* Mother HORTENSE Mituga Nsimire, Abbess of la Clarté-Dieu
- 37* Mother STELLA MARIS Venezia, Superior *ad nutum* of Carrizo
- 38* Mother MARIA VICTORIA Sanz Chozas, Abbess of Tulebras
- 39* Mother GENEVIÈVE Akakpo, Abbess of Etoile Notre-Dame
- 40* Mother KATHY de Vico, Abbess of Redwoods
- 41* Mother AUGUSTINE Kanyesigye, Abbess of Butende
- 42* Mother REBECCA Stramoski, Abbess of Mississippi
- 43* Mother MONICA Della Volpe, Abbess of Valsarena
- 44* Mother REGINA Nebo, Responsible for the dispersed Cty of Grandselve (without right of vote)
- 45* Mother ÉLISABETH Unal, Titular Prioress of Cabanoule
- 46* Mother REBEKKA Willekes, Titular Prioress of Klarland
- 47* Mother INÈS Gravier, Abbess of El Encuentro
- 48* Mother VICTORIA Murray, Titular Prioress of Santa Rita
- 49* Mother MARIA Marcenaro, Abbess of Hinojo
- 50* Mother MARIE-PASCAL Dran, Abbess of Brialmont
- 51* Mother MARTINA Benito Prado, Abbess of La Palma
- 52* Mother MARIELA Jeres Pereira, Abbess of Quilvo
- 53* Mother GERTRUDE Ikebe, Superior *ad nutum* of Ajimu
- 54* Mother MAUREEN Ndubuisi, Titular Prioress of Abakaliki
- 55* Mother MANUELA Salvadori, Titular Prioress of Huambo
- 56* Mother PAOLA Pavoletti, Abbess of Humocarò
- 57* Mother MARTHA Driscoll, Abbess of Gedono
- 58* Mother KATHY Ullrich, Titular Prioress of Crozet
- 59* Mother JULIANA Tatara, Titular Prioress of Sujong
- 60* Mother ANA CARMEN Moneo Castel-Ruíz, Titular Prioress of Armenteira
- 61* Mother ANNA CHIARA Meli, Titular Prioress of Mvanda
- 62* Mother CELIA Queza da Santos, Titular Prioress of Esmeraldas
- 63* Mother MARIA GORETTI, Titular Prioress of Rosary
- 64* Mother GIOVANNA Garbelli, Abbess of Matutum
- 65* Mother MARY ANN Kiriathan Devasy, Superior of Kunnambetta
- 66* Mother AGNÈS Brugère, Titular Prioress of Ampibanjinana

- 67* Mother GILCHRIST Lavigne, Titular Prioress of Tautra
- 68* Mother MARIA FABIANA Barrera, Superior *ad nutum* of Juigalpa
- 69* Mother PHILOMÈNE Kalimbanya, Titular Prioress of Kibungo
- 70* Mother MAGDALENA König, Titular Prioress of Donnersberg
- 71* Mother JOËLLE Schmitz, Titular Prioress of Meymac
- 72* Mother LUCIA Tartara, Titular Prioress of Naší Pani
- 73* Mother MIRYAM-MONIQUE Frossard, Titular Prioress of Géronde
- 74* Mother LILIANA Schiano Moriello, Superior of Boa Vista
- 75* Mother MARTA LUISA Fagnani, Superior of Fons Pacis
- 76* Mother CATERINA Mazzarelli, Superior of Macau

Councillors of the Abbot General

Mother DANIÈLE Levrard
Mother REGINA Nebo

WITHOUT RIGHT OF VOTE

Designated Superiors for Future Foundations (for a few days)

Father JOËL Regnard, of Munkeby (Norway)

Regional Delegates

Region AFrique MADagascar	Brother AUGUSTIN Basheka Mulume, Mokoto Sister RACHEL Agoukpe, Etoile N.D.
Region Canada	Father BRUNO-MARIE Fortin, Val N.D.
Region Centre et Nord Europe	Father BERNARD Gueugnon, Cîteaux Sister ANNIE Poultier, Laval
Region Espagnole	Brother ABDON de la CRUZ Rodriguez Hervas, Las Escalonias Sister PAULA MARIA Tellez Gonzalez, Armenteira
Region Europe Israël	No Delegate
Region des ISLES	Father JAN Rossey, Caldey
Region ORIENS	Father MAXIMILIANUS Siamet Widolo, Rawaseneng Sister TERESA Nguyen Thi Thah Thuy, Ajimu
Region Cistercienne Francophone	Brother PHILIPPE-MARIE Mallet, Bellefontaine
REgion Méditerranée	Sister ALEKSANDRA Suchodolska, Bonneval
REgion MIxte Latino Américaine	Brother RUBEN Lacón, Azul Sister KARINIA Bolaños Vilela, Esmeraldas
Region NeErlanDophone	Sister TAMAR Vertommen, Klaarland
Region USA	Sister ALICE Chau, Wrentham Father STEPHEN Muller, Genesee

Secretary of the Commission of Coordination of the Chapter

Father THOMAS Georgeon, La Trappe

Observers

Mother MARÍA ANGELINES de Frutos, Abbess President of the Congregation of Saint Bernard

Mother PILAR Avellaneda, Promotrix of the Chapter of the Congregation of Saint Bernard

Invited for the duration of the Chapter

Brother POLYCARPE Wirsungnim Javion, Prior Administrator of Bamenda

Father MATTHEW Onuh, Prior Administrator of Awhum

Invited for one day to the Chapter:

Mother Geneviève-Marie Fravalo, Campénéac, Secretary of the Commission of Aid

Mother Gabriella Masturzo, Postulatrix for the causes of the Saints

Sister Marie Mouris, Val d'Igny, Central Secretary of Formation

The Abbot General of Cistercian Order, Dom Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori

The Abbot Primate of the Benedictines, Dom Gregory Polan

The Prioress General of the Bernardines of Esquermes, Mother Mary Helen Jackson

The Prioress General of the Bernardines of Oudenaarde, Mother Noella Ghijs

The Committee of the Cistercian Lay Associates (3 members)

SERVICES of the GENERAL CHAPTER de 2014

Interpreters

French – English

Father WILLIAM Dingwall, Spencer

French – Spanish

Father JOSE LUIS Monge, Viaceli

English – French

Father GODEFROY Raguenet de St Albin, Aiguebelle/Syrie

English – Spanish

Sister MÓNICA Madera Molina, Esmeraldas

Spanish – French

Father RAPHAËL Garcia-Pelayo, Cîteaux

Spanish – English

Father SIMEON Leiva Marikakis, Spencer

French – Japanese

Sister MIKAEL Takahashi, Bénédictine of Liège

Japanese – English (aula)

Dom DAVID Lavich, Spencer / Casa Generalizia

English – Japanese

Sister CLOTHILDE Anamizu, Glencairn

Corean (aula)

Sister BONA Ryu, Sujong

**Coordinator of the secretaries
and typists**

Sister CLAIRE Boutin, Echourgnac/Casa Generalizia

Secretaries

English

Sister GRACE Remington, Mississippi

Spanish

Sister MARIA ESTHER Briso-Montiano, Carrizo/ Wrentham

French

Father LUC Thibaud, Melleray

Typists

English

Sister MARY ELLEN McCormack, Wrentham

Spanish

Sister ESTELA Dominguez Flores, Tulebras

French

Sister RENÉE Claude, Grandselve

Photocopies

Sister WENDELIEN Bara, Arnhem

Translators

English – French

Sister LAURENCE Gouezin, Campénéac

Sister CLAIRE Boutin, Redwoods (by e-mail)

Sister JOSÉPHINE Le Clezio, Campénéac (by e-mail)

French – English

Father THOMAS McMaster, New Melleray (by e-mail)

Father CASSIAN Russell, Conyers (by e-mail)

Father DOMINIQUE Nelson, Guadalupe (by e-mail)

Father PAUL Rowe, Guadalupe (by e-mail)

Mrs Valerie Valle (by e-mail)

Spanish – French

Father JEAN-BAPTISTE Brousse de Gersigny, Sept-Fons

Mother ANNE Morin, Laval (by e-mail)

French – Spanish

Father ANDRES Barrón Cervera, St Isidro/Oseira

Father AGUSTIN Romero, Huerta (by e-mail)

Brother PLACIDE Montez Rodriguez, Nový Dvůr (by e-mail)

Brother EDOUARD Lattar, Oelenberg/Scourmont (by e-mail)

English – Spanish

Father JULIO Wais y Piñeyro, Sobrado

Sister CECILIA Huerta Martini, Quilvo (by e-mail)

Spanish – English

Brother GREGORY Escardo, Gethsemani

Brother JUAN-DIEGO Lavado, New Melleray (by e-mail)

Brother ISAAC, Mepkin (by e-mail)

English – Japanese

Sister BERNARDA Hoshiba Chikayo, Nasu

Father JEAN-BAPTISTE Sakamoto, Phare

**General Coordinator of
the Secretariat**

Sister MARIA TERESA Caminada, Vitorchiano

Liturgists and sacristans	Dom HUGUES Chapelain de Seréville, Abbot of Les Neiges and...
Doctor and nurse	Dr. BESSONNEAU Christian Sister Daniela BANNI, Vitorchiano
Cellarer	Brother ENZO Gadea, Huerta/Casa Generalizia
IT and Website	Father KLEMENS Silatama Hananta Tur, Lamanabi
Voting Technician	RICCARDO



IV. PROGRAM FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2017

A – Preliminary Votes:

1 - on the document which presents **the procedures of the General Chapter**, a vote is necessary because of the change in the number of Commissions for the ordinary procedure

(cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 29 – vote 43)

Text of the vote:

“We accept the document that presents the procedures of the General Chapter.”

(cf. p. 65-70 of the Work Book)

If the result of the vote is negative, the Commissions of the Chapter will have to meet to propose modifications.

2 - on the revised text **for the study of the House Reports**

(cf. document « Study of the House Reports at the GC 2014», p. 25-27 of the Work Book, and Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 27)

Text of the vote:

“We accept the procedure for the study of the House Reports, as it has been voted at the General Chapter of 2014”

If the result of the vote is negative, the Commissions of the Chapter will have to meet to propose modifications.

3 - Nominations for the election of the members (3) of the **Commission for Studying the Finances**

(Cf. Procedures of the General Chapter, n°11)

4 - Nominations for the election of two Capitulants (an abbot and an abbess) who after the General Chapter will write the document “**A Synthesis of the General Chapter**”

(Cf. document « Study of the House Reports at the GC 2014», p. 27 of the Work Book, n° d. 3-1 et 3-2)

B – Reading the Reports of the Regions

(Cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 12 – vote 12)

C – Study of the House Reports

According to the procedure « Study of the House Reports» used at the 2014 Chapter (cf. p. 25-27 of the Work Book) or another procedure.

(Cf. n° A. 2. above)

D – The choice of candidates for the election of the Council members of the Abbot General

The CC, Roscrea 2016, expressed the wish that the candidates to be elected members of the Council of the Abbot General be known at the beginning of the Chapter

(Cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 32-33)

E – Questions treated by all the Commissions (*extraordinary procedure*)

5 – Revision of C 67 and the accompaniment of the communities in increasing fragility (cf. work paper of the C.I., p. 44-50 of this document, and work paper of a 3 member Commission, p. 37-43 of this document and Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 15-17)

6 – The Father Immediates

(cf. work paper p. 28-36 of this document, and Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 17-20)

7 – The financial needs of the houses of the Order

Point not treated at the GC 2014.

(cf. work paper p. 56-64 of this document, and Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 23-24)

8 – Discussion on the Reports of the Regions

(cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 12 – vote 13)

9 – Evaluations (2) during the General Chapter

(cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 35 – vote 57)

F – Questions treated by 4 Commissions

(cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 29, votes 43 et 44)

10 - Revision of the votes 47 - 50 of the GC 2014

(cf. work paper of the C.I., p. 51-55 of this document and Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 21-23)

[Commissions : 1, 5, 8, 13]

G – Questions treated by 2 Commissions (*ordinary procedure*)

(cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 29, votes 43)

11 - The Idea of a "Regional Procedure" suggested by RéCiF

(Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 30-31)

[Commissions : 10, 12]

12 - Examine the Acts of the Abbot General and of his Council.

[Commissions 2, 9]

13 - Resignations of Superiors:

1 -Dom Armand of Scourmont **[Commissions : 2, 8]**

2 - Dom Joseph of Port-du-Salut **[Commissions : 3, 11]**

3 - Dom Giacomo of Tre Fontane **[Commissions : 1, 14]**

4 - Dom Mark of Nunraw **[Commissions : 6, 12]**

5 - Dom Joseph of Snowmass **[Commissions : 5, 10]**

6 - Dom Stanislaus of Mepkin **[Commissions : 2, 7]**

7 - M. Catarina of Imari **[Commissions : 4, 13]**

8 - M. Inès of El Encuentro **[Commissions : 9, 12]**

Use of a standardized procedure for the presentation of the resignations in the full assembly:

We accept the resignation.

Yes – No – Abstention

If the vote is accepted, vote (b) is then taken.

If the vote is not accepted, vote(c) is taken.

b - The resignation will take effect on such and such a date.

Yes – No – Abstention

c - The abbot ... shall present his resignation at such and such a time (next General Chapter, or on this given date...)

Yes – No – Abstention

(Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 21)

14 - Closure of the Communities of :

1 – Ava [**Commissions : 4, 7**]

2 – Melleray [**Commissions : 11, 14**]

3 – Holy Trinity [**Commissions : 4, 6**]

15 - Erection to a Simple Priory

1 – Boa Vista [**Commissions : 3, 14**]

2 –Las Escalonias [**Commissions : 5, 13**]

16 - Erection to an Abbey :

1 - de Naši Pani [**Commissions : 7, 14]**

17 - Approbation of a fondation :

1 – fondation of Vitorchiano in Portugal [**Commissions : 6, 13**]

18 - Change of Paternity:

1 – for the Community of Mount Melleray [**Commissions : 3 , 14**]

2 – for the Community of Kopua [**Commissions : 4, 13**]

And other questions that may arise

H – Questions treated according to a special procedure

19 - Discernment regarding the Communities, which have had a Superior *ad nutum* for more than three years (ST 39.2.B): Zenarruza, Mistassini, Frattocchie, Illah, Bricquebec, Oseira, Engelszell, Koutaba, Prairies, Chimay, Chambarand, Ajimu, Carrizo, Baumgarten (9 communities of monks and 5 of nuns).

[Report to be read in plenary assembly by the commission assigned the particular House]

20 - Examine the reports on the finances of the Generalate, of the Order and of the Commission of Aid.

