

*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

Encyclical Letter for the Liturgy 2017-1

Heiligenkreuz, July 23, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The year is progressing and we are already in the middle of 2017. I can report about many liturgical matters, such that it is once again time to write a letter.

Feedback on my last letter

I was asked to keep my letters shorter and to reduce them to the essentials. I will try to do that. If I am unsuccessful, I ask for your patience.

I received the following news from a monastery: “The brothers from Westmalle sent us 20 unbound antiphonaries and paid for the shipping! We are very grateful. A group of prisoners in a nearby prison works on the binding. They do a very good job for little money. Thus reaches Cistercian choral music behind even prison walls...”

Thesaurus Liturgiae O.Cist.

In 2015, the General Chapter sought to enable a better liturgical collaboration. There was the concrete desire for an internet database (Thesaurus) in which the individual communities can upload liturgical texts, books, notebooks, and documents, and so share them with others. This has been created. In addition, there is also the possibility to participate in a discussion forum on this new website. In this forum, members can ask, answer and discuss liturgical questions. The address is: [www.liturgia-ocist.org](http://www.liturgia-ocist.org). It is very user friendly. In order to use it, one must first register. After that, one can click on “Thesaurus” or “Forum”. **The rest is easy to discover on one’s own. If there is a problem, or if there are questions and suggestions for improvement, please contact me. I would ask that you share the information about this site with those who are interested in the liturgy or who work with the liturgy in your communities. It is also important that we actually take advantage of this service by using it. I look forward already to your cooperation. I have also invited members of other Orders to participate in this database (e.g. Trappists and Benedictines).**

Participatio actuosa in the Liturgy of the Hours

In its constitution on the liturgy, Vatican II says, “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right

and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the **primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit**" (Sacrosanctum concilium, 14).

This idea is repeated in The General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours, 33: "As often as the communal celebration may take place with the presence and active participation of the faithful, it is to be preferred to individual and quasi-private celebration. It is fitting that the Office both in choir and in common be sung, when this is possible, in accordance with the nature of each of its parts and the function of each participant." These rules are explicit and clear and should be taken to heart. It should, however, also be mentioned, that the tradition in our Order is very different.

In the architecture that is typical for our Order, the participation envisioned for outsiders is minimal. Moreover, early modern General Chapters disapproved all participation of lay persons in the Divine Office. These regulations have a deeper meaning. On the one hand, they respect the rule of enclosure, since the arrival of outsiders can inevitably involve a certain disturbance to the community. Even today one can notice in many places that the presence of guests at monastic prayer does not automatically ensure a "full, aware and active participation" – and it is central that this participation remains possible first and foremost for the members of the community.

How does one promote this "full, aware and active participation" in a common celebration with all the faithful (that is, with either other members of the order or other men and women from outside the community)? The mere "on looking" of visitors and tourists is neither desirable nor helpful for prayer – and yet this "on looking" can enable an encounter with the living God, which should not be denied to anyone. The beautiful thing about the Divine Office is that it remains open to everyone, even when someone is not able to receive the sacraments. Clearly, it should be possible for everyone who truly wants to pray to join the community in the Divine Office. Whether it is meaningful to sit such guests in choir stalls may be doubted, but one should nevertheless see about introducing them to the Liturgy of the Hours and about providing appropriate aids and books (with translations where necessary) to enable their participation – above all if they participate regularly. Many faithful speak about days in the monastery when they learned how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours and after which they began to pray them on their own. That is really a blessing for the Church. But the participation of the faithful should nevertheless not become a trouble or problem. In this respect, a community that is daily flooded with tourists or pilgrims will have other needs than a community that hosts guests for prayer only sporadically. Each community should find the approach that fits best for itself. An organ can facilitate singing together greatly. Finally, The General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours should be heeded: "The liturgy of the hours is then not seen as a beautiful memorial of the past demanding intact preservation as an object of admiration; rather it is seen as open to constantly new forms of life and growth and to being the unmistakable sign of a community's vibrant vitality" (Nr. 273).

News from the Church and the Order

The French-speaking Catholic bishops announced a new version of the Our Father. Instead of at Advent, the revised text will not be binding until Easter next year. The sentence, "Lead us not into temptation" is changed to, "And let us not be tempted" – all that obviously in French, not English. The other Christian churches in French-speaking Switzerland have welcomed the decision of the Catholic bishops. The new translation concerns all francophone countries except for Canada. It has

already been in force in Belgium since July 4. France will follow suit this year in December, and Switzerland in Easter 2018 (cf. Vatican Radio on 6/29/2017).

