# Meeting of the US Region 20-27 February 2019

# **SUMMARY REPORT**



Our Lady of Mepkin Abbey Moncks Corner, South Carolina



# REGIONAL MEETING PARTICIPANTS Mepkin Abbey

MONASTERY SUPERIOR DELEGATES

Berryville Fr Joseph Wittstock

Crozet M Kathy Ullrich Sr Maria Gonzalo

Genesee Fr Gerard D'Souza

Gethsemani Fr Elias Dietz Br Thomas Richards

Guadalupe Fr Peter McCarthy

Holy Spirit Fr Augustine Myslinski

Mepkin Fr Joseph Tedesco

Mississippi M Rebecca Stramoski Sr Myra Hill

New Clairvaux Fr Paul Mark Schwan

New Melleray Fr Mark Scott Br Juan Diego Levado

Redwoods M Kathy De Vico Santa Rita M Victoria Murray Snowmass Fr Charles Albanese

SpencerFr Damian CarrBr Adam ZielonkaWrenthamM Sofia MillicanSr Karen Myers

#### **INVITED GUESTS**

Fr Timothy Kelly, Generalate, Abbot General's Council
Dom Clément Charbonneau, Abbaye Notre-Dame de Mistassini
Dom Peter Verhalen, O Cist – Our Lady of Dallas Abbey
Br Cassian Russell, Holy Spirit Abbey – Regional Secretary of Formation
Sue Schuttinger, Regional Digital Communications Director

#### **SECRETARIES**

Sr Barbara Smickel, Crozet Sr Anna O'Meara, Mississippi Br Christopher Cheney, Vina

President of the Region: Fr Elias Dietz

Assistant Moderators: M Victoria Murray, Fr Gerard D'Souza

Vote formulation: M Kathy De Vico and Fr Mark Scott

Readers for the Minutes: Fr Joseph Wittstock and M Kathy Ullrich

Finances: Secretaries

#### **VOTES**

(There were 15 Superiors voting except for Vote 1, for which only 14 were present.)

## I. Evaluation of the 2017 General Chapter

| 1.  | We are grateful for the work of the <i>ad hoc</i> commission on Fathers Immediate. We request the General Chapter to appoint once again an <i>ad hoc</i> commission to continue the work done by the 2017 <i>ad hoc</i> commission on Fathers Immediate. |                  |       |                                           |                                                  |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
|     | YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 13               | NO    | 0                                         | ABSTAIN 1                                        |
| 2.  | We appreciate the reduced number of guest speakers at the 2017 General Chapter.                                                                                                                                                                          |                  |       |                                           |                                                  |
|     | YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 11               | NO    | 0                                         | ABSTAIN 4                                        |
| 3.  | We affirm having                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | ng speakers from | with  | in our own Order                          | as at the 2017 General Chapter.                  |
|     | YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 13               | NO    | 0                                         | ABSTAIN 2                                        |
| 4.  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | •                |       | rnoons, the one fr<br>h peace and efficie | ree day, and the number of days allowed to ency. |
|     | YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 13               | NO    | 0                                         | ABSTAIN 2                                        |
| 5.  | We appreciated the scheduling of work in Commissions and work in the Aula which reduced unnecessary loss of time in going from one place to another.                                                                                                     |                  |       |                                           |                                                  |
|     | YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 12               | NO    | 0                                         | ABSTAIN 3                                        |
| 6.  | We ask the Central Commission to consider if the Synthesis of Chapter has produced sufficient benefit to continue this practice.                                                                                                                         |                  |       |                                           |                                                  |
|     | YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 12               | NO    | 0                                         | ABSTAIN 3                                        |
| 7.  | . We request a theme for the next General Chapter.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                  |       |                                           |                                                  |
|     | YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 0                | NO    | 13                                        | ABSTAIN 2                                        |
| 8.  | We wish the House Reports to describe the life of the community since the last General Chapter.                                                                                                                                                          |                  |       |                                           |                                                  |
|     | YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 15               | NO    | 0                                         | ABSTAIN 0                                        |
| 9.  | We request that                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Dom Mauro Lep    | ori g | ive a conference of                       | on Vultum Dei Quaerere and Cor Orans.            |
|     | YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 5                | NO    | 7                                         | ABSTAIN 3                                        |
| 10. | We ask the new YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                  | nd hi |                                           | towards a paperless Chapter in 2023.  ABSTAIN 3  |