[By the Commission elected at the beginning of the Chapter – cf. A. 3 and the Secretary of the Commission of Aid]

I – Conferences

21 - The Abbot General will give a conference

22 – 5 Superiors will speak on the topic of "Their Vision of the Order for the 21st Century".
(cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 8, vote 5)

23 - The guests will address the theme of "The monastic charism for the 21st Century".
(cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 38, vote 63)

J – Information given during the General Chapter

- By the Pontifical Commissary of Awhum
- By the Pontifical Commissary of Bamenda
- By the Pontifical Commissary of Mellifont
- By the Pontifical Commissary of Mariawald
- By the Apostolic Administrator of Marija-Zvijezda
- By the Pontifical Commissary of Alloz
- By the Father Immediate on the situation of Bela Vista,
- By Mother Regina, Responsible for the dispersed Cty, on the situation of Grandselve
- On the situation of Clairefontaine
- By the President of the Commission of Law
- By the Central Secretary of Formation
- Report of the work of the Postulator
- Possible locations for the next General Chapter

K – Elections

- The Regional delegates and their substitutes for the Central Commission (cf. St 80.B.d and d bis)
- Two members of the Council of the Abbot General – a monk and a nun –(cf. 84.1.A)
- The Procurator General (cf. ST 84.1.H)
- Four members of the Law Commission (cf. Statute for the Law Commission, II, 2, 3, 4)
- Members of the Commission of Coordination (a promoter, a vice promoter and 3 members)

And the confirmation of the election of the delegates and substitutes from the Regions as members of the Central Commission 2019 (cf. ST 80.B.d and d. bis) cf. above



V-COMMISSIONS OF THE CHAPTER

- Each Commission elects a president, a vice-president and a secretary
(cf. n° 10 of the Procedure of the Chapter – p. 67 of the Work Book)
- At the beginning of the Chapter, after its election, the presidents, vice-presidents and secretaries meet with a member of the coordinating commission with the aim of receiving some indications about the details of their responsibilities
(cf. document « House Reports and their treatment» B 2.1.2).
- All the indications concerning the study of the house reports, are in the document « House Reports study»
(cf. § B, p. 25 of the Work Book)
- The Commission that studies the report of a house (*) that has had a Superior *ad nutum* for more than 3 years will read the report to the full assembly
(cf. H 19, p. 17 of the Work Book)

The commissions study:

- The House Reports assigned to them
- The questions designated for extraordinary procedure (cf. detail § E p. 16 of the Work Book)
- The questions assigned to them for ordinary procedure (detailed in each of the commissions)
- When a Commission presents a question to the Plenary Assembly it bases its report on the following template:
 - a. A succinct presentation of the question,
 - b. the different opinions heard on the question,
 - c. the pros and cons,
 - d. the formulation of a/several concrete proposal(s),
 - e. the position and proposals of the commission(cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 28, vote 42)

1st: Commission : English / Japanese 1

13 MEMBERS (7 + 6)

Gethsemani – Phare – Kopua – Oita – Shuili – Dom David – Brother Maximilian (Rawaseneng),
Oriens Delegate

Glencairn – Nishinomiya – Imari – Nasu – Ajimu – Sister Teresa (Ajimu), Oriens Delegate

Assigned reports (9)

Calvaire – Oseira (*) – Berryville – Paraiso – Zenarruza (*)

Echourgnac – Bonneval – Arévalo – Redwoods

Questions to be studied (ordinary procedure)

-Resignation of Dom Giacomo Brière, Abbot of Tre Fontane (G 13)

Question to be studied by 4 commissions

- Revision of Votes 47 – 50 of the GC 2014 (F 10)

2nd Commission: English Commission 2

15 MEMBERS (11 + 4)

Mt St Bernard – New-Melleray – Roscrea – Echt – Zundert – Ava – Snowmass – Kurisumala – Nsugbe – Illah – Father Stephen (Genesee), USA Delegate
Mississippi – Klaarland - Abakaliki – Macau

Assigned reports (13)

Bellefontaine – Aiguebelle – Sept-Fons – Scourmont – Phare – Mepkin – Azul – Maromby
Glencairn – Wrentham – Nasu – Etoile N.D. – Mvanda

Questions to be studied (ordinary procedure)

- Resignation of Dom Armand Veilleux, Abbot of Scourmont (G 13)
- Resignation of Dom Stanislaus Gumula, Abbot of Mepkin (G 13)
- Acts of the Abbot General and of his Council (G 12)

3^d Commission: English Commission 3

13 MEMBERS (8 + 5)

Diepenveen – Caldey – Conyers – Rawaseneng – Tarrawarra – Victoria – Bolton – Bamenda
Whitland – Redwoods – Donnersberg – M. Regina – Sister Alice (Wrentham), USA Delegate

Assigned reports (11)

Port-du-Salut – Tamié – St Sixtus – Illah (*) – Nsugbe – Guadalupe
Tulebras – Quilvo – Boa Vista – Rosary – Sujong

Questions to be studied (ordinary procedure)

- Resignation of Dom Joseph Deschamps, Abbot of Port-du-Salut (G 13)
- Erection as a simple Priory the foundation: Boa Vista (G 15)
- Change of Paternity for the Community of Mount Melleray (G 18)

4th Commission: English Commission 4

16 MEMBERS (9 + 7)

Mount Melleray – Spencer – Tilburg – Nunraw – Mepkin – Genesee – Vina – Guimaras – Lamanabi
Maria Frieden – Butende – Santa Rita – Crozet – Rosary – Sujong - Sister Tamar (Kaarland), NED Delegate

Assigned reports (10)

Cîteaux – La Oliva – Prairies (*) – Ava – Tarrawarra
Blauvac – Imari – La Palma – Fons Pacis – Kunnambetta

Questions to be studied (ordinary procedure)

- Resignation of Mother Catharina Shibuya, Abbess of Imari (G 13)
- Closure of the Community of Ava (G 14)
- Closure of the Community of Holy Trinity (G 14)
- Change of Paternity for the Community of Kopua (G 18)

5th Commission: English Commission 5

13 MEMBERS (9 + 4)

Lantao – Holy Trinity – Guadalupe – Bethlehem – Berryville – Awhum – Boschi – Dom Timothy, Father Jan (Caldey), Delegate of the Isles
Arnhem – Wrentham – Gedono – Matutum

Assigned reports (11)

Zundert – Snowmass – Kasanza – Escalonias – Mount St Bernard – Jarabacoa
Soleilmont – Butende – Brialmont – Abakaliki – Kibungo

Questions to be studied (ordinary procedure)

- Resignation of Dom Joseph Boyle, Abbot of Snowmass (G 13)
- Erection as a Simple Priory: Community of Las Escalonias (G 15)

Question to be studied by 4 commissions

- Revision of Votes 47 – 50 of the GC 2014 (F 10)

6th Commission: French Commission 1

14 MEMBERS (7 + 7)

La Trappe – Melleray – Sept-Fons – Bricquebec – Neiges – Mistassini – Kokoubou
Les Gardes – Bon Conseil – Blauvac – Vitorchiano – Soleilmont – Tautra – Sister Annie (Laval), CNE Delegate

Assigned reports (13)

Roscrea – Nunraw – Bethlehem – Guimaras – Frattocchie (*) – Los Andes – Holy Trinity
Baumgarten (*) – Nishinomiya – Santa Rita – Hinojo – Juigalpa – Val d'Igny

Questions to be studied (ordinary procedure)

- Resignation of Dom Mark Caira, Abbot of Nunraw (G 13)
- Approval of the foundation of Vitorchiano in Portugal (G 17)
- Closure of the Community of Holy Trinity [G 14]

7th Commission: French Commission 2

12 MEMBERS (6 + 6)

Cîteaux – Bellefontaine – Aiguebelle – Calvaire – Novo Mundo – Brother Augustin (Mokoto), RAFMA Delegate
Tenshien – Valserena – Cabanoule – Kunnambetta – Meymac – Le Rivet

Assigned reports (13)

Bricquebec (*) – Huerta – Boschi – Consolation – San Isidro – Conyers – Genesee – Oelenberg
Campénéac – Clarté-Dieu – Tautra – Géronde – Ampibanjinana

Questions to be studied (ordinary procedure)

- Closure of the Community of Ava [G 14]
- Resignation of Dom Stanislaus Gumula of Mepkin (G 13)
- Erection as an Abbey the Community of Naši Pani (G 16)

8th Commission: French Commission 3

13 MEMBERS (6 + 7)

Port-du-Salut – Orval – Tamié – Désert – Atlas – Kasanza -
Naši Pani – Fille-Dieu – Etoile N.-D. – Nazareth – Brialmont – Fons Pacis – Sister Aleksandra (Bonneval), REM Delegate

Assigned reports (12)

Latroun – Novo Mundo – Cardaña – Val N.D. – Jacona – Kurisumala – Novy Dvůr
Assomption – Bon Conseil – Avila – Ajimu (*) – Maria Frieden (cf. vote 53 of GC 2014)

Questions to be studied (ordinary procedure)

- Resignation of Dom Armand Veilleux, Abbot of Scourmont (G 13)

Question to be studied by 4 commissions

- Revision of the Votes 47 – 50 of the GC 2014 (F 10)

9th Commission: French Commission 4

12 MEMBERS (8 + 4)

Westmalle – Mt des Cats – St Sixte – Marija-Zvijezda – Val N.-D. – Engelszell – Mokoto
Brother Philippe-Marie (Bellefontaine), RéCiF Delegate
Chimay – Clarté-Dieu – Mvanda – Ampibanjinana

Assigned reports (10)

Spencer – Victoria – Acey – Oita
Les Gardes – Whitland – Meymac – Benaguacil – Armenteira – El Encuentro

Questions to be studied (ordinary procedure)

- Resignation of Mother Inès Gravier, Abbess of El Encuentro (G 13)
- Acts of the Abbot General and of his Council (G 12)

10th Commission: French Commission 5

12 MEMBERS (7 + 5)

Tre Fontane – Acey – Scourmont – Latroun – Prairies – Maromby – Father Bruno-Marie (Val N.D.), CAN Delegate
Baumgarten – Bonneval – Campénéac – Echourgnac – Sister Rachel (Etoile N.D.), RAFMA Delegate

Assigned reports (9)

Les Neiges – le Désert – Engelszell (*) – Diepenveen – Atlas
Laval – Le Rivet – Fille-Dieu – Cabanoule

Questions to be studied (ordinary procedure)

- Resignation of Dom Joseph Boyle, Abbot of Snowmass (G 13)
- Regional Procedure (G 11)

11th Commission: French Commission 6

13 MEMBERS (6 + 7)

Timadeuc – Oelenberg – Consolation – Koutaba – Novy-Dvůr – Father Bernard (Cîteaux),
CNE Delegate
Laval – Chambarand – Assomption – Val d'Igny – Kibungo – Géronde – Mother Danièle

Assigned reports (12)

Vina – Orval – Sobrado – Bolton – Viaceli – Mistassini (*)
Tenshien – Vitorchiano – Esmeraldas – Donnersberg – Huambo – Crozet

Questions to be treated (ordinary procedure)

- Closure of the Community of Melleray (G 14)
- Resignation of Dom Joseph Deschamps, Abbot of Port-du-Salut (G 13)

12th Commission: Spanish Commission 1

13 MEMBERS (6 + 7)

Cardena – Sobrado – Jarabacoa – Zenarruza -Las Escalonias - Brother Ruben (Azul), REMILA
Delegate
Alloz – Avila – La Palma – Quilvo – Esmeraldas – Juigalpa – Huambo

Assigned reports (13)

La Trappe – Westmalle – Rochefort – Myrendal – Lantao – Rawaseneng – Mokoto – Shuili
Chambarand (*) – Carrizo (*) – Vico – Gedono – Macau

Questions to be treated (ordinary procedure)

- Regional Procedure (G 11)
- Resignation of Dom Mark Caira , Abbot of Nunraw (G 13)
- Resignation of Mother Inès Gravier, Abbess of El Encuentro (G 13)

13th Commission: Spanish Commission 2

13 MEMBERS (6 + 7)

Oseira – Azul – Huerta – Miraflores – Jacona – Dom Santiago-Maria
*Arevalo – Benaguacil – Carrizo – Tulebras – Hinojo – Boa Vista – Sister Paula Maria,
(Armenteira), RE Delegate*

Assigned reports (12)

New Melleray – Tilburg – Echt – Caldey – Kokoubou – Koutaba (*) – Kopua
Chimay (*) – Arnhem – Nazareth – Humocaró – Valsarena

Questions to be treated (ordinary procedure)

- Approval of the foundation of Vitorchiano in Portugal (G 17)
- Resignation of Mother Catarina of Imari (G 13)
- Erection as a Simple Priory: Community of Las Escalonias (G 15)
- Change of Paternity for the Community of Kopua (G 18)

Question to be studied by 4 commissions

- Revision of the Votes 47 – 50 of the GC 2014 (F 10)

14th Commission: Spanish Commission 3

12 MEMBERS (7 + 5)

La Oliva – Frattocchie – San Isidro – Viaceli – Paraiso – Los Andes – Brother Albon de la Cruz (Las Escalonias), RE Delegate

Vico – El Encuentro – Humocaró – Armenteira – Sister Karinia (Esmeraldas), REMILA Delegate

Assigned reports (12)

Melleray – Mont-des-Cats – Gethsemani – Mount Melleray – Timadeuc – Tre Fontane

Miraflores – Lamanabi

Klaarland – Matutum – Mississippi – Naši Pani

Questions to be treated (ordinary procedure)

- Closure of the Community of Melleray (G 14)
- Erection as a Simple Priory: Community of Boa Vista (G 15)
- Erection as an Abbey: Community of Naši Pani (G 16)
- Resignation of Dom Giacomo Brière, Abbot of Tre Fontane (G 13)
- Change of paternity for the Community of Mount Melleray (G 18)

VI - STUDY of THE HOUSE REPORTS at the GC 2014

(with the modifications introduced at the GC 2014)

A - Writing the House Reports

1.1 - The aim of the House Reports is to share with the whole Order the real state of the community. The community writes it with its Superior in consultation with the Father Immediate who makes sure that it gives true information on the community, instead of limiting itself to theoretical considerations.

1.2 - In writing it, the community reflects on its own monastic experience, especially as regards formation, dealing with this question in a concrete manner, avoiding abstract considerations. The community can take its inspiration from the document that will be proposed, and may use the recent Visitation Card.

B - Treatment of the House Reports at the General Chapter

2.1 - The study of the House Reports is the main aspect of the collégial pastoral solicitude of the General Chapter towards the communities of the Order. The General Chapter exercises that solicitude by confiding the reading and study of these House Reports to the commissions of the General Chapter.

