



CENTRAL COMMISSION

ÂTEAUX

13 - 21 June 2019

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PARTICIPANTS IN THE CENTRAL COMMISSION MEETING CÎTEAUX 2019

1 **Abbot General** Dom EAMON Fitzgerald

Members of the Coordinating Commission:

2 Promotor Dom JEAN-MARC Chéné, *Bellefontaine*
3 Vice-Promotrix M. REBEKKA Willekes, *Klaarland*
4 Members Dom ROBERTO de la Iglesia Pérez, *Cardeña*,
5. M. MARIE Fahy *Glencairn*
6. Dom ELIAS Dietz, *Gethsemani*

Delegated Regional Superiors:

7 CAN Dom CLÉMENT Charbonneau, *Mistassini*
8 CNE Dom OLIVIER Quenardel, *Cîteaux*
9 ISLES Dom ERIK Varden, *Mount St Bernard*
10 NED Dom BERNARDUS Peeters, *Tilburg*
11 ORIENS M. GIOVANNA Garbelli, *Matutum*
12 Dom RAPHAËL Shioya Hisashi, *Oita*
13 RAFMA Dom JOHN BOSCO Kamali, *Victoria*
14 M. PHILOMÈNE Kalimbanya, *Kibungo*
15 RE M. ISABEL Rivero Navarro, *Vico*
16 RÉCiF Dom BENOÎT Briand, *Timadeuc*
17 REI Dom PATRICK Olive, *Sept-Fons*
18 REM M. ANNE-EMMANUELLE Devêche, *Blauvac*
19 REMILA Dom PEDRO Barrientos Montalva, *Miraflores*
20 M. MARIELA Jerez Pereira, *Quilvo*
21 USA Dom GERARD D'Souza, *Genesee*

Members of the Abbot General's Council:

22 Dom TIMOTHY Kelly, Procurator
23 M. DANIELÈ Levrard
24 Dom ANASTASIUS Li
25 M. RACHEL Agoukpe
26 Dom JUAN JOSÉ Domingo Falomir

(total of **26 people** with voting rights)

Interpreters :

27	French-English	Fr WILLIAM Dingwall, <i>Spencer</i>
28	French-Spanish	Br RICARDO Villa Cabrera, <i>Jacona</i>
29	English-French	Fr GODEFROY Raguene de St Albin, <i>Aiguebelle</i>
30	English-Spanish	Fr SIMEON Leiva-Merikakis, <i>Casa Generalizia, Spencer</i>
31	Spanish-French	Fr RAPHAËL García-Pelayo, <i>Cîteaux</i>
32	Spanish-English	Br GREGORY Escardo, <i>Gethsemani</i>
33	English-Japanese (in aula)	Sr CLOTHILDE Anamizu, <i>Glencairn</i>

Secretaries:

34	English	Sr FIACHRA Nutty, <i>Glencairn</i>
35	French	M. MARIE JOSEPH Dhanger, <i>Campénéac</i>
36	Spanish	Sr MARILUCÍA Ji, <i>Casa Generalizia, Quilvo</i>
37	Facilitator	Dom JACQUES Delesalle, <i>Mont des Cats</i>

Invited guest for a few days:

Sister MARIE Mouris, *Val d'Igny*, Central Secretary for Formation

INTRODUCTION

The Central Commission meeting convened to prepare the General Chapter of 2020 was held at the monastery of Cîteaux from Thursday 13th to Friday 21st June, 2019. Several participants later admitted that on first seeing the agenda with its 237 votes from Regional Meetings to be addressed, they thought the task impossible, given the allotted timeframe. However, thanks to the warm fraternal welcome from the Abbot and Community of Cîteaux established at the beginning and maintained throughout by all attendees, amazing things were achieved....

Undoubtedly the splendid progress was largely due to the pervading spirit of prayer that seemed to flow from church to meeting room and back again. Indeed the splendid liturgy and awesomely beautiful singing made it difficult at times to quit the church in favour of yet another work session. But there were also marvellous breaks - the Abbot's guided tour of the monastery, the wonderful celebration for the 900th anniversary of the Charter of Charity, not to mention the deeply moving experience of celebrating the office of Terce on the site of the original church where our founders would first have celebrated the Divine Office.

A particularly moving experience for many was viewing a two part DVD called *Witnesses of the Greatest Love* which focused on the stories of the 19 Algerian Martyrs. This DVD was produced by Net for God, a film production company owned and run by Chemin Neuf.

Another very meaningful experience was that of attending the Abbot General's Plenary Council at which everyone present was reminded of the exceedingly difficult and dangerous circumstances in which some of our monasteries endeavour to live and pray. We were thus reminded of the need for each and every one of us to bear the needs and intentions of our suffering brothers and sisters to the Lord in our daily prayers...

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE CENTRAL COMMISSION OF 2019

The Abbot General, Dom Eamon warmly welcomed everyone to the Central Commission meeting and thanked the abbot, Dom Olivier, and the community of Cîteaux for hosting it. An important factor in their offering Cîteaux as a venue was the celebration of the 900th anniversary of the approval of the Charter of Charity by Pope Callistus II, scheduled for June 16th.

The Abbot General proceeded to thank the interpreters and the secretarial team in a special way for their availability and their work. Over the past number of years he said he had come to appreciate more and more, their service to the Order at the Central Commission and General Chapter but at other times too. He also extended his thanks to their superiors and communities for making them available.

The purpose of this meeting, it was explained, was to prepare for the General Chapter of 2020. The programme for the meeting was drawn up by the Abbot General and his Council in the light of the

experiences of the previous General Chapter, together with proposals garnered from the Regional Conferences of the Order. The layout and organization of the Agenda and especially the organization of the votes from the Regions was primarily the work of Mother Danièle, with the assistance of Dom Timothy and others at the Generalate.

Prior to handing over the work of running the meeting to the Promoter Dom Jean-Marc and his colleagues, Dom Eamon prayed *“May the Lord who is Spirit, guide our thoughts and our words and help us in our decision-making for the good of the Order and the building up of the body of Christ, the Church.”*

PRELIMINARIES

The Central Secretary for Formation, M. Marie, from the monastery of Val d’Igny, came to the end of her mandate at this meeting. As she had clearly stated that she did not wish to be re-elected, the coordinating commission asked all participants to reflect on her replacement. Propositions for candidates were to be given to Dom Roberto before Tuesday 18th.

The formulation of votes: During the Central Commission meeting at Roscrea, in 2016, a commission of 3 members was created to review and correct the wording of votes if it necessary. This positive experience was adopted during the General Chapter of 2017 with the same members and it worked equally well. For this Central Commission therefore, the coordinating Commission proposed the same formula. On being proposed, M Danièle, Dom Erik and Dom Juan-José agreed to undertake this important service. The Coordinating Commission, therefore, formulated the votes at this meeting and handed them over to this commission for review and correction.

The following vote was taken to introduce this procedure into the proceedings of the General Chapter:

VOTE 43

WE WISH TO MODIFY THE PROCEDURE FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER NO II 9.C TO READ:
“TOGETHER WITH A COMMISSION OF 3 PERSONS OF THE 3 LANGUAGE GROUPS CHOSEN TO HELP WITH THE FORMULATION OF VOTES, THE COORDINATING COMMISSION PREPARES VOTES FOR THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY AND INDICATES WHEN A TWO-THIRD MAJORITY VOTE IS REQUIRED. AD HOC COMMISSIONS MAY BE REQUESTED TO FORMULATE VOTES.”

YES 26 NO 0 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

I. PREPARATION OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

1. RESIGNATION AND ELECTION OF THE ABBOT GENERAL

Essentially the date for the election of the new Abbot General determines what happens in the first days of the General Chapter. September 8th, the Feast of the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary was preferred by many but some stated a preference for the second half of the Chapter. There was also a proposal for an afternoon of silence and prayer before the election. If the 8th of September were agreed, Dom Eamon's resignation and its subsequent acceptance could occur in the first day or so.

The following requests were submitted as a result of the Regional Conferences:

- That the same process of election as that of 2008 would be employed.
- That the Abbot General's resignation would occur during the first days of the Chapter.
- That the election would happen on 8th September, the traditional day for it to be held
- That Dom Eamon would give a presentation on how he sees the role of the Abbot General.
- That some time be allotted for Regional reflection on the subject
- That the fruit of Regional reflections might be presented in plenary session
- That each Region might prepare (in advance of the Chapter) a single page text addressing:
 - o its expectations on the role of the Abbot General
 - o a profile of the future Abbot General
 - o a listing of present day needs of the Order

VOTE 20

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL TO WRITE A PAPER ON HIS EXPERIENCE AS ABBOT GENERAL AND ON HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THIS SERVICE IN THE CONTEXT OF TODAY'S CHALLENGES.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 21

WE ASK THAT A WORKING PAPER BE DRAWN UP ON THE EXERCISE OF THE MINISTRY OF THE ABBOT GENERAL.

YES 19 NO 5 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 22

THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE DRAWN UP BY 2 PERSONS.

YES 14 NO 4 ABS 8 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 26

SINCE THE 2020 GENERAL CHAPTER IS A CHAPTER OF ELECTION, WE ASK THAT THE PRESENTATION OF THE ABBOT GENERAL'S RESIGNATION TAKE PLACE ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER.

YES 25 NO 1 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 27

WE ASK THAT THE VOTE CONCERNING THE ABBOT GENERAL'S RESIGNATION BE TAKEN ON THE FOLLOWING DAY.

YES	26	NO	0	ABS	0	Proposition Accepted
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VOTE 28

WE ASK THAT THE ELECTION OF THE NEW ABBOT GENERAL TAKE PLACE ON THE 8TH SEPTEMBER.

YES	24	NO	0	ABS	2	Proposition Accepted
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VOTE 29

WE WISH TO HAVE AN AFTERNOON OF PRAYER AND SILENCE ON THE DAY BEFORE THE ELECTION OF THE ABBOT GENERAL. (THE FIRST DAY OF THE CHAPTER WOULD THEN BE A NORMAL WORKING DAY).

YES	24	NO	0	ABS	2	Proposition Accepted
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The result of the nomination and election of the commission of the 2 members to draft a working document on the exercise of the ministry of the Abbot General (votes 21 and 22) Dom Bernardo (Azul) and Mother Marion (Crozet) were elected.

Procedure for the Resignation and Election of the Abbot General

In 2008, the regional meetings proposed candidates for election - a process which took place after the commissions had reflected on the needs of Order at that time and the qualities required of a future Abbot General. The names of proposed candidates, whose strengths and weaknesses were sensitively discussed, were subsequently posted in the general assembly. This was followed by a time of prayer and reflection.

- The proposition of names at Regional level was discussed, but it was decided that the nomination of candidates could be broadened if conducted in commissions.
- It was proposed that following reflection, the regions might prepare a text which would elucidate the needs of the Order and the expectations of a future Abbot General

2. REGIONAL REPORTS

The Central Commission accepted the idea that instead of writing regional reports, each region would reflect on their needs and the expectations they hold in relation to the election of a new Abbot General.

Providing questions to guide this reflection was discussed but it was agreed it would be better to allow everyone the freedom to undertake the task without too many directions.

The intention is for these reports to be heard in plenary session without the need for discussion in commissions since the feelings they elucidate will provide a 'sense' of the Order in the context in which the election of a new Abbot General will take place.

These reports should be one page long (not exceeding 3,000 characters) and contain the general statistics of the region.

VOTE 24

WE ASK THAT THE REGIONS SUBMIT A TEXT OF NOT MORE THAN 3,000 CHARACTERS, EXPRESSING THEIR VIEW OF THE ABBOT GENERAL'S ROLE IN THE LIGHT OF THEIR PRESENT NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 25

WE WISH THAT THIS REPORT INCLUDE THE GENERAL STATISTICS OF THE REGION (NUMBER OF HOUSES, NUMBER OF MONKS AND NUNS, MEMBERS IN FORMATION).

