

*una caritate,
una regula,
similibusque
vivamus moribus*



*Liturgia est culmen
ad quod actio Ecclesiae tendit
et simul fons unde
omnis eius virtus emanat.*

SECRETARIUS LITURGIÆ
Ordinis Cisterciensis

Liturgical Circular Letter 2016-1

Stift Heiligenkreuz, May 4th 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the outset I want to note something about the dating of this letter. My last letter was dated “Christmas 2015,” but was not sent and published till Lent of 2016 (I hope that it reached every monastery). The interval between Christmas and Lent was needed by the translators, whom I thank for their tremendously important service to me and to our Order. Since translation involves a delay in sending these letters, I will in future make no reference to the liturgical season, simply dating the letters by the day of the month. It is certainly a pity not to date liturgical letters by liturgical season, but given the necessity of delay, it seems unavoidable.

Translations

This brings me to the first issue that I want to address: translations. I am very grateful that in many of our monasteries monks and nuns were ready to translate my letter. It would be a great help if even more would volunteer to translate a letter, if only occasionally.

I have heard that the French translation was not especially good. The translation has now been revised and can be downloaded from the website of the Order.

Since it is difficult to find translators, Fr. Alberich Altermatt’s last liturgical circular letter (November 2012) was only published in German, which naturally made it impossible for it to be read in much of the Order. I have therefore decided, with his permission, to include the contents of his letter in a postscript to my letter. I have somewhat abridged Fr. Alberich’s letter, as some matters have become irrelevant with the passage of time. Today I want to offer my thanks to Fr. Alberich for the wonderful letter that he wrote to us four years ago.

Replies to my last letter

Many thanks for the numerous responses to my last letter. Such responses are very welcome to me and they are really helpful, since show whether what I wrote was really helpful and interesting.

I have heard that in many monasteries the letter was read out loud, in some it was read only by the superiors, and that wasn't even delivered to some. I think that it would be good if these letters could reach all the members of our Order, since some points are of importance to everyone—but that is of course up to the superiors. I request that this letter be forwarded so that every monastery of our Order receives a copy. If my e-mail with the letter did not arrive in a monastery, I request that I be told, so that that the problem can be corrected.

News From the Church and the Order

In the three years of his pontificate, Pope Francis has made **three changes to the *Missale Romanum*** (the *Roman Missal*). All three changes are to be adopted in the vernacular translations.

In the decree *Paternitas Vices* (May 1, 2013) the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, following the Pope's instructions, inserted St. Joseph into Eucharistic Prayers II-IV— following the example of Eucharistic Prayer I, St. Joseph is inserted after the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary. An appendix to the decree included translations for all the major languages:

In Eucharistic Prayer II: *that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with the blessed Apostles...;*

In Eucharistic Prayer III: *with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs...;*

In Eucharistic Prayer IV: *with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, and with your Apostles...*

The decree *In Caenam Domini* (January 6, 2016) the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, following the pope's instructions, gave permission for the feet of women to be washed in the *mandatum* during the Mass of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday. The decree states:

In order that the full meaning of this rite might be expressed to those who participate it seemed good to the Supreme Pontiff Pope Francis to vary the norm which is found in the rubrics of the *Missale Romanum* (p. 300 n. 11): «The men who have been chosen are led by the ministers...», which therefore must be changed

as follows: «Those who are chosen from amongst the people of God are led by the ministers...» (and consequently in the *Caeremoniali Episcoporum* n. 301 and n. 299b: «seats for those chosen»), so that pastors may select a small group of the faithful to represent the variety and the unity of each part of the people of God. Such small groups can be made up of men and women, and it is appropriate that they consist of people young and old, healthy and sick, clerics, consecrated men and women and laity.

Strictly speaking, this decree only changes the Latin typical editions of the *Missale Romanum* and the *Ceremoniale Episcoporum*, but it can nevertheless be implemented at once in vernacular celebrations. Archbishop Arthur Roche, the secretary of the congregation, has written a commentary on the decree in which he explains the history of the ritual of the washing of the feet on Maundy Thursday— it is very worth reading. Archbishop Roche notes that the washing of the feet during the Mass of the Last Supper is not required. The tradition in our Order is to celebrate the *mandatum* before the Mass of the Last Supper in the refectory, the chapter room, or the cloister. I assume that most communities have preserved this practice. Obviously in monasteries of nuns, women's feet were always washed at the *mandatum*.

