

Liturgical Secretariat OCist
Liturgical Commission OCSO
Legal Secretariat OCist

Liturgy in Cistercian Monasteries
An overview of the most important liturgical facts

Just as our Cistercian monasteries throughout the world are places where very different people and groups come together, so too our liturgical celebrations now include participants with varied habits, backgrounds, and traditions.

Contrary to the “Cistercian myth” of an original unanimity, it is good to recognize that “boredom was born one day out of uniformity,” while it is charity in simplicity that unites us beyond legitimate differences.

At the same time, we must carefully safeguard our communion, especially in our relationship with the local churches and their own liturgical practices.

The text presented here — *The Liturgy in Cistercian Monasteries*, the fruit of the work of the Cistercian Liturgical Commission (CLC, established jointly by delegation of the General Chapters of the OCist and the OCSO) — has as its sole aim the fostering of these good *mutuae relationes* (“mutual relations”).

In the service of true communion, this document recalls, while outlining its contours according to tradition, how the encounter between the legitimate authority of the Church which presides (through its books and ministers, *Ecclesia Mater et Magistra*) and the pastoral orientation proper to our monastic life and traditions can be lived harmoniously.

There is here an ecclesiological challenge in the service of authentic communion. This requires the commitment not only of monks and nuns, but also of bishops and ministers who work for the good of our communities.

This challenge was emphasized by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi* (June 29, 2022), no. 31:

“... It would be trivial to consider the tensions, unfortunately present around the celebration, as a simple divergence between different sensibilities towards a ritual form. The problem is above all ecclesiological...”

The question of the time and “power” of presidency, on the part of the clergy, can sometimes be a source of suffering in our Cistercian monastic communities. This applies especially to communities of nuns, though not only to them, since there are also houses of monks where priestly ministry is now lacking.

For this reason, we wished to provide this kind of *vademecum* — a “code of good conduct” — for the use of our communities as well as for priests, deacons, and bishops called to preside in our monasteries. It should also serve superiors, liturgy leaders, masters of ceremonies, and sacristans.

It will be very useful to refer to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM, nos. 352–363). While many elements are left to the discretion of the priest, he who comes as a servant must inquire of the community he serves about the pastoral choices it has legitimately made. In this way, he will cooperate in safeguarding the dignity proper to the celebration — a dignity which belongs above all to the community celebrating.

To take just one example: if the cenobitic community informs the celebrant that there is no homily during the week, the celebrant should accept this, understanding that monks and nuns also live an intense rhythm of *lectio divina* and receive daily instruction from the abbot or abbess. Conversely, if he is asked to provide the service of preaching, the community should inform him in good time, indicating clearly which celebration is taking place that day and which scriptural texts are to be used — especially if the readings or feast differ from what the celebrant might otherwise expect.

“Indeed, a harmonious order and execution of the rites greatly helps to dispose the minds of the faithful to participate in the Eucharist” (GIRM, end of no. 352).

So that in all things God may be glorified.

The members of the Cistercian Liturgical Commission
Abbazia di Valsereina, September 2024

A. Preliminary remark:

This brief overview is intended to help readers better understand the legal structure and liturgical competencies within the Cistercian Order. It is limited to monasteries that celebrate according to the Roman Latin Rite and are therefore governed by the CIC¹². All references to liturgical books are taken from the Latin Editio typica, which may differ from local-language editions.

This text is meant as a guide for those interested in the subject. It is a working document of the joint OCist–OCSO Liturgical Commission and does not constitute an official document of the Order.

B. Legal status of the Cistercian Orders:

The Cistercian Orders (*Ordo Cisterciensis* (Ocist) and its Congregations; *Ordo Cisterciensis Strictioris Observantiae* (OCSO)) are monastic religious institutes³ under papal law,⁴ which largely have a clerical structure and are also sometimes explicitly referred to as clerical institutes in their respective constitutions.

¹ Can. 1 CIC. All canons cited here refer to the CIC/1983.

² The information from the Constitutions of the OCist does not apply to the OCSO and vice versa. It may serve as inspiration in some cases. Please refer carefully to the sources in the footnotes.

³ Can. 588 – 2. Can. 596 – 1. Superiors and chapters of institutes have authority over their members as defined in general law and in the constitutions. § 2. In clerical institutes of pontifical right, they also have ecclesiastical authority for both external and internal matters.

⁴ Cf. Can. 589.

The General Abbot OCist is the supreme leader (*supremus moderator*) of the OCist and of all monasteries of the OCist that do not belong to a congregation⁵. The General Abbot OCSO is the supreme leader (*supremus moderator*) of the OCSO⁶. In the monasteries of the OCist that belong to a congregation, the respective Abbot President or Abbess President, assumes the function of supreme leader (*supremus moderator*)⁷. For some monasteries, a *pater immediatus* has been appointed (or is ex officio)⁸, exercising an intermediary role between the leadership of the Order or congregation and the monasteries concerned, in accordance with the provisions of the constitutions.

The head of an autonomous/independent monastery *sui iuris* is: the abbot, the abbess, the administrator, the conventual prior, the conventual prioress. They exercise the office of major superior (*superior maior*)⁹. Dependent monasteries (pries or residences) are headed by a house superior (*cloistral prior* or *cloistral prioress*), but always in accordance with the instructions of the competent major superior. They are responsible for organizing the liturgy within their jurisdiction in accordance with the provisions of the Constitutions¹⁰, considering the liturgical norms of the universal Church, the General Chapter, and the Order's own law, as well as those of the Episcopal Conference and the diocesan bishop^{11, 12}.

