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# STATUTE ON TEMPORAL ADMINISTRATION

*approved by the General Chapters of 1999  
and n° 13, 21, and 33.d, modified  
by the General Chapters of 2002.*

1. The organization of the monastery is directed to bringing the monks into close union with Christ, since it is only through the experience of personal love for the Lord Jesus that the specific gifts of the Cistercian vocation can flower. Only if the brothers prefer nothing whatsoever to Christ will they be happy to persevere in a life that is ordinary, obscure and laborious (C.3.5). Hence the economy is organized in such a way that the members are given the utmost support in living the values proper to their Cistercian vocation.

## INTRODUCTION

2. The present Statute, elaborating in more detail what our Constitutions say about temporal administration (C.41-44), establishes suitable norms concerning the use and administration of the temporal goods of the communities, in accordance with our Cistercian tradition and the norms of Canon Law. It aims at promoting a common interpretation of the Constitutions and helping those responsible in their administration. It is for each monastery to apply and practice these norms in agreement with their Father Immediate and according to local culture, circumstances and traditions.

## I - THE COMMUNITY

3. The monasteries of the Order are juridical persons, capable of acquiring, possessing, administering and alienating temporal goods (can 634 § 1, 1255; C.42).

4. Every effort is to be made in so far as possible, to have the monastery recognized by civil law as a juridical person, so that it will not be necessary for the monks to be proprietors in their own names, of goods, bank accounts, stocks, shares etc. belonging to the monastery.

5. Each brother has the right and duty of serving the community by doing his share of its work according to his abilities and within the economic structure of the monastery (C.41.1). He is encouraged to understand and foster the development of its economy.

## II - THE GOODS OF THE COMMUNITY

6. Acquisition of Goods - Although a community is allowed to acquire temporal goods by all lawful means (can 1259), fidelity to Cistercian tradition requires that the community's regular income be as far as possible the fruit of its own work (C. 41.1).

7. Use of goods - In the use it makes of its goods, each community should respect the requirements of evangelical simplicity, as well as the prescriptions of the Church. Following the example of the fathers of Cîteaux, who sought an uncomplicated relationship with the God of simplicity, the brothers' lifestyle is to be plain and frugal. Everything in the household of God should be appropriate to the monastic life and avoid excess, so that its very simplicity can be instructive for all. This is to be clearly apparent in buildings and their furnishings, in food and clothing and even in the celebration of the liturgy (can 635 § 2; C.27). The monastery should be conspicuous for its simple and pleasant appearance (ST.27.A; cf. can 634 § 2).

As far as it is possible, some part of the community's income is to be allocated for the needs of the Church and the Order, and the support of those in want (can 640; C.41.3).

8. Regarding the temporal goods of postulants and novices, the prescriptions of universal law are observed. The abbot ensures that the civil laws of the country are applied.

a) Prudence demands that a postulant on entry sign a renunciation of all salary relating to work which will be done while in the monastery.

b) Before temporary profession the novice should assign the administration of his goods to someone else and dispose freely of their use and income for the whole time of his engagement (can 668 § 1-3; C.52.2).

c) The temporary professed retains the ownership of his goods and the capacity to acquire more. But anything which he receives for his work or because of his religious state or through pension, grant or insurance passes to the monastery (can 668 § 3).

d) Since the monk by virtue of solemn profession loses the capacity of acquiring and owning goods, if he has any or has a right to them he is bound to distribute them to the poor or dispose of them in some other way in accordance with the norms of can 668 § 4-5. This renunciation is to be made before solemn profession, as far as possible in a form that is valid in civil law, to take effect from the day of profession. Whatever comes to him after the renunciation goes to the monastery (C.55).

e) He will also, before his solemn profession, draw up a will in favour of the monastery, as far as possible valid according to civil law (can 668 § 1), so that in the case of death, his affairs will be easily put in order (old age pension, author's rights etc.).

9. The Oblate retains the radical ownership of his goods but he is invited to free himself as much as possible from their administration. Where this is not possible, he administers these goods in agreement with the abbot who watches over the interests of the oblate and acts in such a way as to avoid anything that could be prejudicial to the community. All legal arrangements should be taken to assure the necessary guarantees. An expert in social legislation should be consulted if needed (Statute on Oblates 2).

10. Familiar : In the case of a particular status, such as a familiar for example it is advisable to draw up a contract signed by the two parties, before a notary according to the local legislation, clearly mentioning the reciprocal obligations of the monastery and the person concerned.

11. Those who leave or are dismissed are not entitled to claim anything from the monastery for services rendered. Nevertheless the abbot is to observe the norms of equity and evangelical charity towards members who depart (can 702; C.59.2). To safeguard the welfare of the members who leave or are dismissed, as well as that of the community, the abbot is to have a sound knowledge of the social legislation of the place where the monastery is located (ST.59.2.A).

### **III - ADMINISTRATORS OF THE GOODS OF THE COMMUNITY**

12. The Abbot, as steward of the House of God, is the one primarily responsible for the administration of the temporal goods of the community. He exercises this part of his charge in the light of the Gospel (C.41.2), the Holy Rule, Canon Law, the Constitutions of the Order and this Statute. This function is only part of the pastoral mission of the abbot and not his main concern. Hence the need to delegate most of the responsibility in this regard.

**N° 13** The Abbot appoints a cellarer who is responsible for the ordinary administration of the monastery's temporal affairs. Normally, apart from the Abbot, only he may act validly in the name of the monastery when incurring expenses and in legal matters (C 43.1). The Abbot may, however, entrust the **functions** traditionally assumed by the cellarer to several persons, one of whom **will be named** cellarer (**vote 13**).

14. Other Administrators - The abbot entrusts to other brothers responsibility in one or other department of the monastery, or in a role of administration, subject to the overall co-ordination of the cellarer or the financial council, deciding in each case the limits of authority granted and to what extent there is financial responsibility. Final accountability is in all cases to the abbot (C.43.1).

15. Finance Committee - The monastery is to have a finance committee (C.43.2) comprising of at least two members, elected by the conventual chapter or appointed by the abbot, according to local custom (can 1280). The cellarer is a member of this committee.

The role of the finance committee, with which the abbot meets at determined times (cf. can 636 § 2), and with which he regularly reviews the economic situation of the monastery (C.43.2), is to help the various administrators in fulfilling their respective offices (cf. 27d).

16. The Good Steward - All administrators are to perform their duties with the diligence of a good steward. Can 1284 gives a helpful list of duties.

### **IV - THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOODS OF THE COMMUNITY**

17. Legal titles - The cellarer or a brother appointed by the Abbot ensures that all legal titles of ownership are kept in order and that when needed, provision is made for the updating of titles, and also that title deeds are suitably inventoried and held safely (can 1284 § 2-9).

18. Property - It is for the cellarer or another brother appointed by the Abbot to ensure that the property of the monastery is properly maintained. The brothers are to be concerned about conservation of the environment and to manage natural resources prudently (ST. 27.A).

19. Organisation of work - The economy of the monastery should be organised in such a way that the members can live the values proper to their Cistercian vocation (C.2; 3; 14.2; 16; 19; 20; 21; 25; 26; 27; 29; 35). To this end, it is above all necessary to have adequate organisation of the work and services which the different members of the community render. Their respective duties and various responsibilities should be defined in a precise manner. Appropriate information and communication facilitate the work and increases communion.

20. Contracts should conform to the legal norms which apply to them (can 1290-1298). Care should be taken that all transactions carried out by the monastery are not only legal in character but also moral (cf. C.41.2).

21. Commercial labels - It is not permissible in any circumstances for the members of our Order to grant to third parties rights to the use of the titles "La Trappe" or "Trappist" or terms derived from them. They are to use their best efforts, according to their own civil law, to prevent or stop any usurpation, imitation or illegal use of these words. They must avoid ceding or conceding for any reason the rights to the use as a title, commercial name or trademark, of any name derived from the title of the monastery or containing such words as "abbey", "monk" or "monastery" and the like (ST. 43.1.C). The rights of other monasteries and Regions should be respected. **The rights in question**

**include all rights to ownership in the marks identifying the Order that would accrue to a secular firm owning a trademark under local law. The Region receiving imports also has the sole discretion over the appropriateness of advertising, etc . in the context of local culture. (monks - vote 15)**

22. Money will be administered with prudence, so that income covers expenses. It is prudent to have a policy of keeping a financial reserve, set in place with the help of the finance committee. As far as possible a reserve capable of covering at least the living expenses of one year will be set aside.

23. Investments -The consent of the abbot is required for dealing in investments. Investments are to be managed prudently. Any speculation is forbidden (ST.43.1.B).

24. Bank accounts - The abbot has the power to sign the cheques, as well as the brothers whom he has appointed for this. It would be prudent in certain cases that when the amount on a cheque exceeds a given sum, joint signatures would be required for its validity.

25. Debts - If debts are to be contracted, these should be permitted only if it is certain that normal income can service the interest on the debt and by lawful depreciation, repay the capital over a period which is not unduly extended (can 639 § 5).

26. Taxes - In accordance with the Gospel teaching taxes required by civil society are to be paid. The official documents relating to taxes paid or possible tax exemptions are to be carefully preserved.

27. Ordinary and extraordinary administration - There exist two types of administration (can 638 § 1): acts of ordinary administration and acts of extraordinary administration.

a) An act of ordinary administration is one that an administrator can carry out within the framework and limits of his ordinary competence.

b) An act of extraordinary administration is one that an administrator cannot carry out without going through a special decision-making procedure, involving asking advice, consent or permission. This special procedure is required because the act goes beyond his ordinary competence, or because it goes beyond certain limits such as: alienation, the necessity of borrowing, the fact that a new operation is involved, the amount of money involved.

c) The law already determines certain such cases.

- Our Constitutions (C.44.1) state that alienation or any transaction by which the patrimonial condition of the monastery could be adversely affected is considered as an act of extraordinary administration (cf. can 638 § 3).

- The permission of the Holy See is required for an act of extraordinary administration, if the sum involved exceeds that fixed by the Holy See for each region, or if it concerns things donated to the monastery in fulfilment of a vow or that are precious for historical or artistic reasons (cf. C.44.2). When the permission of the Holy See is needed the consent of the conventual chapter and the General Chapter should be obtained (ST.44.2.A). In an urgent case, the permission to be asked from the General Chapter may be obtained from the Abbot General with the consent of his council. This permission is to be given in writing (ST 44.2.B).

- The General Chapter determines the sums in excess of which special permissions are needed for the validity of acts of extraordinary administration that are not covered by C.44.2 (C.44.3). The consent of the conventual chapter and the General Chapter is required for any transaction that exceeds the greater sum fixed by the General Chapter, and for the construction or demolition of buildings if more than this amount is involved (ST. 44.3.A).

- The consent of the conventual chapter is required for any transaction that exceeds the lesser sum fixed by the General Chapter and for giving power of attorney in a serious matter (ST.44.3.B).

d) Each community, in Conventual Chapter, will decide for which acts of administration the advice or consent of the conventual chapter or the finance committee will be required. This decision, which will be reviewed periodically, will have to be approved by the Father Immediate. Schemas (grilles, in French) will be proposed at the level of the Regions to help the communities and the Fathers Immediate.

28. Budget - It is earnestly recommended that a budget of income and expenditure be drawn up each year (can 1284 § 3). Such a budget and the method of approval corresponds to the degree of complexity of the monastery's economy.