A third decree of the Congregation Divine Worship, *Pastor Aeternus* (May 29, 2014), inserted the optional memorials of Pope St. John XXXI (October 11) and Pope St. John Paul II (October 22) into the general calendar of the Roman Rite.

I want to recall a change that was made already in the *Missale Romanum* of 2002, and which is referred to in the *Directorium Divini Officii* of our Order: the re-introduction of the solemn announcement on the Feast of the Epiphany of the date of Easter and the other movable feasts of the year. This announcement is chanted in the preface tone, after the Gospel in the Mass of the Epiphany, and can easily be practiced in a monastic setting.

The *Missale Romanum Supplementum* of 2008 re-introduced the Pentecost Vigil— the long liturgy of the word in the Mass of the eve of Pentecost, modeled on the Easter Vigil. This too could be an enriching addition to our monastic liturgical life.

I would like to mention here that the Trappists too have a liturgical secretary. The current secretary is Fr. Justin Sheehan, O.C.S.O., of Genesee Abbey in the U.S.A., who can be contacted at the following e-mail address: justinlitsec@gmail.com. Fr. Justin is the editor of the Trappist *Ordo for the Divine Office and Mass*, which can be downloaded at www.ocso.org. I am in regular contact with Fr. Justin, and try to keep him informed about liturgical matters in our Order.

I was recently informed by Wettingen-Mehrerau Abbey that they still have some copies of the *Kyriale* of 1983, which can be ordered from them. A revised and expanded version of that *Kyriale* was published in Heiligenkreuz in 2010, and can be ordered at www.bebeverlag.at.

The Belgian Trappist Abbey of Westmalle still has some copies of the liturgical books once printed there. These can be ordered free of charge by monasteries that still use the Westmalle books in the liturgy. In such cases one can contact Br. Gueric Aerden, O.C.S.O: brgueric@trappistwestmalle.be; +32/489 86 90 02; Antwerpsesteenweg 496, 2390 Westmalle, Belgium.

I would request that communities that still use the Westmalle books cooperate in preparing revised versions, so that new editions of all the liturgical books can be made for our whole Order.

I have learned from Itatinga-Hardehausen Abbey in Brazil that they are preparing a new Cistercian Breviary in Portuguese, modeled on the Latin Breviary, published at Heiligenkreuz in 1978. In this connection I would like to mention that work is underway in Heiligenkreuz on a new edition of the Breviary of 1978, in which the Sanctoral is too be updated, and the current edition of the *Nova Vulgata* is to be used for the scriptural texts.

In the German-speaking world a new version of the *Einheitsübersetzung* of the Bible has been approved by the Holy See. This edition will be published in 2016, and will then be the only translation of the Bible approved for liturgical use in German speaking countries. Lectionaries and other liturgical books will have to be revised accordingly.

Activities of the Secretariat for the Liturgy

At the invitation of Mother Emmanuelle, of the French Abbey of Boulaur, I was able to spend a week in Boulaur at the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016. Our consœurs there wanted to speak with me about certain current liturgical questions. I am grateful for the days of encounter and conversation, and would like to invite all communities to follow Boulaur's example, and set aside some time for the deliberate discussion of liturgical matters—perhaps also with external counsel.

In April of 2016 I visited some monasteries in Switzerland. I first spent some days at Eschenbach Abbey to meet with Fr. Alberich Altermatt. He handed over many valuable texts, documents, and archival materials to me, and also gave me a great deal of useful information verbally. I then spent some days in Hauterive Abbey, since it was important to me to get to know the monastery that for so many decades had such decisive influence on the liturgical life of our Order. From Hauterive I made a short, but very cordial visit to the Abbey of Maigrange, where I was able to meet with the sisters, and pray Vespers with them. At the University of Fribourg I had the opportunity of meeting with Dr. Alicia Scarcez (expert in Cistercian chant) and Prof. Martin Klöckner (professor of liturgical studies). Both of them gave me much valuable information, and promised to help me with certain questions in future. On the last day I was able to visit the Priory of Orsannens, which was founded from Vietnam. The French-Vietnamese liturgy celebrated there impressed me deeply. My time in Switzerland was a wonderful experience, in which

I learned much about liturgy and above in which I was able to pray the liturgy with our confreres and consœurs. I thank all of them for their hospitality and the cordial welcome that they gave me.