2.1.1 - After having read and discussed the Reports, the commission dialogues with the superior. The father immediate, who always has the right to provide pertinent information to the president of the commission that is reading the report of his daughter house, is consulted (which does not necessarily imply that he participate in the discussions). If more information is needed, the commission contacts other members of the General Chapter who are familiar with the case in question. In both cases, the consultation may be carried out either in the presence or the absence of the Superior of the house, according to circumstances.

2.1.2 - Care should be taken at every stage, to respect the legitimate sensitivity of the superior of the house studied and of everyone concerned. If some sensitive information needs to be given to allow for an enlightened pastoral intervention, all the participants must be aware of their duty to respect charity and confidentiality.

At the beginning of the General Chapter, after their election, the presidents, vice-presidents and secretaries of the Mixed Commissions will have a meeting with a member of the coordinating commission in order to receive some indications on how to fulfill their tasks.

a) Study of the House Reports by the Commissions of the General Chapter

2.2 - Each Commission studies all the Reports assigned to it.

2.2.1 - In that study, they will be sensitive to, for example:

- The quality of formation in every phase of monastic life.
- The effective balance between *lectio*, liturgy and work.
- The superior's pastoral care of the community. For example, the care of the aged and infirm members or of those in initial formation.
- How the community is facing certain challenges, such as that of enculturation, especially in the field of formation.
- The available means used by the superior to assure his or her own ongoing formation inner balance and growth.
- The relationship with the father immediate.
- In cases where an abbot has a large filiation, how he deals with this.

2.2.2 - The pastoral care for the communities studied and their superiors will normally be exercised through: advice, affirmation, encouragement, recommendations and brotherly/sisterly support. The Commissions may also choose to send a message to the community concerned. Such messages are normally sent in the Commissions' name. If a Commission wishes to write a message on behalf of the entire Chapter, its text must first be approved by a vote of the Chapter.

2.2.3 - When a Commission judges that a community requires special pastoral attention, it will always discuss the matter with the superior concerned and will consult the Father Immediate. If there is need for a specific decision, the Commission first tries to reach an agreement with the local superior, the Father Immediate, and—when appropriate—the Abbot General. In such cases, the Commission's role is mainly consultative: the actual decisions are made and carried out by the persons who have the authority to do so.

2.2.4 - If, in exercising pastoral care for the community and its superior, the Commission (with or without the aid of an ad hoc commission) is unable to reach an agreement with the competent persons regarding the recommendations it proposes or if these recommendations are not within the competence of the parties involved, the matter may be brought to the attention of the General Chapter. A majority vote of members of the Commission is required in order to take this step. It then consults the Abbot General and requests the Coordinating Commission to put the matter on the agenda.

2.2.5 - In cases when the General Chapter wishes to impose a decision, a majority vote of the General Chapter is required.

2.2.6 - It is possible for a superior to have recourse to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life (CICLSAL) concerning a decision made by the Chapter in his own regard or that of his community

2.2.7 - It is the responsibility of the Commission president to communicate important matters of this kind to the plenary assembly in the manner that the Coordinating Commission will judge opportune. The persons involved should be made aware beforehand of what information will be given to the Chapter.

2.2.8 - Each commission makes a report offering a general picture of the communities it has studied. In this report mention can be made of particular aspects or common features which could be of interest to the whole Order, especially in the area of formation.

b) Situations Requiring a Special Pastoral Attention

2.3.1 - There may be situations that invite further pastoral care due to the fact that: the pastoral care of the Commission is not accepted by the persons involved; more time and special interventions are needed in complicated situations.

2.3.2 - In such cases, the Commission, in consultation with the Abbot General and his Council, may create an ad hoc commission that will be composed of persons chosen for their experience and their capacity to intervene in that particular situation. The findings of the ad hoc commission will be brought to the Commission, which will then make the necessary recommendations.

2.3.3 - The following-up of the decisions taken by the Chapter will normally be made by the Father Immediate; if this is not opportune the Abbot General and his Council will be responsible for the following-up.

c) The Communication of Information

2.4 - The secretaries of the commissions will regularly give to the secretary of the coordinating commission a report on the progress of their work on the House Reports.

2.5 - A member of the council of the abbot general will serve as liaison between the abbot general and the coordinating commission.

2.6 - The reports of the commissions, at the end of their work, will be communicated to the plenary assembly in the form judged most opportune by the coordinating commission.

2.7 - The secretaries of the commissions having finished their work of the General Chapter will give to the coordinating commission all the documentation that has been worked on in the mixed commissions.

2.8 - All the documents established by the Commissions of the Chapter will be presented to the persons who are concerned - Superior, Father Immediate - as well as to the Abbot General, before being presented in Plenary Session.

2.9 - At the end of the General Chapter, the secretary of the coordinating commission will give to the abbot general a complete documentation concerning the work of the General Chapter.

d) Synthesis of the General Chapter

3.1 - A document will be written after the General Chapter, the redaction of which will be entrusted to two members of the General Chapters (an abbot and an abbess), elected by the General Chapter at the beginning of its work. The Abbot General and his Council will approve it.

3.2 - This document will. Be a synthesis of the work of the General Chapter and of its most significant points.



VII – WORKING PAPERS

1 - THE CURRENT SITUATION OF FATHER IMMEDIATES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

(Working Paper requested by Central Commission, Roscrea, 2016,
votes 25-28)

Dom Timothy (Procurator General
and Councilor of the Abbot General)
Dom Olivier (Cîteaux)
M. Martha (Gedono)

I. The State of the Question

The Central Commission meeting at Roscrea in June 2016 noted all the work that has been done in the Order on the question of Father Immediates and the Statute on Regular Visitations in recent years. (See page 17 of the CC Report.)

A working paper was prepared for the General Chapter of 2011 on the topic “The Role of the Father Immediate and the Challenge of his Ministry” which gave a synopsis of the responses to a questionnaire. All the Commissions studied this topic and their reports expressed a very positive respect for the ministry of the Father Immediate and its importance in the life of the communities. Some practical suggestions were offered. One pertained to the long debated topic of the need to limit the number of daughter houses any one community can effectively minister to. Another regarded the item mentioned in the Statute on Visitations that invites communities to send a report on the effect of the Visitation to the Visitor a few months after the Visitation had been completed.

It was proposed that the questions and suggestions from the Commissions’ reports be studied at the 2014 General Chapter. Unfortunately there was no time for this at the General Chapter of 2014 so the Central Commission of Roscrea in 2016 put this topic on the program of the General Chapter of 2017 with an increased sense of urgency because of the increased number of delegated Father Immediates and the difficulty of finding Father Immediates. The question has become more complex and urgent because of the diminishment and closing of certain motherhouses and the need to find other Father Immediates. New unexpected situations have developed and it is quite possible that others will follow.

II. Filiations and the Charter of Charity

Our Constitutions explain the service of Father Immediates and the Statute on the Regular Visitation with reference to the Charter of Charity, the 900th anniversary of which we will celebrate in 2019.

In accordance with the Charter of Charity, Cistercian communities are united by the bond of filiation. Traditionally filiation has its juridical form in the function of the Father Immediate. Paternity and filiation are expressed through mutual assistance and support. (C. 73)

This bond of filiation is an expression of the transmission of life from motherhouse to daughter house, which became the basic structure of our Order as a family of families/filiations. This then becomes the communion which unites all the communities of the Order among themselves with the aim of mutual help, encouragement and support in their various difficulties. This characteristic of the Order is underlined by Constitution 4:

The communities of the Order spread all over the world are gathered into unity by a bond of charity. Through the union that results from this association they can help one another in coming to a more complete understanding and practice of their common patrimony and they can offer mutual encouragement and support in difficulties. (C. 4.1)

In order that the bond of filiation can remain a living expression of the Cistercian charism in our present context, we need to look courageously at the difficulties which confront us, seek their causes and take the measures that are needed to resolve them. In new circumstances we must find new ways of remaining faithful to the spirit of the Charter of Charity, which from the beginning inspired the 'new monastery' and its institutions. Our communities are born of the same transmission of life and have the responsibility to nurture and transmit that life in their turn, whatever the poverty of their situation.

III. Actual problems:

1. A growing number of monasteries which have several/many daughter houses no longer have the resources to be able to fulfill the responsibilities of being a mother house.
 - Monasteries who have a superior *ad nutum* rather than an abbot who is often limited by their Father Immediate to the pastoral care of their own community and not the daughter houses. Also their situation is temporary and, if the Superior *ad nutum* is brought in from another monastery, they do not have familiarity with the daughter houses.
 - The precarious situation of several monasteries with large filiations (Melleray, Bricquebec, Mount Melleray)

2. The incapacity to take care of their daughter houses can happen rather suddenly and unexpectedly. Someone dies, a Regular Visitation asks the abbot to resign, a superior *ad nutum* is named without being given the task of caring for the daughter houses, etc.

3. The daughter houses are left to themselves. A temporary delegated Father Immediate has to be found and appointed, hoping that he and his community will want to accept the responsibility to further the Cistercian development of the "new daughter". The daughter house may not want to accept the delegated Father Immediate proposed.

4. Many temporary situations are created which weaken the real possibilities of pastoral collaboration and often cause misunderstandings.

5. Sometimes the request to be a delegated Father Immediate is refused because:
 - The situation of the abbot's own monastery is too fragile.
 - He already has other daughter houses.
 - He feels incapable of confronting a new situation, perhaps more so if in another culture.
 - He feels he lacks the financial capacity to care for daughter houses.
 - Personal health problems.
6. Perhaps an abbot is willing to be a delegated visitor but not a Father Immediate. But what is needed is pastoral care of the community that is more intense than just a visitation every two years.
7. Some daughter houses do not want to give up their Father Immediate even though the motherhouse is no longer able to do the job.
8. The particular needs of 'spontaneous monasteries' that were admitted into the Order without the normal process of foundation by a motherhouse and are the responsibility of the Order that accepted them to provide a Father Immediate and motherhouse to transmit the Cistercian patrimony and encourage their monastic response to the Gospel.

IV. Some Basic Questions:

1. Do we want to be faithful to the original structure of filiation in which houses founded by a monastery become and remain daughter houses of the mother house as intended by our founding fathers?
2. Is it time to face the actual problems of our time with more practical, pragmatic solutions?
3. Is filiation merely a structure or does it express something fundamental to our charism?
4. What values are expressed in our filiations that might be lost if we make changes in the manner of designating Father Immediates?

V. Possible Proposals:

Our concern: the exercise of responsible paternity by the motherhouse without detriment to the life of the mother house itself. At our meeting to work on this document, we started by considering the three proposals that have been mentioned most often.

1. The General Chapter could be given the power to choose and assign a new Father Immediate when necessary, which the abbot and his community would accept under obedience, *ad experimentum*. After 3 years there would be a vote of the two communities and the General Chapter to confirm the permanent change of paternity. This power would be delegated to the Abbot General for urgent cases that arise between Chapters. He could give this task as a temporary delegation to be approved by the following General Chapter.

Pro – This authority is needed in urgent cases because of the difficulty in finding abbots willing to become the Father Immediate of houses in need that subsequently remain without a Father Immediate over a long period of time.

Con – What criteria should be used to choose which community would be asked to be the new Father Immediate? Can such obedience be demanded by the Chapter or the Abbot General?

The power to demand such obedience might be possible by adapting elements of a centralized Religious Institute. This would involve a change in the structure of the Order.

Con – Forced adoptions do not augur well for good relationships of trust.

2. The larger filiations of some monasteries could be divided up more evenly among the houses of the Order. At present, 12 monasteries have from 5-8 daughter houses, 5 have 4 daughter houses, 14 have 3, 9 have 2, 19 have 1, 34 have none. It is suggested that there be a limit of 3 or 4 daughter houses and the others could be adopted by monasteries that have less than 2. This could be done by decisions of the conventual chapters of the motherhouses, the daughter houses and the new motherhouses, and would need to be confirmed by the General Chapter.

Pro – This has been put forth as a simple solution to redistribute the burdens of overloaded houses.

Con – Each house with more than 4 daughter houses would have to decide which ones would be kept and which ones would be ‘offered for adoption’. A new Father Immediate would have to be found for each of the houses to be given away. This would need the acceptance of the conventual chapter of the new motherhouse and the agreement of the daughter house. Some Father Immediates who are overburdened do not want to let go of their daughter houses.

Con – Even if communities were open and agreeable to this proposal, this would entail a huge amount of work, many sided consultations, votes and collaboration between the former Father Immediate and the new one.

Con – The solution would not be so immediate, simple or practical.

Con – Family and filiation ties would be lost. A new Father Immediate would have to take on a completely new situation without knowing the community of the daughter house, its history, and its people.

3. Separate the role of financial support from the role of paternity.

All the houses of the Order would need to agree to contribute all funds available for such purposes to the Commission of Aid rather than distributing their funds themselves. The Commission of Aid will consult the Father Immediate of the community requesting assistance and have access to the financial documents of the said community in order to evaluate the request and make their decision.

Pro – A community with limited financial resources would be able to accept responsibility for a daughter house.

Pro – The Charter of Charity states that it is the General Chapter that gives material support to houses in difficulty.

Con – Some communities may prefer to administer the distribution their funds themselves.

VI. Possibilities that we could try to implement without changes in our legislation or structure

“What is clearly emerging in the situation of increasing fragility is that the way forward is the path of collaboration” (Conference of the Abbot General at the General Chapter of 2014).

1. Seek collaboration from within the motherhouse. An overburdened abbot of a mother house could, with the explicit agreement of the daughter house, delegate the role of Father Immediate and the full pastoral care of a daughter house to a prior, a former superior or other competent member of the mother house community, while retaining canonical jurisdiction. Actually an abbess could also be delegated by the Father Immediate with the same kind of pastoral care or be delegated as a Visitor, even in houses of monks, while the Father Immediate retains responsibility and jurisdiction. Pastoral care and canonical jurisdiction can be distinguished and separated. They do not have to reside in the same person.

Pro – The councilors of the Abbot General who have never been superiors have been given the right of making visitations. Other non-superiors could be given the same power, based on the discernment of the Fr. Immediate.

Pro – Such an arrangement could be freely decided between the Father Immediate and the daughter house but would not be imposed on any community not in favor of such a delegation.

Con – There is obviously a risk of human error and incapacity as there is in entrusting any new pastoral task.

2. Seek collaboration within a filiation. An overburdened motherhouse of a large filiation could delegate visitations to certain daughter houses to superiors of other houses in his filiation who have some acquaintance with the sister house.

Pro – A superior ad nutum at the motherhouse could also retain responsibility for daughter houses by delegating the visitations to one of his other daughter houses where possible. There would be continuity within the same filiation.

