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OCSO

CONSTITUTIONS

OF THE NUNS

Edited by the 2022 General Chapter

C. I. 2023

Preface

1

The holy abbots Robert of Molesme, Alberic and Stephen Harding gave the Benedictine tradition a particular form when in 1098 they built the New Monastery of Cîteaux, the Mother of us all, and founded the Cistercian Order. About 1125, Saint Stephen established the nuns' monastery of "Tart" as Cîteaux's own daughter-house, entrusted to the pastoral care of the abbot of this monastery. The *Exordium Parvum* and The Charter of Charity express the vocation and mission that the founders received from God which the Church has authoritatively approved both in their times and in ours. Under the influence of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and others, the ideal of this reform spread and monasteries of monks and nuns following the Cistercian way of life multiplied even beyond Western Europe. From the very beginning, the Order received lay brothers and lay sisters. A substantial spiritual heritage was engendered through the lives and labours of innumerable brothers and sisters that found expression in writing, chant, architecture and crafts, and in the skilful management of their lands.

2

Monks and nuns of the Order acknowledge their indebtedness to the movement that is called the "Strict Observance", which strongly defended certain aspects of the Cistercian patrimony in troubled times and, through the labours of Abbot de Rancé and the initiatives of Dom

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

Augustine de Lestrangé, made it possible for these values to be handed on to succeeding generations. In 1892, the three congregations that arose from la Valsainte formed a union that became an autonomous order, the Order of Reformed Cistercians of Our Lady of La Trappe, now named the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance.

3

The desire for an authentic monastic life acting in different ways through the centuries continues to inspire the monks and nuns of the Order to work hard to renew their way of life. In obedience to the principles of the Second Vatican Council, they strive to come to a deeper understanding of their origins and at the same time show themselves docile to God's action in the present. In 1969 the General Chapter, by its Declaration on Cistercian Life and Statute on Unity and Pluralism, reaffirmed the Order's commitment to the Rule of Saint Benedict as its traditional interpretation of the Gospel and gave guidelines for the faithful observance of this Rule in the changed conditions of the world. In these documents, the General Chapter made a distinction between the orientation and fundamental observances of the Rule, which constitute the Cistercian way of life, and those details that can be modified according to local circumstances.

4

This collection of Constitutions and Statutes is the fruit of the experience of those years of renewal. It is to be hoped that they will be an effective means of helping the Order to embody the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and show itself ever more able to carry out its particular function in the Church and in the world.

Part One CISTERCIAN PATRIMONY

C. 1 The Tradition of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance

The Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance has its origin in that monastic tradition of evangelical life that found expression in the Rule for Monasteries of Saint Benedict of Nursia. The founders of

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Cîteaux gave this tradition a particular form and the monasteries of the Strict Observance strongly defended certain of its principles. In 1892 the three congregations of the Strict Observance combined to form a single order, now called the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance.

C. 2 The Nature and Purpose of the Order

This Order is a monastic institute wholly ordered to contemplation. The nuns dedicate themselves to the worship of God in a hidden life within the monastery under the Rule of St Benedict. They lead a monastic way of life in solitude and silence, in assiduous prayer and joyful penitence as defined in these Constitutions, thus rendering to the divine majesty a service that is at once humble and noble.

C. 3 The Spirit of the Order

1

The Cistercian way of life is coenobitic. Cistercian nuns seek God and follow Christ under a rule and an abbess in a stable community that is a school of mutual love. Since all the sisters are of one heart and one mind, they have everything in common. By bearing one another's burdens, they fulfil Christ's law, participating in his sufferings in the hope of entering the kingdom of heaven.

2

The monastery is a school of the Lord's service where Christ is formed in the hearts of the sisters through the liturgy, the abbess's teaching and the fraternal way of life. Through God's Word, the nuns are trained in a discipline of heart and action to be responsive to the Holy Spirit and so attain purity of heart and a continual mindfulness of God's presence.

3

The nuns follow in the footsteps of those whom, in times past, God called into the desert to engage in spiritual warfare. As citizens of heaven, they become strangers to worldly behaviour. Living in solitude and silence, they aspire to that interior quiet in which wisdom is born. They practise self-denial in order to follow Christ. Through humility and obedience, they struggle against pride and the rebellion

of sin. In simplicity and labour, they seek the blessedness promised to the poor. By generous hospitality, they share with their fellow-pilgrims the peace and hope which Christ has freely given.

4

The monastery is an expression of the mystery of the Church, where nothing is preferred to the praise of the Father's glory. Every effort is made to ensure that the common life in its entirety conforms to the Gospel, which is the supreme law. In this way, the community will not be lacking in any spiritual gift. The nuns strive to remain in harmony with all the people of God and share their active desire for the unity of all Christians. By fidelity to their monastic way of life, which has its own hidden mode of apostolic fruitfulness, nuns perform a service for God's people and the whole human race. Each community of the Order and all the nuns are dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Symbol of the Church in the order of faith, love and perfect union with Christ.

5

The organisation of the monastery is directed to bringing the nuns 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 sisters prefer nothing whatever to Christ will they be happy to persevere in a life that is ordinary, obscure and laborious. And may he lead them all together into eternal life.

C. 4 The Character of the Order

1

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

2

This communion assumes juridical form in the government of the Order according to the Charter of Charity as interpreted by the norms of these Constitutions. The abbots and abbesses assembled for the General Chapter are active in their common solicitude for all the communities of the Order in matters both human and divine. This pastoral care has been exercised traditionally through the institutions of filiation,

visitation and the General Chapter. In addition, other organs of dialogue, collaboration and mutual service have developed, by which communion is fostered in the entire Order and the ideals of the founders are effectively adapted to modern conditions.

3

Following the Charter of Charity, Cistercians of the Strict Observance live by one charity, one rule and similar observances. It is for each community, in dialogue with other communities, to find new ways in which the patrimony of the Order can be expressed dynamically in its own culture according to particular circumstances, observing always the norms established by the General Chapter.

Part Two THE MONASTERY: HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

C. 5 The Local Community

Gathered by the call of God the sisters constitute a monastic church or community that is the fundamental unit of the Order.

ST 5.A

a.

The traditional form of the community is to be autonomous as an abbey. To be declared as such, it must fulfil the conditions defined by the Statute on Foundations (n. 15), in such a way that the monastic observance can be lived in its entirety, according to the Rule of Saint Benedict, the Cistercian tradition and the present Constitutions ;

b.

If these conditions are not fulfilled but the community has the necessary criteria to be autonomous, according to the Statute on Foundations (n. 15) it is a major priory or a simple priory according to the case. The simple priory continues to have the right to assistance from the founding house in both personnel and temporal goods.

c.

A foundation is part of the founding house and is not autonomous. Its superior remains that of the founding house. The conditions for attaining autonomy, like those of moving from a simple priory to the rank of a major priory or from a major priory to that of an abbey, are defined by the Statute on Foundations (cf. n.15).

ST 5.B

Unless stated otherwise, what is said in the following constitutions regarding the local community is equally valid for an abbey, a major priory, a simple priory, and a foundation.

C. 6 Composition of the Community

The community is composed of sisters who have made profession in it, novices and others who have been admitted into the community on probation, and oblates.

ST 6.A

Among the professed mentioned above are included:

a.

the lay sisters who made their profession before the Decree of Unification in 1965;

b.

extern sisters.

ST 6.B

Oblates participate in the life of the community according to the norms of the Statute on Oblates promulgated by the General Chapter, and according to local customs.

ST 6.C

Sisters who come from other monasteries of the Order to stay for a long period participate in the life of the community except for what concerns the conventual chapter.

ST 6.D

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Each community may define, with prudence, before the civil law of its country, its status and its membership.

CHAPTER ONE: The Cistercian Way of Life

C. 7 Regular Observance

In the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance the way of life is consecration to God expressed in union among the sisters, solitude and silence, in prayer, work and a disciplined life. By a hidden apostolic fruitfulness, it causes the mystical body of Christ to grow.

C. 8 Monastic Consecration

By monastic profession, a sister is consecrated to God and joined with the monastic community that receives her. At this time, the consecration received in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation is renewed and given vitality. The sister binds herself in faithful stability to a sincere conversion of life through ready obedience until death.

C. 9 Stability of Place

By the vow of stability within her community, a sister obliges herself to make constant use of the means of the spiritual craft there, trusting in the providence of God who has called her to this place and to this group of sisters.

C. 10 Conversatio Morum

By the vow of *conversatio morum* or fidelity to monastic life a sister who, in the simplicity of her heart, seeks God by the following of the Gospel, binds herself to the practice of Cistercian discipline. She retains nothing at all for herself, not even authority over her own body. She renounces the capacity of acquiring and possessing goods for herself. For the sake of the Kingdom of heaven, she makes profession of perfect continence and celibacy.

C. 11 Obedience

By the vow of obedience, a sister desiring to live under a rule and an abbess promises to fulfil all that lawful superiors command in accordance with these Constitutions. In thus renouncing her own will she follows the example of Christ who was obedient until death, and commits herself to the school of the Lord's service.

C. 12 Monastic Clothing

The characteristic Cistercian habit is the white cowl. Given at solemn profession it is a sign both of a nun's consecration and of the unity of the whole Order.