Fr. Nikolaj Aracki O.Cist. (Sticna) completed his doctorate in Liturgical Science this year at the Pontifical Atheneum of St. Anselm in Rome. He is now already teaching liturgy at the university in Ljubljana. Fr. Johannes Paul Chavanne O.Cist. (Heiligenkreuz) finished his doctorate in Liturgical Science this year at the University of Vienna, and he will soon teach liturgy at the Hochschule in Heiligenkreuz. We warmly congratulate both monks and wish them well in their new tasks. It makes me happy to know that our Order has two new experts in liturgy.

Sr. Pauline Klimachs O.Cist. (Helfta) asked me to relate the following: “I would like to make available to as many as possible the notes that we in recent years at Helfta have transcribed into GABC software. In this way, even small communities who only every now and again would like to sing a hymn or antiphon in Latin can print out a nice version for their choir booklets. Everything is found on <https://gregobase.selapa.net/>. The hymnal and the antiphonary from Westmalle are available for free as images on <http://splendorveritatis.org>.” I thank the sisters from Helfta for their tremendous work and I am glad if this work can help others.

On June 15, 2017, the Congregation for Divine Worship sent a letter recalling the regulations in place for bread and wine used for the celebration of the Eucharist: the bread for the celebration of the Eucharist “must be unleavened, purely of wheat, and recently made so that there is no danger of decomposition.” “The wine that is used in the most sacred celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice must be natural, from the fruit of the grape, pure and incorrupt, not mixed with other substances.” The letter refers to the current regulations in canon law (can. 924 CIC) and in the regulations for the Roman Missal (Nr. 48 & 50). In this letter, the Congregation for Divine Worship is trying to respond to the trend towards the industrialization and commercialization that is emerging in the production of hosts and wine for mass (and all its side effects). In fact, one wonders why many communities purchase their hosts and wine for mass from abroad, even though in many places there are vineyards that produce wine for mass (often these vineyards are managed by monasteries) and religious communities who run a bakery for hosts (like at Valley of Our Lady or Maigrange in our Order, for example). In this context, the Congregation for Divine Worship recalls the “honesty, responsibility and competence” needed for the preparation of bread and wine directed toward the celebration of the Eucharist – in other words, all that one would expect from a trustworthy bakery and vineyard. Incidentally, the Congregation speaks about “bread” and not about “hosts”. They also recall a letter in 2003 from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith about the use of bread with low gluten contents and of must (unfermented grape juice) as matter for the Eucharist. The use of hosts with low gluten or alcohol-free grape-must is allowed for those for whom it is medically necessary. Until now, technical reasons prevented one from producing hosts with less than 0.0008 grams [of gluten] without artificial additives. Now, there are even certain bakeries that offer gluten free hosts with a maximum of 0.002 grams for every 100 grams of flour. Eucharistic bread that has such a minimum amount of gluten fulfills the criteria of the Congregation may be used for mass in the Catholic Church, since it counts as wheat bread. However, commercially available gluten-free wafers made from potato starch, which do not contain any gluten and thus no wheat flour, do not correspond to these liturgical regulations and may not be used in the Catholic Church. Those who are unable to receive Communion in the species of low-gluten bread have the possibility to receive under the species of wine (cf. Information des Liturgiereferates der Erzdiözese Wien).

The Secretary for the Liturgy of OSCO made me aware of some things that can be used for the current Feast of St. Mary Magdalene. These are approved for the Anglican Ordinariate and in the *Thesaurus Liturgiæ Horarum Monasticæ* (Romae 1977): Vigil: 1. Nocturn Ps 6, 13, 16 (Hebrew numbering); Reading: Ex 15,1-21, 2 (or: Zeph 3,14-20). Nocturn Ps 30, 42 & 43, 63; 3. Nocturn Canticle 1 Sam 2,1-10 (or: Jdt 9,11-14). Vesper: Ps 111, 116 (= Vulgata Ps 114&115), 139. Laudes: Short Reading Isa 30,18-21; Sext: Short Reading Wis 1,1b-2, Vesper: Short Reading 2 Cor 1,3-7. Alternative readings for each hour: Ruth 1,6-18; 1 Sam 16,14-23; Isa 25,1-9; Acts 13,26-33a; Acts 16,13-18; 1 Cor 1,26-31.

The Congregation for Divine Worship has allegedly worked on a new instruction for translations, one which would abrogate the somewhat controversial instruction *Liturgiam authenticam*. Other voices suggest that this new instruction will be only a supplement to the other. The draft of this text is allegedly under consideration by the Holy Father. For the moment, this means that translation projects currently in progress should wait, lest their work be doubled after the publication of the new instruction.