## **II.** Preparation for Election of the Abbot General

| 11.                                                                                                       | 1. We ask Dom Eamon, in preparation for the election of a new Abbot General, to write a reflection for the Chapter on what he sees as the role of the Abbot General in the face of our present realities and future hopes for the Order.                         |    |    |    |   |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|---|-----------|
|                                                                                                           | Y                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ES | 15 | NO | 0 | ABSTAIN 0 |
| 12.                                                                                                       | 2. We request that the Regions, in view of the election of a new Abbot General, submit a text, not more than a page in length, identifying the needs of the Order at this time. For instance, suggest new directions that are needed, areas for revitalization.  |    |    |    |   |           |
|                                                                                                           | Y                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ES | 15 | NO | 0 | ABSTAIN 0 |
| 13.                                                                                                       | 13. We desire a working paper on the exercise of the role of the Abbot General and his Council, in light of the present realities and needs of our Order.                                                                                                        |    |    |    |   |           |
|                                                                                                           | Y                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ES | 15 | NO | 0 | ABSTAIN 0 |
| 14.                                                                                                       | 14. We would like the spiritual preparation for the coming election of the Abbot General to follow the process that was used at the 2008 Mixed General Meeting.                                                                                                  |    |    |    |   |           |
|                                                                                                           | Y                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ES | 14 | NO | 0 | ABSTAIN 1 |
| 15.                                                                                                       | 15. We wish to maintain the practice of the commissions at the Chapter nominating candidates for the election of the Abbot General.                                                                                                                              |    |    |    |   |           |
|                                                                                                           | Y                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ES | 14 | NO | 0 | ABSTAIN 1 |
| 16. We desire that time be allowed for capitulants to ask questions of these nominees in plenary session. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |    |    |    |   |           |
|                                                                                                           | Y                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ES | 5  | NO | 8 | ABSTAIN 2 |
| III. CST 67 and the Statute on Accompanying Fragile Communities                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |    |    |    |   |           |
| 17.                                                                                                       | 17. We accept the proposed new text of CST 67 redacted by the Law Commission.                                                                                                                                                                                    |    |    |    |   |           |
|                                                                                                           | Y                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ES | 15 | NO | 0 | ABSTAIN 0 |
| 18.                                                                                                       | 18. We propose changing C.34 <i>bis</i> .1 to the following: 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.' |    |    |    |   |           |
|                                                                                                           | Y                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ES | 14 | NO | 0 | ABSTAIN 1 |

| 19. We propose changing the second sentence in #10 of the Statute to the following: The General Chapter authorizes the Father Immediate to appoint a 'monastic commissary' to oversee the care of the members of the community so that they can continue to live together in the fullest way possible.                                                                               |                                                                                                                   |             |           |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|--|--|--|--|
| YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>S</b> 13                                                                                                       | <b>NO</b> 0 | ABSTAIN 2 |  |  |  |  |
| 20. We request clarity on the following:  + Could a non-priest monk be appointed 'monastic commissary'?  + Could a nun be appointed a 'commissary' of a monks' monastery?  + Could a monk be appointed a 'commissary' of a nuns' monastery?  + Must the 'commissary' be a member of a religious institute?  + With reference to #11, who are the advisors, how are they selected?    |                                                                                                                   |             |           |  |  |  |  |
| YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | S 15                                                                                                              | <b>NO</b> 0 | ABSTAIN 0 |  |  |  |  |
| 21. We request a working paper on numbers 22, 23, 24 in the proposed Statute, taking into account such situations as a suppressed motherhouse, a motherhouse of another culture and language, and the legal and financial implications for the receiving community. The study would evaluate also if Statute 67.2.a meets the realities of the individuals and communities involved. |                                                                                                                   |             |           |  |  |  |  |
| YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | S 15                                                                                                              | <b>NO</b> 0 | ABSTAIN 0 |  |  |  |  |
| 22. We ask the Lav community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 22. We ask the Law Commission to examine the issue of the disposition of the patrimony of a suppressed community. |             |           |  |  |  |  |
| YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | S 15                                                                                                              | <b>NO</b> 0 | ABSTAIN 0 |  |  |  |  |
| 23. We propose replacing the term 'monastic commissary' with a title more in line with the present structures of our Order.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                   |             |           |  |  |  |  |
| YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>S</b> 4                                                                                                        | NO 8        | ABSTAIN 3 |  |  |  |  |
| IV. Cor Orans                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                   |             |           |  |  |  |  |
| 24. We request, for the nuns of our Order, Monastic Cloister as defined in <i>Cor Orans</i> (#208-#211).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                   |             |           |  |  |  |  |
| YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | S 15                                                                                                              | <b>NO</b> 0 | ABSTAIN 0 |  |  |  |  |
| 25. We request that the Law Commission revise CST 29 for the nuns in terms of Monastic Cloister as described by <i>Cor Orans</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                   |             |           |  |  |  |  |
| YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | S 15                                                                                                              | <b>NO</b> 0 | ABSTAIN 0 |  |  |  |  |
| 26. We suggest for this revision that the Law Commission refer to the work on CST 29 done at the 2005 Mixed General Meeting.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                   |             |           |  |  |  |  |
| YES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | S 15                                                                                                              | <b>NO</b> 0 | ABSTAIN 0 |  |  |  |  |