ST 12.A

The clothing, which traditionally includes a white robe, a black scapular and veil with a leather belt, can be adapted to local conditions.

ST 12.B

Temporarily professed and novices wear a white veil, and a cloak instead of the cowl. The novices' scapular is white.

C. 13 Coenobitic Life

1

A nun follows the common life in her monastery. The law of the common life is this: unity of spirit in the charity of God, the bond of peace in the mutual and unbroken love of all the sisters, communion in sharing all goods.

ST 13.1.A

The common table both expresses and strengthens the unity of the sisters. For this reason, all have their meals together unless they are excused for a reasonable cause.

ST 13.1.B

If there are private rooms, their use is determined by the abbess according to local usage. They should not be prejudicial to the common life and always be modest in conformity with Cistercian simplicity.

The abbess is permitted to visit them.

2

The sisters are to bear their infirmities with great patience and to serve one another humbly. They are to support by prayer and by other appropriate means those who are weak, troubled or unwell. The sick, the aged and the dying are to be surrounded with a care that is attentive and affectionate.

ST 13.2.A

The abbess is to be very careful that the sick and the aged are looked after with diligence and love, as if it were Christ himself. If possible, the sisters will assemble for the anointing of the sick.

3

A nun is not allowed to leave the monastery without the permission of the abbess. When there is question of prolonged absence, the abbess, with the consent of her council and or a just cause, and after consulting the Father Immediate, can permit a nun to live outside the monastery, but not for longer than a year, except for the treatment of illness, for study, or, in extraordinary cases, to lead an eremitical life. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 85).

ST 13.3.A

The abbess having listened to her council, may permit a sister to lead an eremitical life, the hermit remains under the authority of the abbess. If she lives away from the monastery property, the consent of the council and the consent of the bishop of the place where she will reside are necessary. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 87).

C. 14 Unity and Pluriformity of the Community

1

The community forms a single body in Christ. Each sister is to contribute to the up building of relations within the community especially by sharing with others the spiritual gifts she has received by God's manifold grace.

2

The equilibrium between the Work of God, prayer, lectio divina and manual work, essential to the Cistercian way of life, is determined according to the character, training and age of each. The abbess is to discern and moderate everything so that each sister may grow in the Cistercian vocation.

C. 15 Reconciliation with God and with the Sisters

1

The preservation of unity among the sisters depends on a sincere and mutual effort towards reconciliation. To eliminate thorns of scandal from the community, the sisters are not to prolong the time of anger but, when there is a dispute, to make peace as soon as possible.

ST 15.1.A

In the spirit of the Gospel, the sisters are to help one another by humble and discreet correction. The community is to establish suitable means of doing this.

2

The sisters are to confess their sins each day in prayer to God and frequently approach the sacrament of reconciliation. The abbess is to facilitate access to the sacrament.

ST 15.2.A

The abbess can make provision for a communal celebration of penance as appropriate.

C. 16 Active Participation of the Sisters

1

The sisters have the right and duty to participate fully in the common life, although this participation can be exercised in different ways.

2

All the sisters are called to mutual care, mutual co-operation and mutual obedience. All are to be concerned for the spiritual state of the community, knowing that the good zeal of one is a help to all, whereas bitter zeal is a hindrance.

3

The abess is to govern the sisters with reverence for the human person created in God's image, promoting their voluntary obedience and appropriately fostering their gifts of zeal and intelligence. The abess should lead the sisters so that they cooperate with an active and responsible obedience both in carrying out their duties and in taking the initiative, all the while maintaining her authority to decide and give orders about what is to be done.

4

The abess and the officials are to communicate to the sisters what concerns all and readily accept their desires and suggestions.

C. 17 Liturgical Life

1

The spiritual character of the community is especially evident in the celebration of the liturgy. The liturgy strengthens and increases both the inner sense of the monastic vocation and communion among the sisters. Each day in the liturgy God's Word is heard. A sacrifice of praise is offered to God the Father, there is a sharing in the mystery of Christ and the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification is accomplished.

ST 17.1.A

The liturgy is celebrated in the rite to which the community belongs. According to the proper spirit of each rite, this is done in conformity with the Cistercian tradition, following the norms approved by the General Chapter and confirmed, where necessary, by the Holy See.

2

The changing seasons of the liturgical year have great power to nourish and enrich the contemplative life of the sisters. They provide a solid basis for the preaching and teaching given to the community.

3

Sunday is dedicated to the mystery of the Resurrection. It is a day of joy and freedom from work so that the sisters may come together to share the Eucharist more fully and intensely, and zealously apply themselves to lectio divina and prayer.

C. 18 Celebration of the Eucharist

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole Christian life and of the sisters' communion in Christ. For this reason, it is to be celebrated by the whole community every day. It is by sharing in the paschal mystery of the Lord that the sisters are united more closely with one another and with the whole Church.

C. 19 Work of God

1

Nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God. Accordingly, the Liturgy of the Hours is to be celebrated by the community which, in union with the Church, fulfils Christ's priestly function offering to God a sacrifice of praise and making intercession for the salvation of the whole world.

ST 19.1.A

Because the Work of God is a means of sanctifying the day, [each Hour] is to be celebrated at the time assigned to it, determined according to Cistercian tradition and local custom.

2

The Liturgy of the Hours is a school of continual prayer and an outstanding component of the monastic way of life. It is the abbess's duty to promote zeal for the Work of God among the sisters.

ST 19.2.A

The celebration is to be such that it expresses the spirit of the community and leads the sisters to full participation.

ST 19.2.B

In particular cases the abbess may determine the measure in which an individual nun participates in the Liturgy of the Hours in choir. This is done only after careful examination of the question with the sister herself and having regard to the needs of the community.

ST 19.2.C

In exceptional cases the Abbot General may, with the consent of his council, dispense a community from one or two Little Hours.

3

A sister who was absent from the choral celebration is to acquit herself of the Hours according to the instructions of the abbess.

C. 20 Mindfulness of God

By constantly cultivating mindfulness of God, the sisters extend the Work of God throughout the whole day. The abbess is to see to it that each one has ample leisure to give herself to lectio and prayer. Furthermore, all should take care that the monastic environment is favourable to silence and quiet.

ST 20.A

Each year all the sisters are to make a retreat of at least six days.

C. 21 *Lectio Divina*

Careful lectio divina greatly strengthens the sisters' faith in God. This excellent monastic practice, by which God's Word is heard and pondered, is a source of prayer and a school of contemplation, where the nun speaks heart to heart with God. For this reason, the sisters are to devote a fitting amount of time each day to such reading.

ST 21.A

Tradition greatly values lectio divina done in common. This is especially recommended during Lent.

ST 21.B

The scriptorium is the traditional place of lectio divina.

C. 22 Heartfelt Prayer

In a spirit of compunction and intense desire, nuns devote themselves frequently to prayer. While dwelling on earth, their minds are occupied with heavenly things, desiring eternal life with all spiritual longing. May the Blessed Virgin Mary who was taken up into heaven, the life and sweetness and hope of all earthly pilgrims, never be far from their hearts.

ST 22.A

The abbess is to make prudent provision for the time of daily *lectio* and prayer for the sisters.

C. 23 Night Vigils

In the sober anticipation of the coming of Christ, following the tradition of the Order, the hours before sunrise are appropriately consecrated to God by the celebration of Vigils, by prayer and meditation.

ST 23.A

The sisters' hour of rising is so determined that Vigils maintains its nocturnal character.

C. 24 Silence

Silence is counted among the principal monastic values of the Order. It assures solitude for the nun in community. It fosters mindfulness of God and fraternal communion. It opens the mind to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and favours attentiveness of heart and solitary prayer to God. Therefore, at all times but especially during the hours of night, the sisters are to be zealous for silence, which is the guardian both of speech and of thought.

ST 24.A

According to the tradition of the Order, silence is to be observed especially in the regular places such as the church, the cloisters, the refectory and the scriptorium. There is no recreation in communities of the Order.

ST 24.B

Other norms governing the use of speech, particularly in the chapter room and the private rooms, are established by each community and verified at the Regular Visitation.

C. 25 Monastic Asceticism

The quietness of mind cultivated by silence is also the fruit of purity and simplicity of heart. For this reason the nun, in a spirit of joyful penitence, is to embrace willingly those means practised in the Order: work, the hidden life and voluntary poverty, together with vigils and fasting.

C. 26 Work

Work, especially manual work, has always enjoyed special esteem in the Cistercian tradition since it gives the nuns the opportunity of sharing in the divine work of creation and restoration, and of following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. This hard and redeeming work is a means of providing a livelihood for the sisters and for other people, especially the poor. It expresses solidarity with all workers. Moreover, work is an occasion for a fruitful asceticism that fosters personal development and maturity. It promotes health of mind and body and contributes greatly to the unity of the whole community.

ST 26.A

The duration of work is to be determined according to the demands of the monastic way of life and local needs. The sisters are to be engaged in work for at least four and usually not more than six hours a day.

C. 27 Simplicity

Following the example of the Fathers of Cîteaux, who sought an uncomplicated relationship with the God of simplicity, the sisters' lifestyle is to be plain and frugal. Everything in the household of God should be appropriate to 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.