29. The accounts - Each monastery is to keep accounts (ST.43.1.A). Whether kept by a member of the community or not, the system of accounts used is to be standard in the locality and professional, with a degree of development according to the size and complexity of the community economy. Well-kept accounts are necessary to ensure proper management of temporalities and to provide an adequate knowledge of the economic condition of the community. The accountant is obliged to give a statement of accounts to the persons in charge designated by the Abbot

When a community possesses goods that are divided into various juridically distinct entities, each one having its own accounts, it is recommended that each year a consolidated statement of accounts be produced to enable the community to know the state of the patrimony as a whole. Great clarity will be observed in the accounts as to the links between the monastery and its income-producing activities.

30. Monitoring - The goods for which the various administrators assume responsibility are ecclesiastical goods, of which they are managers, so they exercise their administration with humility and accept willingly the monitoring necessary for good management.

a) The heads of departments are accountable to their superiors for their administration. In addition, they have access to the accounts of their departments.

b) At the end of the year, all the accounts must be submitted to the Abbot

c) The finance committee meets regularly to examine the economic situation of the community and to analyse the financial reports and budgets. It examines the various projects and their development; the organisation of the work is examined by the abbot's council and the finance committee.

d) At least once a year the abbot and the persons in charge appointed by him give the conventual chapter an account of the financial situation, and also of the different activities of the monastery. Regular information encourages the participation and co-responsibility of the community. The increasing complexity of economics and of civil legislation makes recourse to outside specialists, in a variety of disciplines, frequently necessary. While making a prudent and grateful use of these specialists the community never renounces its own responsibility for decision making.

e) The Father Immediate, as part of his general role of vigilance, will see that this Statute is observed in his daughter houses (cf. C.74.1).

f) The temporal administration of the monastery is examined during the regular visitation (can 636 § 2). The visitor is provided with the information necessary for a true evaluation of the material condition of the monastery: current accounts up to date, minutes of the finance committee and experts' reports on temporalities, if any etc. Where the income-producing activities have a juridical structure and set of accounts separate from that of the community all the accounts shall be examined. At least every four years, before the visitor signs them, they should be examined by a person who is really competent (ST.43.3.A/m). In certain cases the examination of the economic situation could consist of an "audit" by an expert, some time before the regular visitation, in order to verify the sound condition of the monastery's economy. The expert's report would provide an objective vision of the situation, and help, should the case so require, the taking of a decision.

The visitor's attention is not confined entirely to matters of economy and accounting but is also addressed to the wider questions of charity, justice and ethics. Should he judge it opportune, the visitor will devote a paragraph of the visitation card to the economic condition of the community.

g) The information given to the Abbot General will mention finances without going into details. If the visitor perceives that the monastery is in a dangerous economic situation, he notifies the Abbot General who will take the necessary decisions, and if he is a delegated visitor, he also informs the Father Immediate (cf. ST.43.3.A).

31. Employees - The teaching of the Church and the dispositions of civil law relating to labour and social life are to be observed in respect to all employees. They are to be paid a just and honest wage, sufficient to provide for their needs and those of their dependants (can 1286). A community policy regarding employees is co-ordinated by the cellarer or the financial council.

32. Lay Administrator - If in particular circumstances one is forced to entrust to a layperson some of the duties normally incumbent on the function of cellarer, the abbot will work out in writing the precise nature and limits of this lay administrator's function. The Abbot must be very mindful of the legal consequences of such a contract and ensure that there exists an atmosphere of peaceful collaboration between this lay administrator and the brothers. In these circumstances, the role of the financial council is of particular importance.

## V - THE ORDER

33. The Order is a juridical person capable of acquiring, possessing, administering and alienating temporal goods (can 634 § 1; 1255; C.42). In the area of the temporal administration, the Abbot General is responsible for the ordinary administration of the Order and of the Generalate (cf. ST.82.2.A and C) and the General Chapter for its extraordinary administration.

a) The General Chapter is authorised to establish which acts are to be considered acts of extraordinary administration in the Order.

b) The Abbot General appoints a monk of the Order to be responsible for the ordinary administration of the Order. He also appoints a finance commission to administer the capital of the Order. This commission will provide the General Chapter with its annual reports.

c) The ordinary administration of the Generalate is the responsibility of the bursar of the Generalate who also keeps account of the general expenses of the Order. He presents its annual report to the General Chapter. The administration of the Generalate follows the rules laid down for the other houses of the Order. The Abbot General and the permanent council determine the share which each monastery contributes to the expenses of the Generalate, bearing in mind the economic situation of the monastery (ST.84.1.G).

d) Following the prescriptions of the Charter of Charity (7,4) when some houses of the Order are in need, the communities with more resources "inflamed by the fire of charity, and according to their ability, from the goods which God has given them should help them. **A commission will study requests for assistance. Such requests must be submitted with a file explaining how the funds will be used and indicating whether assistance has already been requested and/or received from another organisation or community. The commission also manages a mutual assistance fund, which is funded by a free annual contribution from each monastery. It will be respond to requests insofar as possible or refer them to other communities or organisations that may be able to offer assistance. (vote 86)**

# STATUTE FOR THE LAW COMMISSION

*approved by the General Chapters of Poyo - 1993  
(votes 22 to 28, Minutes of the General Chapter of 1993, p. 129)  
The definitive text was formulated by the Law Commission, April 1994  
and after RGM 2005 : votes 88 and 89, and updated by the Law  
Commission, October 2013 because of the single Chapter.*

## I. The Nature of the Law Commission

1. The Law Commission of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance is:

- a mixed permanent commission,
- set up by the General Chapter
- to assist the Government of the Order, the local superiors and the other members of the Order in all matters concerning law.

The Law Commission works on mandate of the General Chapter, the Abbot General and the Central Commission.

## II. The Structure of the Law Commission

2.

- a)- The Law Commission is composed of five members competent in matters of law.
- b)- Two monks and two nuns are chosen by the General Chapter and the four elected members choose the fifth member indiscriminately from either branch of the Order.
- c)- Among the members elected by the General Chapter, there is at least one monk and one nun members of the General Chapter.

3. The President and the Vice-President are elected by the Commission.

4. The mandate of the members expires at the second General Chapter following their election.

5. The principal functions of the President are:

- a)- To apportion and supervise the work of the Commission;
- b)- To present the work done by the Commission - either in person or by another designated person;
- c)- To set the date, the place, and the length of the meetings of the Commission and to convoke the members;
- d)- To invite persons whose help would be useful to participate in the work and meetings of the Commission;
- e)- To present to each General Chapter a short report on the work of the Commission.

6. The Vice-President assists the President and replaces him or her when he or she is impeded.

7. The members of the Law Commission:

- a)- must be called to the meetings by the President;
- b)- have the right to vote at the meetings;
- c)- if they are appointed to study a question, must communicate the result of their work before the meeting.

8. The Secretary of the Law Commission:

- a)- is chosen by the President of the Commission. If the Secretary is not a member, he or she does not have the right to vote;
- b)- is responsible for drawing up the minutes of the meetings and for sending out reports, studies and other information.

9. Between sessions of the General Chapter, the resignation of the President must be accepted by the Abbot General to become effective. The resignation of the other members must be accepted by the President and confirmed by the Abbot General.

10. To call together the members of the Law Commission, the President asks the authorization of the Abbot General. The Order takes care of the expenses of the Commission.

### **III. Functions of the Law Commission**

11. The principal functions of the Law Commission are:

- a)- to assist in the preparation of the General Chapter in questions of law;
- b)- to prepare and distribute the information which the members of the Chapter will need for their discussions and decisions;
- c)- to bring our law up to date after each General Chapter;
- d)- to establish contacts with other Orders and groups, to coordinate the work concerning monastic law.



# STATUTE on FOUNDATIONS

*Updated and approved by the General Chapter of 2011 vote 27 and 27 bis  
and with revisions regarding the single chapter by the Law Commission*

1. Divine Providence can, by means of different signs, invite a community to spread the Cistercian way of life. Since, according to the Order's tradition, a foundation is always one community's act of transmitting Cistercian life through the creation of another, a personal project can never be a foundation unless it is taken on by the community. It is the Abbot/Abbess who first discerns these signs of divine Providence and, when he believes it is opportune to begin a discernment in the community, the matter is brought to his/her council.
2. The Abbot/Abbess then presents the contents and the conclusions of the deliberations of the council to the reflection of the community and asks the advice of the brothers/sisters as well as their prayers. He/she also consults the Father Immediate.
3. The Abbot/Abbess, and the community, take into consideration the following aspects:
  - a. The possibilities and capacities of the community as regards both qualified personnel and material resources, not only in view of making the foundation itself, but also of fostering its growth, since the founding community is committed to supplying the necessary material and spiritual support and personnel until the foundation attains the rank of major priory or abbey.
  - b. The advice of the Abbots and Abbesses of the Region where the foundation is being considered, and of others who have made foundations in similar circumstances. Inquiry should be made about other forms of monastic life in the same region.
  - c. The possibilities of local vocations as well as the religious, cultural, political, economic and climatic situation. Of special importance is to ascertain the attitude of the local Church and its Bishop.

## I - PREPARATION

4. When the Abbot/Abbess judges that the possibilities have been studied sufficiently, he/she presents the conclusion to the Conventual Chapter, and seeks its consent to take the concrete steps that would lead to a foundation. The consent is expressed by an absolute majority vote. By this vote the community accepts to give the necessary support to move towards a foundation while not at this time committing itself to one. It is a period of preparation which can unfold in different ways.  
The Abbot/Abbess informs the General Chapter of the project and keeps the community and the Father Immediate abreast of the developments at all stages of the process.
5. A concrete step in preparing a foundation could consist in bringing candidates from the place of the future foundation to the community for formation, and this with the understanding that they may return as members of the foundation, subject to the judgement of the Abbot/Abbess.
6. Another possibility would be to send monks out to prepare the foundation, which could include studying the language and customs of the place. This group would be considered a religious house following Canon 608. To do this, the authorisation of the local Ordinary is required. The building of the monastery can only begin once the General Chapter has approved the foundation.

## II - FOUNDATION

7. When the Abbot/Abbess and the community judge that the situation is sufficiently mature to establish a foundation, the Abbot/Abbess sends a detailed report to the Father Immediate. He/she also asks for the consent of the Bishop of the place to be given in writing.

In the case of a foundation of nuns, an Abbot of the Order, with the consent of his conventual chapter, should have accepted to assume the paternity of the foundation when it will accede to autonomy. The General Chapter ratifies this choice. Until then, the Father Immediate of the founding house acts as the Father Immediate of the foundation.

8. Before making the final decision, the Abbot/Abbess presents the documents mentioned in no.7 to his/her community and asks the consent of the conventual chapter with a two-thirds vote. The foundation can be recognized as such only after the approval of the General Chapter. Thus the community assumes before the Order and the Church the responsibility of setting up a new Cistercian Community.
  - a. The founding community commits itself to give spiritual and material support until the new foundation attains the rank of major priory or abbey.
  - b. With the help of his council, the abbot chooses the superior of the foundation. Then, with his council and the designated superior, they agree on the choice of the monks to be sent.
  - c. In this group there must be at least six professed monks, including the superior, but experience shows that this number is the bare minimum necessary for lasting growth. Among these persons, there should, in addition to the superior, be someone who is able to be novice master and someone who is able to be cellarer. Special



care is taken to send qualified persons who desire to give their life in the foundation and have already developed a certain degree of unity with the superior before setting out.

