

HOPE

| 1 | general chapter 2025

M. Katharina (Nazareth)

CHA-CHA-CA

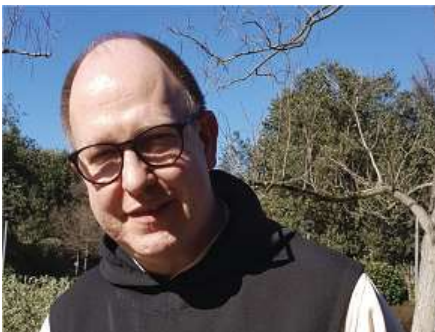


Dear brothers and sisters in the Cistercian charism,
May I invite you to the dance ?

In September 2025, all the superiors of the Order will gather in Assisi to dance the Cha-cha-ca in a 'general' way: **CHA**pitre general, general **CHA**pter, **CA**pitulo general ! In preparation, we want to send out some newsletters in which we will let various people of the Order speak about the General Chapter: their vision of the cha-cha-ca, what they see as an invitation or challenge, how they experience it. In this way we hope to involve each of you more closely in the General Chapter, which is not only a dance for superiors, but for all members of the Order! This is the first edition of the Newsletter and we hope that three more will follow in the course of the coming year. The Lord of the Dance joins us <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1yzqsWxcBY> . You too?

D. Bernardus

A bridge of hope



TO GET TO the Central Commission meeting in Chile, many of us had to cross a figurative bridge. A bridge that connected not only long distances but also different cultures and languages. Once that bridge was crossed, the meeting became, for all participants, a sign of hope. More than ever there was the realization that the Order "is not to be bound to any particular

form of culture nor to any political, economic or social system" (C. 70) but that "The relationship of the various regional conferences gives rise to a dialogue among the various nations and peoples by which the common patrimony of the Order can be more deeply appreciated." (St. 81.C) What the participants in Chile experienced in miniature is also our hope for the General Chapter of 2025. The celebration of a General Chapter is a moment for all members of the Order to more deeply appreciate and live the shared patrimony. These newsletters are a bridge to help you cross over between your daily life and the General Chapter. Be challenged by brothers and sisters from around

the world to be a sign of hope together in today's world. Our hope is that the General Chapter will be good not only for the souls of the superiors but for every member of the Order and truly help us to grow in "faith, love and perfect union with Christ" (C. 3.4). Therefore, this initiative of some newsletters that can help all of us to prepare in prayer and communion for the General Chapter of 2025.

Hope has two beautiful daughters;
their names are
Anger and Courage.
Anger at the way things are,
and Courage to see that they do not
remain as they are.
Saint Augustine

What's on the Agenda?



Topics

TWO OF THE major topics have been maturing for several years. The first has to do with filiations. Because of houses closing or for other reasons, many houses have no Father Immediate, and it is increasingly difficult to find enough abbots to fulfil this role. Meanwhile, abbesses can now be delegated to conduct visitations in any house of the Order, and several abbesses are, in fact, fulfilling the role of Father Immediate. Moreover, the population of the Order will soon be equally divided between monks and nuns. So, the topic of the abbesses' role in the Order and the possibility of Mothers Immediate will be an important part of the agenda. The second topic that is coming to maturity has to do with fragile communities: the possibility of affiliation will be discussed further; a revised Statute on the Accompaniment of Fragile Communities will be presented to the Chapter; and discussion will begin on the question of a required minimum number for a conventual chapter.

Other topics are new: study and discernment regarding the place of the Eucharist in Cistercian life today, given the fact that many communities are no longer able to

have daily Mass; the question of specific terms of office for such roles as Abbot General, Councilor, and members of the various Commissions of the Order; a reconsideration of the current distribution of houses into Regions and of the way the Regions function; and, finally, the possible integration into our legislation of the recent change in canon law that allows a non-cleric to be elected abbot.

How?

FOR SOME OF these topics, the Chapter will consult the experiences of our communities. For instance, before the Chapter, communities will receive a questionnaire on their experience of the Eucharist, and at the Chapter, experiences will be shared from several fragile communities. On an even broader scale, the whole Order will engage in reflection and dialogue on the intercultural dimension of our communities and Regions, with Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* as a starting point.

Communities will also be invited to participate more fully in the General Chapter through the broadcasting and recording of certain events like the opening and closing Masses, the Abbot General's opening talk, and perhaps other conferences as well.