ST 27.A

The monastery should be conspicuous for its simple and pleasant appearance. The sisters are to be concerned about conservation of the environment and to manage natural resources prudently.

C. 28 Fasting

Monastic fasting expresses the humble condition of a creature before God. It arouses spiritual desire in the heart of a nun and lets her share in Christ's pity for the hungry. The sisters are to observe the Lenten and paschal fasts and also other fasts according to the customs of the Order and the directives of the abbess.

ST 28.A

For the main meal on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, the sisters are to be content with bread and water or something similar.

ST 28.B

In accordance with tradition, the sisters abstain from meat at all times, except in case of necessity.

ST 28.C

If a sister, moved by God's grace, wishes to undertake additional fasting, she is to propose this to her abbess.

C. 29 Separation from the world: monastic cloister (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 91).

1

Those who prefer nothing to the love of Christ make themselves strangers to the actions of the world. In the monastic tradition, this involves a certain degree of physical separation. For this reason, the monastery is built so that it completely safeguards the quiet and solitude of those who reside there.

2

The buildings where the nuns live and work are strictly reserved to them. Nevertheless, the faithful may have access to the church, especially during the celebration of the liturgy. It is for the abbess, with the consent of her council, to fix the limits of strict enclosure. It belongs to the abbess to give permission when, for an appropriate cause, outsiders come in or nuns go out. The necessary discretion is to be maintained in the use of the means of social communication. These can be permitted only if the special character of the contemplative life is safeguarded. The nuns, moreover, are to be given a careful formation in the discipline of separation from the world. The application of these principles is the responsibility not only of the abbess but of all the sisters. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 93).

3

It is for the abbess, with the consent of her council, to fix the limits of strict enclosure.

4

Regarding the exits of the sisters and the entry of outsiders into the enclosure, the norms of universal law are followed.

5

The application of the norms regarding enclosure are the responsibility of the abbess. All the sisters, however, are to share her concern for observing these norms. For this reason, they are to be given a careful formation in this discipline of separation from the world.

6

The Father Immediate, according to C. 74-75, or the Ordinary of the Place is to watch over the observance of enclosure, which is to be reviewed during the regular visitation.

7

The abbess is to see that the entry of outsiders does not damage the regular life. Sisters are not permitted to initiate contacts with outsiders without the consent of the abbess.

8

The norms of universal law are followed in the use of the means of social communication.

C. 30 Reception of Guests

Every monastery is to continue the tradition of welcoming guests and the needy as Christ according to local circumstances. Let those whom the providence of God has led to the monastery be received by the sisters with reverence and kindness but without allowing this service to impair monastic quiet.

ST 30.A

The community is to render assistance to those who come to the monastery looking for deeper prayer.

ST 30.B

In God's providence, monasteries are holy places not only for those who are of the household of the faith but for all persons of good will.

ST 30.C

It is for the community to make arrangements about the manner in which

guests are to take part in the Work of God.

ST 30.D

The relatives of the sisters are to be received with the utmost kindness in a way consonant with the monastic vocation.

C30 bis: Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Adults

Each community and each member of the Order, attentive to the respect and dignity of each person, in particular minors and vulnerable persons, is vigilant in the prevention of all forms of abuse of power, of conscience and of sexual aggression.

ST 30 bis A

A community protocol will be drawn up with the various church bodies. They will receive training on this subject.

ST 30 bis B

The protocol and its application are to be reviewed during the Regular Visitation.

C. 31 Apostolate of Nuns

Fidelity to the monastic way of life is closely related to zeal for the Kingdom of God and for the salvation of the whole human race. Nuns bear this apostolic concern in their hearts. It is the contemplative life itself that is their way of participating in the mission of Christ and his Church and of being part of the local church. This is why they cannot be called upon to render assistance in the various pastoral ministries or in any external activity, no matter how urgent the needs of the active apostolate.

ST 31.A

When pastoral assistance is sought from the monastery in particular circumstances the abbess, if she judges it expedient to agree to the

request, should entrust this ministry to a sister who is competent and willing to undertake the task. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 95).

C. 32 Relationship with the Church Hierarchy

The nuns are to foster good relations with their local church and its bishop, to whom they render devoted submission and respect. They are humbly to obey the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ as their supreme Pastor, even by virtue of the vow of obedience.

CHAPTER TWO: The Service of Authority

C. 33 The Ministry of the Abbess

1

The abbess is elected from among the sisters. She receives her power from God through the ministry of the Church. She is believed to act in the monastery as Christ's representative. She ministers to the whole community as a mother in both spiritual and temporal matters.

2

The abbess exercises pastoral care of the flock entrusted to her. She shows to all the goodness and kindness of Christ, striving to be loved rather than feared. She adapts herself to the character of each, encouraging the sisters to run with a cheerful and happy disposition along the way God has called them. She is to pray constantly to God for each.

3

As the teacher in Christ's school, the abbess is the guardian of her disciples' fidelity to monastic tradition. She sustains them with the food of God's Word and by her example. She does not neglect to renew herself with Sacred Scripture and the wisdom of the Fathers. She makes herself available to all the nuns for conversation.

ST 33.3.A

On appointed days, the abbess is to give a conference to the community and she is to explain the Rule of Saint Benedict frequently.

ST 33.3.B

The sisters should approach the abbess with confidence and be able to reveal to her freely and spontaneously the thoughts arising in their hearts. Nevertheless, the abbess should in no way induce them to manifest their consciences to her.

4

As a skilled physician, the abbess seeks to cure both her own wounds and those of others, and to bring healing in the name of Christ to those hurt by sin. She is to exercise great solicitude and to use all her skill and energy so as not to lose any of the sisters entrusted to her. When the situation warrants it, she calls on the help of spiritual seniors. Above all, she relies on the prayer of all to cure the infirmities of the sisters.

C. 34 The Abbess's Power of Governance

1

The abbess is a major superior according to the norms of law. In the spirit of the Rule of St Benedict, she enjoys full power in the monastery in both temporal and spiritual matters.

ST 34.1.A

The superior of a monastery that is still part of the mother-house has delegated power. This she may sub-delegate.

ST 34.1.B

The superior *ad nutum* mentioned in ST 39.2.B has proper ordinary power as a major superior of an autonomous community.

2

Everything said about an abbess applies equally to the prioress of a priory and to a superior *ad nutum* unless explicit exception is made.

C. 34 bis - Appointment of a Monastic Commissary

1. When a community is experiencing an especially grave situation, the General Chapter may suspend the exercise of its autonomy and authorize the Father Immediate to appoint a monastic commissary in accordance

with par. 10 of the Statute on Fragile Communities and on the Suppression of a Monastery.

2. The monastic commissary, who may be from within or without the Order, has proper ordinary power as a major Superior of an autonomous monastery, as defined in the letter of appointment. The commissary represents the community at the General Chapter, with voting 41 rights unless he or she is not a member of the Order.

3. The situation of the community will be examined at each following General Chapter and the autonomy of the house will be restored when the situation has sufficiently improved. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 13).

C. 35 Sisters in Charge of Offices

The abbess selects suitable assistants for the various offices of the monastery. With the advice of God-fearing sisters, she appoints as prioress, mistress of novices, cellarer and the other officials those with whom she can safely share her burdens. The sisters thus chosen are to fulfil their offices cheerfully and worthily, keeping in all things the commandments of God and the instructions of the abbess, so that no one may be disturbed or saddened in the household of God.

C. 36 Consulting the Sisters

1

To deal with matters affecting the welfare of the community the abbess, mindful of the admonitions of the Rule, willingly consults the sisters, by means of either the conventual chapter or her private council. The sisters are to approach the consultation in a spirit of docility to the voice of the Holy Spirit and to offer their opinions humbly and forthrightly. Except in those cases where the law provides otherwise, it pertains to the abbess, having listened to the sisters attentively, to make the final decision. In confidential matters, all are to be careful to maintain secrecy.

2

Voting is to be secret in all elections, in other cases prescribed by law, and when one of those present requests it. In the counting of votes, null votes and abstentions are not included. When the consent of the abbess's council or the conventual chapter is required for the performance of an action the abbess, to act validly, must obtain this consent either by an absolute majority or by a two-thirds majority, as

the case may be. Having obtained the consent, the abbess may perform the action, but she is not bound to. If the consent is denied, she cannot act validly. In the same way, when it is prescribed that the abbess must consult her council or the conventual chapter, that consultation is required for the validity of the action.

ST 36.2.A

Votes are not taken unless the matter to be voted upon has been clearly presented and some interval allowed for reflection and prayer.

ST 36.2.A bis

When consent is required, it means a vote by absolute majority, unless a two-thirds majority vote is explicitly requested.

ST 36.2.B

Whenever consent is required, after the votes have been cast, the abbess and two witnesses are to count the votes and announce the result. The result is to be entered in the book of the acts of the chapter or council and signed by the abbess and the two witnesses.

3

In seeking advice or consent, the abbess or superior may vote, but she is not bound to. Those absent cannot vote by letter or by proxy. The exclaustrated lack both active and passive voice.