Like all religious orders, the Cistercians form a part of the local church in which they live out their special monastic vocation¹³. For centuries, the *Carta Caritatis* has regulated the basic legal structure of the Cistercians through general chapters, filiation, and visitations. With papal confirmation, the Church recognized the order's legitimate autonomous structure¹⁴. This was confirmed and expanded several times in the first decades of the order through further bulls. Thus, what later came to be known as *exemption* was gradually achieved and now applies to almost all religious orders: they are exempt from the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishops¹⁵. This was most recently defined by the Second Vatican Council¹⁶. Accordingly, the CIC provides in can. 678, § 1: "Members of religious orders are subject to

⁵ Cf. Constitutions OCist art. 79.

⁶ Cf. c. 82.6, Constitutions OCSO.

⁷ Cf. Can. 1405 – § 2. Cf. Constitutions OCist art. 36

⁸ See Constitutions OCist art. 46.

⁹ Can. 620: "Superiors major are those who govern an entire institute or a province or a part of it equivalent to a province, or a juridically independent establishment; the same applies to their vicars. To these are added the Abbot Primate and the superiors of a monastic congregation, who, however, do not have the full power granted by general law to superiors major." Can. 596: "In clerical institutes of religious life of pontifical right, they also have ecclesiastical power of governance in matters both external and internal."

¹⁰ Cf. Can. 596.

¹¹ Cf. Constitutions OCSO C.ST 17.1.A.

¹² If there are several options in the liturgy, the decision should always be made based on pastoral considerations and the needs of the specific community. If the liturgical texts are approved by the Church for our Order, it is advisable to give them preference.

¹³ See Constitutions OCSO C.32.

¹⁴ See Can. 586 in conjunction with Can. 593. Both the *Carta Caritatis* and the current legal norms (see Can. 733 – §1) require the written consent of the diocesan bishop in the case of a new foundation of a monastery. This implicitly recognizes the Order's own law.

¹⁵ See *introduction to the bulls* in: BREM H., ALTERMATT A. (eds.), *Einmütig in der Liebe, Die frühesten Quellentexte von Cîteaux*, Langwaden 1998, 219-229.

¹⁶ "The exemption by which the Pope or another ecclesiastical authority draws religious persons to himself and exempts them from the jurisdiction of the bishops concerns above all the internal order of the associations. The aim is to ensure that everything within them is better coordinated and connected, thus promoting growth and progress in the monastic way of life; furthermore, that the Pope may dispose of them for the good of the entire Church, while another competent authority may do so for the good of the churches within its own jurisdiction. This exemption does not, however, exclude the fact that religious in individual dioceses are subject to the jurisdiction of the bishops in accordance with the law, insofar as the exercise of their pastoral ministry and the orderly care of souls require this" (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree *Christus Dominus*, on the pastoral office of bishops, No. 35.3). See also *ibid.*, nos. 33–35.

the authority of the bishops, whom they must obey with faithful obedience and reverence in matters concerning pastoral care, the public celebration of divine worship, and other works of the apostolate¹⁷". "We wish to show obedience and reverence to the Pope and the bishops as the successors of the apostles and to assist them insofar as we can and must, in accordance with our vocation"¹⁸.

C. The ecclesiological dimension of episcopal liturgy:

The office of the bishop in the life of the local Church is—although it is also a legal one—above all an ecclesiological one¹⁹, whereby the liturgy celebrated by the bishop becomes the most outstanding and visible expression of the inner sacramental constitution of the Church²⁰ : ²¹"In the bishop, see the high priest of his flock, from whom the life of his faithful in Christ in a sense proceeds and depends. Therefore, all should hold in high esteem the liturgical life of the diocese, at the center of which stands the bishop, especially in the cathedral church; ²²they should be convinced that the Church is made visible in an excellent way when the entire holy people of God participate fully and actively in the same liturgical celebrations, especially in the same celebration of the Eucharist: in the unity of prayer and at the one altar, presided over by the bishop, who is surrounded by his presbyterate and the ministers of the altar."²³"

"The celebration of the Eucharist is an action of Christ and of the Church, that is, of the holy people, united and ordered under the bishop. Therefore, it concerns the whole body of the Church, makes it visible, and affects it; but its individual members come into contact with it in different ways, according to the diversity of their states, tasks, and actual participation."²⁴ "In this way, the Christian people, 'the chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people God has acquired' (²⁵), make visible its organic and hierarchical order. Therefore, all, whether they are ordained ministers or faithful lay people, in the exercise of their office or task, must do only what belongs to them and all that belongs to them (²⁶)" (²⁷).

¹⁷ The canon is related to the apostolate. It is not primarily concerned with the celebration of the liturgy IN a monastic community, but with cases where members of religious orders celebrate the liturgy in the diocese. If, for example, they celebrate the liturgy in a parish of the diocese ("public celebration," i.e., in a church, thus accessible to the faithful, and not in a cloistered chapel), they must follow the rite of the universal Church and not their own approved rites.

The word "*exemption*" does not appear in the CIC, only "*eximere potest*," cf. Can. 591.

¹⁸ Declaration of the General Chapter 2000 of the Cistercian Order (OCist), No. 125.

¹⁹ See Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* by Pope John Paul II, No. 9: The Council finally wanted to see in the liturgy an epiphany of the Church itself: she is the Church in prayer. In the celebration of divine worship, the Church expresses what she is: a holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. She reveals herself as corresponding to the unity that comes to her from the Trinity, [Cf. Roman Missal, Preface for Sundays in Ordinary Time, VIII], especially when the holy people of God 'participate in the same Eucharistic celebration: in the unity of prayer and at the one altar, presided over by the bishop surrounded by his presbyterate and the ministers of the altar' [*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 41]. Nothing in the liturgy should break or impair this unity of the Church! [...] The Church [finally] is apostolic in the liturgy because the faith she professes is based on the testimony of the Apostles; because, in the celebration of the mysteries, presided over by the bishop, the successor of the apostles, or by a minister ordained in apostolic succession, she faithfully transmits what she has received from apostolic tradition; because the worship she offers to God obliges her to spread the Gospel throughout the world.