Efforts are being made to enhance all the participants' experience of the Chapter. Greater attention will be paid to preparing new capitulants beforehand, and more time will be taken on the first day to provide orientation for capitulants new and old on the pur-

pose and functioning of the Chapter. Greater attention will also be given to the needs of the various secretaries and translators.

Lastly, the Central Commission asked the organizers of the Chapter to find ways to emphasize the spiritual dimension of the three weeks spent together at Assisi. At the beginning of the Chapter and at its midpoint, part of the day will be set aside as a kind of retreat, with a spiritual conference, group meetings for reflection and sharing, and time for prayer and adoration. Sessions in the aula and commission meetings will also begin and end with a moment of prayer.

Intention

THE INTENTION OF all these efforts is to encourage the entire Order to contribute to the General Chapter in thought, dialogue, discernment, and prayer, on "The Cistercian charism in today's world under the sign of hope," in communion with the whole Church in its jubilee year 2025.



Theirs is an endless road,
a hopeless maze,
who seek for goods
before they seek for God.
Bernard of Clairvaux

D. Loris (Frattocchie)
M. Bénédicte (Echourgnac)



Daily Eucharist Questionnaire

With regard to the theme of the daily Eucharist, at the beginning of July P. Loris (Fratochie) and Mother Bénédicte (Echourgnac) worked on a questionnaire which was sent to all the communities of the Order. It should be returned to the Generalate by September 30. Thank you for your responses, which will provide a valuable basis for our reflection at the next General Chapter.

M. Giovanna (Matútum)



The Beauty of the Charism *Why the theme of HOPE for the General Chapter?*

To overcome times of crisis, we must set our hearts on what is essential and gives us hope. Is there hope for the Cistercian Order today?

Yes! Many communities are growing. But we focus on problems and diminish and overlook signs of life. Therefore, the Central Commission decided to emphasize growth, strengthen hope, and cel-

ebate life. Our Abbot General has already helped us see signs of hope that should console us all.

For the next General Chapter, I hope that we honor life. We can do it only by recentering ourselves in Christ and the beauty of our charism.

Hna. Catalina (Quilvo)



What means hope for me?

For me, hope is a rope stretched between my heart and the encounter with Jesus.

I believe that the rope is Easter.

For the Order, in the next General Chapter, I hope for concrete help to live this encounter with Jesus in the daily and poor reality of our communities.

H. Manuel (Miraflores)



What is hope for me?

I am a creature of God, He does not abandon me to my fate. He has a plan for me, no matter what paths He makes me go through, even if they are painful and purifying - "all shall be well" (Juliana of Norwich). May the General Chapter be a sign of living participation in diversity.

Hope is a gift from Jesus; hope is Jesus himself and bears his name. But it's not the kind of hope that you find in a person who usually looks at a half full glass that's simply optimism. Optimism is a human attitude that depends on many things. But hope is a different thing, it is not optimism. Hope is a gift, a gift of the Holy Spirit and hope has a name. **Hope is Jesus.**

Pope Francis

D. Alberic (Schiermonnikoog)

How do I experience a General Chapter?

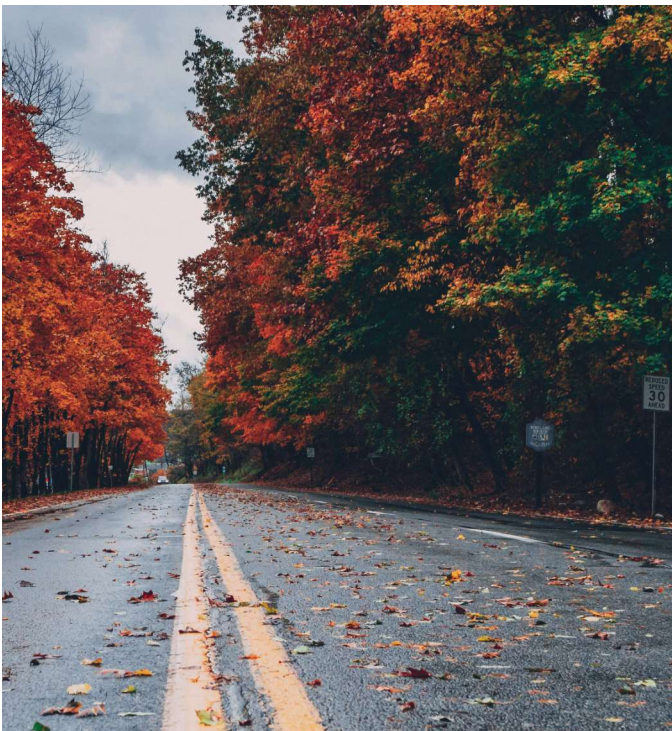


God is the same everywhere, humans are not. Lourdes was a great place to be. One element captures well my experience of the General Chapter: the pyramid shape of the aula where we met. Instead of each other's backs, here we saw each other's faces. A powerful experience. I was only a

recent superior and it stamped my experience: we come together.