YES 22 NO 1 ABS 3 **Proposition Accepted**

3. HOUSE REPORTS

There were several different opinions expressed concerning the writing of house reports but there was unanimity in the idea of not requiring themes to guide their composition. Some thought the provision of questions would be helpful but others did not. What was deemed to be more important was that each monastery would give voice to the reality of the major events of their community's life and God's interventions in it.

A number of guidelines for the production of house reports were detailed:

- ✓ The inclusion of the major events which had occurred in the monastery since the last report was written in 2017
- ✓ An account of how the community saw the action of the Holy Spirit in these events
- ✓ Reports should be written with reference to the most recent Visitation Card
- ✓ A description of the method used to draw up the report should be given
- ✓ The report should be concise and not exceed the given limit

A reminder: that the Father Immediate should verify the reports of his daughter houses before they are submitted.

Concerning the study of the house reports in commissions; everyone agreed this should be conducted as it was at the last Chapter. Prior to undertaking these studies, the presidents of the commissions should consult the Abbot General or a member of his Council, the Father Immediate and the Regional Presidents, to identify houses that may be problematic. In some commissions the Father Immediate is always invited to participate in the process but while the procedure says he is consulted, his attendance is, in reality, at the discretion of the commission. For clarification of the text of the House Report, a commission would become obliged to invite the participation of the Father Immediate was considered desirable.

Treatment of House Reports: Following the experience of the Chapter of 2017, it would seem advisable to wait until all the reports on the study of the house reports are completed and available before they are read together in the *aula* since otherwise it is difficult to formulate an accurate overall picture. One region suggested that subsequent to the reading of these studies everyone might return to their commissions to discuss them so as to form a better vision of the Order in its entirety.

VOTE 32

WE ASK THE COMMUNITIES, WHEN WRITING THEIR HOUSE REPORTS, TO REFLECT ON AND DESCRIBE THE SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY SINCE THE LAST GENERAL CHAPTER.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 33

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE COMMUNITY REFER TO THE MOST RECENT VISITATION CARD WHEN DRAWING UP THEIR HOUSE REPORT.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 34

THE TEXT OF THE HOUSE REPORTS SHOULD NOT EXCEED 3,000 CHARACTERS.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 35

WE ASK THAT PARAGRAPH B.2.1.1 OF THE DOCUMENT OF THE "STUDY OF THE HOUSE REPORTS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER" (AS FOUND IN THE GENERAL BOOKLET OF 2017) BE REVISED.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

(If this vote is positive we take the following vote)

VOTE 36

WE ENTRUST THIS WORK TO A COMMISSION OF THREE PERSONS FROM THIS ASSEMBLY.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

As a result of the nomination and election of a 3-member committee to review a paragraph of the document "Study of House Reports" (votes 35 and 36), the following were elected: Dom Bernardus (Tilburg), Mother Daniele (Generalate) and Dom Juan José (Generalate).

VOTE 63

WE APPROVE THE REVISED TEXT OF B.2.1.1 AS REQUESTED IN VOTE 35:

2.1.1. *"BEFORE STUDYING THE HOUSE REPORTS, THE PRESIDENT OF EACH COMMISSION MAY SPEAK WITH THE ABBOT GENERAL OR A COUNCIL MEMBER, AND THE PRESIDENTS OF THE REGIONS, IN ORDER BETTER TO IDENTIFY THE HOUSES WITH PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT REQUIRE THE HELP OF THE COMMISSION.*

AFTER HAVING READ AND DISCUSSED THE REPORTS, THE COMMISSION DIALOGUES WITH THE SUPERIOR. THE FATHER IMMEDIATE MUST ALWAYS BE CONSULTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION STUDYING THE REPORT OF HIS DAUGHTER HOUSE. THE FATHER IMMEDIATE HAS THE DUTY TO PROVIDE PERTINENT INFORMATION AND THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD, WHICH DOES NOT NECESSARILY IMPLY THAT HE PARTICIPATES IN THE DISCUSSIONS. IF MORE INFORMATION IS NEEDED, THE COMMISSION CONTACTS MEMBERS OF THE 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."

YES 24 NO 1 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

II. MAYOR ISSUES FROM THE AGENDA

4. THE ABBOT GENERAL'S COUNCIL AND THE GENERALATE

Clarification was sought as to the duration of the mandate of a person appointed by the Abbot General to his council, to replace a previous incumbent. When nominated by the Abbot General, does this person begin a new mandate or complete that of his/her predecessor? Attention was drawn to the fact that were the new appointee to begin a new mandate, the current procedure for the rotation of members of the council would be upset. In the two most recent cases where replacements occurred, the new councillors were told their mandates would expire at the next General Chapter.

One region suggested that the role of the Abbot General's council be reviewed. Is it really necessary to have a permanent presence in Rome? Furthermore since there appear to be difficulties finding people to serve on the council, could much of their work be carried out on-line e.g. via Skype, and thereby remove the necessity for residency in Rome? Or perhaps the Generalate could be amalgamated with a monastery that is geographically close to its present location – TreFontane for example?

Dom Eamon was not in favour of these ideas. In the first place there are regions where internet access is virtually non-existent. Secondly, many difficult cases are only resolved over the longer term and the solutions are frequently manifested outside formal meetings or phone calls. In the third place, an international Order needs a physical presence in Rome to undertake the numerous tasks needing to be addressed through the various offices of the Vatican. And finally, the daily operation of the Generalate is entirely different to that of a regular monastery, so it would be exceedingly difficult to amalgamate it with a regular house.

As to the difficulty of finding councillors, it is often more difficult to find the people required to run the house than to serve on the council.

Dom Eamon went on to say that he considered the current ambiance at the Generalate to be the best it has ever been: several younger people are now working there in service of the Order and he felt this had improved the dynamic immeasurably. He questioned outsiders understanding of the work carried out at the Casa Generalizia and welcomed the idea of having an evaluation undertaken. This he thought would improve understanding of the work involved and possibly identify better ways of doing it which could be implemented now and by his successor in the future.

VOTE 30

WE ASK THE LAW COMMISSION TO CLARIFY WHETHER MEMBERS OF THE ABBOT GENERAL'S COUNCIL WHO ARE APPOINTED TO FILL A VACANCY, CONTINUE THE MANDATE OF THE DEPARTED COUNCILLOR (SEE ST 84.1.C.D).

YES	25	NO	0	ABS	1	Proposition Accepted
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VOTE 31

WE ASK THAT THE NEW ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL, BEFORE THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2023, MAKE PROPOSALS REGARDING THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE ABBOT GENERAL.

YES 22 NO 3 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 61

WE HEREBY CORRECT VOTE 31 TO NOW READ: WE SUGGEST THAT THE GC 2020 ASK THE NEW ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO MAKE PROPOSALS, FOR THE GC OF 2023, ON THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE ABBOT GENERAL.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

5. FATHERS IMMEDIATE

Temporary delegations

Approximately 25 monasteries of our Order were affected by the temporary delegations of paternity made by an ad-hoc commission at the General Chapter of 2017. These delegations were made for a three year period and come to their end at the Chapter of 2020. All who were affected - either by being delegated or by receiving a delegation - now need to have their views and opinions heard since it is important that informed discussions take place prior to long-term decisions being made.

Thus it was proposed that all the experiences, hopes and concerns of those affected – fathers immediate, superiors and communities - be consolidated in written statements for which either the Law Commission or the Abbot General might provide simple guidelines. These statements, (composed with reference to the working paper of 2017) are to be submitted to the Abbot General (thereby ensuring confidentiality) for evaluation by a process of his choosing, prior to the commencement of the Chapter of 2020.

Experimental delegations from the working paper of GC of 2017

A request was made that the working paper prepared for the GC of 2017 be revisited. This paper, concerned with the different ways by which delegation of filiation might be addressed, now needs to be evaluated, even though some houses consider the trial period to have been too short to evaluate the experience and make long-term decisions.

Possible re-distribution in filiations of communities with more than four daughter-houses

A number of Fathers Immediate seem to be feeling overburdened by the number of daughter houses they are tending. An abbot, acting as Father Immediate to multiple communities, can have many issues to address and, inevitably, will be absent from his home community for considerable periods because of his responsibilities. Thus it was suggested that a mother house should not have responsibility for more than four daughter houses - which would inevitably lead to a change of paternity for some. In the light of past negative experience in one region, an appreciation of the sensitivity of the procedure must be recognised if the infliction of painful and long-lasting wounds is to be avoided. It was suggested that a genuine commitment to living the Charter of Charity in a new way, by everyone involved, is what is required rather than blanket legislation.

Delegation of the regular visitation of monasteries of nuns

One region requested to review of the traditional practice of delegating the regular visitation of houses of nuns every six years to another abbot. Concern was expressed that in so doing, a process begun by a Father Immediate could be short-circuited. Another question was concerned on the differences of legislation (between monks and for nuns) on this is matter and whether this could be streamlined. However, others saw advantages in the current arrangement.

Possible temporary delegation of paternity of houses of nuns to an abbess

There was a suggestion in the working paper prepared for the General Chapter of 2017 that paternity of a house of nuns might be temporarily assigned to an abbess by a Father Immediate but that to make this possible would require the approval of the Holy See. After some discussion - including the idea of how abbesses might assist or share the work of Fathers Immediate, a vote was taken.

That the superior of a daughter-house has right to participate in the abbatial election of its mother-house

Concern was expressed by one region about the participation of the abbesses of daughter houses in abbatial elections. At present, the abbots of daughter houses have the right to participate in the abbatial election of their mother houses (and are eligible to be elected) but abbesses do not have the right a vote. Furthermore, in cases of fragile mother houses with numerous filiations, this practice can have a significant impact on the outcome of the election. Very differing opinions on this issue were expressed and a vote taken.

VOTE 50

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL TO INVITE ALL COMMUNITIES, FATHERS IMMEDIATE, AND THEIR DELEGATES AFFECTED BY THE DELEGATIONS OF PATERNITY MADE AT THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2017 TO REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCE DURING THESE THREE YEARS AND TO FORMULATE THAT REFLECTION IN A WRITTEN STATEMENT BEFORE THE GC.

YES 25 NO 1 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 51

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO COLLECT THESE WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND TO DETERMINE HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH THEM.

YES 24 NO 1 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 52

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT VOTE 77 OF THE GC 2017: "WE ENCOURAGE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSALS OF N° VI OF THE WORKING PAPER ON THE FATHER IMMEDIATE." WE ASK THAT THE GC 2020 EVALUATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PROPOSALS. (CF. P. 32, 33 OF THE GENERAL BOOKLET OF GC 2017)

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 54

WE WISH TO PUT ON THE AGENDA OF THE GC 2020 THE QUESTION OF DELEGATING THE REGULAR VISITATION EVERY SIX YEARS IN MONASTERIES OF NUNS

YES 9 NO 13 ABS 4 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 55

WE WISH THAT THE GC 2020 REFLECT ON A POSSIBLE REDISTRIBUTION IN FILIATIONS OF THOSE COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE MORE THAN FOUR DAUGHTER HOUSES.

YES 6 NO 17 ABS 3 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 56

WE ASK THE NEXT GC TO STUDY THE POSSIBILITY OF TEMPORARILY DELEGATING THE PATERNITY OF A MONASTERY OF NUNS TO AN ABBESS.

YES 8 NO 12 ABS 6 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 57

WE ASK THE GC 2020 TO REVIEW THE TEXT OF C. 39.2. THE TEXT GIVES TO THE SUPERIOR OF A DAUGHTER-HOUSE OF MONKS THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN THE ELECTION OF THE ABBOT OF THEIR MOTHER-HOUSE.