A new Cistercian Gradual is beginning to take shape through the extraordinarily dedicated efforts of the sisters in Boulaur. The work is still in its initial phase, but is progressing well. It was a wish expressed by many monasteries in answers to the recent liturgical questionnaire sent to all monasteries of our Order that a new edition of the Gradual be made. The fact is, that copies of the last edition of the *Graduale Cisterciense* from Westmalle have become scarce. Moreover the Westmalle Gradual followed the pre-conciliar calendar. The new Cistercian Gradual is to preserve the tradition of Cistercian chant, but arrange the chants according to new liturgical order given by the *Missale Romanum* and the *Ordo Cantus Missæ*. What has not yet been determined is the approach to rhythmical signs and certain peculiarities of our chant tradition. These are points on which I would be especially grateful for suggestions.

A request that was made several times— both at the General Chapter of 2015 and in responses to the liturgical questionnaire— was that a new Cistercian Customary be prepared. A small committee of eight members of our Order has therefore already been formed. The members come from eight different monasteries— some of monks, some of nuns. The basis of our work will be the *Usus Cistercienses* of 1957, which are widely used in the Order. These were never officially approved by the Order, but since they are the last documentation of their kind, they therefore reflect what is seen in many monasteries as the traditional practice (at least in some parts). Many parts, however, no longer reflect the current life of the Order, and will have to be revised. The hope for the new Customary is that it will be approved by the Order— not as a law, chiseled in stone, but merely as a legitimate guide to the customs of the Order. Here too I hope for and request suggestions from the particular communities, so that that the new book can be a real help to each monastery, and that it not ignore the reality of their lives. I will also try to cooperate with the Trappists as far as they are willing.

In 2001, under Pope St. John Paul II, a new edition of the *Martyrologium Romanum* was published. It is the official canon of the saints of the Church. In no. 38, and in other passages, religious orders are encouraged to prepare appendices to the *Martyrologium*, and to have these appendices approved by the Holy See. We are now in the process of completing such an appendix for the Cistercian family. Most of the work has already been done by Fr. Pacide Vernet, O.C.S.O. (Citeaux Abbey) and Fr. Alberich Altermatt, O.Cist. Now the time has come for the final revision of these texts, so that they can be presented to the next General Chapter. I welcome suggestions concerning the *Martyrologium*.

Responses to Questions Received

- How does one punctuate the Marian anthem *Sub Tuum Praesidium: ...libera nos semper,* Virgo...* [deliver us always, Virgin]; or *...libera nos,* semper Virgo...* [deliver us, ever Virgin].

The antiphon *Sup Tuum Praesidium* goes back at least to the third century. At that time no punctuation marks were used in Latin. That means that the oldest texts are of no use in answering this question. Most modern liturgical books punctuate as follows: *...libera nos semper,* Virgo...* [deliver us always, Virgin]. See the following editions:

- *Graduale Cisterciense* (Westmalle, 1804, and following editions), p. 129.
- *Liturgia Horarum* (Rome, 1986), p. 586.
- *Antiphonale Monasticum II* (Solesmes, 2006), p. 17 seq.
- *Cantus Selecti* (Solesmes, 1949 [reprint, 2006]), p. 180*.

These are more or less random examples, but they suggest that this reading is consistent throughout the tradition. Some monasteries (including Hauterive, Heiligenkreuz, the General House, and some monasteries of the Congregation of Mehrerau), have changed the punctuation to read: *...libera nos,* semper Virgo...* [deliver us, ever Virgin].

Even though some monasteries have chosen the second punctuation, I would encourage our monasteries to pray/sing the antiphon with the punctuation the reading that almost all liturgical books have taken, and which is almost certainly the most common one in our Order. Nevertheless, one needn't force a change, since both variants are possible and full of beautiful meaning.

- Do we Cistercians hold a *statio* before the Divine Office or not?