Unfortunately, the location proved unsuitable for us, but not to worry. This experience speaks from every General Chapter, even when the aula offers little view of each other. To see each other is to open each other - something that

happens, in between all the paperwork and beyond all the screens, and every time it gives another glimmer of hope that people, wherever they are, can be in God. Just like that.



Prayer on the road

Good God,
Where two or more are together in Your Name,
there You are in their midst.
One year away from the General Chapter of our Order,
where so many of us from all over the world
are together in Your Name,
where we are united with thousands
of monks and sisters from our communities,
we come to ask the action of Your Spirit at this event.
Bless all those who are keeping their diaries free
to travel to Assisi in a year's time.
Bless all those for whom
an intensive period of preparation is now beginning.
Bless Father General and his council,
bless the coordinating commission
presiding over the General Chapter.
Bless all brothers and sisters
who prayerfully place their hopes in this gathering.
Bless all communities with fidelity
to their Cistercian charism,
in joy to live with each other for You.
Be with us, remain in our midst,
in Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Hna. Marilucia (Quilvo)

Preparing for a General Chapter



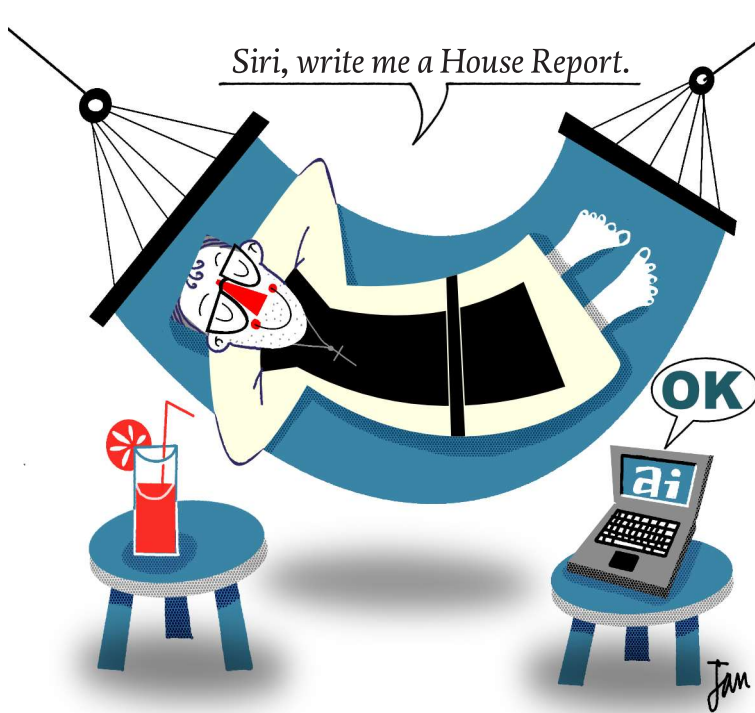
PREPARING FOR A General Chapter is a complex and lengthy planning process. Being a meeting not only functional but also spiritual in nature, we try to put our service to this multiple purpose so that everything runs smoothly until the last moment. I remember with gratitude the experience of Chapter 2022, because in spite of the hectic days, I felt that the heart rested in the joy of being in

the bosom of the Order. Recently we had the Central Commission in Chile and we noted the desire for the common good, the desire to be attentive to the Holy Spirit who speaks today. We hope that the General Chapter 2025 will be a place of spiritual listening where charity is concretely incarnated and where the prophetic spirit is rekindled.



D. Jan (Caldey)

Joke



AN ABBOT AND an abbess meet.
The abbess asks the abbot: 'Have you already thought about the General Chapter?'
The abbot replies: 'Yes, I have already thought about it.'
To which the abbess asks: 'Then have you already read the report of the Central Commission?'
The abbot replies: 'No, I have not read it yet.'
The abbess asks: 'Are you already working on your house report or the regional report?'
The abbot replies: 'No, I am not working on that yet.'
The abbess asks: 'Have you already discussed certain topics with the brothers?'
The abbot replies: 'No, I haven't yet.'
To which the abbess asks: 'But what have you already done for the General Chapter?'
The abbot says: 'As I told you, I have already thought about the General Chapter.'

The Central Commission in Chile