**9.** The foundation can be recognized as such only after the approval of the General Chapter. In doing this the Abbots and Abbesses welcome the new foundation into the communion of charity which unites all monasteries of the Order and they commit themselves according to their possibilities to assist it in a fraternal way. This approbation can be asked from the Abbot General who can give it with the consent of the Central Commission when it acts as the plenary Council of the Abbot General. In every case, the request is accompanied with a succinct report on the foundation.

**10.** Following a tradition as old as the Order itself, all houses are founded under the name and patronage of the Virgin Mary, Queen of heaven and earth.

**11.** The place should be sufficiently set up and provided with the necessities of life as to permit the founding group to lead a regular life. Taking into account the needs of progressive adaptation to the new country, especially the necessity to learn the language of that country, the regular enclosure is set up as soon as possible.

**12.** When the installation has been judged to be sufficient, a date is fixed for a liturgical ceremony which officially dedicates the foundation. The Abbot/Abbess founder draws up the act of foundation, and sends a copy to the Abbot General, and he/she informs all the houses of the Order.

**13.** The founders remain members of their community of origin. The Abbot/Abbess founder remains the major superior of the foundation; however, he/she delegates as much authority as possible to the local superior. The latter is assisted by a council in the spirit of Chapter 3 of the Rule of St Benedict and Constitutions 36 – 38 and 43.2.

The Father Immediate of the founding house is also the Father Immediate of the members of the foundation. However, in the case of a monastery of nuns he can delegate his powers to another superior of the Order, especially if it is foreseen that the foundation will have this other superior as Father Immediate at the moment of autonomy (Cf. n.7). He consults beforehand with the interested communities.

It belongs to the Father Immediate or to the Visitor of the founding house to extend the Visitation of the latter to the foundation.

**14.**

**a.** The foundation can obtain from the Abbot General, with the consent of his council, the authorization to open a novitiate. The Mother house however, is careful to ensure a solid formation at the foundation.

**b.** The superior of the foundation presents candidates for temporary profession with the consent of the abbot founder.

The right of vote for the admission to simple profession belongs to the members of the foundation from the founding house who are solemnly professed.

The Abbot founder can delegate to the superior the power to receive the profession.

**c.** The foundation usually waits until autonomy before accepting new members to solemn profession. Nevertheless, if conditions do not allow this, the Abbot founder, with the consent of the conventual chapter of the mother house, can decide to accept solemn professions in the foundation.

It then falls to the conventual chapter of the mother house :

- either to delegate to the solemnly professed of the foundation who have voting rights the exercise of its voting rights for the admission of the candidate,
- or to express its vote after having received the consent of the solemnly professed of the foundation who have voting rights.

### III - AUTONOMY AND RANK

**15.** In the Cistercian tradition, the monasteries are autonomous. Foundations may move to full autonomy in stages and they are encouraged to advance through these stages without unnecessary delays. When the Abbot/Abbess of the founding house judges that the foundation has sufficiently taken hold, he/she can proceed to the erection of the foundation into an autonomous house. The autonomous house can be an abbey or a priory and a priory can be either simple or major. From the canonical point of view, autonomy is the same in the three cases. However, the simple priory continues to benefit from the assistance of the founding house in matters of personnel and the material resources (ST 5.A.b.).

**a.** The conditions for becoming a **simple priory** are :

- to have at least six professed monks/nuns who are ready to change their stability, among whom some may be temporary professed, in addition to some novices coming to the end of their probation,
- to have sufficient buildings to make a regular life possible,
- to have the means of subsistence which cover an important part of the needs of the community and allow thinking of economic independence (taking into account, however, the particular economic circumstances of the region).

**b.** The conditions for becoming a **major priory** are :

- to have at least eight professed monks/nuns, of which six are solemn professed who are ready to make their stability there, if they have not already done so. Except under special circumstances, at least some of them should be from the country itself,

- to have full economic independence (taking into account, however, the particular economic circumstances of the region).

**c.** The conditions for becoming an **abbey** are :

- to have at least twelve solemnly professed, besides the superior, ready to make their stability there, if they have not already done. Except under special circumstances, at least an important number of them should be from the country itself,

- to show clear signs of having become definitely and fully rooted in the country,

- to have acquired full economic independence (taking into account, however, the particular economic circumstances of the region).

**16.** Before a foundation obtains autonomy :

**a.** the superior of the founding House asks the advice of the Father Immediate. In the case of a foundation of nuns, if another Father immediate is foreseen (cf. n° 7 and n° 13) he is also consulted.

**b.** the monks/nuns of the foundation give their consent with a two-thirds vote. The result of this vote is communicated to the Conventual Chapter of the founding house which then votes. The result of the vote of the foundation is added to the result of the vote of the founding house, and the global result must have acquired a two-thirds majority.

**c.** These results accompanied with a brief report on the state of the foundation are communicated to the General Chapter in order to obtain its approval.

**d.** For the foundations of nuns, the permission of the Holy See is also required.

**17.** The erection into an autonomous house is celebrated in a solemn way:

**a.** The official declaration of autonomy is read by the Abbot/Abbess of the founding house, and in the case of nuns, in the presence of the Father Immediate if possible.

**b.** The monks/nuns who freely wish to do so change their stability publicly on the same day, if possible during the celebration of the Eucharist.

**c.** The first titular Superior is elected within a maximum delay of three months, in conformity with the CST 39 4 D.

**d.** The Father Immediate informs all the houses of the Order of this event and at the same time communicates the news of the election of the new superior.

**e.** The Abbot/Abbess-founder cannot ask for reimbursement from his/her daughter house for the funds invested in the foundation.

**f.** If a religious who has changed his/her stability desires to take up his former stability again, the procedure described in CST 60 is followed.

**18.** Passage from a priory to a higher rank :

**a.** To pass from the status of a Simple Priory to that of a Major Priory or an Abbey – or to pass from the status of a Major Priory to that of an Abbey – the following are required : the consent of the conventual chapter of the priory with a two thirds majority, the agreement of the Father Immediate (and of the Abbess of the founding house in the case of a monastery of nuns) as well as the consent of the General Chapter, which, in an urgent case or for serious reasons, can be given by the Abbot General with the consent of his Council.

**b.** The event is celebrated and the news is communicated to the Order as for the erection of an autonomous house (cf. n° 17.d.).It is the Father Immediate, or the Abbess of the founding house in the case of the nuns, who reads the declaration.

**19.** The Superior

**a.** The titular Prior of a Simple Priory is elected for six years. The titular Prior of a Major Priory and the Abbot of an Abbey are elected for either an indefinite term or for six years according to the choice of the community (cf. C 39.4). In the first election taking place after the erection to a Simple Priory and until the moment when the community becomes a Major Priory, the right to vote may be given to the temporary professed who already have at least three years of profession, with the consent of the conventual chapter (ST 39.2.A)

b. From the moment when a Simple Priory or a Major Priory having a prior/prioress elected for a definite term, passes to the rank of Abbey, the office is vacant. This erection is done preferably at the end of the six years' term of office. On the contrary, if the Superior of a Major Priory is elected for an indefinite term, he/she remains in office and receives the abbatial blessing.

20. If it becomes necessary to close a foundation, the authorization of the General Chapter must be obtained. In an urgent case this authorization may be given by the Abbot General with the consent of his Council. In every case, the abbot who is requesting the closure must consult the conventual chapter of the founding house and the members of the foundation.

## **SOME CONNECTED QUESTIONS**

### **I - TRANSFER of an autonomous house**

21. When special circumstances require it, a monastery can change its place of implantation. This requires:
- a. The consent of the conventual chapter expressed by a two-thirds vote and the advice of the Father Immediate.
  - b. The written approval of the Bishop of the new diocese where the transfer is to be made. Even if the transfer is made within the same diocese, the authorization of the Bishop of the place is still necessary (cf. canon 1223).
  - c. The approval of the General Chapter.  
The Bishop of the place from where the transfer is being made is to be informed in good time.
22. The transfer modifies nothing of the juridical status of the monastery. The monks/nuns do not make a new stability.

### **II - ANNEX HOUSE**

23. For special reasons an autonomous house can set up an annex house.
24. The annex house is a legitimately established house according to the norms of Canon 608, and depends totally on the monastery from which it comes. The Abbot/Abbess of the monastery is the superior of the annex house.
25. The conventual chapter must examine the reasons and the usefulness of such a house and express its consent by two-thirds majority. The Father Immediate must be consulted on the opportuneness of this establishment. The agreement of the Bishop of the place where it is planned to open an annex house is required. The General Chapter is informed. However, if the same community wishes to establish more than one annex house, the approval of the General Chapter is required in each case.
26. The annex house is not a foundation. It does not have the right to receive postulants or novices or to be represented at the General Chapter.
27. It belongs to the Visitor to extend his visit to the annex house and to appraise its situation.

### **III - INCORPORATION**

28. It can happen that a monastic community without any juridical bond with the Order sets up relations with a monastery and from this comes the desire for a more complete sharing in the patrimony and the structure of the Order, by incorporation.
29. The community which desires to be incorporated into the Order should show some important characteristics of the Rule of St. Benedict and the Cistercian tradition, such as a stable common life under a superior, prayer, liturgical life and work associated with silence and solitude.
30. To help a community in view of its incorporation into the Order, a superior of the Order should obtain the consent of his/her conventual chapter by an absolute majority vote, on the means to be taken for giving this assistance. Special care should be given to formation in the Cistercian way of life according to the Constitutions of the Order. An experienced monk or nun should live in the community for at least one year to guarantee that the Community seeking incorporation has an adequate understanding of enclosure, poverty, chastity, stability and obedience.
31. In order that a community might be incorporated into the Order, it must present its request to the General Chapter. All the conditions required for the setting up of a priory or an abbey, must be fulfilled according to the rank which this community has at the time of the incorporation.

### **IV - SUPPORT OF FOUNDATION BY SEVERAL HOUSES OF THE ORDER**

**32.** Several houses may join together to make a foundation or to help one already in existence.

**33.** One of the houses shall assume the functions of motherhouse, following what is laid down in this statute and in the case of a foundation of nuns, a monastery of monks will accept the paternity. Nevertheless, each house involved is to participate actively in discernment at each stage of the foundation.

**34.** The collaboration between the houses and its specific mode must be approved by the conventual chapters of these communities by deliberative canonical votes, whether it is a matter of making a foundation or of helping one already in existence.

**35.** The agreements between the houses may include a commitment to help in personnel, in the economy, in the area of formation, etc., in either a permanent or a temporary way.

**36.** In order that such a foundation be approved, it must have at least six professed (Statute n° 8) in addition to those who are there for assistance on a temporary basis.

**37.** The function of the associated houses shall cease when the foundation attains the rank of major priory, or before, according to the approved agreement.

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# **RATIO INSTITUTIONIS**

## **Guidelines on Formation**

*Called to be transformed into the image of Christ*

*Modified and approved by the General Chapters of 2011 – vote 28*

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#### **PROLOGUE**

1. Cistercian monks and nuns are called to follow Christ along the way marked out by the Gospel, as interpreted by the Rule of St. Benedict and the tradition of Cîteaux. In a community that the Lord has brought together to be a place of his special presence, they allow themselves to be formed by the love of God, each according to the grace he or she has been given.