As far as I know, the *statio* was originated in the Benedictine Order, because in their monasteries the church was not in the monastic enclosure, and it was forbidden to leave the enclosure alone. So, one waited and entered the church together. Among the Cistercians, however, the church was originally within the enclosure, and did not even have an external entrance; one could only enter it through the cloister or the dormitory. It was therefore possible to enter the church alone. Cistercian abbeys usually had a separate Church for non-monastic worshipers (often a “gate chapel”). In monasteries of nuns there was a separate choir, which was in the enclosure, but the naïve of the church was not enclosed, and could be entered by external visitors. For this reason there was no *statio* in Cistercian monasteries. Perhaps there was also a second reason: a procession from the *statio* into the church has a somewhat triumphal character (especially in large communities), and was perhaps rejected by the Cistercian fathers as inconsistent with monastic humility. The *Usus Cistercienses* of 1957 discourages the *statio* and entrance procession, but still mentions them as possibilities. Today there is no regulation that deals with the *statio*. I presume that— although enclosure regulations have changed— most communities still gather directly in choir without a *statio*. I know however, that in

some communities a *statio* and entrance procession are made on especially solemn occasions.

- In our monastery Compline has an oration for each day of the week. Which oration is to be prayed during the octave of Easter— the oration of the relevant weekday, or the oration of Saturday or Sunday?

Traditionally in our Order Compline was entirely the same every day of the week—including the same oration. In communities where that tradition is preserved the question does not arise. But in cases where the oration varies each day (on the model of the new *Roman Breviary*), an oration from Sunday is to be taken for the whole Easter Octave, since the Sunday orations are centered on the mystery of the Resurrection, and the whole Easter Octave is celebrated as the day of the Resurrection. Which of the two Sunday orations is to be taken is decided differently in different books. At any rate the oration at compline after the second Vespers of the second Sunday of Easter should be the oration after the second vespers of Sunday, since this completes the theme of the Resurrection. On the other days of the octave either oration can be taken.

- When one wears a cope, is the cowl worn underneath it?

It is difficult to give a definite answer to this question. The *Ceremoniale Episcoporum* (Rome, 1984) determines the choir dress of bishops as the mozetta and rochet (no. 63), and the surplice and cassock as the choir dress of priests (no. 66). The cope is mentioned as the liturgical vestment for services outside of Mass, but it is not explicitly stated whether choir-dress or an alb is to be worn under the cope. The context, however, seems to suggest an alb. In no. 192 pontifical vespers are described. Here the cope is mentioned, and it is stated that the alb is to be worn under the cope, and that the rochet can be worn under the alb (although this is not required). These rubrics apply only to the Roman Rite.

Originally, our Order did not allow the cope to be worn at all; as Fr. Fulgentius Schneider showed [*Zisterzienserchronik* 449.38 (1926)], the cope was rejected by the early Cistercians, as was the dalmatic. These proscriptions were, however, soon loosened, and the cope came into use— especially the use of the abbot (cf. p. 189). The *Rituale Cisterciense* of 1899 brings up the cope in connection with funerals (ch. IX “Quo ordine efferatur ad tumulum”). In this case the abbot was to wear the cope over the alb, rather than the cowl— but this could be explained by the fact that he had just celebrated Mass. Similar rubrics are found for processions immediately following Mass. The same *Rituale* prescribes merely a stole over the cowl for solemn blessings outside of Mass (cf. p. 43). The *Rituale Cisterciense*, on account of its monastic horizon, does not of course have any rubrics for Baptisms or Weddings, and so it does not give a clear answer to our question.

Universal Church legislation on liturgical matters does not give much guidance for monastic liturgy and the cowl. In 2004 the instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* does mention the cowl in connection with concelebration in no. 126:

The abuse is reprobated whereby the sacred ministers celebrate Holy Mass or other rites without sacred vestments or with only a stole over the monastic cowl or the common habit of religious or ordinary clothes, contrary to the prescriptions of the liturgical books, even when there is only one minister participating. In order that such abuses be corrected as quickly as possible, Ordinaries should take care that in all churches and oratories subject to their jurisdiction there is present an adequate supply of liturgical vestments made in accordance with the norms.