ST 36.3.A

A sister absent from her monastery for the service of the Order, health or studies or, in accordance with C. 13.4, to lead the eremitical life, keeps her active and passive voice as a member of the conventual chapter. However, conscious of her responsibilities, she should be prudent and judicious in using or not using this right.

ST 36.3.B

Except in the cases foreseen in ST 36.3.A, a sister's active voice is suspended if she is absent from the monastery for more than six months, even legitimately.

a.

If this sister wishes to return definitively to her community the

abbess, with the consent of her council and taking into consideration the duration of the absence, can require that the sister live in the community for a certain period before resuming the exercise of her voting rights.

b.

Having consulted the conventual chapter the president of an election can restore voting rights to a sister who is resident in the monastery but who has lost them by reason of a previous absence.

C. 37 Conventual Chapter

The conventual chapter is composed of sisters in solemn vows who have stability in the community together with the superior. All enjoy active and passive voice in its deliberations and acts unless otherwise noted in the Constitutions.

ST 37.A

The abbess needs the consent of the conventual chapter with a two-thirds majority in the following cases:

a.

to admit a nun of the Order to stability in the community, without prejudice to the exception mentioned in C. 60.

b.

to implement the plan for a new foundation.

c.

to raise a foundation into an autonomous monastery.

ST 37.A bis

The titular prioress also needs the consent of the conventual chapter with a two-thirds vote to begin the process for her priory to move to a superior rank.

ST 37.B

The abbess needs the consent of the conventual chapter with an absolute majority in the following cases:

a.

to admit a novice to temporary profession.

a. bis

to allow a sister coming from another community to renew her temporary vows.

b.

to admit a sister to solemn profession.

c.

to proceed validly in the administrative matters treated in C. 44.

d.

to allow a change of filiation. (cf. ST 73.C) **e.**

to enable a sister in a simple priory to take part in an election if she has been simply professed for at least three years.

f. to begin the process of a new foundation.

ST 37.C

The Conventual Chapter must give its consent for a Father Immediate to inquire into the capacity of an abbess and to verify it, and to request the Abbot General to suspend the abbess from the exercise of her office, in the circumstances foreseen on ST 40.B.bis.

C. 38 The Abbess's Council

The council, composed of some of the members of the conventual chapter, helps the abbess in governing the community.

ST 38.A

The abbess's council is composed of at least three sisters of whom one or more may be elected by the conventual chapter.

ST 38.B

The abbess needs the consent of the council with an absolute majority in the following cases:

a.

to readmit a sister who has lawfully left at the end of the novitiate or after making profession without the obligation of repeating the novitiate, and to determine the form and duration of the new period of probation.

b.

to determine, in accordance with ST 36.3.B.a, the length of time a sister who returns to the community is to live there before she can resume the exercise of her voting rights.

c.

to fix the limits of strict enclosure.

d.

to ask the Abbot General to oblige a particular sister to transfer temporarily to another monastery for the sake of peace according to ST 60.B.

e.

to ask the Abbot General to petition the Holy See to impose an exclaustation on a particular sister.

ST 38.C

The abbess must first hear her council in the following cases:

a.

to admit a postulant into the novitiate.

b.

to name the superior of a new foundation.

c.

to choose the members of a new foundation.

d.

to give permission to a nun to follow an eremitical vocation.

e.

to exclude a sister in temporary vows from making further profession.

f.

to have recourse to the Abbot General to seek an indult of dispensation from solemn vows.

g.

to begin the process of dismissal of a nun with solemn or temporary vows.

h. to prolong the period of postulancy beyond twelve months, for a period up to a maximum of two years postulancy. (Cf. 46.1.B)

ST 38.D

The abbess acts with her council in making the declaration of fact that juridically establishes the dismissal of a nun in accordance with can. 694.2 CIC.

C. 39 The Election of an Abbess

1

When a monastery is without an abbess, the governance is assumed by the prioress. She, however is to make no change or to take any important decision except in a grave and urgent situation. In that case she is strictly bound to listen to the conventual chapter and, if possible, the Father Immediate.

2

An abbess is elected by the conventual chapter, acting collegially together with the extern sisters who have made perpetual vows. The Father Immediate, who presides at the election by right, or his delegate is to promote among the sisters a spirit of faith and discernment so that they may set a worthy administrator over the household of God.

ST 39.2.A

In the election that takes place when a foundation has become an autonomous monastery, and in those held until the community attains the status of a major priory, with the consent of the conventual

chapter, the temporarily professed who have at least three years of profession may vote.

ST 39.2.B

If the welfare of the community requires it, the Father Immediate may postpone an election beyond three months and propose that the community pass to the regime of a superior ad nutum. Before deciding this he should first consult the conventual chapter and obtain the consent of the Abbot General. Before choosing the person to be superior *ad nutum* he consults the sisters again. If such a regime, which is exceptional, lasts more than three years, at the time of the General Chapter, the Father Immediate, after having first consulted the community, submits the case to the General Chapter.

ST 39.2.C

When the number of professed members in solemn vows goes down to five, the community loses the right to elect its superior. In this case, the Father Immediate informs the Abbot General, and proceeds to the appointment of a superior ad nutum or follows the Statute on the accompaniment of fragile communities, according to circumstances. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 96).

3

To be elected abbess a nun must be solemnly professed in the Order for at least seven years.

ST 39.3.A

The one who is elected should be at least 35 years old and less than 75 years of age (*Decision of the 2014 General Chapter, vote 48*).

ST 39.3.A bis

A nun having attained 75 years of age can neither be elected nor postulated. (Gen Chap. 2017, vote 12).

ST 39.3.B

Any sister who has made profession in the Order can be elected abbess but neither the abbess nor the titular prioress nor the superior *ad*

nutum of any other monastery nor, unless she is a member of the community, a nun councillor of the Abbot General can be elected.

4

An abness and a prioress of a major priory are elected for an unrestricted term. Nevertheless, they can be elected for a fixed term according to the conditions laid down by the General Chapter. The prioress of a simple priory is elected in accordance with the norms of the Statute on Foundations.

ST 39.4.A

When an absolute majority of the conventual chapter chooses, the chapter can elect an abness for a fixed term of six years.

ST 39.4.B

Before an election, the president is obliged to inquire of the conventual chapter whether it desires to elect an abness for a term of six years.

ST 39.4.C

An abness elected for a fixed term can always be re-elected.

ST 39.4.D

The election is to be held not less than fifteen days after the vacancy and, unless there is a just impediment, within three months. In the case of an abbatial mandate for a fixed term, the election is held immediately the mandate ends.

5

An absolute majority of votes is required for an election, not counting null votes and abstentions. If a majority is not obtained on the first or second ballot, further ballots are to be held until it is achieved. For the good of the community, however, and with the consent of the conventual chapter, the president of the election has the faculty of limiting the number of ballots. A two-thirds majority is required in cases of postulation.

6

The election is confirmed by the Abbot General. Each re-election requires a new confirmation by the Abbot General.

ST 39.6.A

When confirmation has been received the one elected is installed. She receives the abbatial blessing at a convenient time.

ST 39.6.B

The acts of the election are to be sent to the Abbot General as soon as possible.

ST 39.6.C

The ritual of the Order is followed for the election, installation and blessing of an abbess.

C. 40 Resignation from Office

For a just cause, an abbess may submit her resignation to the General Chapter. When the General Chapter is not in session, she presents her resignation to the Abbot General who acts as vicar of the Chapter in this matter.

ST 40.A

An Abbess is to tender her resignation of her own accord when she reaches 75 years of age. This resignation is always tendered to the Abbot General who passes it to the General Chapter only in exceptional circumstances. (Gen. Chap. 2022/2, vote 27)

ST 40.A.bis

The abbess whose resignation at age 75 has not been accepted will present it again to the Abbot General six months before the next General Chapter. In exceptional circumstances he may pass the matter to the General Chapter. (Gen. Chap. 2022/2, vote 17)

ST 40.A.ter

The abbess whose resignation at age 75 had not been accepted will present it again at the next General Chapter (*Decision of the 2014 General Chapter, vote 50*).

ST 40.B

When an abbess offers her resignation, the Father Immediate is always consulted. Careful inquiry is made, if the matter demands it, into the

views of the community. Neighbouring superiors also are to be consulted, if appropriate.

ST 40.B.bis

If because of any infirmity, it is impossible either physically or psychologically for an abbess to exercise her pastoral function, it is for the Father Immediate, having consulted experts and obtained the consent of the conventual chapter, to investigate and verify the matter. If the impossibility is evident, he immediately informs the Abbot General, who with the consent of his council, can remove the abbess from office.

If the reason is different, such as imprisonment, banishment or exile (cf. Can 412 CIC), it is for the Father Immediate, with the consent of the conventual chapter, to ask the Abbot General to suspend, with the consent of his council, the abbess from the exercise of her office. The Father Immediate then appoints a superior ad nutum or asks the conventual chapter to choose a temporary superior.

ST 40.C

A nun who left the community of her profession to exercise the abbatial ministry in another community of the Order can, within a year of resigning from office or completing her mandate, resume her first stability.

CHAPTER THREE: Temporal Administration

C. 41 Temporal Goods of the Monastery

1

Fidelity to Cistercian traditions requires that the community's regular income be mainly the fruit of its own work. Each sister has the right and duty of serving the community by doing her share of its work according to her abilities and within the economic structure of the monastery.