|                                                                                                                        |                    |         | equirement of <i>Cor</i><br>ation, from aspira |              | 50-#289) regarding the minimum the juniorate. |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|--|
| YES                                                                                                                    | 11                 | NO      | 1                                              | ABSTAIN      | 3                                             |  |
| 28. We request that to incorporate <i>C</i>                                                                            |                    | sion 1  | revise CST 13.3 o                              | f the nuns C | onstitutions (on leave of absence)            |  |
| YES                                                                                                                    | 14                 | NO      | 0                                              | ABSTAIN      | 1                                             |  |
| 29. We request the 3  Orans #177-#17                                                                                   |                    | ı to re | evise CST 62 of the                            | ne nuns on ' | exclaustration' as defined in Cor             |  |
| YES                                                                                                                    | 15                 | NO      | 0                                              | ABSTAIN      | 0                                             |  |
| V. Common Fund                                                                                                         |                    |         |                                                |              |                                               |  |
| 30. We support the                                                                                                     | proposal of a Co   | mmoi    | n Fund for the Or                              | der.         |                                               |  |
| YES                                                                                                                    | 3                  | NO      | 11                                             | ABSTAIN      | 1                                             |  |
| REGIONAL ISSUES  (Both Superiors and delegates voted on the following, 21 persons in all.)  I. Delegates               |                    |         |                                                |              |                                               |  |
| 31. We wish to cont                                                                                                    | tinue the practice | of th   | e communities se                               | ending deleg | rates to the Regional Meeting.                |  |
| YES                                                                                                                    | 21                 | NO      | 0                                              | ABSTAIN      | 0                                             |  |
| 32. If yes, the delegates would attend the Regional Meeting immediately before the General Chapter.                    |                    |         |                                                |              |                                               |  |
| YES                                                                                                                    | 12                 | NO      | 3                                              | ABSTAIN      | 6                                             |  |
| 33. We wish to continue the practice of sending delegates to the General Chapter.                                      |                    |         |                                                |              |                                               |  |
| YES                                                                                                                    | 18                 | NO      | 2                                              | ABSTAIN      | 1                                             |  |
| 34. We wish to maintain the present practice of sending one monk delegate and one nun delegate to the General Chapter. |                    |         |                                                |              |                                               |  |
| YES                                                                                                                    | 7                  | NO      | 12                                             | ABSTAIN      | 2                                             |  |
| (If vote #34 is no, we will send one monk <u>or</u> one nun delegate to the General Chapter.)                          |                    |         |                                                |              |                                               |  |
| 35. We wish to maintain our Regional Statute 4.b as it is.                                                             |                    |         |                                                |              |                                               |  |
| YES                                                                                                                    | 2                  | NO      | 19                                             | ABSTAIN      | 0                                             |  |