YES 8 NO 12 ABS 6 **Proposition Rejected**

6. THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF FRAGILE COMMUNITIES

The General Chapter of 2017 requested the Law Commission to revise Constitution 67 and propose a new statute on the accompaniment of fragile communities, taking into consideration the remarks of the fourteen commissions of that Chapter.

Many regions have since considered the matter and have agreed in principle with the Law Commissions' proposal for a new Statute. The number of votes taken at regional meetings indicated the seriousness and breadth of concerns involved and the need to make slight corrections to the proposed text so they might be addressed. This should enable the Law Commission to prepare a final document to present to the forthcoming General Chapter.

There were three main elements of concern expressed in relation to fragile communities and the suppression of monasteries:

- Juridical matters – in the areas of autonomy and stability
- Pastoral matters – in relation to human and spiritual care
- Financial matters – in relation to patrimony and the support of individuals

Monastic Commissary The abbatial power of governance and autonomy are directly affected by the proposal to adopt the institution of 'Monastic Commissary'. This role would confer the powers of a major superior (whose autonomy of a house has been suspended) upon the person appointed. Concerns were expressed on the potential conflict between the Monastic Commissary and the Father Immediate, unless clarification of both roles and their mode of interaction are clearly delineated. There is also a need to indicate when a monastic commissary would be appointed and what relationship there should be between him and a Commission for the Future.

Stability It was suggested that the Law Commission might undertake a study and produce a working paper on the question of the stability of the remaining members of a house, following its suppression. Where will they go if their founding house no longer exists? There is a need for an explicit explanation of where their stability should lie, so no one would find themselves homeless and unsupported - either financially or spiritually. Special concern was expressed for those who move to nursing homes.

Financial matters There were two areas of particular concern – the provision of financial support for the remaining members of a suppressed house and the disposal of the patrimony of houses that are closed.

The patrimony of a suppressed house is ecclesial property so the manner of its disposal needs to be clarified and harmonised with the elements of canon law which determine the matter. Clearly, the setting aside of funds for the support of the remaining members of a suppressed house, for the remainder of their lives, must be a priority.

It ought also to be held in mind that patrimony extends beyond the financial assets of a community i.e. it includes its history, artefacts etc. and that on occasions it is not assets but rather the outstanding debts of a monastery, that need to be addressed.

Given the number of fragile communities in our Order, there is a certain degree of urgency about addressing their needs and support right now. The topic is both large and complicated so we need to prioritise the three issues of autonomy, stability and patrimony, at the Chapter of 2020.

VOTE 53

IN REFERENCE TO VOTES 54 - 56 OF THE GC 2017, WE ASK THAT THE WORK OF THE LAW COMMISSION ON CSTS 67 AND 34 AND THE NEW STATUTE ON ACCOMPANIMENT OF FRAGILE COMMUNITIES BE STUDIED BY EXTRAORDINARY PROCEDURE AT THE NEXT GC.

YES 26 NO 0 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

7. CARE OF ABSENT MEMBERS

The Region of the Isles requested reflection on matters pertaining to absent members, whose care, under our *Constitutions*, is the responsibility of their superiors, regardless of whether their absence is legitimate or not. Most communities have absent members, which accounts for 2-3% of nuns and 15% of monks of the Order. The discussion emphasised the importance of establishing a mutually responsible relationship between the absent member(s) of a house and the superior responsible for their pastoral care. It was suggested norms ought to be established for financial support and humanitarian care, to include the type and frequency of contact between both parties. The issue of care of absent members is currently addressed in a *Vade mecum* but this is not legally binding.

Dom Timothy was in favour of addressing this issue at the General Chapter because he believed people were allowed to drift for too long and their superiors didn't seem very aware of their responsibilities. He explained that in Rome a question frequently asked of Superiors General, was what they had done to encourage the return of absentees. He also pointed out that recent legislation now requires action be taken if an absence exceeds the period of one year and that the CDC would expect this provision to be included in our legislation.

It was noted that to enable a fruitful discussion to occur at the GC of 2020 all relevant information (CST 59. *Vade mecum* and Vote of the ISLES) will need to be included in the General Booklet of the Chapter of 2020.

VOTE 58

WE WISH TO PLACE ON THE AGENDA OF THE GC 2020 THE QUESTION OF THE CARE OF ABSENT MEMBERS, TO BE TREATED BY ORDINARY PROCEDURE, WITH A VIEW TO PROVIDING PASTORAL GUIDELINES. (CF. VOTE 8.1 OF THE ISLES 2019; C. 59; VADE MECUM ON SEPARATION FROM THE MONASTIC COMMUNITY)

YES 24 NO 2 AB 0 **Proposition Accepted**

8. SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Congregation of the Religious, in conjunction with national Episcopal Conferences, has issued directives concerning all forms of abuse - sexual, of conscience and of power – to which our Order must respond, since both superiors and communities have serious responsibilities in this regard. To ensure the protection of everyone involved there is obviously a need for very specific education to raise awareness and consciousness of the issue.

It was proposed that a small commission of two people would compose a “Declaration of Principle” sufficiently broad to answer the requirements of national legislation in all countries of the Order. The intention would be to submit this document to the General Chapter for approval and subsequently add it to both *The Statute of the Regular Visitation* and the *Ratio Institutionis*. The two people elected to undertake the composition of the text of this declaration were Dom Richard and Dom Bernardus.

VOTE 37

WE ASK THE GENERAL CHAPTER TO AFFIRM OUR ORDER’S COMMITMENT TO PREVENTING SEXUAL ABUSE, THE ABUSE OF POWER AND ALL FORMS OF MANIPULATION OF CONSCIENCE.

YES 21 NO 2 ABS 3 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 38

WE ASK THE LAW COMMISSION TO PROPOSE A TEXT TO BE ADDED TO N. 16 OF THE *STATUTE ON THE REGULAR VISITATION*, INSTRUCTING VISITORS TO ENSURE THAT THE COMMUNITY VISITED HAS ESTABLISHED A POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION FROM ABUSE OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS AND THAT THE COMMUNITY PROVIDES EDUCATION IN THIS AREA.

YES 22 NO 1 ABS 3 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 60

IN RELATION TO VOTE 37, WE ASK THAT A COMMISSION OF TWO PERSONS BE ELECTED TO WRITE A DRAFT STATEMENT ON THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE, WHICH WILL BE STUDIED AT THE GC 2020 BY EXTRAORDINARY PROCEDURE.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

The result of the nomination and election process for a 2 member committee to draft a declaration on the prevention of abuse (votes 37 and 60) resulted in the election of Dom Richard (Mount Melleray) and Dom Bernardus (Tilburg).

9. COR ORANS

The apostolic instruction *Cor Orans* is a complex document which became effective for all contemplative nuns from the date of its introduction. Since it contains several elements which are at variance with our current constitutions and modes of practice, there is a need for our Order to respond to it, particularly in the areas where there appear to be differing official interpretations of its content.

The following were areas of particular concern to our regions:

- Legislation inequalities between monks and nuns
- Regulation of Enclosure
- Duration of Formation periods
- The loss of autonomy
- Membership of federations– for which dispensation has already been granted

Since many members of our Order have little understanding of this document it was suggested the Law Commission be asked to formulate a working paper which would present all the options, implications and possible adaptations necessary to harmonize the instruction with our current legislation, taking into consideration the votes from Regional meetings. This would greatly facilitate treatment by extraordinary procedure, and lead to well-informed decisions concerning adaptation or applications for dispensations.

It was agreed that as a single Order, we would like to have as much equality of legislation between our monks and nuns as possible. It was suggested however that the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach of *Cor Orans* does not appear to recognise this and that since our constitutions were approved by the Congregation fairly recently, we might have grounds to hope that our existing legislation will prove sufficiently robust to address all the concerns of *Cor Orans*.

The current president of the Law Commission will attend the General Chapter on a given day to present that Commission’s report but given the complex nature of *Cor Orans*, it was thought advisable that he be available on other days when this topic will be addressed.

VOTE 47

WE ASK THE LAW COMMISSION TO PREPARE A WORKING PAPER FOR THE GC 2020 ON THE ADAPTATION OF OUR CURRENT LEGISLATION AND/OR ON POSSIBLE REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF *COR ORANS*.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 48

WE WISH THAT THE TOPIC OF *COR ORANS* BE TREATED BY EXTRAORDINARY PROCEDURE.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 49

WE ASK THE LAW COMMISSION, WHEN TREATING THE TOPIC OF *COR ORANS*, TO SEEK WAYS OF HARMONIZING, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, THE LEGISLATION OF THE NUNS AND THE MONKS.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 62

WE INVITE THE PRESIDENT OF THE LAW COMMISSION TO BE PRESENT IN AN ADVISORY CAPACITY DURING THE CHAPTER'S DISCUSSION OF *COR ORANS*

YES 11 NO 10 ABS 5 **Proposition Accepted**

10. MUTUAL FINANCIAL AID

The Commission of Aid's primary function is to receive both donations and requests for funding, and the funds reserved for its use are managed by the Commission of Finance. To enable the assessment of requests for financial assistance, a dossier of information must always accompany a community's application to the Commission of Aid.

The secretary of the Commission of Aid, M Geneviève-Marie, regularly reports to the General Chapter giving a detailed account of the funds distributed (which in reality is never enough to cover all the requests received). Three times a year she sends a letter to all monasteries, asking for donations (which are not obligatory) though in practice, only a few make contributions. Perhaps this 'forgetfulness' is because houses feel they have little to offer but there was a conviction at the Central Commission that any donation, however small, is a concrete expression of fraternal charity which acts as a pertinent reminder of the commitment to live out the Cistercian Charter of Charity.

One region spoke of a different form of material aid – that of providing assistance for healthcare, which is something that could be established at regional level. For example the US region, has set up a "catastrophe fund" to which different houses can apply when a dire need occurs.

The management of funds of international organizations such as those of our Order has become increasingly complex and now requires the expertise of competent expert financiers. This is particularly important when making new foundations or providing support to daughter houses located abroad (e.g. in France a special fund called 'La Fondation des Monastères' has been established which provides this kind of financial expertise and advice). Having identified this need, a suggestion was made that an evaluation of the work of both the Commission of Aid and the Commission of Finance be undertaken by experts and that subsequently appropriate professional expertise could be sought and made available.

Another issue of concern is that of the patrimony of monasteries, particularly in cases of suppression. Prior to their closure, a conventual chapter can decide how it wants to distribute its assets subsequent to the reservation of sufficient funds to assure the medical support of its remaining brothers or sisters whether they relocate to monastery or a nursing home.

VOTE 46

WE ASK THAT AT THE NEXT GC THE COMMISSION OF AID GIVE SUGGESTIONS ON HOW THE COMMUNITIES CAN BETTER SUPPORT ITS WORK.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 59

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO EVALUATE THE FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMISSION OF AID AND THE FINANCE COMMISSION OF THE ORDER, HAVING RECOURSE TO COMPETENT PROFESSIONALS, AND TO REPORT TO THE GC 2020.

YES 24 NO 2 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

III. THE FUNCTIONING OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

11. COMMISSIONS

Ad-hoc Commissions: the General Chapter has the right to establish ad-hoc commissions and to elect those who serve on them but there exists an ambiguity in the procedures of their establishment that needs to be addressed.

There were many ad-hoc commissions at the last General Chapter and consequently the regular commissions suffered from the absence of their members. It is very difficult to legislate on this since it is impossible to envisage how many ad hoc commissions may be required and how they will operate.