2

It is the abbess's responsibility as the administrator of God's

household to ensure that the community's possession and use of temporal goods is such that provision is made for human needs and, at the same time, the law of the Gospel is obeyed. The community is to remain faithful to the Church's teaching on social justice, and in its business dealings to withhold support from all structures of oppression.

3

Following a long tradition, some part of the monastery's income is to be allocated for the needs of the Church and the support of those in want, as far as this is possible.

C. 42 Juridical Status

By law, the Order and each of its monasteries are juridical persons, capable of acquiring, possessing, administering and alienating temporal goods.

C. 43 Ordinary Administration

1

The abbess appoints a cellarer who is responsible for the ordinary administration of the monastery's temporal affairs. Normally, apart from the abbess, only she may act validly in the name of the monastery when incurring expenses and in legal matters. The abbess may, however, entrust some business to other sisters, specifying the limits of their authority and their responsibility in financial dealings. All these officials are accountable to the abbess.

ST 43.1.A

The monastery is to keep accounts using a system that is locally acceptable. At regular intervals, the accounts are to be submitted to the judgement of a professional.

ST 43.1.B

The consent of the abbess is required for investing money. Investments are to be managed prudently. Any speculation is forbidden.

ST 43.1.C

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.

2

The monastery is to have a finance committee, with which the abess regularly reviews the economic situation of the monastery.

3

Temporal administration is to be examined during the regular visitation.

ST 43.3.A

The account books of the monastery are to be shown to the visitor who, before he signs them, either examines them himself or gives them to someone competent. If the visitor perceives that the monastery is in a dangerous economic situation, he notifies the Abbot General and also, if he is a delegated visitor, the Father Immediate.

C. 44 Extraordinary Administration

1

Alienation or any transaction by which the patrimonial condition of the monastery could be adversely affected is considered an act of extraordinary administration. Special permissions are required to perform such acts validly when the matter involves sums in excess of what is fixed by law.

2

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 artistic or historical reasons.

ST 44.2.A

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

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.B

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.

3

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 in paragraph 2.

ST 44.3.A

The consent of the conventual chapter and of 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.B

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.

CHAPTER FOUR: Formation

C. 45 The Process of Formation

1

Formation to Cistercian life has for its purpose the restoration of the divine likeness in the sisters through the working of the Holy Spirit. Aided by the maternal care of the Mother of God, the sisters so advance in the monastic way of life that they progressively attain the full measure of the stature of Christ.

2

Solitude, continual prayer, humble work, voluntary poverty, celibate chastity, and obedience are not human skills, and cannot be learned

from human beings. Nevertheless, the teaching of the abbess, the experience and wisdom of the seniors, and the constant help and example of the community are of great value to the sisters as they pass through the different situations and changes of the spiritual journey.

3

The role of the community in the process of formation is to help each sister to assimilate the essential elements of the Cistercian way of life. Those in formation, conscious of their responsibility, should actively collaborate with their formators so that they may faithfully be responsive to the grace of their divine vocation. This formation, which begins at entry and continues throughout life, has many aspects: human, doctrinal and spiritual. It is to be regarded as an important part of the pastoral responsibility of the abbess.

ST 45.3.A

A *Ratio Institutionis* is to be promulgated for the Order and adapted in all the regions according to the different circumstances of each monastery.

ST 45.3.B

Monasteries are to offer generous mutual assistance in making this formation a reality.

C. 46 Admission of Sisters

1

Newcomers to monastic life are to be received kindly, but not easily admitted into the community. By frequent visits to the monastery, they become acquainted with the members of the community. They are told about all the hard and difficult things that are to be found on the way to God. They are to be received as sisters only if they manifest the spiritual attitude needed for monastic life and give evidence of adequate maturity and health. When these qualities are present their desire to embrace this life can be recognised as an indication of God's call and of their intention of truly seeking God with all their heart.

ST 46.1.A

The aspirancy is the stage when the candidate acquires initial knowledge of the community and the community of the candidate, through

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

a series of contacts and times of community experience. The aspirancy is of a minimum duration of twelve months but not more than two years. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 98).

ST 46.1.B

Postulants are initiated into the spiritual disciplines of the Order in a manner appropriate to them at this stage. The postulancy has a minimum duration of twelve months which can be prolonged according to need by the abbess, having heard her council, but must not exceed two years. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 100).

2

A religious in perpetual vows coming from another institute to enter our Order needs the permission of her Supreme Moderator and of the Abbot General, each with the consent of their council. She does not make temporary profession, but can be admitted to solemn profession after at least three years of probation. The norms of universal law are to be observed if she is not admitted. Universal law also defines her canonical status during the time of probation (*canon 685, § 1*).

ST 46.2.A

The sister first obtains a leave of absence from her institute and lives in the community for at least six months. After that, when the abbess has received the authorisations necessary for the transfer she admits the sister to probation for three years, at least two of which are to be spent with those in formation. The time of probation can be prolonged by the abbess for another three years.

ST 46.2.B

For the admission of a member of a secular Institute or Society of Apostolic life, permission of the Holy See is required, and its instructions are to be followed (Can. 684. 5).

C. 47 The Mistress of Novices

One who is skilled in winning souls is to be chosen as mistress of novices. She is to be prudent, well formed in the monastic way of life, effective in communicating the wisdom of the Fathers to the juniors and capable of giving them direction.

ST 47.A

The mistress of novices is to be at least 30 years old and solemnly

professed in the Order for at least two years.

C. 48 Admission to the Novitiate

The abbess is to observe all that is required by law for admission into the novitiate (*canons 641-645*).

ST 48.A

The abbess is to consult her council before admitting postulants into the novitiate.

ST 48.B

The rite of admission is given in the ritual of the Order.

C. 49 Formation of Novices

1

The mistress of novices should lead newcomers to share in the life of the monastic family. She is to instruct them in monastic observances, especially the Work of God, *lectio divina*, prayer and manual work. During the novitiate they are not given offices or work that could impede their formation. All the sisters are to support the novices by prayer and example and encourage them to persevere.

ST 49.1.A

To facilitate the formation of the novices it is recommended that a special part of the monastery be assigned to them.

ST 49.1.B

Between the abbess and the mistress of novices there should exist a sincere and profound unity of spirit, heart and orientation. This is an indispensable condition for a genuine formation of the novices. The abbess and the mistress of novices together determine novitiate policy. This is explained to the community by the abbess in order to obtain its co-operation.

2

Even in the school of love obstacles to full affective maturity can occur. It is of great importance that the community provide for the

sisters such help as they need to overcome these obstacles. The mistress of novices should constantly discern their characters and their progress and help them to grow in self-knowledge. Where appropriate, she should make use of professionals in this field. The formation of novices should be entrusted only to wise and suitable sisters.

ST 50.A

The Abbot General, having consulted his council, can dispense from the second year of novitiate.

C. 50 Duration of the Novitiate

The novitiate lasts two years. For pastoral reasons the abbess can prolong it for a further six months. For the novitiate to be valid, a novice must spend twelve months in the novitiate. For absences from the monastery during this time can. 649.1 CIC is applicable. First profession can be anticipated but not by more than fifteen days (*canon 649, § 2*).

C. 51 Admission to Temporary Profession

During the novitiate, care is taken to discern whether the novice has grown spiritually through her participation in monastic life. If she truly seeks God, is zealous for the Work of God, obedience and humiliations and is suited to living correctly in solitude and silence the community relationships that constitute Cistercian life then at the end of the novitiate she is to be admitted by the abbess to temporary profession. This is done at her free request and with the consent of the conventual chapter.

C. 52 Temporary Profession

1

By temporary vows, sisters undertake the obligations proper to monastic life either for a period of three years, or for three periods of one year. The abbess may prolong this time but not beyond a further six years.

ST 52.1.A

The rite of temporary profession is found in the ritual of the Order.

2

According to can. 668.1-3 CIC, a sister bound by temporary profession retains the ownership of her goods and the capacity of acquiring more. Before she makes temporary profession she should assign the administration of her goods to someone else and freely make arrangements regarding their use and revenues. In this matter, the abbess is competent to give the necessary permissions.

C. 53 Formation of the Temporarily Professed

Monastic formation is to be completed during the years of temporary profession. A *Ratio Institutionis* is to be prepared for this so that the newly professed may come to an ever greater knowledge of the Mystery of Christ and the Church, as well as the Cistercian patrimony, and strive to express it in their lives. Care is to be taken that offices and work given to the temporarily professed do not impede this formation.

ST 53.A

The temporarily professed can remain for some time in the novitiate or in a special part of the monastery. The abbess is to take care that they receive whatever assistance they need, according to the monastery's resources.

C. 54 Admission to Solemn Profession

At the end of the period of temporary profession, after prolonged reflection so that she might clearly perceive the significance of the action she is about to take, the sister may of her own accord present to the abbess her petition to make solemn profession. If the abbess considers her suitable then, with the consent of the conventual chapter, she is to admit her to profession. For a just cause solemn profession may be anticipated but not by more than three months. The conditions for the validity of solemn profession are listed in can. 658 CIC.