²⁰ This liturgical-ecclesiological function of the episcopal ministry is also expressed by the fact that diocesan bishops (and cardinals) have the exclusive right to be buried in churches (cf. can. 1242).

²¹ This refers to the diocesan bishop.

²² Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Magn.* 7; *Ad Phil.* 4; *Ad Smyrn.* 8: ed. F. X. Funk, op. cit. I 236 266 281.

²³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 41.

²⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 26.

²⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 14.

²⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 28.

²⁷ *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, No. 91.

D. Responsibilities:

Based on the aforementioned legal structures and ecclesiological foundations, the following responsibilities pertain to the celebration of the liturgy in Cistercian monasteries:

I. Diocesan bishop (or diocesan administrator, or apostolic administrator) = Local ordinary²⁸ (within his diocese):

- a. "If the bishop²⁹ is present at a Mass where the people are gathered, it is highly appropriate that he himself celebrates the Eucharist and gathers the priests around him as concelebrants in the sacred action. This is not done to increase the external solemnity of the rite, but to manifest more clearly the mystery of the Church, which is the 'sacrament of unity'³⁰ "31.
- b. He presides over monastic liturgies when invited. On such occasions, he may use the episcopal pontificals (including the pallium, if he is entitled to it). Other bishops may use the pontificals only with the permission of the diocesan bishop³².
- c. He is responsible for the public celebration of the liturgy³³ in accordance with the norms of the Church³⁴ and he issues liturgical regulations³⁵ (when necessary, in collaboration with the bishops' conference).
- d. "It is the right of the diocesan bishop to issue norms for the liturgy within the Church entrusted to him, within the limits of his competence, and these norms are binding on all."³⁶
- e. "Churches and chapels that are regularly frequented by the faithful [...] may be visited by the diocesan bishop [...]. If the diocesan bishop discovers any irregularities, he may, after a warning to the superior of the religious order has proved ineffective, take measures himself by his own authority"³⁷.
- f. He administers the sacrament of ordination when invited, and when a letter of dismissal from the superior is available.³⁸
- g. If a church is owned by the monastery, the diocesan bishop appoints its rector on the recommendation of the superior³⁹.
- h. He grants his written consent for the establishment of churches⁴⁰.
- i. Blessings whose significance transcends the monastic community and are relevant to the religious life of the local church are usually reserved for the bishop, who may, however, be represented⁴¹.

²⁸ The Pope, the Vicar General, and the respective Vicar Bishop are also referred to as "local ordinary" (cf. Can. 134). When referring to liturgical functions in the following, this refers to the diocesan bishop or diocesan administrator. The higher superiors in clerical institutes of pontifical right are "ordinaries" but not "local ordinaries."

²⁹ The text refers here in general to the "bishop" – it is therefore not necessarily limited to the diocesan bishop, although it applies to him in a special way.

³⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 26.

³¹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, No. 92.

³² Cf. can. 390.

³³ Can. 678 – § 1; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 22 – §§ 1-2.

³⁴ Cf. Can. 839 – § 2.

³⁵ See Can. 733 – § 4

³⁶ Can. 838.

³⁷ Can. 683. See also Instruction *Redemptionis sacramentum* of March 25, 2025, nos. 176-188.184.

³⁸ See Can. 1019 – 1, provided that the diocesan administrator, vicar general, or episcopal vicars are of the rank of bishop.

³⁹ See Can. 557 – § 2.

⁴⁰ See Can. 1215 – 3. The diocesan bishop is expressly mentioned in Can. 1215, i.e., the vicar general would need a special mandate for this (see Can. 134 – 3).

⁴¹ See *De Benedictionibus, editio typica* (1984), nos. 16-19.

- j. ⁴²⁴³He consecrates churches, chapels, and altars⁴⁴ , and blesses churches⁴⁵ , unless he delegates this responsibility to another bishop, abbot, or priest⁴⁶.
- k. He is to be consulted regarding new buildings, renovations, and the furnishing of sacred buildings and he may issue guidelines in this matter⁴⁷.
- l. He blesses cemeteries, unless he delegates this responsibility to another bishop, abbot, or priest⁴⁸.
- m. He determines the procedure to be followed in the event of the desecration of holy places⁴⁹.
- n. He crowns images of the Blessed Virgin Mary, unless he delegates this responsibility to another bishop, abbot, or priest⁵⁰.
- o. He blesses newly elected abbots and abbesses, unless the respective abbot general has been invited to preside. He may also delegate this authority to another bishop or abbot⁵¹.
- p. He regulates the celebration of services of the Word, which, in certain cases, may take the place of the celebration of Mass⁵².
- q. The (solemn) profession is always received by the superior of the community or his representative. If the superior is not a priest, the priestly functions are ordinarily exercised by the competent abbot president/father abbot, who may also authorize the diocesan bishop to act in his place⁵³.
- r. He consecrates and blesses the holy oils used in the monastic liturgy⁵⁴.
- s. He administers the sacrament of confirmation and may delegates abbots or priests to act in his place⁵⁵.
- t. He grants faculties for the sacrament of penance throughout his diocese, which then applies universally, unless prohibited by the abbot⁵⁶. Each local ordinary can revoke these faculties within his own jurisdiction⁵⁷.
- u. He appoints priests to the office of exorcist⁵⁸.
- v. He authorizes places for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament⁵⁹.
- w. He arranges public worship of the Eucharist, such as the Corpus Christi procession⁶⁰.
- x. He is named in the Eucharistic Prayer, together with his auxiliary bishops, if applicable⁶¹.

⁴² Different legal regulations and liturgical rites apply to the "simple" blessing of these liturgical places than to the "solemn" consecration, which is the prerogative of the bishop.