The Co-ordination Commission: a number of important tasks are the responsibility of this commission which is charged with running the General Chapter. These include:

- Presentation of interim evaluations of the commissions in the form of syntheses
- Provision of instructions and directives for delegates
- Ensuring reports from the commissions are submitted on time and consistent in their adherence to norms, including their length and conciseness
- That the formulation of votes is both clear and precise
- That the opinions of concerned individuals, and not just commissions, are heard, especially in instances of the suppression of a house or the establishment of a new foundation

12. REGIONAL PROCEDURE

Concern was expressed regarding the large number of items on the agenda at the General Chapter since there is often insufficient time to address them all. The Central Commission of 2016 worked on the idea of developing a regional procedure to tackle this problem by undertaking the preparation of subjects at regional level in an effort to reduce the workload of the Commissions. This regional procedure received a positive but indecisive vote at the General Chapter of 2017 ('Yes' 73; 'No' 68; Abstentions 22). This procedure would not be practical for every region so the proposition has lacked sufficient enthusiasm for the Central Commission to pursue the matter.

13. ORGANISATION OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

13.1. The first days of the General Chapter

Usually the morning of the first day of the General Chapter is dedicated to the same essential elements: wide-ranging instructions of a practical nature, information concerning the work of commissions, and the Abbot General's conference together, with the official opening of the event.

In the afternoon, in 2017, there was personal time for prayer and reflection, meeting in commissions to elect presidents, vice-presidents and secretaries, and a period for dialogue and exchange about the Abbot General's conference. At 6 pm, there was a meeting in the *aula* so new superiors and delegates, presidents, vice-presidents and secretaries could be provided with necessary information and instructions. At 6.30 Vespers was celebrated together in the room designated to function as a chapel.

Several requests were made for the first day of the Chapter of 2020: to have the same schedule as in 2017; to have the opening and closing Masses of the General Chapter held in the basilica of *Santa Maria degli Angeli*; that the resignation of Dom Eamon, Abbot General, should be included in the first days and that he would give an opening conference on his vision of the Order.

A reminder was given that quite frequently, due to travel hitches of various kinds, a number of capitulants do not arrive in time to participate in the first day's events so this is now an important consideration when the agenda is being formulated.

13.2. Liturgy

13.2.1. Celebration of the Eucharist

There were several suggestions made concerning the improvement of the celebration of the Eucharist at *Domis Pacis*

- To relocate the *Schola*
- To improve the arrangements for the distribution of the Eucharist
- To simplify the celebration of the Eucharist on weekdays

The fact that many choose to attend Mass elsewhere, was considered: some like to celebrate with the Franciscans while others prefer other locations. However, it would seem important to encourage everyone to join in celebrating the Eucharist together as an Order.

There were two other specific requests:

- That the opening and closing masses of the General Chapter be celebrated at *Santa Maria degli Angeli*
- That a special Mass be celebrated, in the course of the Chapter, to commemorate all deceased members of the Order who had died since the preceding Chapter of 2017.

VOTE 4

IF THE CELEBRATION OF LAUDS AND DAILY EUCHARIST IS IN *DOMUS PACIS*, IT WOULD BE BETTER IF THE SCHOLA FOR THE MASS WERE NOT ON THE STAGE.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 5

WE ENCOURAGE THE ORGANIZATION OF MORE SATISFACTORY PROCEDURES FOR DISTRIBUTING HOLY COMMUNION AT MASS.

YES 26 NO 0 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 6

WE WISH THAT DURING THE GENERAL CHAPTER, A MASS BE CELEBRATED IN MEMORY OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE ORDER WHO HAVE DIED SINCE THE LAST GENERAL CHAPTER.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 7

WE WISH TO USE THE BASILICA OF *SANTA MARIA DEGLI ANGELI* FOR THE OPENING AND CLOSING MASSES OF THE CHAPTER, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.

YES 20 NO 5 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

13.2.2. Divine Office

The importance of celebrating, Lauds and the Eucharist in common was recognised, as was the continued celebration of Vespers in separate languages.

To afford the inclusion of what is often quite a large number of capitulants who will have little opportunity to participate in the Chapter, it was suggested that a very brief meditation might be included in the office of Tierce.

There was also a request for some form of liturgical celebration in one of the Franciscan places of Assisi.

To assist in centering all participants in prayer, a request was made that the presence of the Blessed Sacrament be made available every day for the duration of the Chapter.

VOTE 1

WE WISH TO CONTINUE TO CELEBRATE LAUDS AND THE DAILY EUCHARIST TOGETHER IN *DOMUS PACIS*.

YES 16 NO 10 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 8

WE WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE CELEBRATING VESPERS IN LINGUISTIC GROUPS.

YES 26 NO 0 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 9

WE PROPOSE THAT, AT THE OFFICE OF TIERCE, THE READING BE FOLLOWED BY A BRIEF MEDITATION ON THE WORD, OFFERED BY A CAPITULANT.

YES 7 NO 18 ABS 1 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 10

WE WISH TO HAVE AT SOME POINT DURING THE GC A COMMON CELEBRATION AT ONE OF THE FRANCISCAN PLACES OF ASSISI

YES 8 NO 15 ABS 3 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 11

WE WOULD LIKE THE BLESSED SACRAMENT TO BE IN THE CHAPEL DURING THE WHOLE OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER TO FACILITATE PRIVATE PRAYER.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

13.3. Sunday / Free Day

Several regions expressed appreciation of having Sunday afternoon free. Several also requested a free day.

VOTE 12

WE WOULD LIKE TO MAINTAIN A FREE AFTERNOON ON SUNDAYS.

YES 25 NO 1 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 13

WE WISH THAT DURING THE GENERAL CHAPTER ONE FREE DAY WOULD BE ARRANGED.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

13.4. Guests and Conferences

While it was appreciated that the choice of guests and the extent of their participation in the General Chapter is primarily the concern of the Abbot General and his Council, the members of the Central Commission did offer a number of comments and suggestions.

Satisfaction was expressed at the reduced number of invited guests at the Chapter of 2017 - primarily as a consequence of the presentations made by a number of younger superiors of our Order. It is very difficult to break a cycle of invitations once established but the use of a round table discussion format might be a way of overcoming the problem.

It was considered important to invite guests from the wider Cistercian family as a means of expressing communion, and it was felt we would benefit considerably from the courteous and fraternal presence of Dom Mauro and the Bernardines at the election of our new Abbot General. The conferences of Dom Mauro have always been enormously appreciated and therefore it was suggested he might be invited to make a presentation based on his 10 year experience of fulfilling the role of Abbot General.

The General Chapter provides an opportunity to hear people speak on themes and topics of particular interest e.g. the renewal and revitalization of Cistercian values and monastic observances or the service of authority; but speakers must be given our full attention and sufficient time to

express themselves. In addition, it was suggested that scheduling conferences together would generate a block of time for profound listening.

Considerable interest was also expressed in hearing the ideas of younger members of our Order on the subject of their hopes, dreams, expectations and challenges, since many have a particular gift for engendering the stimulation needed to effect change.

VOTE 14

WE DELEGATE TO THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL THE CHOICE OF INVITED GUESTS TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER AND THEIR MANNER OF PARTICIPATION.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 15

BECAUSE THE CHAPTER OF 2020 IS A CHAPTER OF ELECTION WE SUGGEST THAT THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL REDUCE THE NUMBER OF INVITED GUESTS

YES 24 NO 0 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 16

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO INVITE THREE SOLEMNLY PROFESSED MEMBERS OF THE ORDER BETWEEN 35-45 YEARS OF AGE TO GIVE CONFERENCES ON WHAT THEY FIND MOST LIFE-GIVING IN THE ORDER TODAY.

YES 20 NO 6 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 17

WE ASK THAT THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL CHOOSE TWO SUPERIORS OF THE ORDER TO SPEAK AT THE GC 2020 ON THE REVITALIZATION OF OUR CISTERCIAN VALUES AND OBSERVANCES.

YES 21 NO 5 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 42

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO INVITE DOM MAURO LEPORI, O.CIST TO GIVE A CONFERENCE AT THE NEXT GENERAL CHAPTER.

YES 21 NO 4 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

13.5. Translation and Other Services Required at the General Chapter

The delay in translation of texts had a significant negative impact on the rate of progress at the General Chapter of 2017 (despite the fact that approximately 40 translators were involved). These delays were partly due to the fact that a number of translators were working from their home monasteries, located in different time zones. But whatever the underlying cause, the need for sufficient competent translators to be engaged for the General Chapter was made patently clear.

Since lay people are unfamiliar with monastic terms and vocabulary, there is an urgent need for all Regions of the Order to give serious consideration to the training of monks and nuns in interpretation, translation and secretarial skills which would enable them render these vital services at meetings of the Central Commission and General Chapter in the future.

Conscious of the need for translations to and from Japanese, Dom Raphael reported that the ORIENS region had identified several people to undertake this work at the forthcoming Chapter and their superiors have already given their agreement. This includes Sr Takarashi OSB who will undertake interpretation of French into Japanese and Sr Clothilde (Glencairn), Dom David (Spencer), Sr Bernarda (Nasu) who will undertake the translation of texts. To facilitate translation into Japanese, Dom Raphael requested that texts should be submitted as early as possible, in English, to the ORIENS Region, since they will also need to be translated into Korean for their regional delegate.

The list of services required at the General Chapter is a long one: secretaries and typists, co-ordinator of the Secretariat, photo-copyist, computer technologists, cellarer, liturgist, sacristan, nurse, doctor etc. etc. Happily, Dr Bessoneau (who was present in 2017) has agreed to return to provide medical care but unfortunately a number of former translators are no longer available, so the team needs to be strengthened. A desire was expressed to have the same team of interpreters who attended this Central Commission at the Chapter of 2020 and some names were proposed for other roles which will need to be followed up. Since no one could be found to act as secretary for the Coordination Commission the Central Commission consigned the task of finding a suitable person to the Abbot General and his Council.

13.6. Confidentiality

There was a very serious request that at the commencement of the next General Chapter all participants (whether attending in person or working from home) be reminded by the presidents of commissions, of the confidential nature of information. This request was made as a result of the very negative impact experienced by one region as a consequence of indiscretions committed at the Chapter of 2017. This confidentiality applies to everything including what is written in blogs, information concerning the voting process and photographs. It is virtually impossible to control the dissemination of information but it is essential to raise consciousness of the serious consequences which can result from thoughtless or irresponsible behaviour.

Many errors were published on blogs at the last General Chapter and, as a result, disseminated worldwide, before they could be corrected. Therefore it was suggested that someone might be appointed to provide accurate information (in all three official languages) for the creation of blogs. Alternatively, one or more people, fluent in languages could be asked to proof read what is to be published prior to its release.

VOTE 18

WE SUGGEST THAT THE GENERAL CHAPTER APPOINT 3 CAPITULANTS TO REVIEW THE BLOGS IN EACH OF THE 3 LANGUAGES BEFORE THEY ARE POSTED.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 19

WE ASK THE PROMOTER OF THE GC TO REMIND ALL PRESENT AT THE GC TO RESPECT THE CONFIDENTIALITY AND TO ACT WITH DISCRETION REGARDING THE SHARING OF INFORMATION AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

YES 24 NO 0 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

13.7. The Use Of Technology / Ecology

There were significant differences of opinion expressed by the regions concerning the use of technological devices at the General Chapter. Some regions wanted to move slowly in this regard while others, in the interests of ecology, were in favour of making rapid progress towards a paperless General Chapter.

Since some regional meetings had already tried and tested this approach it had been proven that a considerable reduction in paper consumption could be effected through the use of the internet, lap tops, tablets etc. To facility this type of development at the General Chapter it was recognised that specialist expertise would be required.

Rather than being over ambitious, it was thought better to proceed by taking small steps in the required direction so that a combination of advice and practical experience would ultimately result in the achievement of our objective.

VOTE 41

IN ORDER TO REDUCE CONSUMPTION OF PAPER WE ASK THAT CAPITULANTS MIGHT ACCESS DOCUMENTS DIGITALLY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AT THE NEXT GENERAL CHAPTER. WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO CONFER WITH *DOMUS PACIS* ON THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

In the spirit of *Laudato si*, in order to avoid the use of plastic cups, one region proposed offering an 'eco cup' to every participant, which they could use repeatedly for the duration of the general chapter.