Con – Perhaps the filiation is not so united as to make any difference between this and the possibility of delegating someone from any other house. But it could be a motivation for filiations to renew their sense of family responsibility.

3. Seek collaboration within the Region. Paternity and visitations that need to be delegated could be given to houses of the same region with the coordination of the President of the Region.

Pro – In some regions the same culture, history, language and proximity could be of help.

Con – Being in the same Region does not necessarily facilitate trust and communication.

(Would this be effective in your Region?)

Con – In other larger regions, similarities of culture and language do not exist.

Con – Filiation ties would be lost. There would be a loss of contact between regions. Our transcultural unity would be weakened.

4. Seek collaboration with the nuns.

A. To relieve the burden of Father Immediates, houses of nuns could ask for delegated Abbess Visitors for 2 out of every 3 regular visitations, with the Father Immediate assuring the canonical link and making the visitation every 6 years. This is already possible under our current legislation and would be a generous contribution of the houses of nuns to lessen the difficulties of the houses of monks.

Pro – It would urge the women superiors to be more active and responsible in our Single Order. It would also promote deeper relations among the houses of nuns and be an incentive to grow in trust.

Con – It is said that some houses of nuns and superiors thereof prefer a monk as visitor.

B. The Charter of Charity, having been written for houses of monks, does not envisage mother immediates. Perhaps the time has come to envisage this possibility. A daughter house of nuns could ask the Father Immediate to be given a house of nuns as its mother immediate. The Father Immediate and his community as well as the other house of nuns requested would have to agree. The Father Immediate would retain jurisdictional responsibility in a collaboration of shared authority.

Pro – A theoretical possibility that has aroused negative reactions in the past could perhaps find expression in a concrete situation and then be evaluated.

Con – A delicate balance would need to be reached in which the clarity of the jurisdiction of the Father Immediate because of his priesthood must be maintained.

5. A special and permanent visitor for the houses of a particular region (Nigeria, West Africa or all of Africa) could be appointed and given abbatial powers. This was done by the General Chapter of 1933 for the Far East because of difficulties of making regular visitations. The prior of Mont des Cats was named to the charge. This shows that a non-superior could be given the abbatial powers for visitations and general overseeing of house/houses in special situations. (Cf. *"The Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance in the 20th Century – From 1892 to the Close of the Second Vatican Council – Volume One"*, page 174)

6. Some of these possibilities can be tried and explored. They may open up new pastoral collaboration of shared authority but they will not solve all the problems. At the Central Commissions there was a strong plea for a change of attitude for more generosity and solidarity in the Order, more willingness to make sacrifices and take risks in order to help communities in need, in the spirit of the Charter of Charity. *"If there is not a change of attitude in terms of the level of mutual obligation, these questions will remain without a solution.... the situation deteriorates rapidly."* We cannot assume that other monasteries can do what we feel we cannot do. No monastery is in a situation of such great strength as to feel able to help others so we must learn to give from our poverty as the poor widow in the gospel.

VII. The Current Situation

We feel the scope of this document is not just limited to examining material situations and proposing material solutions but must also examine spiritual realities and make creative suggestions for the future.

Our discussions about concrete situations revealed more difficulties than had been imagined. Reflecting on the problem of the lack of Father Immediates increased our awareness not just of fragile communities but also of the fragility of the Order as such. It seems we are at a moment in which we are called to a new consciousness of our situation, to seek the spiritual roots of our problems, to admit our mistakes and to pose ourselves questions. The final sentence of the 2014 document on the State of the Order states: *"The call to change is addressed not to structures but to human hearts"*. We are faced with a call to conversion. Chapter 72 of the Rule reminds us : *"Let no one follow what he thinks useful for himself but rather for others as well"*. Our motivation to transmit the Cistercian charism to new generations needs to be stronger than the desire of individual communities to survive in their present situation. (Cf. Abbot General's Conference General Chapter 2014)

After all the documents, working papers, questionnaires and discussion about the role of the Father Immediate there are still questions of what is expected from him. There is a growing consensus that the most important thing for an effective pastoral relationship of a Father Immediate with his daughter house, or of a Visitor with the visited community, is a common vision of monastic life held by the Visitor and the visited. Do we have a common vision of our Benedictine-Cistercian charism that can be the basis of discernment? Do we have the courage to ask the questions that need to be asked and say the things that need to be said?

The Charter of Charity successfully achieved equilibrium between the autonomy of the local house and the need for faithful adhesion to the common vision of belonging to the larger family, the Church of Cîteaux, wherever it was present. There was a shared responsibility to support and maintain that balance in which the good of each house and the good of the whole were not felt to be in opposition.

We live in an age of autonomy in which that balance has been lost because of claims to autonomy, fear and rejection of authority and exaggerated diffidence about interfering in the matters of an autonomous house. Difficult situations can become blocked because of hesitation to use rightful authority and unwillingness to accept advice, suggestions or new decisions. We need to admit that the influence of modern thought and culture has weakened our vision of faith as regards the authority of Christ present in the Church and in the Order, causing deep confusion about the meaning of monastic obedience for the individual as well as for communities. The 'crisis of Father Immediates' would seem to be due to a lack of faith.

Our mission in the Church is to live and transmit the Benedictine charism of humility and obedience, as understood and lived by the Cistercian Fathers, as a concrete path toward mystical union with God in the School of Love. Perhaps the celebration of the 900th anniversary of the Charter of Charity could be an occasion in which we renew our commitment to the gift of our common charism and strengthen our solidarity as prophetic witnesses of new humanity in Christ.

THE FATHER IMMEDIATE

Some current problematic situations

FATHER IMMEDIATE	PRESENT SITUATION	AFFECTED DAUGHTER HOUSES
Melleray	Dispersed community	Bricquebec Laval
Bricquebec	Superior <i>ad nutum</i>	Phare Nishinomiya Imari Nasu Ajimu
Mount-des-Cats	Superior <i>ad nutum</i> (D. Marc-André was elected 10.XII)	(until 2017 Chapter) Tilburg to Orval Frattocchie to Tamié Fille-Dieu to Sept Fons
Mount Melleray	Claustral Prior Bolton delegate of FI	(no permanent arrangements) New Melleray Roscrea Mellifont (Pontifical Com) Bethlehem Kopua (delegate Tarrawarra) Glencairn Abakaliki
Mariawald	Claustral Prior (Tilburg delegate of FI until 2017)	Marija Zvijezda (Pont. Ad.) Maria Frieden (Scourmont until 2017 Chapter)
Genesee	(For health reasons unable to function in remote areas.)	Awhum (Pontifical Com) Illah (Scourmont for finance)
Bamenda	Pontifical Commissary	Nsugbe

VII – WORKING PAPERS

2 - "Choose Life!" (Dt. 30,19)

Working paper for the accompaniment of communities that are experiencing an increasing fragility.

(Working Paper requested by the Central Commission, Roscrea, 2016,
votes 18-22)

Dom Bernardus (Tilburg)
M. Rebekka(Klaarland)
Dom Clément (Mistassini)

1. In recent years, the General Chapters have frequently addressed the subject of aging communities, along with the lack of vocations and perseverance. Let us recall especially the report of the Dutch Region at the 1993 Chapter, and the report of the General Secretary of Formation at the 1999 Chapter at Lourdes. Also the letter of Dom Bernardo Olivera on "The Appropriate Attitude toward Aging" addressed to the Canadian Region and the Region of the Isles in 1998, and, not to forget, his conference at the General chapter 2002 on this subject.

Several Regional Conferences—Canada, Holland, Isles, France South West, North and Central Europe, USA—have likewise approached this subject from different perspectives. The Abbot Generals and many Father Immediates have been involved with this subject in various ways, by special Regular Visitations, by taking part in Regional or even special Meetings, and by creating "commissions for the future". Many creative solutions have been made during these years (see working paper GC 2014) to accompany communities with increasing fragility.

Since the General Chapters of 2005 the focus shifts from precarious communities because of aging toward fragile communities. The Order doesn't want to see fragility any longer as a calamity but as a challenge towards the transmission of life even when a community has to be closed. Recent documents by the Magisterium affirm the Order in this attitude, especially the document *Vultum Dei Quaerere*.

Every community in the Order, in every continent, may have to face an increasing fragility at a certain moment in its history. It is important in that case not to withdraw in an isolation justified by a false conception of the community's autonomy, but to see oneself "as part of a true communion which is constantly open to encounter, dialogue, attentive listening and mutual assistance" (cf. VDQ 29). The Charter of Charity also teaches us to look for and to accept concrete assistance "that we may live by one charity" (CC III.2).

2. What do we mean by fragile communities? It is true that every life, including the religious life, is fragile. But still there are objective criteria in order to measure an increase in fragility. In 2002 Dom Bernardo Olivera offered us the following list:

- The last solemn profession was more than 12 years ago.
- The average age of the community is over 70.
- There are less than 12 members.
- More than 5 need special health care.
- The community's attitude is more resigned than hopeful.
- There are no plans for the future.
- Rather than unity, there is tolerant coexistence.
- Those in positions of responsibility hold two or three offices.
- There is a lack of means and personnel for formation.
- At the Opus Dei, attendance is low and quality is poor.
- *Conversatio* is mostly a matter of will-power and/or is lightened by various dispensations.
- Services and livelihood depend on lay help.
- The economy depends on pensions.
- The buildings are disproportionately large.

During several regional meetings and General Chapters people have tried to complete this list. This shows that fragility is not a static concept and that the context of an individual community should always be taken into account.

Besides Dom Bernardo's list, article 8.1 of *Vultum Dei Quaerere* is also helpful to become aware of an increasing fragility. "Juridical autonomy needs to be matched by a genuine autonomy of life. This entails a certain, even minimal, number of sisters, provided that the majority are not elderly, the vitality needed to practice and spread the charism, a real capacity to provide for formation and governance, dignity and quality of liturgical, fraternal and spiritual life, sign value and participation in life of the local Church, self-sufficiency and a suitably appointed monastery building. These criteria ought to be considered comprehensively and in an overall perspective".

As a conclusion we can say that a community is fragile when during a long time there are problems in the area of governance, formation, average age, the number of its members and/or the economy.

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

3. First of all it is the responsibility of every community together with its superior to look realistically at their situation. 'Realistically' doesn't mean only from a human point of view, but especially from a point of view of faith. An experience of fragility should be accepted as an invitation of the Lord to choose life by entering into the Paschal mystery.

4. The well-being of a community and the quality of the monastic life should be the concern of all the members of a community, "knowing that the good zeal of one is a help to all, whereas bitter zeal is a hindrance" (Cst 16.2). To each one individually spiritual gifts are given according to God's versatile grace. By sharing these gifts the brothers and sisters cooperate with the Spirit in constructing the community.

5. When a community is confronted with an increasing fragility it is encouraged to face the situation honestly. 'In a spirit of docility to the voice of the Holy Spirit' they try to discuss the situation "humbly and forthrightly" (cf. Cst 36.1). After all everyone is called to mutual care, collaboration and obedience. "The light of faith is especially necessary in these times in order to see that, through these difficult periods, one's heart is being formed by the personal (and communal) experience of Christ's cross, death and resurrection" (Ratio 54).

6. Facing the reality of a community, in faith, truth and love, "can take the form of community dialogues, meetings of the Council, or other ways apt to stimulate the collaboration of all" (cf. Stat. RV 14). Communities shouldn't be afraid to make use of external help in this process. Although we should have confidence in the Holy Spirit working in our own midst, the desire to solve our own problems can be a dangerous pitfall (cf. Ratio 54).

7. Creativity in seeking a solution is needed in situations of increasing fragility. It may be necessary to ask for exceptions to the existing legislation. Instead of changing legislation when a certain law is unhelpful in a specific case, a dispensation could be asked for from the competent authority. Help from the Law Commission can be useful in this matter. It is recommendable to look for specialized help as well as for collaboration with the local church and other religious institutes.

THE LOCAL SUPERIOR

8. In listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit the local superior has a special role and responsibility, first of all by his/her prayer and pastoral care. With the required tact and discretion the superior will encourage the brothers/sisters to face the real state of the community (cf. Ratio 54). In doing so the superior tries to take care "that no one may be troubled or vexed in the house of God" (cf. Cst 35; RB 31:19).

9. Confronted with an increasing fragility the local superior will involve the brothers and sisters by means of an open dialogue in taking decisions regarding the well-being of the community (cf. Cst 36.1). By giving conferences on a regular basis and by personal conversations the superior can help the brothers and sisters to face the community's reality.

10. An open and trusting relationship with the Father Immediate as well as with the superiors in the region can enable the local superior to share his burden. Spiritual accompaniment or other forms of accompaniment are important for the superior especially in times of the increasing fragility of the community.

THE FATHER IMMEDIATE

11. "The Father Immediate is to watch over the progress of his daughter houses. While respecting the autonomy of the daughter house he is to help and support the abbess in the exercise of her pastoral charge and to foster concord in the community" (Cst 74.1). The Father Immediate/visitor helps the local superior in seeking solutions to particular difficulties and refers to others if necessary (cf Ratio 66).

12. In a situation of increasing fragility in his daughterhouse he must have the courage to help the superior and the community to face the problem. The regular visitation is the most suitable instrument for this purpose (Stat RV 15).

13. Beside the points mentioned in the Statute on the Regular Visitation §16 the Father Immediate/visitor should pay special attention to whether there is a genuine autonomy in the area of governance, economy, formation and the number of its members. The criteria named in this document under no 2 can be of help.

14. Especially in a situation of increasing fragility the Father Immediate/visitor proceeds with great tact and charity, in a spirit of faith in the work of the Spirit in each person and each community. He/she will suggest to the community opportune ways to stimulate its growth and to help it to resolve its difficulties. The Father Immediate/visitor will do all in his power to get an objective idea of the real situation of the community (cf Stat RV 19).

15. The superior and the community will accept "in a spirit of faith and communion with the whole Order" the vision of the Father Immediate/visitor and they will reflect on their response and on how to put into practice any recommendations (cf Stat RV 25).

16. If a Father Immediate/visitor finds that the community doesn't share his vision of the present situation of the community he mentions the fact to the Abbot General and/or brings it to the notice of the General Chapter. The Father Immediate/visitor can also enlist the help of the superiors of the Region or of neighboring monasteries.

THE OTHER COMMUNITIES OF THE ORDER

17. Autonomous monasteries of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance, spread throughout different parts of the world, are joined together by the bond of charity and by a common tradition of doctrine and law. Their superiors are united by the bond of solicitude for the welfare of each community (C. 71.1-2). The communities of the Order collaborate and give mutual help in many ways, having due regard to their healthy differences and the complementarity of their gifts (C. 72.1).