⁴³ See Can. 1207; see The Consecration of a Church, Pastoral Introduction No. 2.

⁴⁴ Cf. The Celebration of the Consecration of Altars, Pastoral Introduction, No. 12.

⁴⁵ See Can. 1207.

⁴⁶ For delegation in general, cf. Can. 131 – §§ 1 – 3 Can. 142 – §§ 1 – 2.

⁴⁷ See *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, No. 292.

⁴⁸ Cf. *De Benedictionibus, editio typica* (1984), No. 839.

⁴⁹ See Can. 1211

⁵⁰ See The Celebration of the Coronation of an Image of Mary, Pastoral Introduction No. 8.

⁵¹ Cf. The Consecration of an Abbot, Introduction No. 2; cf. The Consecration of an Abbess, Introduction No. 2.

⁵² Cf. Can. 1248. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 35.4.

⁵³ Cf. *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 100.

⁵⁴ Cf. Can. 847 – 1; The Celebration of the Chrism Mass, Pastoral Introduction No. 6.

⁵⁵ See Can. 882.

⁵⁶ See Can. 969.

⁵⁷ See Can. 974.

⁵⁸ See Can. 1172 – 1.

⁵⁹ See Can. 934 – 1 2°. Only if Can. 608 is not already fulfilled.

⁶⁰ See Can. 944.

⁶¹ See *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, No. 149.

- y. He grants Cistercian priests the authority to celebrate Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal and determines the time and place for its celebration⁶².
- z. With the exception of ordination, all these faculties are exercised by the abbot or delegated by him in a territorial abbey⁶³.

II. The Abbot General:

- a. He ordinarily presides over the most important celebrations in the life of the Order.
- b. He enjoys the use of pontificals in all monasteries of the Order for the duration of his term of office, without the need to request permission⁶⁴.
- c. He appoints lectors and acolytes at the request of the respective superior⁶⁵.
- d. He has the authority to bless newly elected abbots and abbesses⁶⁶.
- e. In the OCist, he publishes liturgical books for use throughout the Order⁶⁷.
- f. In the OCSO, he may dispense a community from one or two minor hours, acting with consultative advice⁶⁸.

III. The Abbot President or Father Abbot or *Pater Immediatus*:

- a. In monasteries where the superior is not a priest, the Abbot President or Abbot General assumes the function of Ordinary and exercises the following duties:
 - i. He issues the decree concerning the desecration of churches and chapels⁶⁹.
 - ii. He authorizes additional places for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, but only for a just cause⁷⁰.
 - iii. In individual cases, he may dispense from the obligation of the Liturgy of the Hours⁷¹. Otherwise, this competence belongs to the Abbot President, Father Abbot, or *Pater Immediatus*.
- b. He ordinarily presides over the principal liturgical celebrations in the life of the monastic community entrusted to him, unless the Abbot General or the local bishop has been invited to preside.
- c. He enjoys the use of pontificals in all monasteries entrusted to him for the duration of his term of office, without the need to request permission⁷².

⁶² Motu Proprio *Tratitiones custodes* by Pope Francis of July 16, 2021, Art. 3 §§ 2–4.

⁶³ See Can. 370.

⁶⁴ Cf. Motu proprio *Pontificalia insignia* of Pope Paul VI on the reform of the use of pontifical insignia of June 21, 1968, No. 3. Even if the pontifical insignia are carried by a person who has not received episcopal ordination, this must always be done in the manner described in *the Cæremoniale Episcoporum* (cf. Motu proprio *Pontificales ritus* of Pope Paul VI on the simplification of pontifical rites and insignia of June 21, 1968, Introduction in conjunction with Nos. 38-39).

⁶⁵ Cf. Constitutions of the Cistercian Order, art. 85 – b.

⁶⁶ See Constitutions of the Cistercian Order, art. 85 lit. a; *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 203.

⁶⁷ See Constitutions of the Cistercian Order, art. 83 lit. g.

⁶⁸ See Constitutions of the Cistercian Order of Strict Observance, ST 19.2.C.

⁶⁹ See Can. 1212.

⁷⁰ See Can. 936.

⁷¹ See Can. 85. See Constitutions OCSO ST 19.2.B. See Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 97.

⁷² See Motu proprio *Pontificalia insignia* by Pope Paul VI on the reform of the use of pontifical insignia of June 21, 1968, No. 3. Even if the pontifical insignia are worn by a person who has not received episcopal ordination, this must always be done in the manner described in *the Cæremoniale Episcoporum* (cf. Motu proprio *Pontificales ritus* of Pope Paul VI on the simplification of pontifical rites and insignia of June 21, 1968, Introduction in conjunction with Nos. 38-39).

- d. The solemn profession is always received by the superior of the community or by his delegate. If he is not a priest, the priestly functions are usually exercised by the competent abbot president/father abbot, who can also authorize the diocesan bishop act in his place⁷³.
- e. If the constitutions so provide, he presides over the election of an abbot or abbess⁷⁴ and he confirms and installs one elected – in this case, he also presides over the votive Mass of the Holy Spirit⁷⁵.
- f. If the constitutions so provide, he conducts the regular visitation. During the visitation, he assumes the place of the abbot in the choir and chapter.⁷⁶

IV. The abbot (or administrator, conventual prior) with priestly ordination = Ordinarius:

- a. He is the principal liturgist of the monastic community and therefore ordinarily presides over the most important celebrations of the liturgical year (e.g., Easter Triduum)⁷⁷, of the life of the monastic community (e.g., festive solemnities), and of its members (e.g., profession ceremonies)⁷⁸, unless he invites the Abbot General or local bishop or delegates another priest.
- b. The superior of the house shall ensure that every member of the community enjoys freedom in the choice of his/her confessor.⁷⁹
- c. He grants authority to any priest for hearing the confessions of his subjects and of others who habitually reside in the monastery. In certain cases, he also has the right to revoke these faculties⁸⁰.
- d. He grants or refuses permission, in accordance with the law, for the celebration of the Eucharist, the administration of the sacraments, and other ecclesiastical acts in a church or chapel of the monastery⁸¹.
- e. He may dispense from the obligation of the Liturgy of the Hours in individual cases⁸².
- f. He organizes the liturgical celebrations of the monastic community and ensures that they are conducted with dignity, in accordance with the norms of the Church.
- g. He enjoys the use of pontificals in his own monastery and, moreover, in all monasteries of the Order, in accordance with the provisions of the superior general⁸³.