C. 1; C. 3.1; C. 3.2; C. 5; C. 9; Perf. Car. 2,5; Lumen G., 40; RB Prol. 21; RB 40,1; Dir. 8.

[Dir. = the document of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes, published in 1990.]

2. Entering a monastery is a decisive moment in a life history within which the call of God's eternal love has been heard. Baptismal commitment is by it given a new expression. The goal of the monastic journey is a gradual transformation into the likeness of Christ through the action of the Spirit of God.

C. 45.1; C. 8; C. 56.

3. As a school of the Lord's service, each community is called to maintain and to transmit the Cistercian patrimony and a faithful version of its charism to those who enter. It remains constantly alert to the promptings of the Spirit in each person's heart, and to his or her need for healing.

RB Prol. 45; C. 16.3; C. 45.3.

4. In this school of love, monks and nuns will grow in humility and self-knowledge. Through the discovery of the depths of God's mercy in their lives, they will learn how to love. Gradually becoming detached from false sources of security and growing in dependence on God, they will run with an open heart in the paths of his service, aided by the maternal solicitude of Mary, Mother of Jesus and of the Church, and our model in the following of Christ.

Will. of s. Th., De natura et dignitate amoris, PL 184, 396 D; C. 49.2; RB Prol.49; C. 3.4; C. 45.1.

5. The Constitutions describe in detail the essential aspects of Cistercian spirituality, as well as the structures of the life of the community and of the Order. Based on these Constitutions, the present Ratio on Formation in the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance describes the spiritual principles and the concrete norms that are to be followed in the process of Cistercian monastic formation, especially during the initial stages. While this Ratio is addressed in particular to those responsible for formation in their communities, it is also addressed to every other member of the Order.

## **PART I : THE FORMATIVE ROLE OF CISTERCIAN CONVERSATIO**

6. It is essentially by living out the various aspects of Cistercian conversatio that a person gradually becomes ever more truly a Cistercian. The community is the ambience where the transforming action of the Spirit of God takes place. Through the daily practice of the monastic disciplines and under the pastoral care of the superior and those who share in the superior's ministry, this conversatio provides the means for personal and communal growth.  
C. 3.1; C. 10; Dir. 80.

### **1 Lectio divina, Liturgy, and Work**

7. The various elements of Cistercian conversatio, such as obedience, humility, asceticism, solitude and silence, lead, each in its own way, to the interior freedom through which purity of heart and an abiding attention to God are attained. But it is in the particular and delicate balance of lectio divina, liturgy and work, that the Cistercian charism most directly manifests itself.

C. 3.2; C. 14.2; RB 48,1;

Aelred of Rievaulx, *De institutione inclusarum*, 9.

8. In their lectio divina, to which they dedicate themselves with fidelity and regularity, monks and nuns are further awakened in faith to the reality of God within and around them. Lectio, which leads to meditatio, oratio and contemplatio, is therefore a source of continual prayer and a school of contemplation. Through it the one who reads is given the grace to embody the Word in a transformed way of living. It is also an asceticism of the mind that opens the heart to listen constantly to God.

C. 21; Dir. 76.

9. In the liturgy monks and nuns celebrate with joy the Lord who has gathered them into a community of praise and intercession. From this daily participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ they draw strength and grow in a personal understanding of their monastic vocation and deepen their communion with their sisters or brothers. The daily celebration of the Eucharist nourishes the new life received at Baptism and strengthened at Confirmation. The celebration of the Divine Office, in which the community listens to the Word of God, is a means towards a constant mindfulness of God and is therefore a school of continual prayer.

C. 17.1; C. 18; C. 19.1; C. 19.2; C. 20;

Evangelica Testificatio, 48; Dir. 77.

10. Through work, especially manual work, monks and nuns participate in the creative activity of the Father and share in the experience of all workers, particularly the poor. At times this work may be marked by fatigue, tension or frustration: a sharing in the cross of Christ. As one of the principal ways of serving the community and exercising responsibility towards it, work is a powerful instrument in drawing the community closer together. It is also a means of self-discipline that promotes health of mind and body and fosters maturity. When the necessary conditions of simplicity and peace are provided, work is an opportunity for the exercise of the continual prayer that flows from lectio and the liturgy.

C. 26; Exordium Parvum 9; Dir. 79.

### **2 The Community as Formative**

11. All who live in the community share responsibility for its unity, its dynamic fidelity to the Cistercian charism, and its capacity to provide all its members with the conditions needed for the human and spiritual growth that leads to the fullness of love.

C. 13.1-2; C. 14.1; C. 16.

12. A community's ability to form new members depends largely on its having a unified spirit so that it can impart a single orientation to the upcoming generations. Where unity is lacking, difficulties are created for those entrusted with the task of formation. The community should therefore work towards a unified approach that is founded on a common patrimony treasured by all, so that practical everyday questions can be located within a shared vision of the Cistercian ideal. This vision must be one that is rooted in the experience of monastic living and which spans the several generations which together form the community.

C. 45.3; ST.49.1.B.

13. Communal discussions and dialogues, forms of Gospel sharing and fraternal correction, can be important means in the formation of the community. In these and other ways, members of the community are trained to listen to others, exposed to different viewpoints and encouraged to develop skills of self-expression; they learn courage through facing problems, and patience through the slowness of community processes. They grow in mutual understanding and are more ready to forgive when conflicts are unavoidable. Thus a climate is fostered where mutual trust and fraternal support aid conversion of life.

C. 15.1; ST.15.1.A.

14. While the experience of dialogue helps a community to grow in self-understanding, celebrations also have a part to play in community formation. On feastsdays and on other occasions throughout the year, the community celebrates the gifts God has bestowed on it and joyfully recognizes that all are bonded together in one body and one spirit.

### 3 The Pastoral Care of the Superior

15. Because they exercise the role of spiritual father or mother of the community, abbots and abbesses have a responsibility to guide their communities towards unity and growth in the Cistercian charism. Through their teaching they develop the identity of the community; through their administration they create the necessary conditions for formation, and through their pastoral care they aim to provide guidance, support and healing for each and every member. They share these responsibilities with all whom they appoint to help them in the service of the community, but more especially with the monks or nuns who accompany those going through the various phases of initial formation.

C. 33.1-4; C. 3.2; C. 41.2; C. 35; C. 45.3; C. 47.

16. A prolonged and regular spiritual guidance (accompagnement) constitutes an important element of formation, whether initial or ongoing. It leads the monk or the nun towards a real knowledge and acceptance of self, under the eyes of God. Monks and nuns strive to see their superiors with the eyes of faith as the representatives of Christ.

C. 33.1; C. 11; C. 2.2.

## Part II : INITIAL FORMATION

17. The experience of centuries expressed in the Rule of St. Benedict as well as in the legislation of the Church and the Order have provided for a gradual initiation into the monastic way of life. **The various stages of this initiation, which include intellectual formation as well as affective and spiritual development**, are meant to assist the candidates to grow as human beings and as disciples of Christ.

C. 46.

### 1 General Principles

18. According to St. Benedict, great care must be taken to see that those who enter truly seek God, that they "show eagerness for the work of God, for obedience and for trials". Therefore those responsible for their formation help them to develop a life of continual prayer; they teach them to love the Divine Office and to find in it a large part of their spiritual nourishment; they guide them on their journey to take up the cross after the example of Christ.

C. 51; C. 49.1; RB 58,7.

19. It is highly recommended that the superior, the novice director and the junior director, together with one or two others designated by the superior, meet regularly to review the progress of those in formation. The purpose of this formation committee is to ensure good communication and continuity of policy, and also to provide a wider range of experience to draw upon in dealing with particular situations.

Dir. 32.

### 2 Reception

20. Persons who desire to enter the community will be led to the monastery by various natural and supernatural motives. These aspirants will be helped by those who receive them to discover the working of God in their lives and the nature of the attraction they experience. Several visits to the monastery guesthouse, retreats, and possibly a period spent within the community will be the usual means taken to arrive at such a discernment. Those with insufficient knowledge of Christian doctrine will be invited to complete their catechetical preparation.

C. 46.1; Dir 43.

21. Since it is not unusual that an attraction to deeper prayer life is first perceived as a call to a more contemplative form of religious life, candidates will be asked to examine seriously whether God is really inviting them to the monastic life or whether he wants them to remain in their present vocation. All candidates will be encouraged to give themselves totally to God in whatever way he is calling them.

C. 46.2.

22. When candidates have demonstrated positive signs of a Cistercian vocation, the superior receives them, after discussing the matter fully with the novice director and, if there is one, the vocation director. These positive signs include: the sincere desire to embrace the life of the community as a means to union with God; the necessary physical, mental and emotional health to live their vocation fruitfully; the "spiritual disposition" referred to in C 46, 1, which is a humble docility born of faith, hope and love, making the candidate eager to learn and instinctively open to both the solitary and the communal dimensions of Cistercian life. The positive decision of the local superior who receives the candidate is also a necessary criterion for establishing the presence of a Cistercian vocation.

23. Candidates must present certificates of baptism and confirmation and of freedom from obligations due to others. In the case of priests, seminarians, present or former members of institutes of consecrated life, and those

needing dispensation from impediments, the specific requirements of Canon Law are followed. An up-to-date medical certificate is also required. There will be times when competent psychological testing is to be recommended. C. 46; CIC 644 and 645; cf. CIC 642.

**In some cases, it can be useful to set up a pre-postulancy. This period is a time of practical formation, including courses that ensure a solid preparation for the postulancy : a complement to basic catechesis, further study of the community's language in the community if this is not the postulant's mother tongue, training in singing or any other.**

### 3 Postulancy

24. Newcomers will be entrusted to the pastoral care of the novice director. Chosen for a real love of the monastic life and an aptitude for winning souls, the novice director will be responsible for introducing the candidates to the Cistercian conversatio, accompanying them on their spiritual journey until the moment when they leave the novitiate. Apart from this individual guidance, the novice director attends to the quality of the novitiate environment and gives regular conferences. He or she is responsible for the practical organization of the novitiate and may also supervise group activities and work.

C. 47; Exordium Cistercii, N 5; RB 58,6; C. 49; Dir. 30, 31, 52.

25. The novice director and those who assist him or her need to have a real love for persons and a reverence for the grace of God present in each individual. As they strive to foster growth, they are attentive to the novices' gifts and strengths, as well as to their limitations and weaknesses. They need to be persons who possess the ability to listen and they are careful to teach by the quality of their lives as much as by their words. They are open to receive some form of supervision in their task.

C. 47; C. 49.2; Dir. 30, 31, 52.

26. The relationship between the superior and the novice director should be characterized by a deep unity of spirit, heart and orientation and a respect for each other's service within the community. Together they formulate a policy for the organization of the novitiate, which they explain to the community. This is important, since the cooperation and the confidence of the community are essential for those who are responsible for formation.

ST 49.1.B; Dir. 32.

27. The postulancy is a period of initiation and of progressive adaptation to the monastic life. The novice director introduces the postulant to prayer, to the Divine Office and to lectio divina, and helps him or her surmount the difficulties which are proper to this stage. Often these are connected with the physical and affective separation from the activities and relationships that were part of the postulant's life before entering the monastery. Although the postulancy is not a time for studies, in some cases it can be a time for completing the catechetical instruction required for taking part profitably in the novitiate program if it has not been possible to complete it before entry.

ST 46.1.A; Dir. 42, 43.