18. All the communities of the Order share a responsibility for the formation of new candidates, in particular for new foundations and especially those made in young Churches or in isolated regions. They exercise this responsibility by sharing professors, lecturers or novice directors etc. (cf Ratio 72).

19. Communities experiencing fragility in the area of formation are encouraged to seek collaboration with other communities either within the Order or within other monastic Orders (cf Ratio 72). The central and/or regional secretary of formation may play a mediating role (cf Ratio 70-71).

SEVERAL COMMISSIONS

A. THE LAW COMMISSION

20. In all matters concerning canon law the Law Commission of the Order can assist the Order's responsible organs in seeking creative and life giving solutions for specific situations of fragile communities (cf Stat RV 1).

B. THE REGIONAL MEETING

21. Regional meetings are elected occasions for fostering communion and fraternal co-operation between monasteries within a geographical area and in the Order as a whole, and for organizing co-operative projects. They can also assist the houses in facing the challenges of an increasing fragility and in trying to respond to them within the particular culture of the region (cfCst 81; Ratio 69). Particularly communities having to deal with an increasing fragility on the level of the number of its members, formation and economy can be assisted in many ways by the support and the co-operation within the region.

C. COMMISSION OF FINANCIAL AID

22. A community experiencing vulnerability in the area of its economy can, with the knowledge of the Father Immediate, appeal to the Commission of Aid in accordance with the *Carta Caritatis*.

23. This Commission of Aid, together with the local superior and the Father Immediate will do all within its power to look into structural solutions to the economic vulnerability, so that a community may continue as an economically autonomous house according to its rank. The local superior and the community will do all in their power to collaborate in good understanding with the members of the commission and they will take to heart its recommendations.

24. All the houses of the Order are obliged to share of their abundance, be it ever so little, for the support of economically weaker communities by donating a sum to the commission of Aid instituted by the General Chapter.

D. COMMISSION OF THE FUTURE

- 25 Experience has taught us that setting up a commission of the future may be a great help for a community facing an increasing fragility. A community itself can, through the word of its superior, ask for such a commission, but also the Father Immediate, the Abbot General and the General Chapter may encourage a community to set up a commission of the future.
26. Care should be taken that the commission be composed of at least the local superior, a delegation of the community, the Father Immediate and a member of the regional meeting.
27. A procedure that is transparent to all those concerned is of great importance for the success of the commission. The commission gives a regular report of its work to the community. If the Father Immediate is not a member of the commission he has to be kept informed.
28. Every commission of the future does well to draw up statutes that regulate its work and its procedure.
29. The Abbot General is informed of the setting up of a commission of the future and of its proceeding.

THE GENERAL CHAPTER AND ITS COMMISSIONS

30. By virtue of tradition it belongs to the tasks of the general Chapter "to be informed of the state of each community and to exercise pastoral care in its regard" (St 79A.b; cf CC 7).
31. The commissions of the general Chapter charged with the study of a community's house report have to pay special attention to a community in a situation of increasing fragility. The local superior, the Father Immediate and other persons involved should be carefully listened to in order to be able to exercise the pastoral care of the General Chapter.
32. The commissions of the General Chapter follow the rules given by the General Chapter when treating of communities in situations of increasing fragility. The General Chapter can suspend the autonomy of a monastery, temporarily or permanently.
33. The follow-up of the decisions taken by a Mixed Commission will normally be made by the Father Immediate. If this is not opportune, the Mixed Commission will determine who will be responsible for the follow-up (cf 2.2.3. study of the house report GC2014). A regular report should be given to the Abbot General and his council.

THE ABBOT GENERAL

34. Communities facing an increasing fragility will receive the special attention of the Abbot General who "is a bond of unity within the Order" (Cst 82.1). He will follow up the process of such communities with more than normal attention, respecting the responsibilities of all the parties concerned. By giving a ready ear to the needs of the community, the superior, the Father Immediate and everyone who is involved, he fosters life.

35. "He has the power to dispense in all that pertains to the proper law of the Order" (Cst 82.4). "He cannot make decisions about the goods or the persons of communities", but in case of necessity he can take temporary measures (Cst 82.5).

36. If a community doesn't accept the vision repeatedly pointed out to them in visitation cards or other interventions, the Abbot General can always make use of his right to make the Regular Visitation at all the monasteries of the Order either personally or through a delegate. An additional visitation may be useful to help the community overcome an impasse (cf St 82.2D).

37. The Abbot General can alert the community in question, the local superior, the Father Immediate/visitor, the regional meeting, the General Chapter to the increasing fragility.

CONCLUSION

38. In order to allow the Cistercian life "to remain a vital part of the Church, of significance for the community of believers, it is necessary to take the right measures activating a system of dependence between active and vital communities in the Order and those who, although are no longer able to be an autonomous community, may still be a valuable presence" (S. Paciolla, O.Cist).

39. "If the situation of increasing fragility seems to be irreversible, the painful as well as necessary solution is: the suppression of the monastery, applying the same criterion as mentioned by the legislator for the foundation of a monastery namely the benefit of the Church and of the institute" (S. Paciolla, O.Cist).



VII – WORKING PAPERS

3 - ON THE REVISION OF C.67

(Working paper requested of the **Law Commission**
by the Central Commission – Roscrea 2016, votes 14-15, p. 16)

PART I

Historical Overview of C. 67

In order to place this question within the context of its recent history, it seems good to reproduce here the historical introduction to the 2011 working paper on the same topic, and then to provide an update on developments since 2011.

The General Chapter of 1953 wrote a first statute on the foundation, the transfer and the suppression of a monastery of monks of our Order:

Statutum Iuridicum erectionis, translationis et suppressionis monasterii virorum Ordinis Cisterciensium S.O. (C.G. of 1953, Acts, Annex III, pp.39-42).

The following Chapter published a similar statute for nuns (C.G. of 1954, Acts, Annex IV, pp. 24-26). These two Statutes do no more essentially that group together various decisions made by the General Chapters since 1982, the Constitutions of 1895 and of 1926 do not treat explicitly that question, referring simply to the Common Law and the tradition of the Order. Here is what the Statute of 1953 says concerning the suppression of house of monks. That of 1954, about the suppression of a house of nun, indicates simply, on this point, that which had been for the monks:

27. The suppression of a house of the Order, whether it be *sui iuris* or not, will not be done without serious reasons.

28. The suppression of a *sui iuris* monastery will be done in the following manner:

- 1) The decision will not be made without the deliberative votes of the conventual chapter and of the General Chapter, the Ordinary of the place having been consulted and the thing having been perfectly explained before the two councils. In addition, the General Chapter will not act without the Father Immediate having given his advice in writing.
- 2) The affair having thus been treated prudently, the request will be transmitted to the Holy See.
- 3) The religious of the suppressed house rejoin the Mother House and are thus *ipso facto* stabilized there. As for the temporal goods, they normally go to the Mother House. If the suppressed house has no Mother House, the General Chapter takes care of all.

29. The suppression of a monastery that is not yet *sui iuris* is done as follows:

- 1) The suppression will not be done unless the following conditions are achieved: the Ordinary of the place will be consulted; the Abbot will consult the members of the foundation which, according to the norms of the Constitutions have the right to vote; he will consult his own counsel by communicating to it the result of the consultation of the members of the foundation; he will take a deliberative vote of the conventual chapter after having explained perfectly to it the situation; he will propose the affair to the deliberation of the General Chapter with the written opinion of the Father Immediate.
- 2) If the indult of the Holy See approving the foundation has already been obtained, the request will be transmitted to the Holy See.
- 3) The religious of the suppressed house will return to the Founding House, to whom will go as well the temporal goods.

The *Statutes of Foundations* of 1974 do not include any section on the suppression of a community, nor that of 1987, often amended since then.

The various projects of Constitutions elaborated from 1967 on do not treat this question, nor the texts of the Constitutions votes by the monks of Holyoke in 1984 and by the nuns of El Escorial in 1985. On the basis of suggestions made by various Regional Conferences, the Law Commission, at its reunion of Campeneac, in June 1987, proposed the text of a new Constitution on the suppression of a house, which served as a base for the study of that question at the MGM of 1987 and led to the writing of the actual Constitution 67. A Statute (67.2.A) was added to the General Chapters of 2002, concerning the rights of stability of the members of a dissolved house.

C. 67 The suppression of a monastery

1

When, following many particular and enduring circumstances, there is no more reasonable hope for the growth of a monastery, it should be carefully examined whether it should be closed. Only the General Chapter can, at a voice of two-thirds, decree the suppression of an autonomous monastery. However, to this end, it must also have a majority of two-thirds of the voices of the conventual chapter. A written report and the agreement of the Father Immediate are equally required; the local bishop must be consulted as well.

2

When the General Chapter decides on the suppression of a monastery, it names a special commission of at least five people to watch over the process of suppression. Care will be taken, with a very particular pastoral vigilance, of the monks of the suppressed house, above all in that which concerns their right to a stability in a community of the Order. Attention must be given to the rights and obligations of all the concerned persons and communities, as well as the founders and benefactors. In the liquidation of the property, the civil law of the area is to be observed.

ST 67.2.A

The stability of the members of a dissolved community is normally made in the Mother House, and, in this case, the conventual chapter of that house does not make a vote to accept them. (Ch. GI 2002, vote 94).

The legislation of the Constitutions of nuns is the same as that of the Constitutions of monks, except that the dissolution must be decided by the Holy See and that the vote of the General Chapter is then necessary so that the petition of this may be presented to the Holy See.

The 2010 Central Commissions made the following request in Vote 59: *We wish to put the study of C. 67 on the program of the next MGM.* At the Central Commissions' request a working paper was drawn up by the Law Commission for the 2011 MGM, where the matter was treated by extraordinary procedure in separate commissions of abbots and abbesses. Among the commissions of abbots, several expressed dissatisfaction with the current legislation and suggested various revisions to C. 67, notably regarding the requirement of a 2/3 vote on the part the community. One commission of abbots suggested a statute that gives criteria for when it is time to consider closing a house. One commission of abbots suggested that the General Chapter appoint a special commission to determine whether a given house should be closed. As for the commissions of abbesses, one commission found the current C. 67 unclear, whereas all the others found the current legislation satisfactory. In summary, nine of the fifteen commissions were in agreement with the conclusion of the Law Commission's working paper: "If all the concerned persons – General Chapter, Father Immediate, Visitor and, obviously the local community with its superior – are conscious of their responsibilities, we do not much see what there would be to add to the Constitution such as it is found to be in our Constitutions." The 2011 MGM, without arriving at any specific conclusions, took the following votes (76 and 77):

- *WE ENTRUST TO THE REGIONS TO STUDY C.67 "ON THE SUPPRESSION OF A MONASTERY" IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORK DONE BY THE COMMISSIONS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2011.*

- *WE DESIRE THAT THE WORK DONE BY THE COMMISSIONS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2011 ON C.67 "ON THE SUPPRESSION OF A MONASTERY" BE REVIEWED AT THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2014 IN VIEW OF POSSIBLE LEGISLATION.*

The 2013 Central Commissions requested in vote 78: *We wish to consider a revision of C. 67 in so far as it concerns the necessity of obtaining a 2/3 majority vote of the conventual chapter in order to proceed to the suppression of the monastery.* The same Central Commissions also suggested the formulation of a statute on declining communities. At the 2014 Chapter, however, there was insufficient time to treat both questions separately. The commissions of the Chapter presented short reports, mixing the two topics. These commissions showed more interest in the topic of the autonomy of declining communities than in the specific question of the 2/3 vote of the conventual chapter required by Cst 67. Towards the end of the Chapter the following requests were made in votes 59 and 60:

- *WE DESIRE TO CREATE A COMMISSION TO GATHER ALL THE MATERIAL ON DECLINING COMMUNITIES AND CST 67 THAT EMERGED DURING THIS GENERAL CHAPTER AS WELL AS CORRESPONDING MATERIAL FROM OTHERS MONASTIC ORDERS.*

- *WE WISH THAT THIS COMMISSION, BASED ON THE MATERIAL THEY HAVE GATHERED, OFFER SUGGESTIONS AND PROPOSALS TO THE REGIONS.*

The 2016 Central Commission requested in vote 14: *We wish to put on the agenda of the General Chapter of 2017 a revision of C. 67.* The Law Commission was requested to prepare the present working paper on this topic.

PART II

The Difficulties Encountered Regarding C. 67 and Its Implementation

1. It is often remarked that the current formulation of C. 67 does not provide enough clarity about who initiates the processes of the closure/suppression of a monastery.
2. Many find it unclear how the various elements of C. 67 are to be applied in practice.
3. The requirement of a 2/3 majority vote by the conventual chapter of the community in question greatly restricts the General Chapter's ability to proceed to suppression.

PART III

Suggestions toward a Revision of C. 67

A. Suggestions from Recent General Chapters and Regional Meetings

1. Various suggestions have been made regarding the placement of C. 67 within the Constitutions. No doubt a more satisfactory placement can be found, but at present it seems important first to work on the content of the Constitution and the Statutes related to it. Once the General Chapter arrives at a satisfactory revision of the text it can then deal with the question of where to place it in the Constitutions.
2. Within the framework of the general topic of fragile or declining communities, it has been suggested that a list of criteria be drawn up to determine when a given house requires special attention. Dom Bernardo Olivera's conference at the 2002 MGM is often cited as a starting point.
3. It has been pointed out that some religious orders reduce the rank of monasteries that no longer meet the requirements of their given status. For example, an abbey with declining membership becomes a priory, a priory becomes a dependent priory, and so forth. The application of such a system in our Order does not seem possible, since simple priories, priories, and abbeys are all by definition autonomous houses.
4. A related approach would be to withdraw the autonomy of a community in view of closing it in the near future. In this case, our legislation would need to provide the possibility of a new kind of dependent house. Some houses closed in recent years became annex houses for a time. However, according to our current legislation the General Chapter must first suppress the house, and then, if the motherhouse wishes, it may allow the suppressed house to continue as an annex house. An alternative approach would be for the General Chapter to limit the exercise of certain aspects of a community's autonomy.

5. One of most frequently mentioned dissatisfactions with C. 67 is the question of who initiates the processes that leads to the closure of a house. In principle, according to our current legislation, only the General Chapter can take this initiative. One proposal is for the General Chapter to appoint a special commission to determine whether a house should be closed. Another proposal is that the Father Immediate take the initiative by informing the General Chapter of the state of a community and requesting that the process of closure begin. Other proposals suggest the involvement of Regions or Commissions of Aid in initiating the process.
6. The requirement of a 2/3 vote by the conventual chapter of the community has frequently been called into question. Some suggest reducing the requirement to an absolute majority vote. Others propose that the community be consulted without requiring a vote.