VOTE 39

IN ORDER TO AVOID THE WASTE OF DISPOSABLE CUPS AND OTHER PLASTIC ITEMS AT THE GENERAL CHAPTER, WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO NEGOTIATE ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES WITH *DOMUS PACIS*.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

13.8. Synthesis and Evaluation

Opinions on the value of a synthesis of the Chapter were divided. Some thought to abandon it entirely, while others questioned its usefulness. Everyone however, agreed that the synthesis of the Chapter of 2017 was of excellent quality. It was better than a synopsis because of its objective perspective of proceedings and, in addition, it provided an orientation for the future. In this, it's usefulness as a tool of analysis was much appreciated.

A suggestion was put forth concerning the last few days of the Chapter i.e. that an evaluation might be carried out in commissions, which, rather than concentrating on practical matters, would attempt to identify the most significant issues that arose during the Chapter and from these to seek an orientation for the Order for the future. This would greatly reduce the work of the two redactors charged with the task of producing the synthesis.

VOTE 44

WE ASK THAT THE FINAL EVALUATION OF THE GC FOCUS ON THE CONTENT AND SIGNIFICANT POINTS OF THE CHAPTER. EACH COMMISSION WILL WRITE A BRIEF REPORT AND PRESENT IT IN THE *AULA*. THIS INFORMATION WILL THEN BE AVAILABLE TO THE AUTHORS OF THE SYNTHESIS OF THE GC.

YES 24 NO 1 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

IV. PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE ABBOT GENERAL

During the Central Commission of Cîteaux, a plenary council of the Abbot General was convened. This was followed by a pastoral exchange between the participants, the main points of which are presented in **Appendix - iv**.

A letter of encouragement, signed by all participants was sent to the community of Bamenda who are greatly **affected** by the dire situation of the country – **See Appendix - iii**.

V. MISCELLANEOUS

14. Central Secretary for Formation

Mère Marie of Val d'Igny, the Central Secretary for formation in presenting her report (see **Appendix - ii**) suggested that the conclusion of a mandate was an ideal time to conduct an evaluation. She thought the two most beneficial things she had achieved were the production of a thrice yearly *newsletter* for our regional secretaries for formation and the development of the *Experientia* programme for on-going formation. She was particularly pleased that the newsletter enabled the forging of links and close collaboration amongst our formators and the formators of like-minded Orders, so that information now flows easily and readily between them, to the benefit of all.

The *Experientia* Programme

It is difficult at this early stage to assess the success of the programme but it seems to have been well received by all. The seniors were initially quite reticent when faced with personal questions but greatly appreciated the group dialogues which allowed them become more familiar with each other. Those of middle age appreciated the pertinence of the questions posed while the younger generation were delighted by the pedagogy begun - a response which has brought communities to greater unity. Considering the primary objective of *Experientia* was to engender reflection and sharing, early indications suggest it is proving very successful.

M Marie regretted that the workload involved in the production of *Experientia* was considerable and the necessity of attending to the multiple tasks it involved, resulted in other aspects of her job being somewhat neglected. But perhaps that was an inevitable consequence of undertaking such a project.

In conclusion, the Central Commission, having reassured M Marie of its' immense gratitude for all she had done and having accepted her insistence that she did not wish to be re-elected, undertook the election of her replacement. The new Central Secretary for Formation will be Rev Fr Mauricio of the monastery of Azul, who duly confirmed his acceptance of the appointment.

VOTE 45

ON BEHALF OF ALL OUR COMMUNITIES WE WISH TO EXPRESS OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE TO FR MICHAEL CASEY, SR MARIE, THE CENTRAL SECRETARY OF FORMATION, AND TO ALL WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE *EXPERIENTIA* PROGRAMME

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

15. A Special Prayer

A practical proposal was made concerning participation in the revitalization of our Order: that all communities would unite spiritually in offering a fervent prayer for vocations and the revitalization of our manner of living Cistercian life. The date chosen for this was 26th January, the Solemnity of our Founders.

VOTE 40

WE ASK TO PLACE ON THE AGENDA OF THE GC 2020 THE PROPOSAL THAT EVERY YEAR, ON JANUARY 26TH THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR HOLY FOUNDERS, ALL THE COMMUNITIES OF THE ORDER UNITE SPIRITUALLY IN PRAYING FOR VOCATIONS AND THE RENEWAL OF THE ORDER.

Yes 22 No 1 Abs 3 **Proposition Accepted**

VI. CONCLUSION

Preparatory work for the General Chapter of 2020:

The following list of studies and documents, compiled by Dom Roberto, itemises the preparations required for the General Chapter of 2020:

- **A Study of House Reports**
- **To Prepare the Election of the Abbot General:**
 - Every region to prepare a statement concerning its needs and expectations...
 - A working paper on the role of the Abbot General by Dom Eamon
 - A working paper concerning the work of the Abbot General's ministry
- **Conferences**
 - By three younger members of the Order
 - By two superiors of the Order
 - By Dom Mauro Lepori
 - By Dom Eamon Fitzgerald
- **A statement concerning the prevention of abuse**
- **A working paper on *Cor Orans* in relation to our legislation**
- **The treatment of statements / reports from those impacted by the temporary delegations of paternity by the General Chapter of 2017**
- **A new Statute on the Accompaniment of Fragile Communities and CST 67 and CST 34**
- **A document to address the case of absent members**
- **An evaluation of the Commission of Finance & the Commission of Aid**

16. Evaluation of the meeting

All participants at the meeting of the Central Commission were united in their appreciation and tributes of gratitude to Dom Olivier and the community of Cîteaux for their immense hospitality and warmth of fraternal welcome. There were numerous tributes paid to them for their execution of complex logistics which resulted in the wonderfully impressive celebrations organised to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the Charter of Charity. The entire day was thoroughly enjoyed and enormously appreciated by all who attended the liturgy, the conferences and the sharing at table. It was an opportunity to make, renew and deepen friendships but amongst those who share the same Cistercian roots it engendered a new appreciation of the breadth of our family.

Very many thanks were also expressed to the Co-ordinating Team whose masterful handling of a wide range of topics contained in the 237 votes taken at Regional Meetings was quite amazing. The team might have quailed at an agenda of such magnitude but thanks to excellent chairmanship by the moderators everything was dealt with most effectively, with great attention to difficult subjects and in an atmosphere of respectful listening. One participant described it as *“a great communion, where there was immense respect for one another... listening and receiving in charity and truth, even when we disagreed”*.

Several people told of their strong feelings of gratitude for the pastoral exchange by which they felt themselves greatly enriched. In fact it was suggested that at future meetings it would be good to provide an opportunity for the sharing of concerns and reflections on a deeply personal and fraternal level since normally the participants only speak of concerns on behalf of their particular regions. Dom Eamon agreed saying *“...to address things more personally would allow a dimension of creativity which could be very fruitful both for the meeting and the Order.”*

There were a number of suggestions for improvements in the future:

- To remind everyone of the need for adherence to criteria that must be applied to written documents – particularly reports, and why these are necessary
- To invite the presidents of the regions to come to meetings with a list of possible nominations for the roles that will need to be filled at the General Chapter e.g. secretaries, translators, nurses, sacristan etc. etc. They might even check in advance with superiors to see if their proposed candidates would be available.
- That regional presidents would endeavour to identify suitably talented younger people whose superiors would encourage to become trained in secretarial and translating skills so as to be available to serve the Order in these areas

Dom Jean-Marc, promotor of the General Chapter, expressed his appreciation of the Co-ordination Team in terms of its spirit of welcome, where each person was respected and supported in their limitations and which enabled things to go forward peacefully. The atmosphere he thus described was clearly most effective since everything on the enormous agenda was satisfactorily concluded without the necessity of having to work on the great Sunday of Celebration.

Dom Olivier thanked everyone who attended and for the grace the community of Cîteaux received in hosting the event which he identified as one of being opened to an appreciation and wider perspective of the entire Order.

17. Official Closure of Central Commission Meeting Cîteaux 2019

Our evaluation of this meeting has been very positive and despite what I felt was a very slow start, we have completed our work most efficiently. All I would like to say has been covered by others in terms of thanks and appreciation of what we have experienced here. My sense of the celebration of the 900th anniversary of the Charter of Charity particularly, was the appreciation expressed by the Generals of the other five elements of the Cistercian family i.e. that it was a wonderful sign for the future. It was a marvellous meeting and a significant moment in the history of the Order, especially given the circumstances of many of our communities.

We are in the position of living in a changing world and changing cultures and we cannot help but be affected by it. It is a challenge which can be very positive for us. What do we want to be? How do we want to be as Cistercian Christians in the world of today? The important thing is that we live what we have to live, that we live the gift of each and every day: this is what we are called to do. This is the experience of poverty. Let us live every today fully.

We still have a danger in our title – Order of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance – because we are labelled a being ‘stricter’. Peter the Venerable accused us of the danger of pride and it is not a bad thing to be challenged on this.

This is what I desire, what I want to live myself i.e. to live simply and this is what I hope for when I have achieved my mandate. I am looking forward to living my life on a simpler level – I have no problem with doing the washing up, since I feel competent about that but the office of Abbot General is another matter entirely!!! My home community is in a very fragile state, despite the injection of new life from Dom Richard’s appointment as Abbot. I know the community has moved from just being a community to being a community of fraternity and they are all in a better place in the sense of how they are now living together. This is what I wish for all communities – to live fraternally and be happy in it. I know our work here will have given encouragement to many to do just that.

I close this meeting with thanks again to D Olivier and the community here – for their warm welcome, facilities etc. and I renew my thanks to the translators and secretaries all of whom have worked well it seems. I look forward to receiving the outcome of their work. I thank you all again for being present here. May God bless you and keep you all. Please pray for one another.

And again, a very great ‘thank you’ to Cîteaux!

Dom Eamon Fitzgerald OCSO
Abbot General

Appendix - i

Official Opening of Central Commission Meeting Cîteaux 2019

I am happy to welcome all of the members of the Central Commission to this meeting here at Cîteaux. I thank the abbot of Cîteaux, Dom Olivier and the community for hosting the meeting. An important reason in their offering Cîteaux as a venue for the meeting was the fact that this year is the 9th centenary of the first approval of the Charter of Charity by Pope Callistus II. That event will be celebrated here on Sunday next, June 16.

I would also like to thank, in a special way, our interpreters and the secretarial team for their availability and their services. Over the past number of years I appreciate in a more concrete and real manner their service to the Order, at the Central Commission and at the General Chapter but also, in some cases for translation work they do in the service of the Order at other times. At this meeting we have one new face among the interpreters that is Brother Ricardo of Jacona in Mexico who will be translating from French to Spanish. Since the appointment of Fr. Jose Luis of Viaceli as *Superior ad nutum* of his community we had been hard pressed to find a replacement and it was only at the 11th hour that Br. Ricardo appeared on the horizon.

We also have a whole new team of secretaries in the persons of Sr. Marilucia of Quilvo, who is secretary of the Order at the Generalate, M. Marie-Joseph of Campénéac, French language secretary and Sr. Fiachra of Glencairn who is English language secretary. As the three secretaries don't share a common language, though they seem already to be able to manage to communicate, it was thought better to have someone who could act as a go-between so Dom Jacques of Mont des Cats and chaplain at Vitorchiano agreed to act as communications facilitator among the group.

Sr. Clothilde of Glencairn is also acting as interpreter for Dom Rafael of Oita, Japan. To all of these sisters and brothers I say thank you for your services and thanks too to their superiors and communities for releasing them for this work.