In conclusion we may say that for the celebration of Mass alb, stole, and chasuble are to be worn. Outside of Mass, especially in ceremonies immediately following Mass, the liturgical vestments are cope and stole worn over the alb. For all other liturgical celebrations monks are to wear the cowl, when appropriate with a stole. In the case of a solemn liturgical celebration of the Divine Office, presided over by the abbot or a priest (such as pontifical vespers), the presider ought to follow the Roman rubrics— since this form of celebration does not any case fit with our original monastic tradition. In general it is important to note that *the cowl is no substitute for the alb*. I note in passing that Cistercian prelates can also wear the choir dress of prelates (*habitus choralis*): rochet with black or white mozzetta over the habit, worn with white biretta and zucchetto.¹ Prelate's choir dress is, however, going out of fashion nowadays, and is in any case not autochthonously Cistercian.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to leave you with two beautiful reflections on the liturgy from Pope Francis:

Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, ¶24).

Those who attend the house of God and know his mercy do not automatically know how to love their neighbor. It is not automatic! You may know the whole Bible, you may know all the liturgical rubrics, you may know all theology, but from this knowledge love is not automatic: loving has another path, it requires intelligence, but also something more.... The priest and the Levite see but ignore; they look but they do not offer to help. Yet there is no true worship if it is not translated into service to neighbor. Let us never forget this: before the suffering of so many people exhausted by hunger, violence and injustice, we cannot remain spectators. What does it mean to ignore the suffering of man? It means to ignore God! (General Audience, April 27, 2016).

¹ Translator's note: when a white mozzetta is worn, the scapular is removed; but when a black mozzetta is worn the scapular is kept on.

With these words, which can be an aid to reflection on our personal relation to the liturgy, I bid you farewell, and ask for your prayers for our Order.

Yours with confraternal greetings,

Frater Coelestin Nebel, O.Cist.

Contact information:

Postal address: Stift Heiligenkreuz, Markgraf-Leopold-Platz 1, 2532 Heiligenkreuz im Wienerwald, Austria

E-Mail: liturgia@ocist.org

Telefon: +43 680 44 64 364 (mobile) or: +43 2258 8703 (porter's office)

I can only speak German and simple English. If you contact me in one of these languages I can reply promptly, but if you write in another language I have to first find a translator, which delays my response.

APPENDIX

On the Suffrages for the Departed

by Pater Alberich Altermatt O.Cist.

“And withhold not your love from the dead.” (Sirach 7:33).

In the Western tradition November has become the month in which we especially commemorate the dead. One cause of this, apart from the symbolism of dying nature, was the introduction of All Souls’ Day on November 2nd (*In Commemoratione Omnium Fidelium Defunctorum*) by Abbot Odilo of Cluny (died 1049), who prescribed it for the Cluniac Order in 998. From Cluny All Souls’ Day spread slowly through the whole Church.

Since I often receive questions about the prayer and commemoration of the dead in our Order, I have decided to devote this 10th circular letter to the topic. In 1995 the General Chapter of our Order issued new norms for suffrages for our departed (*De suffragiis pro defunctis nostris*), and these regulations are currently in force. Till recently the regulations were only published in Latin— namely, in the Introduction to the *Ordinis Cisterciensis Directorium Divini Officii*, and in the *Rituale Cisterciense* (Langwaden, 1998, pp. 196-198), and so they were not necessarily known in detail in all the monasteries. In the mean time, however, the *Rituale Cisterciense* of 1998 has been translated into numerous languages, and so the new regulations of the General Chapter of 1995 have become more accessible.² In what follows I shall first give a translation of the regulations of 1995 in full, and then comment on the particular points.

Suffrages for the Our Departed in the O.Cist.

According to the Decisions of the General Chapter of 1995

The General Chapter establishes only general norms concerning suffrages for the dead. It is up to the particular congregations to establish special norms, or to apply the general norms to specific cases.

Theological Introduction

Piety towards the departed and prayers for them have had great importance in the Christian life since the earliest days of the Church and of our Order. The commemoration

² Translator’s note: Unfortunately, the English edition of the *Cistercian Ritual* [trans. Sr. Carol Dvorak, O.C.S.O. (Mississippi Abbey, 2004)] omits the O.Cist. norms for suffrages, including only the norms for the O.C.S.O. I have therefore had to translate the norms of 1995 into English for the first time.

of the departed expresses the communion of the saints, in which all the members of Christ are united to each other— the living doing good works for the departed, while receiving the consolation of hope. In praying for the dead we affirm our hope for eternal life, and clearly express the paschal character of Christian death. Therefore the Church offers the paschal sacrifice of the Eucharist for the departed, and pours out prayers and suffrages for them, so that those, who through Baptism have been made members of Christ, who died and rose for them, might pass through death to life; that their souls might be purified and taken up to the saints in heaven, while in their bodies they await the blessed hope of the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

1. The Yearly Commemorations (Solemn Anniversaries) of the Departed

Apart from All Souls' Day (November 2nd), our Order celebrates two yearly commemorations of the departed:

a) September 18th: Commemoration of all the departed of the preceding year from the whole Cistercian family. The Office of this day ranks as solemnity.

b) November 14th: Commemoration of all the departed who fought [the good fight] under the Rule of Our Father St. Benedict. The Office of this day ranks as a feast.