Likewise, the Congregation for Divine Worship is working at this time on a new draft of the cycle of readings for vigils of the second year. It is already available in several languages, but not yet in the Latin *Liturgia Horarum* (editio typica). It would be nice if thereby some standardization to the readings for vigils was reached in the language groups within the Church and the Order. This would also be advantageous for a decision about antiphons in the office, which refer to the readings at vigils. This is the long overdue task for Volume 5 of the *Liturgia Horarum*, which has been available since the reform of the liturgy. Perhaps official psalm prayers will also finally be published with this book.

The Mehrerau Congregation has published a new German translation of the Proper Masses of the Cistercian Order ("**Eigenmessen des Zisterzienserordens**"), for which the Austrian Congregation was also responsible. The text was reworked and translated by M. Hildegard Brem O.Cist. (Mariastern-Gwigggen) and Fr. Alberich Altermatt (Hauterive/Eschenbach). This book can be ordered from Be&Be-Verlag Heiligenkreuz at +43 / 2258-8703-400; or at [bestellung@klosterladen-heiligenkreuz.at](mailto:bestellung@klosterladen-heiligenkreuz.at); or online at <http://www.bebeverlag.at>. Thanks go to all who worked on this project.

#### Activities of the Secretary for the Liturgy

The synod of the Order met in Rome from July 4-7, 2017. On July 6, I was there – as is foreseen in the statutes for the Secretary of the Liturgy – to give a report on the activities of the Secretary of the Liturgy. There was a lot to discuss. I was very pleased with the lively interest of the synod members, and I hope that we can prepare the relevant topics well for the General Chapter in 2020.

Progress is being made on the new Gradual. Thanks goes first and foremost to the sisters of Boulaur, who have taken this project up with great dedication. Because this project can be done meaningfully only with the help of experts in music, and because it requires several expenditures generally, we are dependent upon financial support. If you are able to support this wonderful project, feel free to contact me.

The preparation of a new breviary continues to develop into a team project involving more and more communities. Further helpers and collaborators are still very welcome.

As is known, the reworking of the Cistercian Calendar is also underway. Regarding this project, if there are any suggestions, desires or ideas in the individual communities, please do not hesitate to share them.

From September 27-30, 2018, there will be a meeting in the Monastery of Lilienfeld (Austria) for those responsible for the liturgy in German-speaking areas. The meeting will be held under the title, “**Liturgy in the Cistercian Order: Promotion, Renewal, Praxis**”. Teachers of liturgy, masters of ceremony and cantors from OCist, OCSC and OSB are invited. For the sake of simplicity, the meeting is limited to German-speaking areas. But it would be very desirable, if similar events could take place in other language areas. Further information will be sent out in time. At this point, I ask that this event be publicized in the communities and, if opportune, that the date be reserved.

### Answers to Questions

I would like to answer select questions from among those I recently received. In the future, I will do the same for others. In general, for this I would like to invite everyone to use the new online forum. Of course, I am still happy to answer any liturgical question that is sent to me personally.

#### ■ When may an abbess use the crosier? When should it be used?

First, I would like to emphasize that in the Latin version of the Roman Pontifical (*editio typica*) the crosier was eliminated from the consecration of an abbess. This means that the abbess no longer receives a crosier. In many “translations” it nevertheless remains. Thankfully, the crosier for abbesses was also saved in the *Rituale Cisterciense* (1998) of our Order. The crosier of an abbess is a beautiful and important symbol and should actually be used. There are very few instructions in liturgical books about the crosier for abbesses. According to the *Rituale Cisterciense* (1998), the crosier can stand at the place of the abbess during a solemn profession and she can hold it during the questioning (siting); she can hold it during the announcement of a professorship; during the transfer of the body of a sister into the church and from there to its grave (standing behind the casket); and during the presentation (*Überreichung*) at the consecration of abbesses (where it is immediately handed over again). Since there are no instructions for how the abbess carries the crosier, it is reasonable to carry it like an abbot (or bishop): in the left hand, the elbow (spiral) forward, without gloves, and if need be with *Pannisellus* (*Sudarium*). Other sources foresee the crosier also for the introduction of a woman into the enclosure (into the choir), at an election (confirmation or installation), during the return to choir (*clausura*) after the blessing of an abbess). One commentator thinks that in this regard there are many individual traditions in each monastery. From time to time, abbots are very creative in this regard and find occasions to carry the crosier where it is not actually foreseen – such a creativity should not be seen negatively with abbesses either.