The purpose of this meeting is to prepare the General Chapter of 2020. The programme for the meeting has been drawn up by the Abbot General and his council in the light of the last General Chapter and the proposals of the Regional Conferences of the Order. The lay out and organization of the Agenda and especially of the organization of the votes from the Regions is, in great part the work of M. Daniele, with the assistance of Dom Timothy and other members of the Generalate.

It is now time to hand over the work of running this meeting to the Promoter and his colleagues. May the Lord who is Spirit guide our thoughts and our words and help us in our decision-making for the good of the Order and the building up of the body of Christ, the Church.

Dom Eamon Fitzgerald OCSO
Abbot General

Appendix - ii Report from the Central Secretary for Formation

Central Secretary for Formation Meeting with the Members of the Central Commission Cîteaux, June 18, 2019

My cordial thanks to Dom Eamon for having invited me to meet with you and for having allowed me celebrate the 900th anniversary of the Charter of Charity with you, here at Cîteaux, this place which is so dear to us.

May I say how happy I am to have reached the end of my term as central secretary, one which has lasted 4 ½ years! The end of a mandate is always an appropriate time for an evaluation. Perhaps we could look at this together?

Looking back:

The two most concrete accomplishments which the Lord has granted:

- The creation of a Newsletter which is circulated within the Order and among our closest friends every three months. Thanks to the fruitful collaboration of our regional secretaries for formation, who have really developed a taste for this kind of sharing, news has begun circulating freely among our various regions. Reaction to this sharing has varied according to the relative poverty or wealth of the different regions in terms of formation materials or formators. Nevertheless, links have been forged, and this is the essential point.
- The project for ongoing formation, *Experientia*, was if I may gratefully remind you, the fruit of a discussion with the Central Commission in 2016. The accomplishment of this programme was like a miracle of cooperation among brothers and sisters. I think the fact that our Order was able to provide itself with a formation course through the efforts of 78 of its members (including authors of texts and translators), coming from every region, represents a huge investment in itself. And the fact that one of their number was able to make a dynamic and truly formative whole out of all the individual contributions, was a beautiful grace.

There were also a few more minor achievements: the leaflet “Avanceées”, which gathers together the reflections of some superiors on the subject of formation; making introductions between brothers or sisters to provide mutual aid, both on a temporary and ongoing basis; fulfilling requests for bibliographies, finding speakers on one subject or another; seeking proposals for formation...etc.

Then there are my personal shortcomings in this role:

- I have been quite negligent in keeping email lists up to date and my failure to note changes in superiors or addresses have been hurtful for some.
- I have lacked a certain zeal for learning even a bare minimum of Spanish.
- My contacts with the regional secretaries for formation have become more and more sporadic and are now reduced to just the communication required to produce the newsletter; in addition, some people regretted that the *Experientia* project was carried out without their being consulted
- §70 of our *Ratio* stipulates that “the central secretary for formation will ensure the dissemination of relevant information about all aspects of monastic formation.” Alas, I find myself far from attaining this goal; for example, I never solicited enough information about practical or artistic formation.

- Having allowed myself to be taken up with the production of the *Experientia* programme, my vision of formation in the Order as a whole has shrunken considerably.
- Contacts I made at the beginning of my mandate, notably with regional collaborators in the AIM, have fallen by the wayside; etc.

In spite of all my shortcomings, I am nevertheless immensely grateful to the Lord for all that He has allowed us to accomplish - both by myself and by my many collaborators.

Ongoing Projects:

Experientia programme: while the work of sowing still remains incomplete, I would not dare to speak of any fruits! However, the first comments received from our communities seem to indicate that it has been favorably received. The reactions we have noted can be divided into three main categories:

1. Our seniors, although quite reticent regarding questions which were judged as being overly personal, appreciated the group discussions which allowed them get to know each other better;
2. The middle-aged appreciated the pertinence of the questions;
3. Our younger members, with their frank enthusiasm for the programme, drew their whole communities in to participation - even their superiors!

The programme seemed to work on both the level of the individual and that of the community as a whole – by which we see it as having achieved its goal of being a programme for reflection and sharing. Volume Two has “gone to press”. God willing, it will be sent to superiors by the Feast of St. Benedict. 78 brothers and sisters have worked towards the completion of the whole programme.

Experientia remains a ‘classic’ effort, based on the model of Exordium; the only difference being the use of email to make contact with the authors and translators. We have also used the internet in other aspects of the project, including the distribution of the completed work. This signals advancements in the means of communication which has greatly facilitated our work and has, above all, saved us a great deal of money in postage.

The project was more ambitious at its inception, the working group having mentioned formation by CD (along the lines of the “Great Courses”); the possibility of greater contact by Internet among participants in the programme; a meeting, a session, even a pilgrimage to the sources of our tradition, for those who persevered to the end of the course...! As we went along, our investments in time and personnel became more modest. Perhaps we should have been more audacious?

The total cost of producing the programme came to €9,041.56. This covered both travel and accommodation expenses for the members of the working group who met at Val d’Igny in January, 2017 and after the General Chapter, at Valserena. Since the Order covered these costs, we could say that everyone has had a part in the project.

Following the request of three French regions, we sent our programme beyond the boundaries of the Order to the Bernardine Sisters, to Dom Mauro for the Order of Cîteaux, to Dom Jean-Pierre Longeat for the AIM, as well as Dom Gregory, Abbot Primate of the Benedictines. On receiving a copy of *Experientia*, Dom Gregory wrote of his interest in our work: “I was delighted to receive your programme and will be happy, if time permits, to take part in it myself. I truly believe that the three monastic orders: Benedictines, Cistercians and Trappists should continue to work more closely together. Our values are very similar and very deep. We have so much to learn from each other.”

Towards the Future:

Doesn't Dom Gregory's letter open the way to collaborating on material for inter-order monastic formation? Is *Experientia* perhaps too exclusively Trappist? Now it is up to us not to rest on our laurels.

Perhaps we should also make an effort not to lose the dynamism that our programme seems to have inspired. At the levels both of our regions and individual communities, how can we prolong this double path of personal assimilation/transmission of our tradition and of worldwide fraternal communion?

More profoundly, what new horizons could *Experientia* open up in the present-day context of the closing of several houses? How can we help our brothers and sisters to keep their hope oriented towards a formation that encourages everyone to persevere in a type of ongoing formation that is – if I may repeat myself – integral and mystical?

During the time between General Chapters, wouldn't it be good to have our regions reflect on one of the intuitions expressed here? This is where the idea for *Experientia* originated, but I repeat, that for the past few months my attention has been too focused on the programme itself, to allow me to come up with suggestions for the regional secretaries for formation.

As I mentioned at our last meeting, there are still several texts at the secretariat that should be published: in French there is a paper a brother wrote for his Licence in theology, on the Liturgy of the Hours, and in German there are several texts on the subject of formation. Perhaps there are other theses or papers...? It might be good to see if a small library could be set up, on the reserved part of the Order's website.

I'd like to finish my look to the future with a personal request. Even though I have been very happy serving as central secretary for formation, I would like to ask you to pass on the torch to another, particularly:

A brother or sister with knowledge of Spanish
Someone younger than I
Someone more computer-literate than I am!

I am making this request not out of weariness, but because this job has allowed me to come to know and therefore to love all the better, the brothers and sisters of the Order, in all our rich diversity, and it is my great hope that younger people also might have the opportunity to receive this grace.

I also make this request for the sake of my own community, who generously provided me with the necessary time and means to complete this task.

There I ask that you unbind me and let me go.

To the Lord and to you, for everything that was given to me by way of experience during my mandate, thanks in large part to the attentiveness and trust of the Central Commission, let me simply say, 'Thank you'.

Sr. Marie Mouris
Abbey Notre-Dame du Val d'Igny

Appendix - iii Letter of Encouragement to the Community of Bamenda

Cîteaux 28th June, 2019

Dear Dom Polycarp

dear Brothers of Bamenda Abbey

Gathered at Cîteaux, the wellspring of our Order, for the Central Commission, we wish to assure you of our prayers and deep concern. Conscious of the unrest that plagues your country, we commend you to the intercession of Our Lady, Comforter of the afflicted. May the Lord grant you his peace. And may your Community stand forth as a sign of unity, reconciliation And Christian hope in a situation of conflict.

Appendix - iv

Pastoral Sharing

The discussions which took place following the Abbot General's plenary council were considered to have been of immense value. In response to a request, the following text provides some of this material for reflection by other superiors:

Re-Foundation

Concern was repeatedly expressed regarding the concept of re-foundation i.e. with the idea of intentionally attempting to inject new life into a dying monastery. The results of a fairly recent survey show that the average lifespan of a monastery is approximately 150 years. If so, then clearly there will be instances when there is a need to have both the humility and courage to admit that something has come to an end, and for this to be accepted without seeking to attribute blame.

There are quite a number of our existing monasteries which have been re-founded (Cîteaux itself, being a prime example); this sometimes creates a tendency to be preoccupied with living up to one's forebears, thereby becoming weighted down with ideas that detract from the contemplative aspirations of our monasteries, and our Order. In short, an erroneous notion of history can have a paralysing effect, while a sound one will make use of, or build upon, that which went before.

However, the point was also made that a house which has reached its expected lifespan of 150 years need not necessarily have arrived at its termination date. The spiritual life of a mature house today, compared to that of its forebears, can be equally vibrant if it has received the necessary revitalization required to make it so.

We are all charged with the task of re-foundation in the sense of ensuring the transmission of our charism to younger generations. However, we should not become bogged down in ideas of conservation (of tradition and of patrimony) and lose the aspirational energy for making progress to that which lies ahead. Pope Francis has spoken about the temptations of conservation, of keeping things as they have always been. The search for security often lies in attempts to perpetuate something that should be allowed to come to an end.

An alternative view suggested that patrimony is something we try to retain because it says something important to us, because it is part of our charism. For many it is a question of what is considered sufficiently important to be transmitted to succeeding generations. To let go of a monastery of great age, somehow seems wrong. The constitutions in speaking about the patrimony that needs to be kept, include the love for the place, a place which transformed the monks/nuns themselves. To want to save patrimony is not necessarily just an emotional feeling but a way of seeing the Order.

While considering the question of diminishment of houses, one participant was particularly struck by the dearth of staff now available to fulfil a wide variety of roles at the General Chapter. The point is that we cannot expect to continue to have things done as they always were in the past. We need to rethink what we can retain and what we need to jettison. It was suggested that perhaps at the next General Chapter everyone could decide, together, what should be retained and what should not.

The Contemplative and Fraternal Dimensions

The General Chapter, is supposed to be about taking care of the souls of the superiors of the Order, so wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone left the General Chapter feeling revitalized? We have a tendency to get bogged down in the practical, in keeping the institution going, rather than concentrating on the contemplative dimension, which is our true patrimony. As an Order, shouldn't we endeavour to make the contemplative piece, the centre of our lives and our houses?

In response came a reminder that Dom Bernardo Olivera repeatedly said that *the quality of our contemplative dimension is visible in the measure of our fraternal life*. There is great danger in the inclination to selfishness; we need to look beyond our own selfish borders. If we fail to vigorously address big problems – 'unforgiveness' for example, they become a form of rot. We need to live in truth and love, lest large problems become mortal wounds that divide a community. Therefore in the event that a deep problem comes to the attention of the visitor(s) in the course of a regular visitation, it must not be allowed to carry on indefinitely.

Another view questioned whether we are the most objective judges when it comes to an evaluation of the quality of our monastic life today. Often those who come from afar to visit, have something to say to us. There are small communities whose influence goes way beyond the walls of their monastery. If people visit our communities it is because they can find a place to rest and revive themselves, even though our houses may seem mediocre to ourselves. Why do people come regularly to make retreats or to pray with us? Perhaps because of the existence of the monastery and the people who live there? The monastery remains a touchstone – an important place in their lives.