All the Masses celebrated on these two days are to be offered for the departed, unless the superior wishes to establish an exception.

2. The Monthly Commemoration of the Departed (Officium Mensis)

Once a month, on the day proposed by the *Directorium Divini Officii O.Cist.*, a votive office for the departed is to be prayed. At least the conventual Mass on this day should be offered for the departed.

3. The Daily Commemoration of the Departed

Apart from the daily prayers for the departed in the celebration of the Holy Eucharistic and the Liturgy of the Hours, those monasteries in which it is customary the Psalm *De Profundis* with an oration are prayed after the daily reading of the *Necrologium*.

4. Suffrages for a Departed Brother or Sister of the Community

Apart from the rites prescribed by the *Cistercian Ritual* for a departed brother or sister, the following are to be observed:

a) In addition to the funeral Mass three conventual Masses are to be celebrated or concelebrated for a departed brother or sister— for example, on the third, seventh, and thirtieth days after his or her death, according to the rubrics. If in a community of monks a priest is either not able to concelebrate at the conventual Mass, or not able to offer it for the departed, he shall follow the instructions of his superior.

b) Where it is customary 30 Masses (Gregorian Masses) may be celebrated for the departed brother or sister.

c) We highly recommend that the name of the departed brother or sister be mentioned in the bidding prayers at Mass, or in the Eucharistic prayer, or in the litany at Vespers.

d) According to ancient and Cistercian tradition works of charity or almsgiving are offered for the repose of the soul of a departed brother or sister. The superior may also command other suffrages (for example, special prayers).

e) The obituary is to be sent to the other monasteries of the Order, and of the whole Cistercian Family. The superiors of the particular monasteries are to determine how the obituary is to be made known within their communities.

5. Suffrages for Other Deceased

a) After receiving notice of the death of a brother or sister of our Order, or of the Cistercian Family; or of an oblate; or of a father, mother, sister, brother, spouse, or child or ours; in every community, in addition to the *officium mensis*, each member of the community will offer suffrages as they see fit, or as the superior indicates.

b) The name of the departed may be mentioned in the bidding prayers at Mass, or in the Eucharistic prayer, or in the litany at Vespers.

c) After receiving news of the death of the Supreme Pontiff, of the diocesan bishop, of the Abbot General, of the Presiding Abbot (or Abbess) of the congregation (or presiding Abbess of the federation), or the *Pater Immediatus*, a conventual Mass is to be celebrated for him (or for her).

Commentary on Some Points of the Norms of the General Chapter of 1995

After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and the liturgical reform that followed it, it was repeatedly suggested (especially by Abbot Dionysius Farkasfalvy of Dallas) that the suffrages for the departed in our Order be reformed to fit with current theology (eschatology) and Church practice. Other ancient orders, with similar traditions to ours, had already done this— for example the Trappists, who reformed their suffrages in the General Chapter of 1971 [cf. *Rituale Cisterciense* (Langwaden, 1998), pp. 195-196].

The Liturgical Commission of our Order discussed this complex question at a meeting at Frauenthal Abbey in Switzerland (April 20th-22nd, 1995), and drafted new norms for the General Chapter. As an introduction to the theme of that meeting, Jakob Baumgartner (died 1996), Professor emeritus for Liturgy at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, gave an important lecture on the principles in question, entitled “*And Withhold Not Your Love From the Dead* (Sirach 7:33): Pastoral-Liturgical Reflections on the Commemoration of the Dead.” [The lecture was given in French, but a German version has been published

in: *Heiliger Dienst* 49 (1995), pp. 174-187. The reform and renewal of the suffrages was to fit with the theological view of death and eternal perfection adopted by Vatican II and the liturgical reform (eg. in the *Ordo Exsequiarum* of 1969 and the various vernacular editions). That is also the reason why the norms of 1995 were given a theological introduction.