B. Proposal of the Law Commission

1. Given the seriousness and complexity of the question, it does not seem realistic to arrive at a reformulation of C. 67 that would take into account all these suggestions and the various situations currently arising within the life of the Order. A more realistic possibility would be to reduce C. 67 to the essentials, and then refer to a separate *Statute on the Suppression of a Monastery*. A Statute of this kind could integrate recent work toward pastoral guidelines for helping increasingly fragile communities. Such a Statute would also give the General Chapter greater flexibility in adjusting its legislation in this area to actual practice, as has been the case with other documents like the *Statute on Foundations* and the *Ratio institutionis*.

2. **C. 67** could be reduced to the following:

Cst 67 Suppression of a Monastery

1/for the monks:

When due to particular and long-standing circumstances a monastery no longer offers any basis for hope of growth, careful consideration should be given to whether it is to be closed. Only the General Chapter, by a two-thirds majority can decide on the suppression of an autonomous monastery.

1/for the nuns:

When due to particular and long-standing circumstances a monastery no longer offers any basis for hope of growth, careful consideration should be given to whether it is to be closed. Only the General Chapter, by a two-thirds majority, can petition the Holy See to suppress an autonomous monastery.

2/for both monks and nuns:

The process of suppression of a monastery is described in a special *Statute on Suppression of a Monastery* approved by the General Chapter.

3. A proposed **STATUTE ON THE SUPPRESSION OF A MONASTERY** could contain the following elements:

INTRODUCTION:

When due to particular and long-standing circumstances a monastery no longer offers any basis for hope of growth, careful consideration should be given to whether it should be closed (from C. 67.1)

I. PROCESS

Stage 1: Initial awareness of serious fragility.

Some communities arrive at this awareness on their own. Others need the help of the Father Immediate, the Region, or the General Chapter.

- Some basic criteria of evaluation and discernment could be based on *Vultum Dei Quaerere* (Art. 8 §1): a certain, even minimal, number of monks or nuns, provided that the majority are not elderly; the vitality needed to live the monastic life; a real capacity to provide for formation and governance; dignity and quality of liturgical, fraternal, and spiritual life; sign value and participation in the life of the local church; self-sufficiency and a suitably appointed monastery building. These criteria ought to be considered comprehensively and in an overall perspective.
- At the same time, other factors like the quality of community life can be more important for discernment than objective criteria.

Stage 2: Attempts to re-vivify the community (on its own initiative or with outside help):

- Adaptations of buildings, liturgy, work, economy, etc., to the size and capabilities of the community.
- Changes of key personnel or perhaps help in personnel from other communities.
- Work to promote better communication in the community or to promote reconciliation among its members.
- Creation of a special commission (e.g., Commission for the Future).
- Other forms of help from the Region.

Stage 3: Continuing decline:

- The Father Immediate and perhaps a special commission continue to accompany the community.
- The Region continues to show special solicitude for the house in question.
- Consideration of alternative plans:
 - Merger with another community or group of communities?
 - Collaboration with another Religious Order?
- During this and the following stage it is particularly important to assure that adequate health care is provided for the community.

Stage 4: Toward closure:

- Longer or shorter period of stagnation during which the community is perhaps in a state of denial.
- The community is clearly unable to receive and form novices. (In some cases the right to receive novices is suspended by the General Chapter.)
- Need for intervention on the part of the Father Immediate (perhaps with help of a special commission or the Region).
- Concrete discernment and planning toward closing the monastery:
 - About the future of the members of the community: Staying together? Relocating? Dispersing?
 - About the property and goods of the monastery.

II. SUPPRESSION

The Father Immediate, with the agreement of the community and in consultation with the Region and the bishop of the place, proposes to the General Chapter that it suppress the monastery. An ad hoc commission is formed at the Chapter to study the proposal and to give its conclusions. For the monks, only the General Chapter by a two-thirds majority vote can decide on the suppression of an autonomous monastery. For the nuns, only the General Chapter by a two-thirds majority can petition the Holy See to suppress an autonomous monastery.

(The requirement of a vote by the conventual chapter has been a major point of discussion. If such a requirement is maintained it would be placed here, along with the majority required, i.e. 2/3 or absolute majority.)

In the case of a community whose condition is extreme but whose members do not agree that the Father Immediate should propose its suppression, the Father Immediate can bring the matter to the attention of the General Chapter, which will decide how to proceed.

III. AFTER THE SUPPRESSION

Here the second part of Constitution 67 could be adopted (perhaps with modifications):

When the General Chapter decides on the suppression of a monastery it names a special commission composed of at least five persons to supervise the process of suppression. Great pastoral care is to be given to the monks or nuns of the suppressed house, especially regarding their right to stability in another community of the Order. Attention is to be paid to the rights and obligations of all persons and communities involved and to the rights of founders and donors. The civil law of the place will be observed with regard to the disposal of property.

The stability of members of a suppressed community is normally made to the mother house and in this case, the conventual chapter of this house does not need to vote to accept it.



VII – WORKING PAPER

4 - A REVIEW OF VOTES 47-50 OF THE 2014 GENERAL CHAPTER ON THE AGE LIMIT OF 75 FOR THE EXERCISE OF THE ABBATIAL FUNCTION

*(Working paper requested of the **Law Commission**
by the Central Commission – Roscrea 2016, votes 31-34, p. 23)*

The USA and CAN Regional Meetings requested a review of the votes taken at the 2014 Chapter:

USA Regional Meeting, 2016:

- We recommend a review of the votes 47-50 of the 2014 General Chapter (vote 19).
- In the review of votes 47-50 we recommend that if a person is postulated who is over 75 years of age that he/she automatically be given a three year term (vote 20).

CAN Regional Meeting, 2016:

- We wish to reconsider the decisions made at the 2014 General Chapter on the question of the postulation of a person over 75 years of age as abbot or abbess (vote 4).

These two Regions are referring to the following votes:

ELECTION OF THE ABBOT/ABBESS

Vote 47:

A monk or nun having attained 75 years of age can neither be elected nor postulated.
WE APPROVE STATUTE 39.3.A: YES 69, NO 76, ABS 9. Proposition rejected.

Vote 48:

The candidate must be at least thirty-five years of age and less than 75 years of age.
WE APPROVE THE COMPLETED STATUTE 39.3.A: YES 128, NO 28, ABS 8. **Proposition accepted.**

RESIGNATION OF THE ABBOT/ABBESS

Vote 49:

The abbot/abbess having been postulated at an age beyond 75 and whose postulation has been confirmed shall spontaneously offer his/her resignation at the next General Chapter :
WE APPROVE STATUTE 40.A bis: YES 146, NO 9, ABS 10. **Proposition accepted.**

Vote 50:

The abbot/abbess whose resignation at age 75 had not been accepted will present it again at the next General Chapter:
WE APPROVE THE NEW STATUTE 40.A ter: YES 155, NO 4, ABS 6. **Proposition Accepted.**

In the document it prepared for the 2014 General Chapter, the Law Commission gave a state of the question. No new elements have emerged since then.

Since the 2014 Chapter, two abbots, having reached the age of 75, were postulated according to the possibility offered by ST 39.3.A, modified by vote 48 of the 2014 Chapter.

In order for the 2017 Chapter to reflect on this question again following the Central Commission's vote 30 (*We wish to place on the agenda of the General Chapter 2017 the revision of votes 47-50 taken during the General Chapter of 2014. Yes 15, No 2, Abs 6*), and either confirm or modify the votes taken in 2014, the working paper drawn up for the 2014 Chapter is here repeated, with the addition of the USA Region's vote 20.

The first questions to ask, therefore, are the following:

- 1) Do we want to re-take votes 47-50 of the 2014 General Chapter?
- 2) Do we want to study the possibility offered by vote 4 presented below (which is a limitation of option B)?

STATE OF THE QUESTION (FROM THE WORKING PAPER FOR THE 2014 CHAPTER):

According to the current legislation, an abbot or an abbess must spontaneously offer his/her resignation when he/she reaches the age of 75. But what happens if a person who has reached that age is elected?

There is no doubt that, according to the current legislation, a person who is over 75 years of age can be validly elected as abbot or abbess (titular prior or prioress). In fact, the conditions for being elected include a minimum age but do not include a maximum age.

However, if a person who is over 75 years of age is elected, some questions, not foreseen by our legislation, present themselves.

Can the Abbot General refuse to confirm such an election?

If the election has been carried out according to all the canonical norms, we cannot see how he could refuse to confirm it. To refuse because of the age of the person elected would be to prefer his own judgment to that of the community, which with full knowledge of the situation, elected a person over 75 years of age.

Is the person elected obliged to resign as soon as he is elected?

This is very doubtful. A restrictive law must be interpreted in a restrictive way. The law states what a person in office must do when he/she reaches 75. In itself, this law does not apply to a person elected at a more advanced age. It can be said that it would all the same be "normal" to resign in this case; but it can just as well be said that it would hardly be "logical" to resign immediately after having been validly elected and confirmed.

In view of this ensemble of complex and somewhat confused situations, the Central Commission of 2013 (vote 38) requested that our legislation on this point be more clearly “defined”. What is requested is not an “interpretation” of the law, but its adaptation to situations not foreseen by the legislator.

A very simple solution would be to modify the conditions for a valid election by stating, in Statute 39.3.A, that to be validly elected a person must be “at least 35 years of age and must not have reached 75 years of age”.

However, we should be aware that, as someone can be postulated before attaining 35 years of age, someone who has attained 75 years of age could also be postulated, unless we prohibit this possibility in our legislation (cf. CIC 180.1). In fact, we cannot exclude that a community, whose abbot/abbess has offered his/her resignation upon reaching 75 years of age, would want to postulate him/her so that he/she can continue his/her service, nor that it would want to postulate someone who is more than 75 years of age.

We can, in a statute, stipulate that a person who has attained the age of 75 can neither be elected nor postulated. If, on the other hand, we accept the possibility of a postulation, we could stipulate that the person over 75 years of age, who would have been postulated and confirmed, must offer his/her resignation at the next General Chapter, or that the person over 75 who has been postulated serve for a three-year mandate.

This obligation that a person over 75 years of age would have to present his/her resignation at the next General Chapter could be extended to the abbot or abbess who had presented his/her resignation at the age of 75 and whose resignation had not been accepted.

We therefore have a choice between three options :

- either we reject any possibility of election or postulation for an abbot or abbess who is over 75 years of age (**option A**);

- or we accept the possibility of postulation (**option B**), with or without the obligation of a resignation at the next General Chapter

- or we accept the possibility of a postulation for a three-year mandate

A vote could be added regarding the obligation to resign at the next General Chapter for an abbot or abbess whose resignation, offered at the age of 75, had not been accepted.

Vote 1 (option A)

☞ A new statute is added to C. 39.3 (ST 39.3.A remains unchanged)

St 39.3.A bis:

A monk or nun having attained 75 years of age can neither be elected nor postulated

We approve Statute 39.3.A bis.

YES – NO -- ABS

If this vote is accepted we do not take vote 2

Vote 2 (option B)

☞ **ST 39.3.A** is completed leaving the possibility of the postulation of a candidate over 75 years of age:

The candidate must be at least thirty-five years of age and less than 75 years of age.

We approve the completed Statute 39.3.A

YES – NO -- ABS

If this vote is accepted, we take vote 3

Vote 3 (limitation of option B)

☞ The following Statute is added to C.40

ST 40.A bis

The abbot/abbess having been postulated at an age beyond 75 and whose postulation has been confirmed shall spontaneously offer his/her resignation at the next General Chapter.

We approve Statute 40.A bis.

YES – NO – ABS

If this vote is accepted, we do not take vote 4.

Vote 4 (limitation of Option B)

NEW: this proposal was not part of the votes taken at the 2014 Chapter

ST 40.A bis:

The candidate having been postulated at an age beyond 75 and whose postulation has been confirmed, serves a three-year term.

We approve Statute 40.A bis.

YES – NO –

ABS

If this vote is not accepted, the postulated abbot/abbess remains in charge for the duration of his/her mandate, whether for a fixed term or for an indefinite term, according to the option taken by the community, and that he/she will present his/her resignation at each Chapter.

Vote 5 (related question)

☞ A new **ST 40.A ter** (or 40.A.bis, if the result of vote 3 was negative) is added, introducing into the Constitutions what has been up to now the general practice.

ST 40.A ter (or 40.A bis).

The abbot/abbess whose resignation at age 75 had not been accepted will present it again at the next General Chapter.

We approve the new Statute 40.A ter (or 40.A bis).

YES – NO – ABS



VII – WORKING PAPERS

5 - REVISION OF THE WORKING PAPER "THE FINANCIAL NEEDS OF THE HOUSES OF THE ORDER"

(Revision requested by Central Commission, Roscrea, 2016,
p 23-24, vote 37)

Dom Armand Veilleux (Scourmont)
Mother Myriam Fontaine (Laval)
Dom Isidoro Anguita Fontecha (Huerta)

This working paper is basically the same as the one prepared for the General Chapter of 2014, that could not be sufficiently studied at that Chapter, for lack of time. A section was added to it concerning the suppression of monasteries.

The object of this working paper is to treat of the “financial needs” of the houses of our Order. It will thus be a question, initially, of describing these financial needs and of explaining their existence. We will then ask as to how and up to what point the houses of the Order meet their own financial needs. We will finally try to find how it is possible to organize solidarity allowing the communities to help each other in this field. Moreover, the title limits the study to the financial needs *of the houses* of the Order and not of those of the Order as a whole.

A - What does one understand by “financial needs”?

Whoever speaks about finance speaks about money. We are speaking about money requirements. We are not going to deal here with all the questions related to the *economic* management of our communities.

If a monastery could live in full independence, it would have no need for money. It would produce all that it needs, without having to buy or to sell anything. This situation is certainly nowadays pure utopia. It could be possible for a group to produce all the food that it needs. To make all its clothing would be more difficult! Unless living in a primitive situation in the extreme, one will always need money to buy essential things that one could not produce on the spot.

In any event, monks, since the beginning of monasticism, manufactured objects that they sold (for example plaits and wicker baskets, as in the deserts of Egypt in the 4th century) in order to be able to buy books and to meet their other essential needs. The first Cistercians, giving up living out of feudal tithes and other rights of the kind, and developing great extents of land made a very wide use of trade.

We cannot escape from it.

B - What are our financial needs?

Let us ask, initially, as to what are the financial requirements of a monastic community nowadays.

The most fundamental physical need is food. A community will always have to buy some of its food, even if certain communities can cultivate a good part of what they eat. Even these communities will need money to buy seeds, fertilisers (if they are not completely “organic”), as well as tools sometimes very expensive (like tractors) to cultivate the land.