28. A minimum period for the postulancy is determined by each community. When, on the advice of the novice director, the superior judges that postulants are ready to begin their canonical novitiate and they themselves express a desire to do so, they are accepted after the council has been consulted.

ST 38.C. a; ST 46.1.A; C. 48,1; ST 48.A; ST 12.A.

### 4 Novitiate

29. The novitiate is a time for a personal integrating of the Cistercian way of life. Through prayer, asceticism, growth in self-knowledge and participation in the life of the community, the novices are led to a more intense personal experience of what is involved in the living out of the Cistercian conversatio. They should continue to develop humanly and spiritually, growing in a personal relationship with Christ.

C. 49; C. 49.2; C. 51; Dir. 45.

30. In order to profit from this period the novices will strive to develop from the very beginning an open and confident relationship with the novice director and the superior who, in their turn, will help the novices by their pastoral care, prayer and example.

C. 11; C. 45.3; ST 33.3.B.

31. The novices, who normally live in a separate part of the monastery, learn through their community life to develop a realistic acceptance of and love for one another. This experience of common life within the novitiate forms the basis of their integration into the community. As they gradually learn to know the community and the community comes to know them, the novice director may have at times to act as mediator, by helping the novices to understand the community and the community to understand the novices.

C. 13.1; ST 49.1.A.

32. A program of monastic studies is begun in the novitiate. The courses of the novitiate are under the control of the novice director and are oriented to the spiritual needs of this stage of formation. They are also however coordinated with the program of the monasticate. Among the topics to be presented are the following: Sacred Scripture, in particular the Psalms; the Liturgy, especially the Liturgy of the Hours, with practical instruction in singing and public reading; the Rule of St. Benedict; Monastic History and Spirituality, especially the Cistercian Patrimony; instruction in Prayer and Lectio, on the Vows and the meaning of Religious Life; an introduction to the Christian Mystery and Christian Doctrine, and to the Constitutions and the Statutes of the Order, **practical accompaniment and other means to understand and manage affective life.**

Dir. 46, 74.



33. The novitiate remains a time of probation, and departures of novices are not abnormal. The novice director shows understanding and sympathy for the hesitations and soul-searching of those who are doubtful in their vocation, and helps them make a decision in such a way that, even if they do depart, they do not feel that they have failed but, rather, leave the monastery more determined to serve God in whatever way he indicates. When novices must be asked to leave, they should be helped to see this not as a rejection but simply as the recognition that there are not enough positive signs of their Cistercian vocation for this community at this moment. In such cases it would be false kindness and, in the long term harmful and unjust to the novices and to the community to allow them to remain too long in the monastery.

34. At the end of the novitiate, when the novices are ready to commit themselves to Christ and to the community through monastic profession, they make a petition to the superior, who reviews each case with the novice director before presenting the novice to the vote of the conventual chapter. If the needs of the individual warrant it, profession may be delayed for up to six months after the two years of the novitiate have elapsed. According to local circumstances, the novice may also remain in the novitiate for some time after profession. C. 50; C. 51; ST 53.A; ST 38.C.e; Dir. 54, 56.

35. Voting for profession is an important way in which the community exercises its responsibility. Therefore the superior and the novice director will do everything possible to ensure that this act of the conventual chapter is not a mere formality. While respecting the necessary confidentiality, they will keep the community informed, in a general way, of the progress of each novice. Most of all, the community must remember that its attitudes towards the novices are very important: its welcome, its acceptance of them as individuals, its affection for and understanding of each of them. ST 37.B.a; C. 51.

## 5 Monasticate

36. Novices are still young in the monastic life when they are admitted to first vows and therefore need special help and attention from the community. C. 53; ST 53.A; Dir. 58, 59, 60.

In recent times the period of formation that comes after that of the novitiate has been called the monasticate, and those who are in it are called juniors.

37. If there are several juniors, the relationships among them constitute a significant element in their formation, as long as a healthy and confident relationship is also maintained with the rest of the community. They are given a director who strives to foster unity and charity in the monasticate, gives conferences and organizes other group activities. The juniors themselves are responsible for developing a good climate of friendship and support in the monasticate. Dir. 60.

38. It is the task of the director of juniors to accompany those in his or her care as they pass from the relatively segregated regimen of the novitiate to their own distinctive mode of sharing in the life of the community. The director reviews with them their experience of monastic living in the community, prayer, vocation, the vows, study, work and the acceptance of responsibilities. Because the monasticate is such a critical time of growth, it is important that the juniors receive understanding, acceptance and encouragement from the director, as well as being challenged by him. Dir. 30, 60.

39. The monasticate continues and complements the work of the novitiate in a way that is less structured and which is spread over a longer period. During it the juniors will progressively learn to act more from inner principles and move towards a fuller participation in the activities and responsibilities of the community.

40. Through their participation in a program of monastic education the juniors are led, on the one hand, to a more conscious awareness of the content of the faith and of the monastic patrimony; on the other hand, they are invited to a deeper reflection on their own beliefs and values. In this way it is hoped that they will be able to construct a broader context in which to locate their personal experiences and to have some objective means of checking their judgements and opinions. C. 53; Dir. 61, 74.

41. Although the gradual assumption of responsibility within the community is a characteristic feature of the monasticate, juniors are not to be given work or duties which impede their formation. While the conditions of each monastery have to be taken into account, communities are to be generous in providing time to juniors for classes and personal studies. As a stimulus to serious work and as a necessary condition for further academic studies, some form of evaluation is advisable, especially if these studies are to be done in institutions outside the monastery. Careful attention must also be given to ensure that the fruits of the juniors' vocation are becoming manifest in their lives through their regularity and through their application to prayer, lectio, the divine office, work, and the acceptance of corrections. Also to be considered as evidence of their cooperation with the charism of their vocation is the character of their relations with superiors, seniors, peers and novices, their control over temperament and emotions, and their growth in human maturity. C. 53; CIC 660,2.

**42. For the monasticate it is difficult to suggest a general course of study, since circumstances differ widely among monasteries and among the juniors themselves. Juniors destined for the priesthood will follow the appropriate theological studies (cf. §§ 60-62) Regarding the regular program of monastic studies, courses in the following areas are highly recommended : sacred Scripture, Cistercian patrimony, Christology, systematic theology, patrology, liturgy, and history of philosophy. These courses should be integrated into the framework of Cistercian**

**anthropology and spirituality. Classes may be given in the monastery, at sessions organized by the Regions, or over the internet.**

**In addition to the above, courses in Church history, the theology of monastic life, comparative religion, or the classical languages such as Latin, Greek or Hebrew could be proposed, and the study of modern languages.**

C. 53; Dir. 61.

43. The nature of the monastic life makes it desirable that the students develop a taste for private study. In some cases most of the studies of this period will be done privately, under the supervision of competent tutors. At any rate, it is essential that teaching sessions be supplemented by individual work.

Dir. 84.

44. The director keeps the superior and the other formators acquainted with the general lines of the juniors' progress. In the case of the renewal of temporary profession, it is desirable that the superior discuss the matter with the council, even though there is no legal obligation requiring a vote. If he or she judges it necessary to exclude a person in temporary vows from making further profession, the advice of the council must first be heard. Towards the end of the period of temporary profession a more serious discernment regarding the juniors' vocation needs to be undertaken.

45. At the end of the period of temporary profession, the juniors will freely ask their superior to be allowed to make solemn profession. The superior will examine their spiritual and human progress with the director of juniors, the formation committee and the teachers. Special attention will be given to seeing whether they have sufficient human maturity to make a free and responsible commitment that will enable them to live their consecration with fidelity through the many difficulties and changes which are characteristic of the spiritual journey, and whether they are able to accept the specific identity of the local community and to give themselves to its service. They will be presented for the vote of the community by the superior if these qualities, as well as growth in their life of prayer, are found to be present.

C. 54; C. 56.1; RB 58.4.

46. The newly professed may continue in the monasticate for some time, until in the judgement of the superior the objectives of the monasticate have been achieved. Then they pass fully into the community. It is recommended that they choose someone in whom they have confidence to be a continuing source of counsel, whom they may freely approach in their difficulties and whose judgement they respect. This may be the superior or one of the mature members of the community who serve as spiritual counsellors.

Dir. 63.

### **Part III : ONGOING FORMATION**

47. Fidelity to the demands of monastic conversion requires some form of ongoing formation that will last during the whole monastic life, and that can be adapted to each one's needs and potentials.

ST 58.C; RB 58,14; Dir. 67.

#### **1 General Ongoing Formation**

48. A program of ongoing formation available to everyone is to be developed in each community. In that way especially, a monastic culture will be built that will enable all to be united in a common understanding of their vocation. A specific wisdom is gradually developed in a community when its members supplement their *lectio divina* with serious reading and study. The goal of such ongoing education is a deeper penetration of the mystery of Christ and of the Church. A good assimilation of the patrimony of the Order, a real familiarity with the contemporary teaching of the Church, and a better understanding of the world of human experience as a whole will contribute greatly to the development of a solid and objective basis for faith and practice.

C. 58; Dir. 68, 75.

49. In order to ensure the ongoing formation of its members, the community will avail of all the means compatible with Cistercian life: courses, conferences given by monks or by persons from outside the monastery, correspondence courses, modern means of communication and an adequate supply of books and periodicals. In particular, the various periodicals of the Order may offer an accessible means for strengthening and renewing a personal interest in monastic history and spirituality. Isolated monasteries and those lacking a sufficient number of persons qualified to teach will seek among the means listed here those best suited to their situation in order to sustain a lively desire for constant prayer. It should be borne in mind that a wholesome and balanced life is nurtured by an environment of harmony and beauty.

ST 27.A; ST 58.A; Dir. 68.

50. There should be good coordination between the general programs mentioned above and the courses given in the various stages of initial formation. It may be helpful, especially in larger communities, that someone be appointed to supervise the study programs in collaboration with the novice director and the junior director. This person could arrange for the ongoing education of the community and maintain contact with juniors and others doing studies outside the monastery, and could also be the contact person for collaborative projects with other monasteries and other religious houses.

C. 58.

51. After solemn profession, monks and nuns are to be encouraged to engage in the personal study of a particular interest, or to engage in some technical specialization in the area of manual work or in some form of artistic creation.

C. 58.

52. Study contributes most to organic growth in monastic virtues when it interacts with work and prayer, with solitude and community living. Prolonged involvement in personal study while pursuing particular fields of attraction should be at the service of the community or the Order, or at least carefully discerned as a particular element in an individual's vocation.

C. 14.2; Dir 68.

## **2 Help in Times of Difficulty or Crisis**

53. The monastic journey is inevitably marked by moments of crisis, which will in reality be challenges and calls to new phases of growth. These may be of interior or exterior origin. They may consist of moments of special difficulty in the life of prayer and commitment. They can also be events that change the quality of an individual's life and upset the equilibrium previously achieved gaining or losing a particular employment, exposure to new influences and experiences, success or failure in some venture, change in the affective relations with the superior or with other members of the community. For everyone, there will eventually be the aging process, often accompanied by illness, and finally the approach of death itself.

Dir. 70.

54. With the necessary discretion and reserve, the community will be particularly attentive to its members in such moments of crisis. Through prayer and pastoral solicitude, the superior will take care of these brothers or sisters who are particularly tried, and will assure them of the support of the community. The light of faith is especially necessary in these times in order to see that, through these difficult periods, one's heart is being formed by the personal experience of Christ's cross, death and resurrection. If it should seem necessary, professional help will be made available for those in difficulties.