C. 55 Renunciation of Goods

By virtue of solemn profession, a sister loses the capacity of acquiring and owning goods. If she owns goods or has a right to them, she is bound, before this profession, to distribute them to the poor or dispose of them in some other way in accordance with the norm of can. 668.4-5 CIC. 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 her after

the renunciation goes to the monastery.

C. 56 Solemn Profession

1

By making profession of solemn vows, a sister gives herself to Christ in a spirit of faith and commits herself perpetually to lead in her community a way of life in accordance with the Rule of Saint Benedict. The abbess and the sisters are to welcome her warmly into the community, knowing they are duty bound to help her by prayer and example, more and more to put on the likeness of Christ.

ST 56.1.A

The rite for the blessing of a nun is found in the ritual of the Order.

ST 56.1.B

The abbess is to notify the pastor of the parish in which the newly professed was baptised that the solemn profession has taken place.

2

By solemn profession a sister is definitively incorporated into the Order with the rights and duties defined by law.

C. 57 Formula of Profession

This is the formula of profession:

I, Sister N..., promise my stability, my fidelity to the monastic way of life, and obedience until death in accordance with the Rule of Saint Benedict, Abbot. I do this before God and all his saints, in this monastery of N... of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance, constructed in honour of the Blessed and ever Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and in the presence of N..., abbess of this monastery and Dom N..., Father Immediate.

C. 58 Continuing Formation

After solemn profession and throughout their lives, the sisters continue to learn “the philosophy of Christ”. Accompaniment is provided for the newly solemnly professed during this time of particular vocational maturation. Continuing formation is to be made available to the whole community and to individual sisters according

to their capacity. This formation is always to be based on the Rule of Saint Benedict and the Cistercian patrimony and is to draw from the riches of biblical, patristic, liturgical, theological and spiritual sciences. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 107).

ST 58.A

The liturgy, the teaching of the abbess, readings, conferences given to the community and a well-stocked library are means that contribute to the continuing formation of the whole community. The abbess is to encourage individual sisters to give themselves fully to this formation according to their gifts, using means compatible with monastic life.

ST 58.B

Provision is to be made so that the monastery is not without well-trained teachers who have sufficient time to carry out their task effectively.

ST 58.C

The sisters who work in the various offices and crafts are to do so peacefully. The abbess is to see to it that they are able to acquire useful skills as needed.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Separation from the Community and Suppression of a Monastery

C. 59 Pastoral Solitude

1

The abbess is to act with pastoral solicitude towards those leaving the monastery. Above all she is to act with disinterested concern for the welfare of the one who is leaving as well as for that of the whole

community.

2

Those who leave or are dismissed are not entitled to claim anything from the monastery for services rendered. Nevertheless, the abbess is to observe the norms of equity and evangelical charity towards members who depart.

ST 59.2.A

To safeguard the welfare of members who leave or are dismissed, as well as that of the community, the abbess is to have a sound knowledge of the social legislation of the place where the monastery is located.

C. 60 Transfer of a sister to another Monastery of the Order

1. A grave cause is required if a professed sister is to change the monastery of her stability. Furthermore, the consent of the abbesses of both monasteries is required and that of the conventual chapter of the monastery that receives her. The consent of the chapter is not required, however, in the case of a nun who had changed her stability to a foundation when this became autonomous and later returns to the monastery of her previous profession. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 11).

ST 60.A

The Abbot General can oblige a sister for the sake of peace to transfer temporarily to another monastery, having heard the sister herself and with due consideration for the community that receives her. This is done at the request of the abbess and with the consent of the abbess's council and of the Father Immediate and for not more than five years.

2. In the case of a nun of a suppressed house who wishes to make her stability in the community, the receiving community expresses its willingness to accept this sister through a vote of the conventual chapter, taken at the moment of acceptance. This vote requires an absolute majority. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 11).

C. 61 Transfer to another Institute

If a nun wishes to transfer to another institute of consecrated life, to a secular institute or to a society of apostolic life the norms of can. 684 and 685 CIC are observed.

C. 62 Exclaustration

1

The abness, with the consent of her council, can grant an indult of exclaustration to a solemnly professed nun, for a period of not more than one year, having obtained the consent of the Ordinary of the place where the nun is to live, and having consulted the Father Immediate. An extension of this indult of exclaustration can be granted by the Abbot General with the consent of his council for a period of not more than four years. (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 88).

ST 62.1.A

The Abbot General with the consent of his council can, for a grave cause, request the Holy See to impose exclaustration on a nun, equity and charity being maintained. This is done at the request of the abness and with the consent of the abness's council and after consulting the Father Immediate.

2

The exclaustated nun is released from those obligations that are incompatible with her new state of life. However, she remains dependent on her superiors and under their care. She is also dependent on the Ordinary of the place. She can wear the habit of the Order, unless it is stated otherwise in the indult, but she loses both active and passive voice.

C. 63 Departure of the Temporarily Professed

1

One who, for a grave cause, asks to leave the monastery during the time of temporary profession can obtain an indult to leave from the Abbot General with the consent of his council.

2

At the end of the period of temporary profession if just causes exist, the abness can, after consulting her council, exclude a sister from making further profession.

3

If a sister in temporary vows contracts a physical or psychological illness, the abbess is to observe can. 689.2-3 CIC.

C. 64 Departure of the Solemnly Professed

A nun in solemn vows is not to request an indult to leave except for very grave causes, weighed in the presence of God. She is to give her request to her abbess who is to discuss it with her council and send it with her comments to the Abbot General. The Abbot General is to forward this with his opinion and that of his council to the Holy See.

C. 65 Dismissal

In the case of the dismissal of a professed nun, whether in temporary or solemn vows, cann. 694-704 CIC are to be followed with regard to causes, procedures and effects. The competent superiors in these cases are the abbess with her council, as Major Superior; and the Abbot General with his council, as supreme moderator.

C. 66 Readmission to the Monastery

One who had legitimately left the monastery at the end of the novitiate or after her temporary or solemn profession can be readmitted by the abbess with the consent of her council, without the obligation of repeating the novitiate. It is for the abbess to determine the form and duration of a new term of probation, according to the norm of universal law and particular circumstances.

ST 66.A

To determine the form and duration of a new term of probation the abbess needs the consent of her council.

C. 67 - Accompaniment of Fragile Communities and Suppression of a Monastery (Gen Chap. 2022/2, vote 12).

1. When a community experiences a situation of grave fragility, it deserves special attention of the Order, especially of the Father Immediate and of the General Chapter. The process of accompanying communities in these situations is described in a special Statute on the Accompaniment of Fragile Communities and on the Suppression of a Monastery approved by the General Chapter.

2. When, despite this help, a community remains in a situation of increasing and irreversible fragility, it will be necessary to proceed to its suppression as outlined in the same Statute.

3. Only the General Chapter, by a two thirds majority, can petition the Holy See to suppress an autonomous monastery (CIC 616 §4). The process to be followed by the General Chapter is described in the Statute on the Accompaniment of Fragile Communities and on the Suppression of a Monastery.

CHAPTER SIX: Foundations

C. 68 Foundations

1

When their number increases, or when they are alerted by some other indication of Providence, the sisters are to know that this may be an invitation to extend monastic life to another place. Let them examine the possibility of a foundation not only prudently but also boldly and generously, considering whether they wish to participate in a monastic manner in fulfilling the mission of evangelization as the contemplative presence of the Church. They are to give special attention to the appeal of the Second Vatican Council to carry the monastic way of life to new churches.

2

The process of founding a monastery is described in a special Statute on Foundations approved by the General Chapter.

C. 69 Care of Foundations

1

When they give approval to a foundation, the abbots and abbesses are to encompass the new offshoot with loving care.

ST 69.1.A

The selection of sisters to be sent on a foundation is not merely a matter of practical preparation; it also requires discernment and prayer.

ST 69.1.B

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

If there are financial difficulties in a foundation, the superiors of the Order are to provide the necessary help.

ST 69.1.C

The superiors of the Order should provide help in the area of formation, especially for very remote monasteries.

2

With the consent of his council, the Abbot General can give permission for the opening of a novitiate in a foundation.

3

The nuns who found a new monastery maintain a close connection with the mother-house so that an affinity remains between the two communities expressed in family relationships.

C. 70 Adaptation to Local Culture

Wherever new monasteries are established, the founders are to become lovers of that place. Monastic life is not to be bound to any particular form of culture nor to any political, economic or social system but, as far as possible, what is rightly valued in the local culture should be welcomed as new means of expressing and enriching the treasure of the Cistercian patrimony.

Part Three THE CISTERCIAN ORDER OF THE STRICT OBSERVANCE

C. 71 The Bond of Unity

1

Autonomous monasteries of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance, spread throughout different parts of the world, are joined together by the bond of charity and by a common tradition of doctrine and law.

2

Their superiors are united by the bond of solicitude for the welfare of each community.

3

They collegially exercise this pastoral care, together with supreme authority in the Order, when they assemble for the General Chapter.

4

The same pastoral care is exercised, under the guidance of the General Chapter, through the institutions of filiation and regular visitation, as well as by assemblies of superiors and the various offices by which the welfare of the whole Order is fostered.