One will need to build the monastery, in the case of a foundation and, in all cases, to maintain in good condition the one wherein they live. Nowadays, the setting of standards for kitchens and for the security systems against fire can require a lot of money.

Whatever the source of the income of the community, whether it be of an agricultural nature or that of a small industry or simply the production of handicrafts, the financial needs for the purchase of tools for work will always be considerable.

Health care, the purchase of drugs and the care of the elderly, especially if they are invalid can be very considerable. The liturgical life will require the purchase of liturgical books. The requirements of the *lectio divina* and that of ongoing formation will require the purchase of books of all kinds.

Finally, in the current world, it is not possible to avoid having some means of transport. And if one does not have any, it will be necessary to spend the equivalent in travelling expenses. And, of course, one should not forget to provide oneself with good insurances (health, fire, civil responsibility, cars, etc).

The following question will be then: how does one get the money necessary for the life of the community and for meeting all these needs?

C - What are the financial resources of our communities?

The most traditional and most normal way to get money in order to be able to buy the objects that one needs, is to sell objects that oneself has cultivated, manufactured or transformed. In the past, at least for the monasteries of monks, the main financial resources came from agriculture. Nowadays, we usually has resort to some craft, or to an industry, small or of average size. As for agriculture, where it was maintained, it took on industrial dimensions and often requires enormous investments in machinery.

None of these sources of income is simple to manage and each one raises questions proper to itself.

One could produce something already largely present on the market.

One would then be only able to compete by maintaining high standards of quality and a very professional outlook. The profit margin would be tiny and it would be necessary to produce large quantities in order to have a sufficient income. The industry would be quite easily forced to make large quantities, even only to survive.

Or one may choose to offer exclusive products of a very high quality. One would be able to make a considerable profit margin on these products and so limit the production, especially if there is a trade mark known for a long time. But one would then appeal to a privileged class of the population, able to afford things at these prices. This would some ethical question.

One could also make small craft products of lesser value, artistic or other, that the visitors could easily buy at the monastic shop, in order to help the monks or nuns. Perhaps, in these cases, it should be considered that one lives out of charity rather than from one's work.

Even if this is something little exploited in our Order, one could also resort to service sales, all the more so since the service sector is one of the most important in contemporary economy. It could be, for example, an accountancy department put at the disposal of small industries of the area, or a service for encoding documents, if one is close to a university town, or a service for the translation of texts.

A significant and extremely profitable service could be the management of a small company giving employment to workers of the area and creating with the local population a synergy of which one could easily find a model in the management of the large Cistercian domains during the first centuries of our Order.

Our Constitutions and our document on Temporal Administration require of us to have reserves capable of meeting our needs for a few years in the event of difficulties. The good management of these reserves is another source of income. Such a management cannot however be made lightly, if one does not wish to endanger one's reserves and if one wishes to respect financial ethics.

To these various sources of income can be added pensions and alms. Where pensions correspond to a right acquired for having worked during a certain number of years and for having paid the contributions required by the law, these pensions can be regarded as "differed wages". Where they are given automatically to all, after a certain age, they should rather be regarded as gifts.

The following question consists in asking as to up to what point the communities of our Order succeed in meeting their needs with the financial resources they have.

D - Are the financial resources of our communities sufficient?

To the 2014 Working Paper was attached a questionnaire. The hope was that the answers to that questionnaire would bring some light for the reflexion on that subject within each community as well as at the Regional Conferences and at the General Chapter. Although the number of answers sent to the redactors of the paper was not such as to permit an elaborated scientific analysis of the situation, they were certainly instructive. A synthesis of them was given to the Plenary Assembly in 2014, before the very brief exchange in commissions. Here is the text of that communication, as it appears in the Minutes of the General Chapter (section 21, page 151) :

The **first question** deals with the source of revenues for the community. Since we didn't give a list of categories, the replies were very, very diversified : A rather important number of communities, especially from Europe have pensions as revenue. That happens somewhat less frequently outside of Europe. A few monasteries make a living from agriculture; there are some but they are the exception; agriculture is still a source of revenue but only a small percentage. Guesthouses are not a source of revenue for anyone; for some it is 10 to 15 %, for others nothing. Rather it is considered as a service. We are not mendicants, so gifts represent a very small portion of our resources for most monasteries. The principal source of revenue for many of our monasteries comes from a small industry, a shop, the work of the monks and nuns. That represents 30 to 40% of the revenue.

The question that we found the most interesting was: do the revenues of your work cover all your essential needs? Do they allow you to meet extraordinary needs? Some or all of them? By "extraordinary needs" we mean, replacing the roof of the monastery, a boiler, conforming to fire regulations. There are a few monasteries that are not able to cover their essential needs. Most, almost the all of those who replied, said that they are able to cover their essential needs, and some can cover extraordinary needs and give help to other communities. No one said that their monastery is able to cover all its extraordinary needs.

The third question focuses on reserves. In the Constitutions, concerning the Statute "Material Administration," it is foreseen that, normally, one should try to have reserves that would allow us to live for a few years in case our sources of revenues should stop for one reason or another. Most of the communities who replied have reserves that would, according to their calculations, allow them to live for a year sometimes less: 3 months, 6 months, and 9 months. Some have revenues that would permit them to live, according to their calculations, 5, 6, or 8 years. One community told us that they could live for 25 years, doubtless, they have a good portfolio!

These are numbers that can enlighten us. I don't think that one could analyze these statistics scientifically because they are not complete

One can obviously wonder why a large majority of communities do not arrive at total self-sufficiency and why a good number have a recurring need for outside assistance.

First, there are situations where the regional economic context, often due to wars, makes the self-sufficiency of a community practically impossible. The monks or nuns may produce quality articles, but no one in the area has the necessary resources to buy these goods. It is currently the case in several African countries. The challenge for these communities is to find a good balance between sharing the precariousness that the people around experience and their recourse to other monasteries of the Order for their essential needs, in particular for formation.

In many communities, worldwide, the problem is that of a lack of rigorous management, which is often the consequence of the reduction in membership. However, in these difficult economic times, no company small or big can survive without a great rigor in management. It is often thought that by manufacturing such and such a product one will make a lot of money. Actually, it is good management which makes a company profitable, whatever the product manufactured. No company “automatically” gives good results! **And before launching out in a new economic activity, it is essential to study its profitability !**

It happens for example that monasteries continue to offer products that provided for the subsistence of the community in the past, but which no longer meet the current market needs. In some cases those products have a production cost that does not allow them to compete which manufacturers who produce the same products in mass quantities at prices much lower than their own cost price.

E - How to help each other in this situation?

Our Fathers of Cîteaux, at the time of the drafting of the *Charter of Charity*, had the genius to set up a system of solidarity between the monasteries of the Order not only respecting, but also ensuring the autonomy of each community. This tradition is an aspect of our Cistercian patrimony which we must preserve for the future generations, even if it is often endangered or questioned nowadays. It is too easily thought that when a person or a community needs assistance in one field or another, it is no longer autonomous or is less so. The purpose of the solidarity required by the *Charter of Charity* was precisely to ensure the maintenance of the full autonomy of the community or the person in need.

Throughout the centuries, solidarity between the Cistercian monasteries was played out in many fields. It has often happened, throughout history, that a community has sought an abbot or an abbess from one of its daughter houses or from another monastery of the Order, without that establishing any bond of dependence between the two communities. Sometimes it was a cellarer, or a master of novices who was sent or who was borrowed.

Most communities having made foundations are able to look after these and to help them with material goods and personnel, even after these communities have reached the statute of autonomy. In general, when they cannot do it with their own resources, they assume the responsibility of finding the assistance elsewhere.

There remains however, as was explained above, the fact that more and more communities of the Order are forced to call on other communities, either each time a somewhat extraordinary need presents itself, or even simply to meet their everyday needs. Until the recent past all the requests were made directly, from one community to another.

The main difficulty encountered by the more frequently solicited communities, was that, in many cases, they knew that a simple cash donation would not solve the problem. To really help, it would be necessary to be able to analyse the entire material situation of the applicant community and to offer an audit or advice in management rather than a simple hand out of money. But an individual community can hardly allow itself to be so intrusive in the life of another. This is why a Commission of Aid was created by the General Chapter of 2002.

The first function entrusted to this Commission of Aid was precisely to analyse the requests for assistance presented to some communities and to give its opinion to these communities. It is indeed easier for a Commission elected for this purpose by the General Chapter to ask an applicant community for more information, to analyse the financial reports of the last few years, the state of the treasury and debt, etc.

However it happened that at the same General Chapter, after having created this Commission of Aid with the mandate which we have just described, it was also decided to create a Mutual Assistance Fund, and the management of this Mutual Assistance Fund was entrusted to the same Commission. The consequence was that, for most people of the Order, the goal of this Commission was simply to fairly distribute the money deposited in this Mutual Assistance Fund. That was not, however, the primary task of the aforesaid Commission.

The goal of this Mutual Assistance Fund was to allow all the communities to deposit there either large sums or the mite of the widow, according to their capacities. The fact is that only a minority of the communities contribute to this Fund - and a minority which continues to decrease. The entire sum deposited there makes it possible to answer only a rather limited number of requests for assistance submitted to the same Commission. Is it worthwhile to maintain this Mutual Assistance Fund that, in the end, implies complex procedures of transfer of funds and thus a multiplication of expenses? If it thought good to maintain it, it would undoubtedly be necessary to sensitize all the communities to the need to contribute to it, each one according to its capability.

What had initially been proposed in the General Chapter of 2002 was the creation of a fund the income of which could be used to help the monasteries of the Order. The constitution of such a fund was not accepted by the Chapter, and the creation of a Mutual Aid Fund whose management was entrusted to the Commission of Aid that had been elected shortly before was an alternative solution. What militated then against the constitution of such a permanent fund was that in order to have the sufficient annual incomes to meet the needs of the communities, one would have needed a very substantial fund of several million euros or dollars, which the Order was not really in a position to create. Moreover, one such funds required professional managers which the Order does not have.

Perhaps could one find inspiration in some regions by what is done in France by the *La Fondation des Monastères (Foundation of Monasteries)*, which receives legacies and other donations, in the name of all the monasteries of the country and which offers a certain number of specialised services to the communities.

Apart from this possibility of resorting to services outside the Order, the question always remains: how to better manage the mutual aid between the communities of the Order in the economic domain? In the recent past, especially in certain regions, synergies were developed between the communities in many fields, especially with regard to liturgy and formation. Apart from meetings of cellarers in some countries, however, little was done to develop synergies in the field of work as well as in the economic and financial management of our communities -- and yet, a balance between the spiritual life and work is an essential characteristic of our Benedictine-Cistercian monastic life.

F - Synergies

Pope Francis in several of his interventions, underlined the evil character of the international economic system which creates poverty while generating the wasting of the natural and human resources. We must avoid becoming too easily dependent on this system and perhaps we must work with others at the discovery and the realization of alternative solutions.

Nowadays, it has become difficult for a community to live solely from agriculture or from a craft industry with the exception of small communities. Our communities in general seek their resources from a small industry. However the cost of machinery, nowadays, is such that any industry, even a small one, requires investments that are sometimes disproportionate with the sales turnover and even more so with regard to the number of people who work in that industry. Doesn't one sometimes make investments without taking account of the future of the community?

It is not rare that communities, in order to buy instruments for work, ask for sums of money that a normal calculation of "Return On Investment" (ROI), in the "real world" of the economy, would demonstrate as completely disproportionate, non-profitable and not justified. In the current difficult situation of the economy in almost all our countries, such investments pose an ethical question. It is not easily justifiable to invest great sums of money in sophisticated instruments of work which will work only up to 10% or 20% of their capacity when there is such an amount of unemployment around us. Would it not be more reasonable to seek a greater co-operation between the monasteries of the same region (or even of various regions) manufacturing similar products? The same synergy could also be established with local companies. (For example: subcontracting the manufacturing of cheese for communities which limit themselves to the refining process).

Our Constitutions (*Foreword*, 1) remind us that the spiritual patrimony that we have received from monks and nuns who preceded us in the Cistercian way of life found its expression not only in their writings, chant, architecture and art, but also in the healthy management of their lands. It is important to develop this aspect of work essential to the balance of all the other aspects.

If the first Cistercians could, in a few generations, build a large number of superb abbeys, and if they could nourish crowds of monks and lay brothers who had come to populate these abbeys; and if they could answer all their material needs, it was because they knew how to establish an impressive network of synergies. Each monastery that had a large number of members, especially lay brothers, had several granges, whose system and effective management changed the agricultural face of Europe.

In the same way, nowadays, except for very particular local conditions, the economy of an abbey cannot survive and remain profitable without inserting itself within the economic context of the immediate area and of the country. Much remains to be done in this field.

Today's communities do not have laybrothers to ensure that work be done. The same people must assume all the work, except in the communities that manage an important and well developed industry with a large number of hired workers.

For most of our communities there exists a delicate balance between:

- An investment appropriate and corresponding to the production.
- A balance of work allowing time for the Divine Office, *Lectio* and prayer.

Several of our communities inherited material structures that have become a burden for a more reduced number of members. Some found creative solutions in the reorganization of their buildings and the reconversion of their property. These experiments ought to be shared. The communities which have inherited buildings which are architectural treasures must discover how to continue a normal monastic life without being overwhelmed by these structures and establish with the civil authorities a collaboration in the maintenance and the management of the historical part. Here also, various experiments ought to be shared.

G - Closing of a monastery

Some monasteries of the Order have been closed in recent years. Others undoubtedly will be in the years to come. Undoubtedly it will be necessary for the Order to develop certain norms to be respected in these situations regarding the disposition of community property. We propose some suggestions for the drafting of such norms.

There is a legitimate preoccupation concerning the material goods – especially the buildings – of the communities that need to close and that do not have the necessary expertise for managing such a situation. In some cases those buildings have been declared “cultural patrimony”, and can be a temptation for the civil Administration. In other cases, they may have been the object of a “pious donation” or the diocese where they are situated may have an interest in those buildings not being sold, so that they may remain as part of the good of the same dioceses, being “ecclesiastical goods”.

It is true that the goods of the religious communities are “ecclesiastical goods”, and must therefore be used for the works of evangelization and of charity of the Church. However, it does not mean that the acquired rights of its members disappear when a monastery is closed. It is necessary to attend to the needs of the Order to which they belong as well as to the communities that will receive the members of the suppressed community.

Of course, every case is different and therefore needs a different treatment. Sometimes the buildings are not very attractive. In other cases, they do not have a great cultural or ecclesiastic interest, but can bring benefices, thanks to their location. In some places there is a new religious community that can take over. In some cases there is a good understanding between all the parties. There are also situations where important economic exploitations operated by lay people for the monastic community. Etc.