C. 33.4; C. 45.2; C. 49.2.

## **Part IV : SPECIALIZED FORMATION**

55. Over and above initial formation and the general ongoing formation described above, some monks and nuns, because of particular services they are called to fulfil in their community, will need specialized formation.

### **1 Special training for Formation Personnel**

56. Certain members of the community are appointed to be responsible for formation. The primary characteristic of those appointed is that they be imbued with love of Cistercian life, of the place, of the brothers or sisters and of prayer. But it is also very important that they be well trained. The superior therefore will see to it that they have adequate opportunities to practice a deeper monastic life and that they are given the means to acquire the knowledge and pastoral techniques needed today for the guidance and direction of souls and for the understanding of the young. This applies especially when there is a question of appointing a novice director.

ST 58.B.C; Exordium Parvum, 17,3; C. 47; ST 31.A (monks); CIC 651.3.

57. Those responsible for formation will always be attentive to the Spirit of God working in those they are called to train. They will be helped by having a clear knowledge of themselves and of their needs. At some stage it may be useful for them to seek the assistance of specialists towards acquiring this knowledge. The duration of their responsibility is subordinated to the need and the good of the community.

58. Competent teachers contribute to the proper formation of new members and to the quality of the intellectual life and monastic culture of the community. They require adequate intellectual and pedagogical preparation that may in some cases have to be acquired at a university. In ensuing years they need to take appropriate measures to maintain their level of competence. For the proper preparation of their courses, they should be provided with the books and time necessary. They are encouraged to share their talents with other monasteries in the Order.

ST 45.3.B; ST 58.B.

59. For the Order to maintain its knowledge and love of its own tradition, it is necessary that at least some of its members receive a more scholarly formation, in particular in disciplines directly related to the monastic and Cistercian way of life, such as Patrology, Monastic History, Liturgy or Canon Law. When a monk or nun who possesses special talents and is well integrated into the monastic life manifests a particular interest in any such discipline, his or her community should be open to making the necessary sacrifices to help this person develop an expertise in that field, if the superior judges that it is for the good of the community and of the whole Order.

### **2 Formation to Ordained Ministries**

60. The nature of the Cistercian life does not of itself require that all monks be ordained. But the Lord's call and the immediate and longterm needs of the community may require that a brother be ordained to the priesthood or to another ministry. It is the responsibility of the abbot to promote such a vocation in the context of the community's needs, to discern with the brother concerned what the Lord's will is, and to make a decision after consulting the conventual chapter, or at least his council.

C. 57 (monks); RB 62.

61. If the abbot decides that a monk is being called to the priesthood, he will see that this brother fulfills all the conditions required by Canon Law before presenting him to the bishop for ordination. Additional formation that complements the studies already done during the monastic training will usually be necessary, so that the courses

completed by these monastic candidates will be in conformity with the norms published by the Holy See. When the studies are done in the monastery, the student will be given the necessary time to acquire an adequate formation in all the required disciplines. If necessary, these additional studies may be done outside the monastery at some appropriate house of studies.

C. 57; RB 62; CIC 1019.1, 1020, 1021; Dir. 103. See the norms contained in the document on the Congregation for Christian Education, *The Theological Formation of Future Priests*, issued in 1976, and in the document of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*, published in 1990.

62. Throughout their life, but more particularly in the years following ordination, priests are to make use of the means needed to ensure the effectiveness of their ministry, especially by deepening their spiritual life, by increasing their knowledge of theology and the other sacred sciences, and by integrating the contemplative and ministerial dimensions of the monastic priesthood.

### **3 Formation to Services in the Community**

#### **a Ministry to the Guests**

63. Because people who come to the guesthouse of a monastery are often seeking guidance in the ways of prayer, it is important that those who are designated to provide this service receive adequate training. They should also observe the pastoral directives given by the local Ordinary. As they enter their ministry, and indeed also later on, they will willingly ask for advice from those more experienced.

C. 30; ST 30.A,B; Dir. 106.

#### **b Training for Those Engaged in Technical Tasks**

64. Special training is more and more required today by those who serve the community in management and administration, in health care, in the technical trades and in other similar areas that call for specific skills. This training may be done in the monastery itself or outside.

ST 58.C.

## **Part V : FORMATION IN THE SPIRIT OF THE CARTA CARITATIS**

65. The communities of the Order are united among themselves by the bonds of charity and a common tradition of doctrine and law. This charity expresses itself through filiations, the role of the Father Immediate and of the Abbot General, the General Chapter, and the Regional Conferences.

C. 71.1; C. 71.4; C. 82.1.

### **1 Filiation and Father Immediate**

66. The Father Immediate concerns himself with the quality of the formation given in his daughter houses. In the course of the regular visitation he or the designated visitor examines how formation is being carried out and how the present Ratio is being implemented. He helps the abbot or abbess in seeking solutions to particular difficulties, and refers if necessary to the Abbot General.

C. 74.1; C. 75.2; ST 79.B.

### **2 Role of the General Chapter**

67. The General Chapter concerns itself with the question of formation throughout the Order. It supplements this Ratio with pastoral directives. When approving new foundations it ensures that there are adequate resources for formation.

ST 79.B.

### **3 Role of the Abbot General**

68. Because of his firsthand knowledge of our communities throughout the world, the Abbot General can contribute to improving the quality of formation in the houses of the Order through his visits to the communities and the Regions, his circular letters, his conferences to the General Chapters and his contacts with individuals. He will seek help for those communities that lack the resources and facilities needed for initial formation.

C. 82.1; ST 69.1.C.

### **4 Role of the Regional Conferences**

69. The Regional Conferences can be an effective forum for discussing formation, for furthering inter-house cooperation and for organizing co-operative projects. It can also assist the individual houses of the Region in adapting the present Ratio to their specific needs and to the particular culture they live in.

C. 81; ST 45.3.A; Dir. 91.

## 5 The Central Secretary for Formation

70. The Central Secretary for Formation will be elected by the joint **Central Commission** for a term of three years. He or she can be re-elected. The Central Secretary's function is to facilitate communication between the Regions and to ensure the dissemination of relevant information about all aspects of monastic formation. He or she may make recommendations to the **Central Commission** about items concerning formation to be placed on the agenda of the **General Chapter**, and may be invited by the Abbot General to attend the meetings of the **Central Commission**, and by the **Central Commission** to attend the **General Chapter**.

## 6 The Regional Secretary for Formation

71. Each Region elects a Regional Secretary for Formation who may be invited by the President of the Region to attend the Regional Meetings. The Regional Secretaries disseminate useful information relative to formation and promote common formation projects in their own Regions in accordance with the mandate given them by the Regional Conference. They collaborate with the Central Secretary and keep him or her informed about the formation activities and the suggestions of their Regions. With the consent of the Abbot General, the Central Secretary may invite all or some of the Regional Secretaries to meet with him or her to treat of matters concerning formation in the Order as a whole.

## 7 Care for Monasteries with Special Needs

72. All the communities of the Order share a responsibility for young foundations, in particular those made in young Churches or in isolated regions. They exercise this responsibility, for example, by sharing professors, lecturers or novice directors. Isolated monasteries may also solve some of their own difficulties in the area of formation through collaboration with other monastic Orders and by applying to diverse agencies for help.  
C. 69; ST 69.1.C.

## EPILOGUE

73. The principles and norms presented here will need to be adapted to regional and local circumstances by the Regional Conferences and by those who have special responsibility for formation in each monastery. A careful implementation by a community of these principles and norms should ensure that its members receive an adequate formation. A frequent recourse to the Rule of St. Benedict, to our Constitutions and Statutes and other documents of the Order and to the appropriate documents of the Church will be necessary. But above all, a constant reading of the writings of our Cistercian Fathers will ever remain a privileged source for learning how to become a Cistercian or how to help someone else discern and nurture the Cistercian grace present in his or her heart. Finally all must remain aware of the fact that whatever the means used in the work of formation, it is ultimately the Holy Spirit alone who can accomplish in us the necessary trans-formation though this is something which will not take place without our co-operation.  
RB 73; C. 86.



# STATUTE ON OBLATES

*approved by the General Chapters of 1987*

The Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance recognizes the oblature which is a gift of oneself to God and the monastery. It is lived out in the midst of the community, sharing its life of prayer and work. Every monastery can receive oblates who follow the Cistercian observance, taking into account the dispositions made by the Abbot after consultation with his council. The oblate is a member of the community where he is received, without being canonically a member of the Order.

All that is said in this present Statute applies to oblates of both sexes unless it is otherwise clear from the context (cf. canon 606).

1. The oblature has the character of a promise of mutual fidelity on the part of the oblate and on the part of the community, and it does not of itself imply any vow. However, the oblate leads the monastic life according to the spirit of the vows of obedience, conversion of manners and stability. This mutual agreement is revocable on either side, but only for serious reasons.

2. The oblate retains the radical ownership of his goods but he is invited to free himself as soon as possible from their administration. Where this is not possible, he administers these goods in agreement with the Abbot who watches over the interests of the oblate and acts in such a way as to avoid anything that could be prejudicial to the community. All legal arrangements should be taken to assure the necessary guarantees. An expert in social legislation should be consulted if needed.

3.

a) The Abbot takes care to assure himself that the candidate has no civil or family obligations incompatible with his entry into the community.

b) After an initial time of probation whose length will depend on the decision of the Abbot, after consultation with his council, the Abbot may admit the aspirant-oblate to a new stage of probation for a period of two years, and gives him the habit of the brothers.

c) At the end of this period of two years, the Abbot proposes to the consent of the conventual chapter the admission of the oblate to a new probation for a period of three years.

d) At the expiration of this three year period, the Abbot can, with the consent of the conventual chapter, allow the oblate to make a definitive engagement.

4. During these periods of probation, the Abbot takes care that the candidate oblate receives formation in spirituality and liturgy, and that he familiarizes himself with the Cistercian monastic tradition. For this formation, the age of the candidate and his personal aptitudes are taken into consideration.

5. Each community decides the ceremonies to be observed in the reception and definitive engagement of the oblates. It is recommended that these be inspired by what is provided for in the Ritual for the reception of novices and for admission to profession, using a formula of promise adapted to the situation. The habit of the oblates is similar to the brothers, except for the cowl.

6. After the definitive engagement, the oblate cannot be sent away for reasons of age or health. Only serious reasons can lead the Abbot, with the consent of his council, to ask the oblate to leave. In all of this, equity and evangelical charity are to be observed. The oblate who believes himself unjustly dismissed can have recourse to the Abbot General in order that his case might be examined.

## **Particular Cases**

7. For the admission into the oblature of a religious from another institute or of a priest, it is necessary to obtain, for the first, the consent of his superiors, and, for the second, the consent of his Bishop.

8. Besides those who enter the monastery with the view of becoming an oblate, it can happen that a brother novice or a simply professed at the end of his vows, would apply to become an oblate. This decision can come from the brother himself or it can be proposed to him by the Abbot. The consent of the conventual is required (cf. 3 c and d).

9. On the other hand, if an oblate desires to engage himself with monastic vows, the Abbot asks the consent of the conventual chapter. With the advice of his council, he decides on the stages that should be followed and if necessary asks for an indult from the Holy See.