C. 72 Cistercian Monks and Nuns of the Strict Observance

Cistercian monks and nuns of the Strict Observance constitute a single Order. They participate in handing on the same patrimony. They collaborate and give mutual help in many ways, having due regard to their healthy differences and the complementarity of their gifts.

CHAPTER ONE: Filiation

C. 73 The Character of Filiation

In accordance with the Charter of Charity, Cistercian communities are united by the bond of filiation. Traditionally filiation has its juridic form in the relationship established between a community of nuns and the monastery of monks whose abbot becomes the Father Immediate of the nuns. Paternity and filiation are expressed through mutual assistance and support.

ST 73.A

It is for the General Chapter to approve the naming of a Father Immediate of a new monastery of nuns, for the time when it becomes autonomous. The communities concerned will have previously given their consent. This approval is given when the foundation is accepted by the General Chapter.

ST 73.B

When a foundation is raised to an autonomous monastery the abbot who assumed the paternity becomes its Father Immediate.

ST 73.C

All changes in filiation must be discussed by the communities involved and the General Chapter (*cf. ST 37.B.d*). If no agreement is reached, the decision rests with the General Chapter.

C. 74 The Father Immediate

1

The Father Immediate is to watch over the progress of his daughter houses. While respecting the autonomy of the daughter house he is to help and support the abbess in the exercise of her pastoral charge and to foster concord in the community. If he notices there a violation of a precept of the Rule or of the Order, he is to try with humility and charity and having consulted the local abbess, to remedy the situation.

ST 74.1.A

The abbess needs the consent of the Father Immediate to ask the Abbot General to oblige a sister to transfer temporarily to another monastery.

2

When the abbatial office is vacant, the Father Immediate is consulted by the prioress in important matters. He presides at the election of an abbess. If necessary, he names a superior *ad nutum* in accordance with the Order's law.

ST 74.2.A

The Father Immediate is always consulted when an abbess offers her resignation.

ST 74.2.B

The Father Immediate needs the consent of the conventual chapter to begin the process of removal of an abbess from office, and to ask the Abbot General to suspend, with the consent of his council, an abbess from the exercise of her office, in accordance with ST 40.B.bis.

3

The Father Immediate presides also at solemn professions. As far as possible, he makes himself available for consultation and advice during the regular visitation when he has delegated his right of visitation. He examines the accounts of the monastery at the time of the regular visitation.

ST 74.3.A

Changes in the rights and duties of the Father Immediate as defined in these Constitutions are subject to the consent of the General Chapter.

C. 75 Regular Visitation

1

Monasteries are visited by the Father Immediate. The Abbot General also can visit them. The Father Immediate will delegate another person to make the visitation at least once every six years. Before delegating an abbot or abbess visitor, the Abbot General or the Father Immediate consults the abbess of the monastery to be visited, who in her turn consults her community, when an abbess is delegated. [Statute on Regular Visitation, n. 7 and 8]

ST 75.1.A

The abbot visitor or the abbess visitor may be accompanied by another person according to the norms of the Statute on the Regular Visitation (n.9). This is done after consulting the abbess of the monastery to be visited, who in her turn consults her community. [Statute on Regular Visitation, n. 9]

2

The purpose of the regular visitation is to strengthen and supplement the pastoral action of the local abbess, to correct it where necessary, and to motivate the sisters to lead the Cistercian life with a renewed spiritual fervour. This requires the active co-operation of the community. The visitor is faithfully to observe the precepts of law, the spirit of the Charter of Charity and the norms of the General Chapter.

ST 75.2.A

The delegated visitor can be the superior of an autonomous monastery. The delegated visitor can also be a former abbot (titular prior) or a former abbess (titular prioress) or a monk councillor or a nun councillor of the Abbot General. In these cases, both the Abbot General and the Father Immediate consult the abbess of the house to be visited, who in her turn consults her community.

ST 75.2.B

Each monastery is to be visited at least once every two years.

ST 75.2.C

After the visitation, the visitor is to send a copy of the visitation card to the Abbot General within two months. A delegated visitor is also to send one to the Father Immediate.

C. 76 The Chaplain of Nuns

1

Communities of nuns enjoy the ministry of a monk of the Order who serves as chaplain and confessor. In accordance with the norms of canons 567 and 630 CIC, the Father Immediate, having consulted the abbess and the nuns should propose to the local Ordinary as chaplain and ordinary confessor, a monk of the Order who has the necessary liturgical and pastoral knowledge.

ST 76.1.A

This consultation of the community should be repeated at certain times.

2

This priest by virtue of his office enjoys the faculties mentioned in can 566.1 CIC. In celebrating the liturgy, he co-operates with the abbess and the community. He does not in any way involve himself in the governance of the community.

ST 76.2.A

As far as possible, the chaplain maintains contact with his own community or with another community of monks.

CHAPTER TWO: Assemblies of Superiors

C. 77 The General Chapter

1

At fixed times all the abbots and abbesses come together. They discuss there the salvation of their own souls and of those committed to them. They take measures regarding the observance of the Holy Rule and of the Order where there is something that needs to be corrected or added. They foster anew among themselves the benefit of peace and charity. They devote themselves to maintaining the patrimony of the

Order and safeguarding and increasing its unity.

2

The supreme authority of the Order is exercised by all the superiors meeting as a General Chapter, according to their proper Constitutions. The General Chapter is competent to legislate for the monks and nuns and to be responsible for the application of these laws. The ecclesiastical power of governance for the whole Order resides in the General Chapter in accordance with canon 596 §2 of the Code of Canon Law. It is exercised by the abbots with the cooperation of the abbesses in accordance with canon 129 §1 and 2.

ST 77.2.A

Any sister can submit desires or suggestions to the General Chapter. This is done through her abbess, through the regional conference or the regional delegate, or even directly through the Abbot General.

ST 77.2.B

It belongs to the General Chapter to ensure that the members of the Order have the possibility of unimpeded recourse to the various instances of appeal as needed: that is to the Father Immediate, the Abbot General, the General Chapter or the Holy See.

ST 77.2.C

Ordinarily the General Chapter is convoked once every three years.

C. 78 Those Taking Part in the General Chapter

The Abbot General, the superiors of autonomous monasteries and the councillors of the Abbot General have the obligation of participating in the General Chapter and voting rights in it. The Chapter can invite other members of the Order and even give them voting rights.

ST 78.A

The following also can assist at the General Chapter with voting rights:

a.

superiors of foundations, when invited by the abbesses of the founding houses with the consent of the Abbot General.

b.

delegates of superiors who are unable to take part.

c.

representatives of communities in which the abbatial office is vacant, elected by the conventual chapter.

ST 78.B

The following can assist at the General Chapter, but without voting rights:

a.

delegates of each regional conference.

b.

experts and observers invited by the Central Commission.

c.

those named superiors of future foundations.

C. 79 The Competence of the General Chapter

It is for the General Chapter to approve new foundations or their closing, to incorporate or suppress monasteries of monks, to incorporate monasteries of nuns, to petition the Holy See for their suppression, to elect the Abbot General and to accept his resignation. It is also for the General Chapter to elect officials of the Order determined by law, to watch over the manner in which they exercise their office, to accept their resignations and if necessary to depose them, and to accept the resignations of abbots and abbesses or to depose the abbots.

ST 79.A

It is also for the General Chapter:

a.

to decide by a two-thirds majority about changes to be introduced into the Constitutions, before submitting them to the Holy See, to which belongs the authentic interpretation of the Constitutions.

a' except for ST 79.a, all the votes taken by the General Chapter require absolute majority. Yet 50 capitulants can request that the assembly decide, by a preliminary vote that a particular matter requires a vote with a majority of two thirds.

b.

to be informed of the state of each community and to exercise pastoral care in its regard.

c.

to give approval to each regional conference and to determine the manner of its representation in the structures of the Order.

d.

to establish inter-capitular commissions, to name their members, and to supervise their activities.

e.

to approve changes in filiation and the relocation of monasteries.

f.

to establish the procedure for the General Chapter and to elect its Promotor.

g.

to promulgate a statute on the publication of books.

h.

to give communities the permissions required by C. 44.

i.

to entrust causes for beatification or canonisation to the Postulator General.

ST 79.B

When after consulting the abbesses of the region a Father Immediate judges that a particular community can no longer form new aspirants, the General Chapter can suspend its right to receive aspirants until

the next General Chapter, which is to re-examine the situation.

C. 80 The Central Commission

Each General Chapter elects a commission with the task of preparing the next Chapter. This commission is called the Central Commission. It operates under the presidency of the Abbot General and according to the norms established by the General Chapter.

ST 80.A

The Central Commission meets once between General Chapters or when the Abbot General or a majority of the members considers it necessary.

ST 80.B

The following are members of this Commission with the right to vote:

a.

the Abbot General.

b.

the Promotor of the General Chapter.

c.

the Vice-promotor of the General Chapter and the three other members of the Coordinating Commission.

d.

superiors, monks or nuns, each representing their regional conference and elected by it. They may hold this office three times only.

d bis.

A second representative of three regional conferences (ASPAC, RAFMA, and REMILA)

e.

the councillors of the Abbot General.

f.

others elected by the General Chapter in a particular instance.