Criteria that must be taken into account

CIC, c. 616 §1 : The institute's own law is to make provision for the disposal of the goods of the suppressed house, with due regard for the wishes of founders or benefactors and for lawfully acquired rights

CIC, c. 123 : On the extinction of a public juridical person, the arrangements for its patrimonial goods and rights, and for its liabilities, are determined by law and the statutes. If these do not deal with the matter, the arrangements devolve upon the next higher juridical person

That implies the need for a legislation in this regard.

- Taking into account the desires and the rights of the community that is being closed, concerning the disposition of its goods.
- Taking into account the moral right of the communities that receive the brothers or sisters of a closed monastery to receive a part of the goods of the monastery.
- Indicating a percentage of these goods to be given to the Order (Fund for mutual help?) so as to be able to help other communities in difficulties.
- Taking into account the possible obligations originating from the act of foundation or from the will of donors (cf. c. 1300 and 1304). Checking whether there are still some obligations originating from the foundation.
- Listening to the local bishop and to the proposals he may have to make, taking into account the needs of the diocese, even if he does not have rights on the monastery.
- Being attentive to the situation of the place where the monastery to be closed is located and that of the local people.
- Clarifying the right of supervision and of assessment of the Order when one thinks of giving away the ownership or the use of the monastery to a Church institution, without waiting to the last moment to do so.
- It is important to have the greatest possible clarity concerning:
 - * the titles of ownership of all the buildings
 - * the titles of ownership of the land
 - * the patrimonial rights of the State, especially in the case when a good was declared of "cultural interest".

In all the situations, the commission for the closing of the monastery must be attentive to apply this to-be-developed legislation.

PROCEDURES

FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER

(Text of the procedures for the General Chapter,
revised regarding a single Chapter by the Law Commission)

Ordinary Procedure : 2 Commissions instead of 4, n° III,15,2
(Cf. Minutes of the Roscrea CC 2016, p. 29 - vote 43)

I. PERSONNEL

1. President

The Abbot General presides by right at the General Chapter.

2. Participants

The participants at the General Chapter, with or without voting rights, are those mentioned in no. 78 of our Constitutions.

3. The Promoter

Elected by the previous General Chapter, the Promoter sees to the smooth running of the Chapter.

4. The Moderator

The Promoter may act as Moderator during MGM sessions. He/she can also call upon other members of the Coordinating Commission or other members of the Order, even if they are not capitulants.

a. The Moderator must call upon non-voting Moderators when the assembly is taking votes or having elections. The secretary of the Coordinating Commission can assume this function.

b. When the Moderator of a session wishes to take part in the debate, which he/she is also moderating, he/she must turn the meeting over to another Moderator and he/she does not resume the service of Moderator until the next session.

5. The Secretariat

a. Three secretaries, one each for French, English and Spanish, are responsible for preparing the minutes of the sessions of the General Chapter under the direction of the central secretary. These secretaries must have a good knowledge of at least one of the other two languages in addition to their own.

b. Another person, the coordinator of the secretariat, is responsible for overseeing all the services of the secretariat (minutes, translations, distribution of documents) and of supervising relations between the secretariat and the Chapter.

c. This coordinator may attend the meetings of the Coordinating Commission as an observer.

6. Minutes

At the beginning of the Chapter, the Coordinating Commission appoints three persons to verify the minutes taken by the secretaries. Each member of the Chapter may consult these open minutes and forward his/her comments to the Central Secretary.

7. Translators

a. Provision must be made for an adequate number of translators in order to assure and to facilitate during plenary sessions simultaneous translations into French, English, Spanish, German and Japanese. The required interpreters can accompany superiors from other language groups.

b. All members of the assembly can speak in their own language, provided an interpretation is available.

c. At the start of the Chapter, the persons needed to review and, as needed, to correct the interpreters are appointed. The Coordinating Commission designates these persons.

II. COMMISSIONS of the CHAPTER

The Chapter accomplishes its work in plenary sessions and in mixed Commissions.

8. The Coordinating Commission

a. The Coordinating Commission is composed of the Promoter, the Vice-Promoter, and three other capitulants elected by the preceding Chapter. This Commission directs the work of the Chapter and has a secretary designated by the Central Commission.

b. The President of the Chapter can always attend meetings of the Coordinating Commission.

c. The members of this Commission cannot be members of an *ad hoc* Commission, but they can be invited by the President to attend such Commissions.

9. Role of the Coordinating Commission

a. The Commission is responsible for the dynamics of the Chapter and decides on the steps to be followed.

b. It coordinates the work of the various Commissions and establishes criteria for the length and the format of reports to be presented in plenary session.

c. It formulates votes for plenary sessions when the *ad hoc* Commissions have not been requested to do so, and indicates when a two-thirds majority vote is required.

d. It receives amendments proposed in writing and retains those, which will be presented to the vote of the assembly, unless it concerns a matter already entrusted to an *ad hoc* Commission.

e. Each time a new proposal emerges during the plenary session, the Commission brings it to the attention of the Chapter and decides the manner in which the Chapter will treat the topic, if the Chapter wishes to do so. The Coordinating Commission decides with the consent of the President of the assembly, how to handle unforeseen questions.

f. To ask the advice of the Law Commission of the Chapter whenever there is a necessity to do so.

10. Mixed Commissions

a. The Chapter is composed of 14 Mixed Commissions, whose composition is determined by the Abbot General's Council. During the Chapter, the Coordinating Commission is responsible for any modification in the composition of these Commissions.

b. Each Commission elects its president, its vice-president, and secretary. The latter is the liaison to the Coordinating Commission.

c. The Commissions can make use of experts, but these persons cannot vote in the Commission.

11. The Commission to Examine the Finances of the Order

One Commission composed of three capitulants having competence in the area of finance to examine the financial reports of the Generalate and of the Order and of the Commission for Mutual Aid. This Commission reports its findings and recommendations to the plenary session.

12. The Law Commission of the Chapter

The members of the Law Commission of the Order who are present at the Chapter constitute a Commission for whatever juridical consultations are required. The Chapter can add other persons to this body as needed.

13. *Ad hoc* Commissions

a. The Chapter can establish *ad hoc* Commissions for specific tasks and also elect their members.

b. The members of each *ad hoc* Commission elect a president and a secretary. The latter is the liaison with the Coordinating Commission.

c. The proposals of an *ad hoc* Commission must be accepted by an absolute majority of the Commission.

d. An *ad hoc* Commission can make use of experts, but these cannot participate in the votes of the Commission.

III. PROCEDURES FOR TREATING THE POINTS ON THE AGENDA

14. The Central Commission has the competence to decide upon the appropriate procedure for examining the points of the agenda of the Chapter.

15. Procedures

There are three procedures:

1. The **extraordinary procedure**: all the Commissions study the question.
2. The **ordinary procedure**: the question is studied by two Commissions.
3. The **simplified procedure**: the question is voted on immediately without preparatory work in the Commissions and without debate in the plenary session. In this case, a significant examination of the question in writing must be submitted to Chapter members before the opening of the Chapter, with the exact formulation of the text that will be voted upon.

16. Change of Procedure

a) At the beginning of the Chapter, all capitulants are able to object to the use of the simplified procedure for a specific agenda point and can ask the Coordinating Commission to return it to the ordinary procedure. For his objection to become effective, the request must be supported by at least 24 other members of the Chapter.

b) If the objection arises solely from a question of form, an amicable compromise can be worked between those making the objection and the Coordinating Commission. If such an arrangement is not possible, the Coordinating Commission can introduce the modification suggested by those objecting as a preliminary amendment to the vote, which had been worded otherwise on the agenda for the Chapter.

17. Before the Chapter, it is the responsibility of the **Council of the Abbot General** to assign the topics to be studied by the various Mixed Commissions.

18. In addition to **items on the agenda**, other points may be treated as the Coordinating Commission sees fit. The Coordinating Commission will designate the procedure to be followed and the Commissions who will study the added questions.

19. Once the matter has been studied, **the Mixed Commissions will communicate their report to the Coordinating Commission** according to the norms that the Coordinating Commission establishes. In so far as it is possible, these reports in their respective translations will be distributed to the entire assembly.

20. Following the reading of the reports, there will be a **debate in plenary session**. The written presentation of the vote(s) follows, and the presentation of amendments, if any.

21. In order for a proposal to be presented in a plenary session, it must have obtained a **majority vote** in at least one of the Commissions. By a majority vote of its members, every Commission can make known to the Coordinating Commission **a request that priority** be given to one or several matters on the agenda. Such a request, submitted in writing and accompanied by the recommendation of the Coordinating Commission, must be presented without delay to the vote of the assembly.

22. a. No proposal coming from a Commission can be submitted for a vote of the assembly without an opportunity first to address the question **in a public debate**.

b. The Coordinating Commission determines **the format for the public debate**.

c. In the public debate **the interventions must be brief**. It is the responsibility of the moderator to control this.

d. Someone who wishes **to make a more substantial statement** on a specific topic asks the consent of the Coordinating Commission. Whenever possible it is appropriate to give to the interpreters a copy of the text, to allow for a simultaneous and accurate translation.

23. If a **new proposal** arises in the course of a debate in plenary session, a proposal which has not yet been approved by a majority vote of a Commission, the Promoter can, immediately or at any other moment, ask the assembly to express by a vote its desire to put this proposition on the agenda or to choose another manner to proceed with the new proposal.

24. Straw vote

A straw vote is taken:

- a. In order to ascertain the opinion of the assembly in a given moment of the discussion.
- b. To help the Coordinating Commission, or some other Commission delegated by them in a particular case, to formulate as clearly as possible propositions on which to vote.
- c. The straw vote cannot be taken in order to bring a discussion to a close.

25. Preparation of Votes

- a. Except for straw votes and procedural votes, no other text of a vote can be submitted to the assembly without previously having been submitted in writing in the principal languages.
- b. As soon as the text has been made public either for a vote or for a document awaiting approval, any member of the assembly can propose amendments to the text. The amendments are proposed in writing and submitted to the Coordinating Commission, except during a voting session.
- c. It is the task of the Coordinating Commission to take note of the amendments and to retain those that will be submitted to the assembly. This role pertains to the *ad hoc* Commission in matters for which it is competent.

26. Voting Sessions

- a. Ordinarily these do not take place immediately following a discussion.
- b. For voting sessions, the following procedure is followed:
 - The text of the vote is read, along with amendments that have been retained;
 - The opportunity to request clarifications, and a discussion of the proposed amendments;
 - A vote on each amendment;
 - A vote on the amended text (without further discussion).
- c. If a new amendment is proposed in the course of the discussion, this must be sent back to the Coordinating Commission, or the appropriate *ad hoc* Commission, unless it pertains directly to the formulation of the vote being discussed.
- d. If questions of depth are raised, they must be sent back to the appropriate Commissions for study, or to other Commissions, which could be constituted for this task.
- e. When opportune, the moderator can submit to the vote of the assembly a vote to close the discussion.
- f. The more significant votes generally are taken towards the end of the Chapter. However, they should not be delayed until the final days.

27. If a vote already taken requires an **interpretation**, only the assembly can give this interpretation, and by a vote.

28. Only the Coordinating Commission, or another Commission mandated by it, is able to present a **document or a decision to the assembly for a vote**.

29.

- a. **Before resuming a discussion** of a subject, which has already been settled by the vote of the assembly, it is necessary to consult the assembly about a second debate. This requires a two-thirds majority vote.
- b. This consultation cannot take place without a **favourable opinion on the part of the President of the assembly**.
- c. If the vote of the assembly is favourable, **the problem must be re-examined by all of the Commissions** before the public debate which must precede the second vote.

30. Certain votes can be taken in writing, at the discretion of either the Coordinating Commission or some other Commission as its delegate.

IV. ELECTIONS

31. At the Chapter, every election of a person is by **secret ballot**.

32. Before every election, ordinarily, persons are **nominated**, unless the Law provides for some other procedure in the case of a given kind of election.

33. Every member of the assembly can nominate **candidates**. A candidate can decline the nomination.

34. The person who presents a candidate should be able to provide **reasons for his/her choice**.

35. An **absolute majority** is required for all elections of persons. The members of the Commissions *ad hoc* are elected one by one.

36. Regarding **the number of ballots**, we follow Canon 119 of the C.I.C.



**A BRIEF OBSERVATION ABOUT THE ROLE
OF THE PRESIDENT, VICE-PRESIDENT,
AND OF THE SECRETARY FOR THE COMMISSIONS**

(From the Minutes of the Central Commissions, Cîteaux 2013, Appendix 2, p. 36)

The president's role and the one of the secretary are very different, and require different expertise, therefore the following observations.

The President:

In the commissions, the president is in charge of directing the sessions. The president is a ***moderator***.

- It is not an honorary title, but a service that is confided to a member who has, as much as possible, an experience of a General Chapter. The president is not necessarily the oldest on the Commission and who automatically is given the service.
- The moderator must really be aware of the full agenda for the Commission meeting. The moderator must organize the time of exchanges according to the overall agenda. For example, regarding the study of the House Reports, every commission has between 10 and 13 reports to study. It is for the moderator to establish a schedule. Perhaps an average of one hour and half for a report would be a good measure.
- The moderator leads the meeting in a manner that allows all the members to express themselves. The moderator offers each the possibility to speak.
- The moderator must keep the discussion directed; not let the real topic be lost.
- The moderator formulates some “straw” votes if such would help clarify a topic.
- At the conclusion of each meeting, it is suggested to take some moments for the group to express its position on various points. These the secretary can note for the final report.
- It is for the moderator to assure that the final report is in accord with the positions of the Commission and presents this report to the Secretary of the Coordinating Commission.

A Vice-President is elected to replace the president in the event of the absence of the President. And so the role and abilities of a Vice-President are the same as those of the President.

The Secretary:

- This is not a task to be confided neither necessarily to a delegate nor to the youngest member of the commission; it is a responsibility for someone who has experience and some secretarial facility.

The secretary takes notes to facilitate writing a synthesis of the meeting and not verbatim minutes.

- The secretary is responsible for the report that will be presented. The report should indicate the opinion of the minority in relation to the majority.

- At a convenient time, the secretary writes the report following any guideline given by the Secretary of the Commission of Coordination and presents the report to the President of the Commission for approval.
- The Secretary gives a copy of the final report to the Secretary of the Coordinating Commission and keeps a copy.

If the Coordinating Commission asks for only one report from several Commissions to be presented in the plenary, this final report is to be given to the Secretary of the Coordinating Commission.

If the President-Moderator directs the sessions well, the secretary's work will be facilitated.

It is to be noted that the service of secretary must not be the responsibility of the person who is the Vice-President.



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