⁷³ Cf. *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 203; *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 100, 116f.; cf. Constitutions OCSO (nuns) C.74.3.; cf. Constitutions OCist Art. 32 lit. m.

⁷⁴ Can. 170: "An election whose freedom has been in any way impaired is invalid by law."

⁷⁵ Cf. *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 199-215.

⁷⁶ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Lérins 1892, 558.

⁷⁷ In accordance with the tradition of the Order, the abbot presides over the following liturgies ("in a solemn manner"): (1) Mass: Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, Easter Triduum, Solemnity of Pentecost, Assumption of Mary, all prescribed solemn commemorations of the dead. (2) Blessings: of candles (February 2), of ashes (Ash Wednesday), of palms (Palm Sunday), of fire (Easter Vigil). (3) Vespers: Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, Solemnity of Pentecost, Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary, Solemnity of the Dedication of the Church. (4) Other: Washing of feet/Mandatum (Maundy Thursday), sprinkling of the members of the community with holy water (daily after Compline). Cf. *Rituale Cisterciense*, Lérins 1892, 415-416, 575.

⁷⁸ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 102f., 108f., 116f.

⁷⁹ See Can. 630 – § 1-2.

⁸⁰ See Can. 974.

⁸¹ See Can. 561.

⁸² See Can. 85. See Constitutions OCSO ST 19.2.B. See Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 97.

⁸³ Cf. *Motu proprio Pontificalia insignia* of Pope Paul VI on the reform of the use of pontifical insignia of June 21, 1968, No. 3. Even if the pontifical insignia are carried by a person who has not received episcopal ordination, this must always be done in the manner described in *the Cæremoniale Episcoporum* (cf. *Motu proprio Pontificales ritus* of Pope Paul VI on the simplification of pontifical rites and insignia of June 21, 1968, Introduction in conjunction with Nos. 38-39).

- h. He clothes novices and admits members to profession, unless he delegates this responsibility⁸⁴.
- i. He assigns members of his community to serve as lectors or acolytes⁸⁵.
- j. He presides over parts of the funeral service in accordance with *Cistercian rituals*, unless he delegates this responsibility⁸⁶.
- k. He is responsible for the commemoration of the deceased within his community⁸⁷.
- l. He grants his consent for the establishment of chapels⁸⁸.
- m. Blessings of particular significance for the religious life of the monastic community are ordinarily reserved to the abbot, who may, however, be represented⁸⁹.
- n. He blesses chapels and altars within the monastery⁹⁰.
- o. He blesses the bells in the monastery, unless he invites the bishop to perform this responsibility⁹¹.
- p. He blesses new religious houses, unless he invites the abbot general or bishop to perform this responsibility⁹².
- q. He issues the decree concerning the desecration of churches and chapels⁹³.
- r. He authorizes additional places for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, but only for a just cause⁹⁴.

V. The abbess or administrator, conventual prioress, or abbot, without priestly ordination:

- a. Abbesses and abbots without priestly ordination enjoy the use of pontificals⁹⁵ in their own monastery church, as well as in all monasteries of the order, in accordance with the authority of the superior of the house⁹⁶.
- b. Grants or denies permission, in accordance with the law, to celebrate the Eucharist, administer the sacraments, or perform other ecclesiastical acts in a church or chapel of the monastery⁹⁷.
- c. The superior is bound to ensure that every member of the community is free to choose his or her confessor⁹⁸.
- d. Order the liturgical functions of the monastery community and ensure that they are celebrated worthily.
- e. Clothes novices and admits to profession those who are to be professed, unless she delegates this competence⁹⁹.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 203; *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 116 f.

⁸⁵ See Motu proprio *Ministeria quaedam* by Pope Paul VI, promulgating certain provisions regarding the ordination of deacons, dated August 15, 1972, No. IX.

⁸⁶ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 155-193.

⁸⁷ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 195-198.

⁸⁸ See Can. 1224.

⁸⁹ See *De Benedictionibus, editio typica* (1984), nos. 16-19.

⁹⁰ See Can. 1207. Different legal regulations and liturgical rites apply to the blessing of these liturgical places than to the solemn consecration, which is the prerogative of the bishop.

⁹¹ Cf. *De Benedictionibus, editio typica* (1984), no. 1036.

⁹² See *De Benedictionibus, editio typica* (1984), no. 518.

⁹³ See Can. 1212.

⁹⁴ Cf. Can. 936.

⁹⁵ I.e.: pectoral cross, ring, and crosier, but not the miter.

⁹⁶ See Motu proprio *Pontificalia insignia* by Pope Paul VI on the reform of the use of pontifical insignia of June 21, 1968, No. 3.

⁹⁷ See Can. 561.

⁹⁸ See Can. 630 – § 1-2.

⁹⁹ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 203; *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 116 f.