ST 80.C

Other persons invited by the Abbot General may attend the meetings of the Central Commission without voting rights.

ST 80.D

In the absence of the Abbot General, the Promotor of the General Chapter presides at the meetings of the Central Commission.

ST 80.E

The Central Commission prepares the General Chapter by co-ordinating the initiatives coming from the regional conferences.

ST 80.F

The Central Commission can give a provisional interpretation of the decisions of the previous General Chapter.

ST 80.G

In special cases, the Central Commission can propose to the Abbot General that an extraordinary General Chapter be convoked.

ST 80.H

The Central Commission acts collegially by a majority vote in the following cases:

a. .

matters relating to the preparation of the following General Chapter.

b.

provisional interpretation of the decisions of the preceding General Chapter.

c.

proposing the convocation of an extraordinary General Chapter to the

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Abbot General.

ST 80.I

When in session the Central Commission acts as the plenary council of the Abbot General, who consults it in the cases mentioned in ST 84.1.C.

C. 81 Regional Conferences

The communities of the Order are grouped in Regions approved by the General Chapter. These regional conferences foster communion and fraternal co-operation within each geographical area and in the Order as a whole. Regional conferences can be composed of both monks and nuns.

ST 81.A

These meetings of superiors and delegates are very useful in preparing for the Central Commission and the General Chapter. In addition, they provide an opportunity for discussing questions of common interest and relevance that may not concern the whole Order.

ST 81.B

Each regional conference is represented on the Central Commission by a superior, monk or nun, elected by it (cf. ST 80.B.d and d bis) unless it was decided otherwise at the moment of its approval. It can send a non-superior as a delegate to the General Chapter.

ST 81.C

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.

CHAPTER THREE: The Office of Abbot General

C. 82 The Abbot General

1

Because the Abbot General is a bond of unity within the Order, he fosters good relations among the communities of both monks and nuns and is the watchful guardian of the Order's patrimony, ensuring its growth. Above all, he is to be a pastor who promotes the spirit of renewal in communities. He visits the monasteries sufficiently often, as he judges best, to be aware of the state of the whole Order, and be able to provide valuable help to individual superiors and communities.

2

The Abbot General convokes the General Chapter and presides at it. Assisted by his council, he acts in the name of the General Chapter in those matters committed to him by the Chapter or by law, and in cases that cannot be postponed.

ST 82.2.A

The Abbot General lives at Rome with the members of his council. He is watchful of the monastic discipline of those living at the Generalate. He draws up for this community an internal statute or ordinance, adapted to its particular situation, and names a superior who is accountable to him for its administration.

ST 82.2.B

Since the Generalate is at the service of the whole Order, each house should consider itself bound to supply personnel. Superiors and communities will readily respond to any request of the Abbot General in this regard.

ST 82.2.C

He is responsible for the ordinary temporal administration of the Order and is accountable to the General Chapter for it. He acts in the name of the Order with the Holy See.

ST 82.2.D

The Abbot General can make the Regular Visitation at all the monasteries of the Order either personally or through a delegate, even though the Regular Visitation has been made recently by the Father Immediate or his delegate.

3

He confirms the elections of abbots and abbesses and accepts their

resignations, as vicar of the General Chapter, when the General Chapter is not in session.

4

He has the power to dispense in all that pertains to the proper law of the Order. However, he does not have the power to pass laws.

5

He cannot make decisions about the goods or the persons of communities, except as a temporary measure in case of necessity.

6

The Abbot General is understood in law as Supreme Moderator of a clerical institute of pontifical right, according to the norm of the Constitutions.

C. 83 The Election of the Abbot General

1

The Abbot General is elected by the General Chapter. Whoever obtains an absolute majority is considered to be elected. Election is for an unrestricted term. Confirmation is not needed. To be eligible, he must be or have been an abbot in the Order in the restrictive sense of the term.

ST 83.1.A

The Abbot General must be at least 40 years of age.

ST 83.1.B

The Abbot General keeps his stability in his monastery and can exercise all rights there that are compatible with his office. When an abbot is elected Abbot General while still in office, his position becomes vacant from the moment of his acceptance of the new office.

2

For his resignation from office to be valid it must be accepted by the General Chapter.

ST 83.2.A

The Abbot General is to offer his resignation to the General Chapter nearest to his 75th birthday.

C. 84 The Council of the Abbot General

1

The Abbot General is helped in fulfilling his pastoral office by his council, which is competent for both monks and nuns in matters defined by law.

ST 84.1.A

The council of the Abbot General is made up of five members. Four members, i.e., two monks and two nuns, are nominated by the Regional Conferences, and elected by the General Chapter. Their mandate lasts six years, so that two members will be elected at each meeting of the General Chapter. The fifth member, a monk or a nun, is chosen for a three-year term at each General Chapter, by the Abbot General and the four councillors already elected. These members are chosen for their competence and, among other qualities, their openness to different cultures. They are to be at least 40 years old and solemnly professed in the Order for ten years.

ST 84.1.A bis

During the time of their mandate, the councillors of the Abbot General lose their passive voice in abbatial elections, except in each one's own community. A councillor cannot be appointed superior *ad nutum* except in her own community.

ST 84.1.B

The members of the Abbot General's council are also members of the Central

Commission that, in session, acts as the plenary council of the Abbot General.

a.

In order to approve a foundation, the Abbot General needs the consent of the Central Commission, acting as plenary Council of the Abbot

General (*cf. Statute on Foundations, n. 9*).

ST 84.1.C

The Abbot General requires the consent of his council for the juridical validity of his acts in the following cases:

a.

the authorization to open a novitiate in a foundation (*Statute on Foundations, n. 14.a*).

b.

to accept the resignation from office of an abbess.

b.bis

to remove or suspend an abbess from her office according to ST 40.B.bis.

c.

to begin the process of canonical deposition of an abbess.

d.

to accept the resignation of a member of the council and to elect his/her successor.

e.

to give a monastery permission for an act of extraordinary administration.

f.

in an exceptional case to dispense a community from one or two of the Little Hours of the Work of God.

g.

to permit a sister professed in solemn vows to transfer to another institute and a religious in perpetual vows in another institute to transfer to ours.

h.

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at the request of an abbess to ask the Holy See to impose exclaustation on a sister.

i.

for a grave cause to grant to a temporarily professed a dispensation from vows.

j.

for serious reasons, to permit raising a priory to a higher rank (cf. Statute on Foundations, n.18)

k.

in an urgent case, to permit the closing of a foundation (cf. Statute on Foundations, n.20)

ST 84.1.D

The Abbot General must consult his council in the following cases:

a.

to dispense a novice from the second year of novitiate.

b.

to name the Postulator General who is to promote the causes of beatification and canonisation entrusted to him by the Order.

c.

to forward to the Holy See the request for a nun to be dispensed from solemn vows according to the norms of C. 64.

d.

to forward to the Holy See the request of exclaustation for a nun.

ST 84.1.E

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In the case of the dismissal of a nun, the Abbot General proceeds collegially with his council in weighing the arguments both in support of dismissal and against it. The decision is reached by secret ballot.

ST 84.1.F

The Abbot General is to communicate the visitation cards from regular visitations to the members of his council.

ST 84.1.G

The Abbot General and his council determine the share which each monastery contributes to the expenses of the Generalate, bearing in mind the economic situation of the monastery. A summary of the financial administration of the general curia is given to the General Chapter.

ST 84.1.H

One member of the Abbot General's council is elected at each ordinary

General Chapter as Procurator General. Under the authority of the Abbot General, he is to conduct the business of the Order with the Holy See until the next General Chapter. He is to keep the Abbot General informed on his current business. He is not to ask the Holy See for any faculty or privilege for a member of the Order unless the Abbot General or at least the petitioner's superior has given approval.

ST 84.1.I

If the Abbot General is *impeded*, the Procurator General takes care of current business.

ST 84.I.J.

For a particular case, the Abbot General may name a special councillor, who does not reside in Rome, chosen from among the abbots or abbesses of the region where the case is found. If the Abbot General deems it necessary, this special councillor may be invited to a meeting of the council, and have the right to vote.

C. 85 The Abbot of Cîteaux

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The Abbot of Cîteaux is to take charge of the Order at the death of the Abbot General. Within three months he is to convoke a meeting of the Central Commission to decide the time and agenda of the General Chapter at which a new Abbot General will be elected.

ST 85.A

In the absence of the Abbot General, the Abbot of Cîteaux presides at the General Chapter.

ST 85.B

If because of ill health or for any other reason the Abbot General is prevented from adequately carrying out the duties of his office, it is for the Abbot of Cîteaux, having consulted experts, to investigate and find out the truth about his condition. If the incapacity is established, he notifies the Procurator General without delay. With his approval and within a month he consults the members of the Central Commission about what is to be done.

ST 85.C

If the office of Abbot of Cîteaux is vacant at this time, the abbot of the most ancient daughter house of Cîteaux acts in his place.

C. 86 In the Joy of the Holy Spirit

These are the Constitutions and Statutes of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance. May God grant that by the breath of the Paraclete the sisters may observe them in a spirit of fraternal charity and fidelity to the Church, and so joyfully make their way to the fullness of love with the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of Cîteaux.