| (Because of the votes.)                                                                                                                                                                                         | (Because of the result of this vote, our Regional Statute will be revised to incorporate the results of the following votes.)                                                                 |                   |        |                    |                 |                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 36. Electors of the Regional delegate to the General Chapter are the Superiors and delegates present at the Regional Meeting with delegates (the meeting in the year of the General Chapter). |                   |        |                    |                 |                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | YES                                                                                                                                                                                           | 16                | NO     | 5                  | ABSTAIN         | 0                                |
| 37. Those eligi                                                                                                                                                                                                 | ble to                                                                                                                                                                                        | be elected delega | ate to | the General Chap   | oter are all th | e monks and nuns of the Region.  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | YES                                                                                                                                                                                           | 1                 | NO     | 18                 | ABSTAIN         | 2                                |
| 38. Those eligi<br>Regional M                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   | legate | e to the General   | Chapter are     | e those delegates present at the |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | YES                                                                                                                                                                                           | 21                | NO     | 0                  | ABSTAIN         | 0                                |
| 39. We desire t                                                                                                                                                                                                 | the alt                                                                                                                                                                                       | ernation of mon   | k and  | l nun delegates, C | hapter to Ch    | napter.                          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | YES                                                                                                                                                                                           | 1                 | NO     | 18                 | ABSTAIN         | 2                                |
| 40. We desire the Region to provide delegates with guidelines and an orientation concerning their role at the Regional Meeting.                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   |        |                    |                 |                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | YES                                                                                                                                                                                           | 15                | NO     | 5                  | ABSTAIN         | 1                                |
| 41. We desire that the delegates compose a one page report of the Regional Meeting for the communities of our Region.                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   |        |                    |                 |                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | YES                                                                                                                                                                                           | 8                 | NO     | 12                 | ABSTAIN         | 1                                |
| 42. We encourage all the communities to send delegates to the Regional Meeting.                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   |        |                    |                 |                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | YES                                                                                                                                                                                           | 14                | NO     | 3                  | ABSTAIN         | 4                                |
| <b>III. Monastic Business Association</b> (only Superiors voting – 15 total)                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   |        |                    |                 |                                  |
| 43. We ask the Monastic Business Association to investigate the possibility of a certification mark for products of our Region, and to present the results of their investigation at the next Regional Meeting. |                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   |        |                    |                 |                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | YES                                                                                                                                                                                           | 14                | NO     | 0                  | ABSTAIN         | 1                                |
| IV. Cistercian Publications                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   |        |                    |                 |                                  |
| 44. We elect the three new Superiors in our Region to the Cistercian Publications Corporation: Fr Joseph Tedesco of Mepkin, Fr Charles Albanese of Snowmass, M Sofia Millican of Wrentham.                      |                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   |        |                    |                 |                                  |

**YES** 15

**NO** 0

**ABSTAIN** 0

| 45. We remove Holy Trinity Abbey and Assumption Abbey from the list of members of the Cistercian Publications Corporation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                         |                         |                            |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>YES</b> 15           | <b>NO</b> 0             | ABSTAIN 0                  |  |  |  |  |
| 46. We wish the Cistercian Publications bylaws to maintain the current requirement of four (4) Supe ( <i>i.e.</i> , members of the Corporation) as members of the Cistercian Publications Board with verights.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                         |                         |                            |  |  |  |  |
| 8                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>YES</b> 0            | <b>NO</b> 15            | ABSTAIN 0                  |  |  |  |  |
| 47. We wish t                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | to modify section 4.02. | A of the Cistercian Pul | blications bylaws to read: |  |  |  |  |
| <u>Voting Members</u> . The voting members of the Board of Directors shall consist of seven (7) people elected by the Members of the Corporation: four (4) Cistercian Directors, at least two of whom are Superiors ( <i>i.e.</i> , Members of the Corporation), two (2) at-large members who possess experience, training, or special skills in medieval scholarship and/or publishing, and one (1) Executive Editor of Cistercian Publications. At least a majority of the voting members of the Board shall be citizens of the United States. |                         |                         |                            |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>YES</b> 15           | <b>NO</b> 0             | ABSTAIN 0                  |  |  |  |  |
| 48. We wish the Cistercian Publications bylaws to require that the President of the Board be a Superior ( <i>i.e.</i> , member of the Corporation).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                         |                         |                            |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>YES</b> 15           | <b>NO</b> 0             | ABSTAIN 0                  |  |  |  |  |
| 49. We wish the non-voting members of the Cistercian Publications Board to include at least one (1) representative of Liturgical Press.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                         |                         |                            |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>YES</b> 15           | <b>NO</b> 0             | ABSTAIN 0                  |  |  |  |  |
| 50. We wish the term in office of all elected members of the Cistercian Publications Board to be three (3) years.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                         |                         |                            |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>YES</b> 15           | <b>NO</b> 0             | ABSTAIN 0                  |  |  |  |  |
| 51. In the light of these changes to the Cistercian Publications bylaws, we wish to dissolve the current Cistercian Publications Board, and to proceed to new elections (or re-elections) at the current meeting.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                         |                         |                            |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>YES</b> 15           | <b>NO</b> 0             | ABSTAIN 0                  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                         |                         |                            |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                         |                         |                            |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                         |                         |                            |  |  |  |  |

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Since many members of the US Regional Conference come from areas of colder winter weather, all happily anticipated Mepkin's warm welcome – and we were not disappointed! After a day of rain and lower temperatures, the sun came out – and we could admire all the evidences of early spring on the Abbey's beautiful grounds. The rains also came – but the milder temperatures were much appreciated.