#### ■ Can nuns serve as altar servers during the conventual mass?

Can. 230 CIC establishes that “All lay persons can also perform the functions of commentator or cantor, or other functions, according to the norm of law.” In the *Instructio generalis missalis romani* it says, “Among those Masses celebrated by some communities, moreover, the conventual Mass, which is a part of the daily Office, or the community Mass, has a particular place. Although such Masses do not have a special form of celebration, it is nevertheless most proper that they be celebrated with singing, especially with the full participation of all members of the community,

whether of religious or of canons. In these Masses, therefore, individuals should exercise the office proper to the Order or ministry they have received. It is appropriate, therefore, that all the priests who are not bound to celebrate individually for the pastoral benefit of the faithful concelebrate at the conventual or community Mass in so far as it is possible” (Nr. 114). Since what is discussed here is the integration of an entire community in the liturgy of a monastery of men, it would be logically consistent, in my opinion, for sisters also to participate as lectors and altar servers, insofar as they are suited and prepared for such services. Carrying a processional cross, incense, candles, candles, offertory gifts, and other such things, are neither bound to holy orders nor to a special commission. These can conveniently be performed in our normal choir vestments (cuculla or cappa/pallium). Elsewhere in the *Instructio*, it says: “At the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist the gifts, which will become Christ’s Body and Blood, are brought to the altar. First, the altar, the Lord’s table, which is the center of the whole Liturgy of the Eucharist, is prepared by placing on it the corporal, purificator, Missal, and chalice (unless the chalice is prepared at the credence table). The offerings are then brought forward. It is praiseworthy for the bread and wine to be presented by the faithful. They are then accepted at an appropriate place by the priest or the deacon and carried to the altar. Even though the faithful no longer bring from their own possessions the bread and wine intended for the liturgy as in the past, nevertheless the rite of carrying up the offerings still retains its force and its spiritual significance.” The “faithful” named here could or even should be sisters – above all if no ministers or other faithful take up this service.

■ Can individual hours of the Office be omitted when there are larger celebrations of the mass (such as masses combined with large processions, professions or ordinations)?

In principle, the superior of a community is entitled to dispense individual (or several) members of a community from the Liturgy of Hours. This can of course also happen for the entire community, and in certain situations such dispensation is truly sensible. There is no precise regulation for this. On November 15, 2000 The Congregation for Divine Worship sent a letter to the German bishops conference in response to a question about the obligatory performance of the Liturgy of the Hours (Prot. N. 2330/00/L). The letter concerns diocesan priests, but it can be used in this situation as well *mutatis mutandis*. An important passage from this letter should be cited here: “Question: Does the strict obligation apply to the performance of the entire Liturgy of Hours? Answer: The following must be observed: a) the obligation to pray the Liturgy of Hours can be excused partially or entirely for a serious reason – such as an illness, a pastoral service, the exercise of charitable works or fatigue – but not for a slight inconvenience: there is no merely positive law of the Church that obliges, when there is a grave inconvenience; b) the partial or entire omission of the Liturgy of Hours on account of laziness or an unnecessary relaxation is not only not allowed, it is even malice – according to the gravity of the matter – against the ministerial office and against the positive law of the Church; c) the reasons which excuse the obligation to pray lauds and vespers must be serious, since these prayers are “two hinges on which the daily office turns” (Sacrosanctum concilium 89); d) if a priest must celebrate several masses or hear confessions for several hours or preach several times in one day, and if all this fatigues him, then he can judge for himself with a calm conscience whether there is a just reason to omit a proportional amount of the Liturgy of Hours; 3) the ordinarius of the priest or deacon can, if there is a just or serious reason, dispense, partly or wholly, from the fulfillment of the Liturgy of Hours, or permit them to convert the obligation into other pious exercises (for example, the rosary, the stations of the cross, Bible readings, other spiritual readings or a certain reasonably extended time of prayer, and so on).

¶ Are lauds omitted on Easter Sunday, if the Easter Night Mass is celebrated into the early morning hours?

Lauds is the moment of the day in which the Church recalls the resurrection of our Lord in a special way. The Easter Night Mass is a vigil and so takes the place of the Easter Vigil, but not lauds. According to the document cited above, lauds and vespers should in no way be omitted lightly. Generally speaking, it should not be a rule to omit hours on feasts, because these feasts bring more intensity than normal days.

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to thank everyone who looks after the liturgy in our monasteries. I happily stand ready to help wherever I can.

With fraternal greetings,

Your,

Br. Coelestin Nebel, O.Cist.

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[Translatio: P. John Bayer O.Cist., Dallas]