The work of the Liturgical Commission was guided by six principles:

- a) The suffrages must be theologically founded and responsible, and must fit with current conditions.
- b) Since the liturgical reform increased the elements of prayer for the dead in the liturgy, these elements should be emphasized. The elements in question are the bidding prayers at Mass and Vespers (which were re-instated by the post-conciliar reform), the last petition of which should usually be for the departed. Another element (which was indeed already present before the reform) is the possibility of mentioning the name of the deceased in the Eucharistic Prayer.
- c) The universal Church's Commemoration of the Departed on November 2nd should be given more prominence. After all, all of our departed are included in that commemoration as well.
- d) Solemn Anniversaries should be reduced, following the examples of other orders.
- e) The "healthy" traditions of our Order ought to be preserved when possible.
- f) And in general: prayers are to be intensified, not multiplied.

Like other medieval orders, our Order had from the start a very extensive system of suffrages for the dead, which developed ever more over time. The prayers for the dead unfolded in a daily and yearly rhythm. At the meeting of the Liturgical Commission in Frauenthal, Dom Placide Vernet, O.C.S.O., a monk of Cîteaux and one of the foremost experts on the Cistercian liturgy, gave an extensive lecture on the cult of the departed in the Cistercian Use. [The lecture has been published in French: "Le culte des morts d'après les Us cistercien," in: *Liturgie* 94 (1995), pp. 220-242].

[Literature on the suffrages for the dead in the Cistercian Order: José MATTOSO, O culto dos mortos em Cister no tempo de S. Bernardo, in: IX centenário do nascimento de S. Bernardo. Encontros de Alcobaça e Simpósio de Lisboa. Actas. Braga 1991 (= Memorabilia Christiana 2), pp. 77-100; Alexander LIPP, Unsere Pflicht gegen die Verstorbenen, in: *Cistercienser-Chronik* 1 (1889), pp. 21-23, 30-31, 38-40, 46-48; (P.), Unsere Pflicht gegen die Verstorbenen, in: *Cistercienser-Chronik* 4 (1892), pp. 187-189; Gregor MÜLLER, Die vier grossen Ordens-Anniversarien, in: *Cistercienser-Chronik* 35 (1923), pp. 185-188; ders., Das tägliche Totenoffizium, in: *Cistercienser-Chronik* 31 (1919), pp. 33-40; idem., Vom Sterbelager bis zum Grabe, in: *Cistercienser-Chronik* 27 (1915), pp. 57-66, 126-131, 149-152, 174-180, 191-198, 215-221, 240-245, 269-273, 284-289; Chrysogonus WADDELL, A Long – a very Long – Parenthesis: The Cistercian Funeral Ritual of 1965, in: *Liturgy OCSO* 11/2 (1977), pp. 53-108].

I would like to make the following remarks on the particular points of the norms of the General Chapter of 1995:

1. The Reduction of Solemn Anniversaries to Two

Up to the General Chapter of 1995 we had four Solemn Yearly Commemorations of the Dead (*Anniversaria Sollemnia Pro Defunctis*, and *Officia Defunctorum Praecipua*) in the Cistercian Order. The beginnings of these could be traced back to the early days of our Order, but they had been modified as regards dates and themes in the course of the centuries. The universal Commemoration of all the Departed on November 2nd is already mentioned in the oldest *Usus* of the Order (the *Ecclesiastica Officia* of the 12th century). In addition four yearly commemorations for the Order were observed:

1. The Solemn Commemoration of departed parents and siblings [relatives, oblates, and benefactors], originally on November 20th (according the oldest *Usus* of the Order), later on the 18th of November. In 1965 it was moved to May 20th, but then it was moved again after the liturgical reform to June 20th.

2. The Solemn Commemoration of all the departed of the Order [including oblates and benefactors] of that year. This commemoration was introduced in the middle of the 12th century, and was originally celebrated after the General Chapter in Cîteaux on an at first undetermined day in September. Later the 18th of September was fixed on.

3. The solemn commemoration of departed [popes,] bishops, and abbots [and other superiors of the Order]. Established in the middle of the 12th century, this commemoration was originally celebrated on January 11th, but later moved to January 28th or 31st, and in 1965 to January 30th.