- f. May impart blessings that are of particular importance for the religious life of the monastic community, who may, however, be represented by the abbot president, the father abbot, or a priest or deacon¹⁰⁰.
- g. Sprinkles the members of the community with holy water (daily after Compline).¹⁰¹
- h. May preside over those parts of the funeral rites which may be carried out in the absence of a priest, in accordance with Cistercian ritual¹⁰².
- i. Has the responsibility of ensuring the commemoration of the deceased members of her community¹⁰³.
- j. In individual cases, dispensation from the obligation of reciting the Liturgy of the Hours may be granted by the superior, provided that such faculty is expressly foreseen in the proper constitutions¹⁰⁴. Otherwise, this competence pertains to the Abbot President, the Father Abbot, or the Father Immediatus¹⁰⁵.

VI. Foreign or emeritus general abbots, abbots, and abbesses

- a. Enjoy the use of pontificals¹⁰⁶ in all monasteries of the Order, in accordance with the provisions of the superior of the house¹⁰⁷.

VII. The parish priest (in his parish):

- a. Grants permission for the celebration of the sacrament of Matrimony¹⁰⁸ in the monastery church.
- b. Administers First Holy Communion¹⁰⁹.

VIII. Church rector¹¹⁰ :

- a. "Without the permission of the rector or another lawful superior, no one may celebrate the Eucharist, administer the sacraments, or perform other ecclesiastical acts in the church; such permission is to be granted or denied in accordance with the law."¹¹¹
- b. "The rector of a church is obliged, under the authority of the local ordinary [diocesan bishop] and in accordance with legitimate statutes and acquired rights, to ensure that liturgical acts are carried out in the church in conformity with liturgical norms and the prescriptions of the Canons; that obligations are faithfully fulfilled; and that the property is conscientiously administered. He is to provide for the maintenance and cleanliness of the sacred vessels and of the church, and to

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *De Benedictionibus, editio typica* (1984), No. 16-19.

¹⁰¹ See *Rituale Cisterciense Lérens* 1892, 416.

¹⁰² See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 155-193.

¹⁰³ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 195-198.

¹⁰⁴ See Can. 85.

¹⁰⁵ See Can. 85. See Constitutions OCSO ST 19.2.B. See Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 97.

¹⁰⁶ For persons not ordained to the priesthood, these are: pectoral cross, ring, and crosier, but not the mitre.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Motu proprio Pontificalia insignia* of Pope Paul VI on the reform of the use of pontifical insignia of June 21, 1968, No. 4. This also applies to titular abbots.

¹⁰⁸ Can. 1108.

¹⁰⁹ See Can. 914.

¹¹⁰ Church rectors are to be appointed only in churches open to the public (cf. can. 1214) and not in private or restricted chapels (can. 1223). He is appointed by the diocesan bishop. If the church belongs to a monastery, the ordinary has the right of proposal (cf. can. 557 – § 2). In a church that is also a parish church, this function is performed by the parish priest appointed by the bishop (can. 570). Monastery churches cannot have a church rector (cf. can. 556). In monastery churches or chapels of monasteries, the duties of the church rector are essentially performed by the superior (cf. can. 561).

¹¹¹ Can. 561.

ensure that nothing occurs which is in any way incompatible with the sanctity of the place and the reverence due to the house of God"¹¹².

- c. Has the responsibility of ensuring that every priest who so desires can celebrate Holy Mass in the church¹¹³.

Priests who preside over the liturgy and administer the sacraments in the monastery (e.g., spiritual director, chaplain, etc.):

- a. Celebrates the liturgical rites and administers the sacraments in accordance with the principles established here and in cooperation with the superior of the house. They are not to interfere in any way with the governance of the community or its internal affairs¹¹⁴.
- b. It is essential that they adequately prepare themselves for the liturgy, especially for any introductions, homilies, and addresses. The order of the celebrations and the choice of specific elements shall always be determined in agreement with the monastic community and directed toward its spiritual benefit¹¹⁵.
- c. "The faithful have the right to celebrate divine worship according to the rites of their own group, approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority [...]"¹¹⁶. Priests are to take care not to introduce unauthorized alternations or liturgical experimentations.
- d. Confessors and spiritual directors
 - i. "The faithful have the right [...] to follow their own form of spiritual life, provided it accords with the teaching of the Church"¹¹⁷.
 - ii. "All the faithful have the right to choose their state of life freely, without any coercion"¹¹⁸.
 - iii. Can. 630 on the free choice of confessor and all ecclesiastical guidelines for the prevention of spiritual and sexual abuse must be strictly observed.

X. The monastic community

¹¹² Can. 562.

¹¹³ Can. 903: "A priest is to be admitted to celebrate, even if he is unknown to the rector of the church, provided that he presents a letter of recommendation from his ordinary or superior, issued no more than one year previously, or if it can be reasonably assumed that there is no impediment to his celebration."

¹¹⁴ "The chaplain of the nuns. In accordance with the norms of Can. 567 and 630, the father abbot, after consulting the abbess and the nuns, shall propose to the local ordinary a monk of the Order who has the necessary liturgical and pastoral knowledge as chaplain and ordinary confessor. This consultation of the community shall be repeated at certain times. This priest enjoys the powers mentioned in Can. 566 § 1 by virtue of his office. In the celebration of the liturgy, he shall cooperate with the abbess and the community. He shall not interfere in any way in the government of the community. As far as possible, the chaplain shall maintain contact with his own community or with another community of monks" (Constitutions of the Cistercian Order of Strict Observance, C. 76).

¹¹⁵ "The pastoral effectiveness of the celebration will be greater if the texts of the readings, prayers, and hymns correspond as far as possible to the needs, inner preparation, and character of the participants. This is achieved by making appropriate use of the many options described below. In preparing the Mass, the priest should therefore pay more attention to the common spiritual good of the people of God than to his own preferences. He should also be aware that such a selection of parts must be made in agreement with those who have a role in the celebration, including the faithful, in matters that concern them more directly. Since there are many choices available for the various parts of the Mass, the deacon, the lectors, the psalmist, the cantor, the commentator, the schola, each for his or her part, must know exactly before the celebration which text is to be used; nothing should be done, as it were, off the cuff. A well-coordinated arrangement and execution of the rites contributes greatly to preparing the hearts of the faithful for participation in the Eucharist" (*Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, No. 352).