The brothers here have a well-deserved reputation for southern hospitality, and it was extended very graciously to the total of 26 persons in our group of superiors, delegates and invited guests gathered February 20-27 for our 2019 Regional Meeting. Fr Timothy Kelly, Procurator General, represented the Generalate, and Fr Clement of Mistassini came from the Canadian Region. Fr Peter Verhalen, O Cist, was with us from Our Lady of Dallas Abbey, and Br Cassian Russell was also present to give his Regional Secretary of Formation report. We were also joined for a day by Sue Schuttinger, our Regional Digital Communications Director who gave a thorough overview of her work with and for our Regional Website and various social media platforms.

At this meeting we welcomed three new superiors in our Region – M Sofia of Wrentham, Fr Joseph of Mepkin and Fr Charles of Snowmass. We also remembered in prayer three former superiors whom the Lord has called home during the past year – Fr Malachy of Holy Trinity, and Fr Thomas Keating and Fr Joseph Boyle of Snowmass.

Among the many topics treated were the document *Cor Orans*, the evaluation of the last General Chapter, and preparation for the election of the Abbot General at the next Chapter, as well as the work done since the last Chapter on CST 67.

Full Minutes of the meeting in English, and a summary version in English as well as the Summaries in French and Spanish will be posted on the Order's website. A copy of the Full Minutes will also be sent by email to the Generalate and to all the US monasteries.

The report which follows tells of the discussion and decisions during the meeting, but can only partially convey the spirit of mutual respect and openness and friendship which characterized our gathering – and made of this meeting a concrete expression of the Charter of Charity in our time.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **Elections:**

Regional President: Fr Gerard D'Souza

Coordinating Committee and Co-Moderators: Fr Paul Mark Schwan and M Kathy Ullrich

Regional Secretary of Formation: Sr Pamela Clinton of Wrentham

Regional Delegate to the General Chapter: Sr Myra Hill of Our Lady of the Mississippi

Substitute for the Regional Delegate: Br Juan Diego Levado of New Melleray

Regional Health Plan/Catastrophe Fund Administrator: Holy Spirit Abbey, Conyers

Cistercian Publications Board: President: Fr Elias Dietz; Treasurer: Fr Gerard D'Souza

The two other Cistercian members of this Board: Fr Brendan Freeman and Fr Lawrence Morey

Next Regional Meeting: June 3-10, 2020 at Our Lady of the Genesee Abbey

#### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Evaluation of the last General Chapter**

Appreciation was expressed for the very pastoral character of the 2017 Chapter. We have put some recommendations for the 2020 Chapter in our Votes, especially continuing the theme of revitalization, revisiting our structures, asking how we can inject new life into the Order, valuing the past while creating something new. We would like the House Reports to report on the trajectory and major events in the life of each community since the last Chapter. We are concerned about the increasing burden of business requiring the attention of the Abbot General in between Chapters; we ask what might be done creatively to alleviate this?

#### Preparation for the election of the Abbot General at the 2020 Chapter

We studied the process of preparation for the last election in 2008 and are in favor of the use of a similar process in 2020. Prior to the Chapter, we recommend that every Region be asked to articulate the realities of its particular situation. It is within this context that the discernment of appropriate candidates for the office of Abbot General can be made. Our Votes specify in particular that we support the surfacing of the names of nominees by the mixed commissions at the Chapter, and some would appreciate the opportunity to ask questions of those proposed.

#### Cor Orans

It seems obvious to us that the Federation requirement should not apply to our nuns because we form one Order with our monks and have a single General Chapter for oversight, assistance, etc. But the exemption from this requirement needs to be the subject of a request to the Holy See – by the Abbot General and his Council acting in the name of the General Chapter.

On the matter of enclosure, *Cor Orans* provides various types of enclosure and requests all monasteries of nuns to choose the type of enclosure which best supports their charism. Monastic Cloister is one option. This corresponds best to the general practice and desire of most of the houses of nuns in our Order. If the General Chapter approves this, the US Region supports the revision of CST 29 accordingly.

Regarding the new requirements on foundations in *Cor Orans*, a possible way of proceeding would be to ask the Holy See to continue to use our Statute on Foundations as it is – since it is a Statute we have been constantly adapting to new situations and new means over the past 50 years.