# STATUTE ON PUBLICATIONS

*approved by the General Chapters of 1990*

1.  
This Statute is to assist superiors in their pastoral care for monks and nuns in their communities who submit writings for publication. When God gives to a member of the Order the talent for writing, the pastoral concern of his or her superior will channel this gift so that it can enrich the Church and our communities and make our patrimony better known and more fully developed.
2.  
The present Statute leaves intact all the provisions of the universal law concerning publications. (Canons 823-833).
3.  
Monks and nuns who want to publish something must, before doing so, receive permission from within the Order, unless they are Major Superiors. This applies even in those cases where universal Law requires the approval of the local Ordinary.
4.  
In the Order the *imprimi potest* is given:
  - a. by the abbot for publications of one of his monks;
  - b. by the abbess for publications of one of her nuns;
  - c. by the Abbot General for official publications of the Order.
5.  
Whoever gives the *imprimi potest* in the Order can proceed by himself or herself to the examination of the text to be published, but can also call upon at least one qualified reader (male or female) to judge the work, choosing for this task those who have been assigned by the Regional Conference, or another qualified reader, taking into account the nature of the work.
6.  
The Regional Conferences.
  - a. assign a sufficient number of qualified readers (male and female) to examine the works to be published within a reasonable time, given the date of publication.
  - b. determine the remuneration of these readers.
7.  
The work should be judged not only on what concerns faith and morals, but also as regards the suitability of the publication by a member of the Order. The *Imprimi potest* is given unless there is some just cause to impede the publication. This cause should always be explained to the author.
8.  
The *Imprimi potest*, preceded as necessary by the *Nihil obstat* of the readers, must be given in writing and mentioned in the publication itself unless it is a question of articles, periodicals (reviews, newspapers etc.) or of contributions to collective works. The authority that gives the *Imprimi potest* can dispense from this mention in special cases.
9.  
In the case of a negative judgment on a book presented for an *imprimi potest*, a monk or a nun can have recourse to the Father Immediate or the Abbot General. A new examination of the work can then be undertaken and the Regional Conference can be asked to give its opinion.
10.  
Authors are asked to send to the Generalate a copy of all published works.



# STATUTE OF EXTERN SISTERS OF THE O.C.S.O.

*approved by the General Chapters of 1987*

1. The vocation of the extern sisters consists in leading a life of religious consecration in the service of a monastic community in its relations with the exterior.
2. To accept an extern sister into a community, the consent of the conventual chapter is required.
3. The extern sisters form part of the community; they observe the rule and the Constitutions of the nuns for all those points which are not modified by this Statute. They are not members of the conventual chapter but they have an active vote in the election of the abbess (cf. Indult 11224/69 SCRIS and 16/7/70 n.1).
4. Ordinarily the extern sisters have their rooms near the entrance to the monastery.
5. The abbess determines the work which the extern sisters do inside and outside the monastery. In case of need, she appoints some nuns to help them. (cf. indult 11224, 16/7/70 n.3).
6. They wear the same habit as the nuns except for the cowl.
7. The abbess names a religious who will be in charge of the formation of the extern sisters and determines with her the arrangement and the program of their formation.
8. The extern sisters make simple perpetual profession. They conserve the radical possession of their goods as well as the capacity to acquire others according to Canon 668 # 1.2.3. of the Code of Canon Law. They make express mention of their status of extern sisters in their formula of profession.
9. The abbess determines with each sister the way in which she takes part in the life of the community, taking into account her occupations.
10. The abbess regulates the exits of the extern sisters which are not specific to their charge.





# STATUTE ON THE REGULAR VISITATION

Updated after the 2005 General Chapter  
C.I. 2016

## Nature of the Visitation

1. The monasteries of the **Order**, while remaining autonomous, are joined together by the bond of charity and by a common tradition of doctrine and law. Their superiors are united by the bond of solicitude for the welfare of each community, and this pastoral solicitude is particularly exercised through the institution of the Regular Visitation.<sup>(1)</sup> Each community is visited at least once every two years.<sup>(2)</sup>
2. The **Regular Visitation** is a moment of communion in the common Cistercian grace, an expression of the responsibility of each community to all the other communities of the Order aiming at a living fidelity to the Cistercian *conversatio*. Its purpose is to motivate the brothers to lead the Cistercian life with renewed spiritual vigilance, and to strengthen, supplement, and when needed, correct the pastoral action of the local abbot.<sup>(3)</sup>
3. The **brothers** will welcome the Visitor in faith and joy.<sup>(4)</sup> They will make every effort to see the Visitation as a call to personal and communal conversion. They will accept with respect and humility the suggestions, directives and corrections of the Visitor.
4. The **superior** of the community visited will receive with confidence the Visitor who comes to assist him in his pastoral responsibility, knowing that the success of the Visitation depends in part on his cooperation seeking the good of the community and of each brother.
5. The **Visitor** will show great respect for the community visited and for its superior, trusting in the Spirit working in each person. He will help the community to examine itself on the quality of its monastic life and to perceive God's call. He will faithfully observe the prescriptions of law, the spirit of the Charter of Charity and the norms of the present Statute approved by the General Chapter.
6. A **shared understanding** between the Visitor, the Community to be visited and the superior is crucial for the abiding fruitfulness of the Visitation. Therefore, all will accompany the Visitation with their prayer and will be mindful of their fidelity to the Gospel and the Rule of St. Benedict, the Constitutions of the Order, the directives of the General Chapter, and to the grace proper to each community.

## The Visitor

7. **The monasteries of the Order** are visited by the Father Immediate. In addition the Abbot General can visit them. The Father Immediate and the Abbot General may delegate another person to make the Visitation<sup>(5)</sup>. For **monasteries of nuns**, the Father Immediate must delegate another person at least once every six years<sup>(6)</sup>.
8.
  - a) **In the monasteries of Nuns**, the delegated person may be the superior, monk or nun, of an autonomous monastery. Also the Visitor can be a retired abbot (or titular prior) or a retired abbess (or titular prioress), a Councillor, monk or nun, of the Abbot General.
  - b) **In the monastery of monks**, the delegated visitor can be the superior of an autonomous monastery. He also may be a retired abbot (or titular prior) or a monk Councillor of the Abbot General.

Whenever there is a **delegation of a Visitor**, the local superior must be consulted. Furthermore, the superior of the monastery being visited must consult the community in all the cases when the person being delegated is not the superior of an autonomous monastery of monks.

## The Assistant Visitor<sup>(7)</sup>

9.
  - a) The Visitor can be **accompanied** by another person, after having consulted the local superior concerning the principle by which the person is chosen. The local superior in his/her turn will consult the community.
  - b) **In the monasteries of nuns or monks**, the person accompanying the Visitor can be the superior, monk or nun, of an autonomous monastery. Also the person accompanying may be a retired superior, monk or nun of an autonomous monastery, or a Councillor, monk or nun of the Abbot General.
  - c) However, in all the circumstances there is only one official Visitor, with whom all the community must visit. The person who accompanies the Visitor assists with his counsel and fulfils all the tasks that are entrusted to him. The Visitor will inform the Community of the manner in which he and his assistant will proceed during the visit.

## Particular Situations

- 10.
- a) A new Abbot is encouraged to have a person of more experience to accompany him in his ministry as Visitor.
  - b) Whenever a community and its superior express the **desire** for a delegated Visitor or someone to accompany the Visitor, this desire must be given serious consideration and respected to the degree possible.
  - c) In **the monasteries of monks and of nuns**, the Visitor can also be accompanied by an expert in some particular field, after having consulted the community as outlined in n° 9.a.
- 11.
- a) In monasteries of monks where the Father Immediate is of a **different culture**, he can delegate from time to time a Visitor of the same culture as the community, in so far as it is possible. In the same way, when the Father Immediate is of the same culture as the daughter-house, he can delegate from time to time a Visitor of another culture.
  - b) When the Father Immediate is not of the same language as the community visited, he can delegate from time to time someone of the same language as the community. Whenever an interpreter is necessary, the person chosen must be approved by the conventual chapter of the community being visited, and this interpreter is bound to the same confidentiality as the Visitor himself.

## Preparation for the Visitation

12. All prepare for the Visitation with **prayer**, asking the light of the Holy Spirit for the community itself and for the Visitor, and also the grace of true discernment and good zeal<sup>(9)</sup>. The Mass of the Holy Spirit will be celebrated on the day of the opening of the Visitation.
13. The **local superior** will lead the community in its preparation and can give some talks on the importance of the Visitation. He will encourage all the brothers to be open and honest with the Visitor and should leave them complete liberty in this regard.
14. It is also desirable for the **community** to examine itself beforehand concerning its needs at this moment of its history. This examination can take the form of community dialogues, meetings of the Council, or other ways apt to stimulate the collaboration of all. A few major themes can be identified that are to be treated during the Visitation. If the community draws up a text to help the Visitor, he will not limit himself to the points contained in such a document. Moreover, if the Visitor proposes a particular method of preparation, the community will make an effort to co-operate.
15. For his part, the **Visitor**, especially if he is not the Father Immediate, will inform himself as best he can, on everything concerning the community he will visit. He will communicate honestly with the superior, who will share with him in detail the preparations made by the community. If the Visitation is going to be of a special character because the community finds itself at a critical moment in its history, the Visitor asks God for the grace of discernment as well as the necessary courage to take the measures that may be needed.

## During the Visitation

16. The following points constitute some of the more important aspects of the **community life**. According to circumstances the Visitor will examine certain ones more specifically :
- a) the level of charity, obedience and unity in the community, (C. 13-16);
  - b) the spirit and celebration of the liturgy, (C. 17-19);
  - c) the balance between lectio, prayer and work (C. 20-23; 26);
  - d) silence and separation from the world, and observance of enclosure (C. 24; 29);
  - e) fidelity to live monastic asceticism in evangelical poverty and simplicity (C. 25; 27; 28);
  - f) hospitality and apostolate (C. 30-31);
  - g) the service of the various officers (C. 35);
  - h) the functioning of the various councils (C. 36);
  - i) the financial condition of the monastery and its temporal administration (C. 43.3; 74.3);
  - j) the quality of initial and ongoing formation (C. 45ss and n. 66 of the Ratio Institutionis);
  - k) the relationship with the absent brothers/sisters and the foundations;
  - l) the state of physical health in the community;
  - m) the ministry of the chaplain, in monasteries of nuns (C. 76);
  - n) the relationship with the Order and the local Church (C. 31.32; 77ss).

17. During the Visitation all the professed members of the **community** have the right and duty to meet privately with the Visitor. They share with him their vision of the community, its strong points, its challenges and problems. They answer his questions with honesty and charity. However, it is not necessary or permissible to mention the secret faults of a brother unless they are likely to become public or to harm the monastery in a serious way.<sup>(10)</sup> Likewise, it is considered reprehensible to save up for the Visitation matters that could and should have been corrected before the Visitor's arrival. If the Visitor holds community dialogues during the Visitation, all should participate and contribute as much as possible to the exchange. Furthermore the Visitor has **the right to visit the places** where the brothers live and work.