¹¹⁶ Can. 214.

¹¹⁷ Can. 214.

¹¹⁸ Can. 219.

- a. The monastic liturgy is celebrated daily by the members of the community¹¹⁹. It should therefore be well prepared and celebrated in harmony so that it becomes a source of strength and edification¹²⁰ for all and not a cause of scandal and division¹²¹.
- b. The entire community should strive diligently and continuously for a solid liturgical education¹²². "We can distinguish two aspects: education for the liturgy and education from the liturgy"¹²³.
- c. Each monastic community has its own unique liturgical competence and is invited to continually expand and deepen it, especially through personal spiritual experience but also through practical and/or academic formation¹²⁴.
- d. It is desirable that the community recognize and appreciate the diversity of liturgical service¹²⁵. Otherwise, suitable persons from outside should be sought.
- e. It is highly commendable that sisters may also serve in the sanctuary and in religious ceremonies, vested liturgically. They may likewise be appointed as lectors or acolytes. This service deepens and expresses their baptismal vocation, manifests the Body of Christ¹²⁶, and bears no connection with clericalism or feminism.
- f. The superior of the community should arrange everything in such a way that the full, active, and fruitful participation of all members of the community and the rest of the faithful is ensured and that everything can take place in peace and in accordance with ecclesiastical order.
- g. The superior is strongly encouraged to consult regularly with the community regarding the common liturgy and to establish a liturgical commission to assist him or her in liturgical responsibilities. This commission should include knowledgeable members of the community such as an organist, cantor, musician, artist, sacristan, master of ceremonies, liturgist, etc. Cooperation with the liturgical commission of the order and the diocese may be useful.
- h. Each community exercises a liturgical apostolate of immeasurable value for the Church. People of diverse backgrounds and dispositions are attracted to the monastic liturgy, and sometimes they are also gently invited. The celebration of the liturgy should therefore always be open to all. Care should be taken to ensure an atmosphere of openness and cordiality. It must be our

¹¹⁹ "§ 1. The first and foremost obligation of all religious is to contemplate divine things and to remain in constant union with God in prayer. § 2. Members should participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice daily, receive the most holy body of Christ, and adore the Lord present in the sacrament. § 3. They shall devote themselves to the reading of Sacred Scripture and to contemplative prayer, and, without prejudice to the obligation of clerics under can. 276, § 2, n. 3, they shall worthily celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours and perform other exercises of piety in accordance with the provisions of their own law. § 4. They should show special devotion to the Mother of God, model and protector of all consecrated life, including through the recitation of the Rosary. § 5. They should conscientiously observe the annual periods of spiritual retreat. Can. 664 — Religious are to remain focused on God, examine their conscience daily, and frequently receive the sacrament of penance. Can. 663-664.

¹²⁰ Cf. RB 39:9; 39:12; 42:3; 47:3; 53:9

¹²¹ Cf. *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, No. 95.

¹²² "For ministers and for all the baptized, liturgical formation in its primary sense is not something that can be considered complete once and for all: Since the gift of the celebrated mystery exceeds our capacity for understanding, this obligation must certainly accompany the ongoing formation of everyone, with the humility of little ones, which is an attitude that invites wonder" (Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi* of Pope Francis on the liturgical formation of the People of God, June 29, 2022, No. 38).

¹²³ Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi* by Pope Francis on the liturgical formation of the People of God, June 29, 2022, No. 34.

¹²⁴ Cf. Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi* of Pope Francis on the liturgical formation of the People of God, June 29, 2022, No. 35.

¹²⁵ Cf. *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, No. 114.

¹²⁶ Cf. *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, no. 91.

common concern that they too are able to participate fully, actively, and fruitfully in the celebration. If necessary, they should be introduced to the meaning and content of the celebration. Assistance should be offered to those who wish to participate. Every effort should be made to help them experience God in a living way.¹²⁷

- i. The community is encouraged to remain open to the legitimate wishes and suggestions of the clergy¹²⁸ and to support them in their pastoral and practical tasks as best as possible, so that the common worship service can be celebrated in harmony and joy and serve the spiritual edification of the whole people of God.

E. The distinctive character of Cistercian liturgy:

Considering the above, both universal law and proper law are to be observed in the celebration of the Cistercian liturgy; moreover, the essential elements of the Cistercian way of life and spirituality are likewise to be safeguarded, as indicated below¹²⁹.

For the celebration of Holy Mass, the Holy See granted to our Order the following proper rites:

"Permission is granted to adopt the current Roman Missal (including the modifying adaptations), with due regard for:

- the Cistercian calendar¹³⁰
- Where fitting, particular elements from the Cistercian tradition, namely:
 - Texts from the former Cistercian Missal not contained in the current Roman Missal. Provided that they are legitimately confirmed.¹³¹
 - Certain rites during the celebration of Mass, such as:
 - a profound instead of the genuflection prescribed in the Roman Missal
 - the customary of making of the sign of the cross at the proclamation of the Gospel
 - the observance certain rites in silence, for example, the kissing the Gospel book or washing the hands

¹²⁷ Cf. General Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours, No. 273: "The Liturgy of the Hours [and the entire monastic liturgy] is not primarily to be regarded as a beautiful monument of a bygone era, to be preserved as unchanged as possible in order to arouse admiration. Rather, it can be revived in a new way, gain new meaning, and become a testimony of a living community." Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that guests do not feel like spectators at a performance, but rather as participants in the liturgy.

¹²⁸ Cf. RB 61:4.