In some ways monks and nuns are always dissatisfied, always trying to reform. Often this is done by referring to a source which seems somehow better e.g. by making comparisons between the life lived today and the life of our Fathers. Perhaps it is a good thing that they are not satisfied with the life they are living but are always seeking ways to improve it. The contemplative life, it was stressed, should not be a theory but should be centred on the Eucharist, by a strong fraternal connection. If, for instance, one refuses to try to forgive or to be converted, then one is not living a contemplative life.

Furthermore, the fraternal life has an effect on the Church and on the world, since it is a visible testimony to others. This is true of friendships enjoyed between superiors and manifested by their efforts to share the load of one who becomes overburdened. Indeed at the conclusion of the General Chapter of 2017 The Abbot General told us *"There is only one way to revitalize the Order and that is through fraternal friendships between superiors."*

Another reminder concerning fraternal life revolved around the question of the size of communities. Often when smaller houses are discussed, there lingers a degree of nostalgia about the notion of larger communities. In reality however, five people could be living a very good, fraternal, contemplative life, while a larger community are unable to do so.

In concluding the discussions on fraternal life there was another reminder i.e. that the brothers of Tibhirine were not all from the one place, yet they chose to unite around the problem – that of facing death. We will all face the Lord one day and need to think about the fraternal quality of the lives that we live and drop the egoism which perhaps is becoming ever more apparent

Formation

We often speak of 'integral formation' yet so many formation events are focused exclusively on the intellectual; all elements of our daily life contribute to the life of a monk or nun. Therefore integral formation shouldn't deny intellectual formation but balance it. We need balance, the balance which is based on faith, on why one comes to a monastery in the first place.

During the celebration of 900 years of the Charter of Charity everyone present lived a great interior renewal. It was likened by one person to an '*upper room experience*', of washing each other's feet and breaking bread together. This is what our life means. There are two great answers to breaking down difficulties it was suggested – an awareness of hardness of heart, and a focus on following, of living in imitation of what Christ lived. Egotism is conquered by washing each other's feet, by cultivating friendship with each other.

The concluding question posed was how, at the forthcoming General Chapter it might be arranged so participants could have discussions of the same calibre as those which took place at this meeting i.e. discussions that focus on the essential elements of our contemplative way of life?

Appendix - v

SUMMARY OF VOTES

VOTE 1

WE WISH TO CONTINUE TO CELEBRATE LAUDS AND THE DAILY EUCHARIST TOGETHER IN *DOMUS PACIS*.

YES 16 NO 10 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

(If this vote is accepted we do not take votes 2 and 3)

VOTE 2 : WE WISH TO CELEBRATE LAUDS AND DAILY EUCHARIST TOGETHER IN THE PARISH CHURCH

VOTE 3 : ON WEEKDAYS, FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST THE GENERAL CHAPTER SHOULD JOIN THE FRANCISCANS IN THE BASILICA

VOTE 4

IF THE CELEBRATION OF LAUDS AND DAILY EUCHARIST IS IN *DOMUS PACIS*, IT WOULD BE BETTER IF THE SCHOLA FOR THE MASS WERE NOT ON THE STAGE.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 5

WE ENCOURAGE THE ORGANIZATION OF MORE SATISFACTORY PROCEDURES FOR DISTRIBUTING HOLY COMMUNION AT MASS.

YES 26 NO 0 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 6

WE WISH THAT DURING THE GENERAL CHAPTER, A MASS BE CELEBRATED IN MEMORY OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE ORDER WHO HAVE DIED SINCE THE LAST GENERAL CHAPTER.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 7

WE WISH TO USE THE BASILICA OF *SANTA MARIA DEGLI ANGELI* FOR THE OPENING AND CLOSING MASSES OF THE CHAPTER, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.

YES 20 NO 5 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 8

WE WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE CELEBRATING VESPERS IN LINGUISTIC GROUPS.

YES 26 NO 0 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 9

WE PROPOSE THAT, AT THE OFFICE OF TIERCE, THE READING BE FOLLOWED BY A BRIEF MEDITATION ON THE WORD, OFFERED BY A CAPITULANT.

YES 7 NO 18 ABS 1 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 10

WE WISH TO HAVE AT SOME POINT DURING THE GC A COMMON CELEBRATION AT ONE OF THE FRANCISCAN PLACES OF ASSISI

YES 8 NO 15 ABS 3 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 11

WE WOULD LIKE THE BLESSED SACRAMENT TO BE IN THE CHAPEL DURING THE WHOLE OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER TO FACILITATE PRIVATE PRAYER.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 12

WE WOULD LIKE TO MAINTAIN A FREE AFTERNOON ON SUNDAYS.

YES 25 NO 1 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 13

WE WISH THAT DURING THE GENERAL CHAPTER ONE FREE DAY WOULD BE ARRANGED.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 14

WE DELEGATE TO THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL THE CHOICE OF INVITED GUESTS TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER AND THEIR MANNER OF PARTICIPATION.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 15

BECAUSE THE CHAPTER OF 2020 IS A CHAPTER OF ELECTION WE SUGGEST THAT THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL REDUCE THE NUMBER OF INVITED GUESTS

YES 24 NO 0 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 16

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO INVITE THREE SOLEMNLY PROFESSED MEMBERS OF THE ORDER BETWEEN 35-45 YEARS OF AGE TO GIVE CONFERENCES ON WHAT THEY FIND MOST LIFE-GIVING IN THE ORDER TODAY.

YES 20 NO 6 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 17

WE ASK THAT THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL CHOOSE TWO SUPERIORS OF THE ORDER TO SPEAK AT THE GC 2020 ON THE REVITALIZATION OF OUR CISTERCIAN VALUES AND OBSERVANCES.

YES 21 NO 5 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 18

WE SUGGEST THAT THE GC APPOINT 3 CAPITULANTS TO REVIEW THE BLOGS IN EACH OF THE 3 LANGUAGES BEFORE THEY ARE POSTED.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 19

WE ASK THE PROMOTER OF THE GC TO REMIND ALL PRESENT AT THE GC TO RESPECT THE CONFIDENTIALITY AND TO ACT WITH DISCRETION REGARDING THE SHARING OF INFORMATION AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

YES 24 NO 0 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 20

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL TO WRITE A PAPER ON HIS EXPERIENCE AS ABBOT GENERAL AND ON HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THIS SERVICE IN THE CONTEXT OF TODAY'S CHALLENGES.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 21

WE ASK THAT A WORKING PAPER BE DRAWN UP ON THE EXERCISE OF THE MINISTRY OF THE ABBOT GENERAL

YES 19 NO 5 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

(If this vote is positive we take the following vote)

VOTE 22

THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE DRAWN UP BY 2 PERSONS.

YES 14 NO 4 ABS 8 **Proposition Accepted**

(if this vote is positive we do not take the following vote

VOTE 23 : THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE DRAWN UP BY 3 PERSONS.

VOTE 24

WE ASK THAT THE REGIONS SUBMIT A TEXT OF NOT MORE THAN 3,000 CHARACTERS, EXPRESSING THEIR VIEW OF THE ABBOT GENERAL'S ROLE IN THE LIGHT OF THEIR PRESENT NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 25

WE WISH THAT THIS REPORT INCLUDE THE GENERAL STATISTICS OF THE REGION (NUMBER OF HOUSES, NUMBER OF MONKS AND NUNS, MEMBERS IN FORMATION).

YES 22 NO 1 ABS 3 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 26

SINCE THE 2020 GENERAL CHAPTER IS A CHAPTER OF ELECTION, WE ASK THAT THE PRESENTATION OF THE ABBOT GENERAL'S RESIGNATION TAKE PLACE ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER.

YES 25 NO 1 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 27

WE ASK THAT THE VOTE CONCERNING THE ABBOT GENERAL'S RESIGNATION BE TAKEN ON THE FOLLOWING DAY.

YES 26 NO 0 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 28

WE ASK THAT THE ELECTION OF THE NEW ABBOT GENERAL TAKE PLACE ON THE 8TH SEPTEMBER.

YES 24 NO 0 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 29

WE WISH TO HAVE AN AFTERNOON OF PRAYER AND SILENCE ON THE DAY BEFORE THE ELECTION OF THE ABBOT GENERAL. (THE FIRST DAY OF THE CHAPTER WOULD THEN BE A NORMAL WORKING DAY).

YES 24 NO 0 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 30

WE ASK THE LAW COMMISSION TO CLARIFY WHETHER MEMBERS OF THE ABBOT GENERAL'S COUNCIL WHO ARE APPOINTED TO FILL A VACANCY, CONTINUE THE MANDATE OF THE DEPARTED COUNCILLOR (SEE ST 84.1.C.D).

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 31

WE ASK THAT THE NEW ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL, BEFORE THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2023, MAKE PROPOSALS REGARDING THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE ABBOT GENERAL.

YES 22 NO 3 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 32

WE ASK THE COMMUNITIES, WHEN WRITING THEIR HOUSE REPORTS, TO REFLECT ON AND DESCRIBE, THE SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY SINCE THE LAST GENERAL CHAPTER.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 33

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE COMMUNITY REFER TO THE MOST RECENT VISITATION CARD WHEN DRAWING UP THEIR HOUSE REPORT.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 34

THE TEXT OF THE HOUSE REPORTS SHOULD NOT EXCEED 3,000 CHARACTERS.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 35

WE ASK THAT PARAGRAPH B.2.1.1 OF THE DOCUMENT OF THE "STUDY OF THE HOUSE REPORTS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER" (AS FOUND IN THE GENERAL BOOKLET OF 2017) BE REVISED.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

(If this vote is positive we take the following vote)

VOTE 36

WE ENTRUST THIS WORK TO A COMMISSION OF THREE PERSONS FROM THIS ASSEMBLY.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 37

WE ASK THE GENERAL CHAPTER TO AFFIRM OUR ORDER'S COMMITMENT TO PREVENTING SEXUAL ABUSE, THE ABUSE OF POWER AND ALL FORMS OF MANIPULATION OF CONSCIENCE.

YES 21 NO 2 ABS 3 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 38

WE ASK THE LAW COMMISSION TO PROPOSE A TEXT TO BE ADDED TO N. 16 OF THE *STATUTE ON THE REGULAR VISITATION*, INSTRUCTING VISITORS TO ENSURE THAT THE COMMUNITY VISITED HAS ESTABLISHED A POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION FROM ABUSE OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS AND THAT THE COMMUNITY PROVIDES EDUCATION IN THIS AREA.

YES 22 NO 1 ABS 3 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 39

IN ORDER TO AVOID THE WASTE OF DISPOSABLE CUPS AND OTHER PLASTIC ITEMS AT THE GENERAL CHAPTER, WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO NEGOTIATE ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES WITH *DOMUS PACIS*.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 40

WE ASK TO PLACE ON THE AGENDA OF THE GC 2020 THE PROPOSAL THAT EVERY YEAR, ON JANUARY 26TH THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR HOLY FOUNDERS, ALL THE COMMUNITIES OF THE ORDER UNITE SPIRITUALLY IN PRAYING FOR VOCATIONS AND THE RENEWAL OF THE ORDER.

Yes 22 No 1 Abs 3 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 41

IN ORDER TO REDUCE CONSUMPTION OF PAPER WE ASK THAT CAPITULANTS MIGHT ACCESS DOCUMENTS DIGITALLY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AT THE NEXT GENERAL CHAPTER. WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO CONFER WITH *DOMUS PACIS* ON THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 42

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO INVITE DOM MAURO LEPORI, O.CIST TO GIVE A CONFERENCE AT THE NEXT GENERAL CHAPTER.

