

Decree of Unification

SACRED CONGREGATION OF RELIGIOUS
Prot.N.16545/65 T.34

Rome
on the 27th day of December, 1965

(English translation from Latin)

The principal work of monks is to render service to the divine assembly, a service which is humble and still ranks high in the order of values. The work is done inside the monastery's enclosure in a sheltered life entirely given up to worshipping God. It is with a view to encouraging with ever greater zeal the performance of this sacred duty, with a view also to fastening ever more closely the bonds of brotherly union, that the Abbot General of the Order of Reformed Cistercians, supported by the votes of the General Chapter, has submitted a humble request that the existence of one single class of religious should be restored in the Order. It is asked that all of them should be monks, contributing their united efforts, either directly or indirectly, to the celebration of the Divine Office.

This Sacred Congregation has weighed every aspect of the matter in the spirit of the second Ecumenical Vatican Council. Accordingly it is glad to grant the favour requested, and gives its confirmation and approval to what follows in the terms of the present Decree.

1. There is to be only one class of religious in the Order. All are monks; monastic formation is given on the same lines; rights and duties are to be the same. It follows that the only difference which is to remain is that which arises from the various functions to which monks may be appointed, in consideration of the special vocation given them by God or of their individual capacity. However, the Abbot, Prior and Novice Master are to be chosen from among the priests.
2. The monastery's special work is the celebration of the Divine Office. In St. Benedict's words, "it is a work to which nothing is to be preferred" (cf Monks' Constitutions, n.77; Nuns Constitutions, n.51). Consequently all should cooperate in this choral celebration in their own way directly or indirectly.
3. All monks in sacred orders, even if they are lawfully absent from choir, are bound to the whole of the Divine Office. Any who are not in sacred orders and are assigned to the choir must every day recite privately those canonical Hours from which they may have been lawfully absent. This is in accordance with the Constitution of the second Vatican Council, De Sacra Liturgia, n.95c, and the Instruction given for its implementation, n.78 a; and it holds good unless, in the Abbot's judgement, there is any special reason to the contrary. Those brethren who are not assigned to the choir, in case they should not have been present in choir, are bound to recite one of the following, as the Abbot may arrange:
 - a) the Divine Office;
 - b) the shorter Office, approved by the Holy See;
 - c) the so-called "Officium conversorum", in accordance with Constitutions.
4. Those who have already made profession for the class of "Conversi", are free to remain in the state which they have chosen.
5. This Decree is to be applied to the nuns of the Order in its essentials and with the necessary adjustments.

Anything contrary to this Decree is declared to be without effect.

Given at Rome

on the 27th day of December, in the year of Our Lord 1965.

+ Paul Philippe
Secretary

I.Card.Antoniutti
Prefect
L + S