The newly-defined required length of time before final profession occasioned much discussion. The document specifies a total of 9 years of formation before final vows. The impetus for this requirement seems to be the number of departures after final profession – and the recognition that in many cases persons from the world of today simply need more time to be formed to make a free, responsible final commitment. The number of candidates coming from broken families, and having betrayals, abuse situations, and a lack of a firm Christian foundation, all militate against the maturity and stability needed for perseverance in monastic life.

One other area to be noted was the provision in *Cor Orans* that a community loses the right of election when the Conventual Chapter is reduced to five solemnly-professed members or less.

Our discussion focused mainly on #287-#288 in *Cor Orans* concerning the duration of temporary profession. On the matter of a longer time now prescribed for formation, the reasons advanced are solid, but it was pointed out that we already have this option in our Constitutions.

#### CST 67 and new Statute on Accompanying of Fragile Communities

M Kathy of Redwoods attended the meetings of the Law Commission which had prepared this material and was able to provide valuable background. Our Order's attention to this spans many years, beginning with Dom Bernardo Olivera's conferences on the increasing fragility within the Order, and the subsequent attention given to this over many General Chapters. More recently, the documents *Vultum Dei Quaerere* and *Cor Orans* stress that juridical autonomy needs to be matched by autonomy of life.

It is helpful to recall the many initiatives already taken in our Order in response to this situation – mergers of communities that have already occurred and others being considered, downsizing in many monasteries, smaller buildings being utilized, lay employees taking on more responsibilities, etc. So there is awareness of the seriousness of the situation – which was certainly underlined by a total of six houses suppressed since the 2017 Chapter.

We examined in detail and with gratitude the excellent work done by the Law Commission, and we went through the proposed changes for CST 67 as well as the new *Statute on Accompanying Fragile Communities*. The final result of our discussion is reflected in the Votes we are proposing for the Central Commission Meeting in June.

A point often mentioned in our consideration of the new Statute is that of the Father Immediate retaining his authority – in particular we desire that he be the one to choose and appoint the Monastic Commissary rather than the General Chapter doing so. In this case the Commissary would report to the Fr Immediate rather than to the Chapter – a more effective arrangement. It is necessary that the Chapter decide on the suspension of autonomy for a community, but the Fr Immediate should then be the one to handle what follows from this.

#### **Suppression Process and Related Issues**

Related to the suppression process is the question of the new stability for the members of the suppressed community. Fr Paul Mark brought this to our attention. Our present Constitutions provide an automatic "right of return" to the motherhouse without any probation nor requiring any approval of the motherhouse community. It seems to us that this is unrealistic in our present circumstances, where a number of motherhouses have been suppressed or are in a condition where they could not accept additional members. Also, the present legal climate is such that it would be very imprudent to accept someone who may be virtually unknown. The important issue is to provide a living community for each monk or nun where they can live their monastic vocation and be assured of permanent care. Our concern about this is reflected in our Votes.

#### **Delegates to Regional Meetings and General Chapters**

We reviewed the matter of delegates – the historical background and present practice. The presence of delegates at the Regional Meetings has been a very positive experience, though many communities in our Region are finding it difficult to spare another person along with the Superior for a week's time.

We have asked ourselves about the presence of delegates at the General Chapters. There are some drawbacks to this.

- Given our present moment in history, there are difficult topics to discuss in the commissions at the Chapter (particular discussions on leadership, sexual abuse, fragile communities, etc). It can be a very negative experience for the delegates and not beneficial nor necessary.
- The presence of delegates in the commissions can inhibit some sensitive discussions.
- The number of persons at the Chapter is already very large, and it is very expensive.
- The 'Delegates' blog' has been good but on occasion it has been a source of untimely information.

Perhaps it is time to open a discussion about the presence of delegates at the General Chapters?

#### **US Regional Matters**

#### **Regional Secretary of Formation**

Br Cassian Russell had this position from 2013 up to the present, with much generosity in the areas of organizing Junior Seminars, collaboration with the Vocation Directors and other regional initiatives. His successor, Sr Pamela Clinton, will benefit greatly from all that is now in place in the area of formation in our region.

#### Carta Caritatis Colloquium at Our Lady of Dallas in July 2019

This program is the result of intense collaboration between our Order and the Cistercians in Dallas, for the 900<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Charter of Charity – seen not only as a celebration but also envisaged as a path into the future. Dom Eamon and Dom Mauro will both be present, as well as many members of both Orders and also invited scholars. The Colloquium will explore the historical origins and intentions of the *Carta Caritatis* as a means to understand how we can integrate this into the life of Cistercians of both Orders in meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Participation is open to any monks and nuns who are able to attend.