18. Even if the Visitation is done by the Father Immediate, the **superior** keeps his ordinary power in the monastery during the Visitation.<sup>(10)</sup> However, in confidence, he should put all necessary information on the community and his

administration at the disposal of the Visitor. He should not, in any way, try to find out who has made critical remarks to the Visitor. He shall maintain a kind attitude towards those whom he thinks may have said something negative to the visitor.<sup>(11)</sup>

19. The **Visitor**, in a spirit of faith in the work of the Spirit in each monk and each community, will act with great tact and charity. He will suggest opportune ways to stimulate the community's growth in fidelity to its Cistercian vocation and will help it to resolve its difficulties. Remembering the healthy pluralism allowed by the Constitutions, he will not try to impose on the house visited the decisions taken in his own community. Great objectivity and discernment will be needed in judging whether the essential Cistercian values are being safeguarded or endangered, as also to get an objective idea of the real situation of the community after being exposed to many different points of view. If something needs to be corrected, he will do it with prudence and kindness.<sup>(12)</sup>

20. The **Visitor** is responsible for helping the local superior in the exercise of his pastoral function. He can do this through the advice he gives the superior, and remarks addressed to the community. If he comes to the conclusion that the superior's pastoral action is wrong or defective in some point, then he has the right and duty to correct it, being careful not to weaken the Superior's authority.

21. If, after having listened to the brothers and examined the overall situation in the community as carefully as possible, he arrives at the conclusion that the good of the community suggests or even requires a change of superior, he will inform the latter with courage and kindness.<sup>(13)</sup> However, he will first consult the Father Immediate, if he is not himself the Father Immediate of the house being visited.

22. The Visitor should not act hastily. He should dialogue with the superior and, as far as possible, with the community (or, at least, with the Council) before taking important decisions. This implies leaving sufficient time to complete the Visitation.<sup>(14)</sup> In exceptional cases, the Visitor, after consulting the Superior, may remove an officer in charge (e.g., the cellarer, the Prior or the Director of Novices) or the head of a department from office, but he has no power to appoint a successor. If he is not the Father Immediate, the Visitor should inform the latter of his decision.<sup>(15)</sup>

## Closure of the Visitation

23. At the end of his Visitation, the Visitor will leave the community visited a document traditionally called the "**Visitation Card**." He should take great care in drawing it up, making it clear that he has listened to what he has been told and has tried to grasp the true picture of the Community. He will summarize the community's view of itself. He will add his own perception of the situation of the community and will add his advice, encouragement, and, if necessary, a summons to conversion, indicating those areas where further growth would be desirable. Rather than presenting a long list of small points of observance, he will concentrate on certain essential aspects. He can leave an additional list of remarks that are less important.

24. It could be useful for the Visitor to present the community or at least the council with the most important points of the Visitation Card, so that they can reflect upon them and discuss them in community dialogues before writing up the final text. He should discuss at least with the local superior both the contents of the Visitation Card and the remarks he intends to make after it has been read.<sup>(16)</sup> The Regular Visitation is usually **closed** with the reading of the "Visitation Card." In exceptional cases, the Visitor may leave the Visitation **open** for a limited and definite period of time after having consulted with the local community and the superior as well as the Father Immediate.

## After the Visitation

25. The local **community** and its superior should do all in their power to put into practice the recommendations of the Visitor in a spirit of faith and communion with the whole Order. The Visitation Card will be read a few times a year, according to the indications of the Visitor, and the community, on that occasion, will reflect on its response to the grace received during the Visitation, and on the Visitation Card itself and the other recommendations of the Visitor. The **Superior** has a specific responsibility in this regard. He should, with the help of his council, promote that reflection and that evaluation within his community.

26. The **Visitor** is to send a copy of the Visitation Card along with a report giving additional information on the Visitation to the Abbot General within two months. A delegated Visitor is also to send these documents to the Father Immediate. In the report he may invite him to be particularly attentive to the implementation of some recommendations made during the Visitation.<sup>(17)</sup> These reports should agree substantially with the Card read to the Community. However, if the Visitor feels that he was not able to say everything in the Card, he should explain this to the Abbot General and suggest that the other matters be addressed at the next Visitation.<sup>(18)</sup>

27. The **Abbot General** may respond to the report of the Visitation, either personally, or through his Council after evaluating the questions raised in it. He may suggest further means for helping the Community to continue its journey in the Cistercian vocation.

28. The local **superior** may always, after consulting with his Council or even with the entire community, send an evaluation of the Regular Visitation to the Abbot General and the Father Immediate. This evaluation may also be shared with the Regional Conference, if the superior so wishes.

29. A superior or his community may always have recourse against a Visitation. It is made to the General Chapter or, between Chapters, to the Abbot General acting as vicar of the Chapter. Recourse to the Holy See is always possible.

30. Both the Visitor and the community visited should remember that the persons who took part in the Visitation have a right to **confidentiality** and the duty to observe it. The Visitor should not reveal the names of those who made

remarks, and should consider himself bound to a great discretion in everything that concerns the community that he has visited.

## Conclusion

31. The Regular Visitation is an expression of the bond of charity between the houses of the Order. When it is prepared and lived in this manner, it constitutes a choice spiritual event that is offered to each community in order to assure its growth in the fidelity to the Cistercian grace.

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## NOTES

1. *Carta Caritatis*, nn. 3-4; C. 71.
2. ST 75.2.B.
3. C.75.2.
4. *Carta Caritatis*, n.5.
5. C 75.1
6. C 75.1 for the nuns
7. ST 75.1.A
8. Cf. RB 72.
9. Cf. Can 628.3.
10. Cf. Vincent HERMANS, *Commentarium Cisterciense* (Romae 1961), p. 159.
11. Cf. *De Forma Visitationis*; Can. 628.3.
12. *De Forma Visitationis*, ST XXXIII in *Instituta Generalis Capituli apud Cistercium*.
13. General Chapter of 1969, 22nd session, p. 87; 26th session, p. 124.
14. Cf. General Chapter, 1971, vote 28 et Canivez, 1738, n.126.
15. Cf. Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium*, Louvain 1933 under 1189 n.2; 1201 n.6; Acts of the General Chapter of 1948 p.23; Vincent HERMANS, *Commentarium Cisterciense*, Romae 1961 p.208).
16. Cf. General Chapter 1950, p.12.
17. ST. 75.2.C.
18. Cf. General Chapter of 1971, vote 30.

# 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

# Declaration of the General Chapter of 1969 on the Cistercian Life

We Cistercian Monks feel a deep desire to interpret for our own times the traditions which our Fathers have handed down to us. Yet we must admit that we are faced with a variety of differing trends in our Order which characterize its present situation. We may feel at times that certain of these trends could well obstruct the renewal and healthy evolution of the Order.

And yet, when these difficulties came to light at the opening of this Chapter for renewal we all discovered a profound sense of communion in the lived experience of our common spiritual values. We are convinced that the work of this Chapter will become constructive to the degree that we foster this communion and the mutual confidence which it inspires.

We shall do this by recognizing all that really unites us in the Holy Spirit, rather than by trying to impose unity through a legislation that would determine observances down to the last detail. Individual communities can in fact look after such details according to local needs and in conformity with the directives of the General Chapter -so long as our wholly contemplative orientation is maintained. We are convinced that the best laws are those which follow and interpret life, and it is in the concrete experience of our Cistercian vocation that we would first of all recognize this life. Our wish is to clarify the content of this experience which we all share and by so doing to further as best we can the values which inspire it.

That is why we feel moved to make the following Declaration on our own particular way of life:

Following the first Fathers of our Order we find in the Holy Rule of St Benedict the practical interpretation of the Gospel for ourselves. A sense of the Divine Transcendence and of the Lordship of Christ not only pervades the whole of this Rule but also permeates our life, totally orientated towards an experience of the Living God.

God calls and we respond by truly seeking Him as we follow Christ in humility and obedience. With hearts cleansed by the Word of God, by vigils, by fasting and by an unceasing conversion of life, we aim to become ever more disposed to receive from the Holy Spirit the gift of pure and continual prayer.

This search for God is the soul of our monastic day, a day composed of the Opus Dei, Lectio divina and manual work. Our Cistercian life is basically simple and austere. It is truly poor and penitential 'in the joy of the Holy Spirit.' Through the warmth of their welcome and hospitality our communities share the fruit of their contemplation and their work with others.

We carry out this search for God under a Rule and an Abbot in a community of love where all are responsible. It is through stability that we commit ourselves to this community. It lives in an atmosphere of silence and separation from the world, and fosters and expresses its openness to God in contemplation ... treasuring, as Mary did, 'all these things, pondering them in her heart.'

The Church has entrusted a mission to us which we wish to fulfil by the response of our whole life . . . 'To give clear witness to that heavenly home for which every man longs, and to keep alive in the heart of the human family the desire for this home ... as we bear witness to the majesty and love of God and to the brotherhood of all men in Christ.'

(Cf Letter of Pope PAUL VI to the Abbot General, Dec 8/68; GS 3 8, AG 40)

*March, 1969*



# Statute on Unity and Pluralism (1969)

## Guidelines and Conditions for Applying Them

This present General Chapter is convinced that "the unity which is based on charity and which has been the strength and beauty of the Cistercian Order ever since its origin" (Letter, Paul VI to Abbot General), will best be served today by a deep sense of communion in the lived experience of our common spiritual values. That is why the present Chapter, in its Declaration on the Cistercian Life, has already insisted on the contemplative orientation and fundamental observances of our Order.

In the present Statute those observances which demand special attention in our times are presented in a more concrete fashion. Thus the fundamental values of our life are guaranteed without imposing a detailed uniformity, where in fact a legitimate diversity should exist. Conditions are laid down so that each community, in union with the other monasteries of the Order and following these guidelines, may deepen its own living experience of the Cistercian life.

## *Guidelines*

1. Faithful to the thought of their Founders, Cistercian monks live under a Rule and an Abbot. They live, united in the love of Christ, in a community which is stable and effectively separated from the world.
2. The Abbot, as spiritual father of his community, should try to discover the will of God. One important way of doing this is by listening to his brethren in the spirit of Chapter 3 of the Rule.
3. In our daily horarium we keep the balance between the Opus Dei, Lectio Divina and Manual Work, as required by the Rule of St Benedict.
4. The hour of rising is so regulated that Vigils, which follows it, should keep its traditional character of nocturnal prayer- as we watch for the coming of the Lord.
5. The monk, who is tending to a life of continual prayer, needs a fixed amount of prayer each day. The Abbot will see to this for the community as a whole and for each individual monk in particular.
6. This search for a life of prayer should be lived in an atmosphere of recollection and silence for which all are responsible. In particular, the great silence at night and the silence in the regular places will be maintained.
7. Separation from the world demands that journeys out of the monastery should be infrequent and only for serious reasons. The use of radio and television will be exceptional. Discretion is needed in the use of other media of communication.
8. Our monasteries should practice generous hospitality, but this should not be allowed to interfere with the contemplative nature of our way life.
9. Our diet should be simple and frugal. The monastic practice of fasting and abstinence should be retained.
10. The habit should be retained as the distinctive sign of our Order. Its use can differ from house to house.
11. The life of the community, as of each monk, should be marked by, simplicity and poverty. Fraternal correction in the spirit of the Gospel a help in this direction.

## *Conditions*

12. Within the limits of the above guidelines the monasteries of our Order are free to arrange the details of their observance. An effective consultation of the community should accompany these experiments - though the manner of it may vary.
13. Anything in the second or third parts of the Constitutions, or in the Usages, which does not fall under common law, retains only a directive, force.
14. The results of these experiments will be reviewed by the Visitor, who: will make a statement on them in his report to the General Chapter.
15. The experiments should be discussed at the Regional Conferences So that communities may be helped in their work of renewal.