YES 21 NO 4 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 43

WE WISH TO MODIFY THE PROCEDURE FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER NO II 9.C TO READ: "TOGETHER WITH A COMMISSION OF 3 PERSONS OF THE 3 LANGUAGE GROUPS CHOSEN TO HELP WITH THE FORMULATION OF VOTES, THE COORDINATING COMMISSION PREPARES VOTES FOR THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY AND INDICATES WHEN A TWO-THIRD MAJORITY VOTE IS REQUIRED. AD HOC COMMISSIONS MAY BE REQUESTED TO FORMULATE VOTES."

YES 26 NO 0 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 44

WE ASK THAT THE FINAL EVALUATION OF THE GC FOCUS ON THE CONTENT AND SIGNIFICANT POINTS OF THE CHAPTER. EACH COMMISSION WILL WRITE A BRIEF REPORT AND PRESENT IT IN THE *AULA*. THIS INFORMATION WILL THEN BE AVAILABLE TO THE AUTHORS OF THE SYNTHESIS OF THE GC.

YES 24 NO 1 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 45

ON BEHALF OF ALL OUR COMMUNITIES WE WISH TO EXPRESS OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE TO FR MICHAEL CASEY, SR MARIE, THE CENTRAL SECRETARY OF FORMATION AND TO ALL WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE *EXPERIENTIA* PROGRAMME

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 46

WE ASK THAT AT THE NEXT GC THE COMMISSION OF AID GIVE SUGGESTIONS ON HOW THE COMMUNITIES CAN BETTER SUPPORT ITS WORK.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 47

WE ASK THE LAW COMMISSION TO PREPARE A WORKING PAPER FOR THE GC 2020 ON THE ADAPTATION OF OUR CURRENT LEGISLATION AND/OR ON POSSIBLE REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF *COR ORANS*.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 48

WE WISH THAT THE TOPIC OF *COR ORANS* BE TREATED BY EXTRAORDINARY PROCEDURE.

YES 25 NO 0 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 49

WE ASK THE LAW COMMISSION, WHEN TREATING THE TOPIC OF *COR ORANS*, TO SEEK WAYS OF HARMONIZING, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, THE LEGISLATION OF THE NUNS AND THE MONKS.

YES 23 NO 1 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 50

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL TO INVITE ALL COMMUNITIES, FATHERS IMMEDIATE, AND THEIR DELEGATES AFFECTED BY THE DELEGATIONS OF PATERNITY MADE AT THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2017 TO REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCE DURING THESE THREE YEARS AND TO FORMULATE THAT REFLECTION IN A WRITTEN STATEMENT BEFORE THE GC.

YES 25 NO 1 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 51

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO COLLECT THESE WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND TO DETERMINE HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH THEM.

YES 24 NO 1 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 52

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT VOTE 77 OF THE GC 2017: "WE ENCOURAGE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSALS OF N° VI OF THE WORKING PAPER ON THE FATHER IMMEDIATE." WE ASK THAT THE GC 2020 EVALUATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PROPOSALS. (CF. P. 32, 33 OF THE GENERAL BOOKLET OF GC 2017)

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 53

IN REFERENCE TO VOTES 54 - 56 OF THE GC 2017, WE ASK THAT THE WORK OF THE LAW COMMISSION ON CSTS 67 AND 34 AND THE NEW STATUTE ON ACCOMPANIMENT OF FRAGILE COMMUNITIES BE STUDIED BY EXTRAORDINARY PROCEDURE AT THE NEXT GC.

YES 26 NO 0 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 54

WE WISH TO PUT ON THE AGENDA OF THE GC 2020 THE QUESTION OF DELEGATING THE REGULAR VISITATION EVERY SIX YEARS IN MONASTERIES OF NUNS.

YES 9 NO 13 ABS 4 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 55

WE WISH THAT THE GC 2020 REFLECT ON A POSSIBLE REDISTRIBUTION IN FILIATIONS OF THOSE COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE MORE THAN FOUR DAUGHTER HOUSES.

YES 6 NO 17 ABS 3 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 56

WE ASK THE NEXT GC TO STUDY THE POSSIBILITY OF TEMPORARILY DELEGATING THE PATERNITY OF A MONASTERY OF NUNS TO AN ABBESS.

YES 8 NO 12 ABS 6 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 57

WE ASK THE GC 2020 TO REVIEW THE TEXT OF C. 39.2. THE TEXT GIVES TO THE SUPERIOR OF A DAUGHTER-HOUSE OF MONKS THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN THE ELECTION OF THE ABBOT OF THEIR MOTHER-HOUSE.

YES 8 NO 12 ABS 6 **Proposition Rejected**

VOTE 58

WE WISH TO PLACE ON THE AGENDA OF THE GC 2020 THE QUESTION OF THE CARE OF ABSENT MEMBERS, TO BE TREATED BY ORDINARY PROCEDURE, WITH A VIEW TO PROVIDING PASTORAL GUIDELINES. (CF. VOTE 8.1 OF THE ISLES 2019; C. 59; VADE MECUM ON SEPARATION FROM THE MONASTIC COMMUNITY)

YES 24 NO 2 AB 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 59

WE ASK THE ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO EVALUATE THE FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMISSION OF AID AND THE FINANCE COMMISSION OF THE ORDER, HAVING RECOURSE TO COMPETENT PROFESSIONALS, AND TO REPORT TO THE GC 2020.

YES 24 NO 2 ABS 0 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 60

IN RELATION TO VOTE 37, WE ASK THAT A COMMISSION OF TWO PERSONS BE ELECTED TO WRITE A DRAFT STATEMENT ON THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE, WHICH WILL BE STUDIED AT THE GC 2020 BY EXTRAORDINARY PROCEDURE.

YES 23 NO 2 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 61

WE HEREBY CORRECT VOTE 31 TO NOW READ: WE SUGGEST THAT THE GC 2020 ASK THE NEW ABBOT GENERAL AND HIS COUNCIL TO MAKE PROPOSALS, FOR THE GC OF 2023, ON THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE ABBOT GENERAL.

YES 21 NO 3 ABS 2 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 62

WE INVITE THE PRESIDENT OF THE LAW COMMISSION TO BE PRESENT IN AN ADVISORY CAPACITY DURING THE CHAPTER'S DISCUSSION OF *COR ORANS*.

YES 11 NO 10 ABS 5 **Proposition Accepted**

VOTE 63

WE APPROVE THE REVISED TEXT OF B.2.1.1 AS REQUESTED IN VOTE 35:

2.1.1. "BEFORE STUDYING THE HOUSE REPORTS, THE PRESIDENT OF EACH COMMISSION MAY SPEAK WITH THE ABBOT GENERAL OR A COUNCIL MEMBER, AND THE PRESIDENTS OF THE REGIONS, IN ORDER BETTER TO IDENTIFY THE HOUSES WITH PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT REQUIRE THE HELP OF THE COMMISSION. AFTER HAVING READ AND DISCUSSED THE REPORTS, THE COMMISSION DIALOGUES WITH THE SUPERIOR. THE FATHER IMMEDIATE MUST ALWAYS BE CONSULTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION STUDYING THE REPORT OF HIS DAUGHTER HOUSE. THE FATHER IMMEDIATE HAS THE DUTY TO PROVIDE PERTINENT INFORMATION AND THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD, WHICH DOES NOT NECESSARILY IMPLY THAT HE PARTICIPATES IN THE DISCUSSIONS. IF MORE INFORMATION IS NEEDED, THE COMMISSION CONTACTS MEMBERS OF THE 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".

YES 24 NO 1 ABS 1 **Proposition Accepted**

Appendix - vi - Homily by Dom Olivier on the 9th Centenary of the Charter of Charity

9th Centenary of the CHARTER OF CHARITY
Solemnity of the Most Blessed Trinity
June 16, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Could there be a more beautiful feast than today's Solemnity of the Most Blessed Trinity to celebrate this ninth centenary of the Charter of Charity as a family? "The Father is love, the Son is grace, the Spirit is communion, O Blessed Trinity!" The Trinitarian *coenobium* is the very substance of charity, Charity that is expressed in love, grace, and communion. These words are full of resonance for every Christian, of course, but perhaps even more so for the monks, nuns and lay people who belong to the great Cistercian family.

Because of the simple fact of belonging to this family, who among us is not conscious of being a full member of a *schola caritatis* where the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion in the Spirit embrace us and form the foundation on which we would like to build everything in our lives? I mean, build everything in our monasteries, everything in our relationships within our communities, everything among our monasteries, among our Orders, our Congregations, and of course also build up everything in the relationships that today inspire, move, and bring to life what is more and more frequently called "the Cistercian Family".

In the genetic code of the Cistercian charism, the Charter of Charity can be considered the nucleus of identity that grounds everything we have lived for 921 years. It is true that its guiding principles began to take shape before Cîteaux was born. I am thinking here of the erection of the Abbey of Aulps, the foundation of Molesme, and the famous "Molesme Agreement" which sought to establish relations of peace and harmony between the Abbey of Aulps and its foundation, Balerne, both of them called a "church" according to the very early usage in the primitive documents relating to the foundation of Cîteaux. That said, there is no doubt that it was on Cistercian soil and under the inspiration of Stephen Harding that the *Carta Caritatis* really took shape and consistency. We might say that the Carta is our chief treasure.

As a gift of the Spirit to the Church and to the world, this treasure is, so to speak, the heart of the Cistercian tradition. It does not belong to us, but it is up to us to make it grow. Each monk and nun bears the responsibility for this. Each community, including a possible lay extension associated with it, can find in the Charter the grace to strengthen and renew its Cistercian identity. Of that great document, each Congregation and Order manifests a particular hue, a special reflection, a new actualization for the good of the great Cistercian Family and its witness at the beginning of the third millennium. We see plainly that our treasure is multifaceted in nature, according to the image dear to Pope Francis. It reflects the confluence of many diversities which, in concert, preserve its overall originality. Here, nothing is dissolved, nothing is destroyed, nothing dominates anything else, but everything is integrated.¹

This treasure possesses an inner force which is precisely Charity, the impulse of Charity that has made the tree of Cîteaux flourish over the centuries, sometimes under difficult circumstances, as is often the case today. Unlike in the 12th century, our Orders, our Congregations, and many of our communities

¹ These lines are inspired by *Evangelii gaudium*, 236, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis.

are no longer today in a context of growth but of diminishment, with all that this implies in the organization of our community life and the way we live in the spaces we occupy.

As a result, we are perhaps better placed to welcome and understand what Saint Paul writes to his correspondents in Rome: “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Rom 5:3-5). This declaration urges us to review our criteria for success: mere numbers are less important to us than the burning flame; the growth or withering of our branches is less important to us than our perseverance in conversion of heart. Through seasons of both toil and grace, whether whipped by the storm or revitalized by the sun, the tree holds its ground.

Let us, then, be so bold as to ask the following questions: When does the fruit of charity have the most delicious taste? When does it cause the most joy? When is it most imbued with the flavour and wisdom that delights the Lord and plays before him at all times? In prosperity or in scarcity? In growth or in diminishment? Only God knows! But it is no offense to God to wonder whether the fruit of the communion we have now rediscovered in the great Cistercian Family does not have for the Lord of the Paschal Mystery a more excellent flavour than that of the best years of the Golden Age, when Saint Bernard was writing his commentary on the Song of Songs and when Cîteaux and her daughter houses couldn’t make foundations fast enough...

For “the ways of the Lord are not our ways, and his thoughts are not our thoughts”. The Spirit of truth again today reminds us of the many times we see Jesus in the gospel not only embarrassing his disciples but also confusing them, as when he says things like the following: “What were you talking about on the way?” “Give them something to eat yourselves!” “Whenever someone takes your coat from you, give him your tunic as well!” “Get behind me, Satan!” “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you!”... And such disorientation keeps up until their very last evening together, when Jesus asks his disciples: “Do you understand what I just did? I am in the midst of you as the one who serves! Love one another as I have loved you.” This is the sign, this is the sacrament of charity.

Dom Olivier Quenardel
Abbot of Cîteaux