4. The General Chapter of 1350 introduced a further yearly commemoration on the 20th (later 21st) of May: *Pro personis regularibus ordinis nostri*. In 1965 this commemoration was moved to the 14th of November, the day after the Feast of All Saints of the Order, and broadened to include “All who fought [the good fight] under the Rule of St. Benedict.”

Since this dividing of the departed into categories (with some overlapping) appears odd to contemporary man, the General Chapter decided to reduce yearly commemorations to two. Since 1995, therefore, our Order has only two solemn yearly commemorations of the departed (in addition to All Souls’ Day) on which the office and all Masses are offered for the departed:

a) September 18th: Commemoration of all the departed of the preceding year from the whole Cistercian family.

Instead of merely the departed of our Order, the departed of the whole Cistercian Family are now commemorated. It has the rank of a solemnity: that means that there are three readings at Mass, and that if it cannot be celebrated on that day it must be moved to the next possible day. [Pater Coelestin’s Note: the *Missa Proprie O.Cist.* only includes one

reading for this day, taken from the Old Testament. I therefore propose that Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 be read as the epistle].

b) November 14th: Commemoration of all the departed who fought [the good fight] under the Rule of Our Father St. Benedict. The Office of this day ranks as a feast.

The Trappists, in their reform of 1971, abolished all four of the Order's commemorations, and concentrate their suffrages on November 2nd.

The most important point is that the General Chapter of 1995 explicitly authorized the particular congregations to make their own norms and take local customs into account. Thus the Chapter of the Congregation of Mehrerau decided to preserve the Commemoration of departed Parents and Siblings on June 20th, and to include the founders and benefactors of monasteries in that commemoration. In many, if not most, monasteries of our Order, the custom of celebrating a yearly anniversary for the founder of the monastery is preserved. In the Middle Ages, after all, monasteries were usually founded so that the prayer would be perpetually offered in them for their founders. Such anniversaries should by all means be preserved.

2. The abolition of the Tricenarium for the departed

For theological and practical reasons the General Chapter of 1995 abolished the 30 days of prayer for the departed, the *Tricenarium*, even though this custom was very ancient (witnessed to by the oldest *Usus* of our Order, the *Ecclesiastica Officia*). The Trappists had already abolished it in the 70s. The *Tricenarium* used to be solemnly begun on September 18th in chapter, and closed on October 17th after Compline. In these 30 days all members of the Order, especially those who were not priests, were given an almost unbearable burden of prayers: an entire Psalter or three Ways of the Cross daily. The main argument for abolishing the *Tricenarium* was the fact that the post-conciliar liturgical reform had introduced bidding prayers at Mass and Vespers, in which prayers for the departed could be offered. But our Order very deliberately decided to preserve the solemn Commemoration of the Departed on September 18th, and raise it to the rank of a solemnity.

3. The Preservation of the Officium Mensis

The monthly commemoration of the dead, the so-called *officium mensis* was introduced by the General Chapter of 1350. The idea was to reduce the number of the many particular anniversaries that had proliferated with time within the order and the particular monasteries by combining them in monthly commemorations. The General Chapter of 1995 preserved the *officium mensis*, but in a simplified form. The minimum is that the conventual Mass is applied to the departed. At certain times of the year (The Seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter), when it is not possible to celebrate Mass as a Requiem, or to pray the Office of the Dead, only this minimum is possible. At other times one can (though it is not obligatory!) celebrate a Requiem Mass and a pray a Votive Office of the Dead with the form of a Memorial. Each community is free as far as the precise

form of this office is concerned. But in every case the conventual Mass of this day must be applied to the dead (i.e. the Mass-intention must be for the dead). The Trappists too have preserved the *officium mensis*, leaving the date up to the abbot or abbess.

All the other norms of the General Chapter of 1995 do not seem to need any further comment. If questions arise, however, I will gladly answer them. The essential thing is that prayer and suffrages for the dead— which have been a matter close to the heart of our Order from its very earliest days— be reverently and intensely offered up, according to the words of Sirach: “And withhold not your love from the dead.” (Sirach 7:33).

Yours truly,

Frater Alberich M. Altermatt O.Cist.

[Translation: P. Edmund Waldstein O.Cist., Heiligenkreuz, Austria]