¹²⁹ A liturgical or legal custom of a community, congregation, or order always requires the approval of the legislator in order to acquire the force of law (cf. Can. 23). In concrete terms, this means that mere reference to "domestic tradition" or "religious tradition" is not sufficient to justify certain practices that are contrary to the valid and approved liturgical books or constitutions.

¹³⁰ "In addition to the celebrations of the diocese or religious order, the calendar of each individual church contains the celebrations specific to that church, which are listed in the directory of liturgical days; it also includes the celebration of a saint whose remains are buried in the church in question. Members of religious communities are bound to the community of the local church by participating in the celebration of the dedication of the cathedral, the principal patron saints of the place and of the higher territory in which they are located" (*Calendarium Romanum* 1969: 52 c). The currently valid religious calendar is published in the liturgical directory/Ordo for each year, which must be observed. If liturgical memorials are optional, the superior of the house decides what is to be celebrated.

"When Mass is celebrated with the people, the priest must follow the calendar of the church in which he is celebrating" (, *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, No. 354a). "If it is possible to choose between a memorial day in the general calendar and a memorial day in the diocesan or religious calendar, preference should be given to the memorial day in the particular calendar, unless there are special reasons and in accordance with tradition" (*Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, No. 355).

¹³¹ However, these texts must have a special Cistercian reference (e.g., a prayer to a Cistercian saint).

- the ancient usage of preparing the chalice with wine and water before their presentation at the altar¹³².

With the approval of *the Rituale Cisterciense* (Langwaden 1998)¹³³, the Holy See has granted to the Order the faculty to celebrate certain parts of the liturgy in a manner distinct from that prescribed in the official liturgical books of the Roman Rite (the *Editio typica* or its duly approved vernacular translations). This applies in particular to the following elements:

- Celebration of Holy Week¹³⁴
- The solemn monastic profession is to be received by the superior of the community or by his lawful delegate. Should the superior not be in sacred orders, the priestly functions are ordinarily fulfilled by the competent Father Abbot¹³⁵
- Celebration of the Anointing of the Sick¹³⁶
- Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance¹³⁷
- Election, confirmation, installation, and blessing of abbots/abbesses¹³⁸. The following points are to be emphasized:
 - The election, confirmation, and installation are conducted by the authority designated in the Constitutions.
 - The blessing is conferred by the diocesan bishop or by the Abbot General, at the discretion of the person to be blessed¹³⁹.
 - In contrast to the *editio typica*, the presentation of a crosier forms part of the rite of blessing for an abbess¹⁴⁰.
- Celebration of the funeral¹⁴¹
- Structure and celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, as well as the psalm scheme¹⁴²

In addition, the Cistercian Order has always considered it of the highest importance to observe the following principles in the celebration of the liturgy:

- St. Benedict writes in his Rule, "Nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God"¹⁴³. It follows that all activities, meetings, labor, pastoral undertakings, etc. are to be arranged so that the communal liturgical worship of the monastic community may take place at the appointed hours.
- The Second Vatican Council teaches: The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions. They should be adapted to the capacity of the faithful and, as a rule, should not require much explanation"¹⁴⁴. This principle has long characterized the Cistercian liturgy, and finds particular expression in architecture and

¹³² Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments Prot. 525/70 of June 8, 1971.

¹³³ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments Prot. 578/95/L and Prot. 629/95/L of October 19, 1995.

¹³⁴ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 44-84.

¹³⁵ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 97-154.

¹³⁶ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 93-98.

¹³⁷ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 92.

¹³⁸ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 199-215.

¹³⁹ See Constitutions of the Cistercian Order, art. 85 – a; *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 203.

¹⁴⁰ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 203; see *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 215.

¹⁴¹ See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 155-198.

¹⁴² See *Rituale Cisterciense*, Langwaden 1998, 25-40.

¹⁴³ Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 43.

¹⁴⁴ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 34.

sacred art, where noble but not overly precious materials are chosen¹⁴⁵, and a **sober formal language is employed**, favoring simple ornamentation rather than elaborate imagery.¹⁴⁶

- The Divine Office and the celebration of the Eucharist in Cistercian monasteries are ordinarily distinguished by a **high degree of singing**. Where Gregorian chant is employed, the proper choral tradition of the order is observed. Alternatively, vernacular language with its customary melodies may be used.
- In Cistercian life, sacred silence and stillness hold a privileged place, together with the Word of God and the liturgy. Accordingly, the organ and other instruments are employed with restraint, and the liturgy itself is prepared in silence. Silence is to be especially maintained in the sacristy, the church, and the cloister.
- In many monasteries, **Holy Communion** is distributed to the convent and the assembled faithful **under both species**¹⁴⁷.
- In many communities, liturgical celebrations are broadcast to sick and elderly members in their infirmaries to enable them to participate. Holy Communion is ordinarily brought to them each day in their rooms. This pastoral concern should be kept in mind in the celebration of the liturgy.
- Concelebration of the presbyters present is the norm in the conventual Mass: "Among the Masses, however, [...] a special dignity belongs to the conventual Mass, which forms part of the daily Divine Office. [...] Even when such Masses do not have a particular rite, it is most fitting that they be celebrated with singing and with the full participation of all members of the religious community. In these Masses, therefore, each individual should perform the duties corresponding to their ordination or appointment¹⁴⁸. Hence, it is recommended that all priests [...] concelebrate the conventual Mass insofar as possible. Moreover, all priests of the community bound by virtue of their office to celebrate individually for the good of the faithful may concelebrate the conventual Mass or "community Mass" on the same day¹⁴⁹. It is preferable that priests present at the Eucharistic celebration, vested in liturgical attire, should exercise the ministry proper to their ordination and thus participate as concelebrants, unless excused for a just cause. Otherwise, they wear the choir habit¹⁵⁰ [...]"¹⁵¹.

F. Final remark:

Despite thorough research, it was not possible to consult all relevant sources. Furthermore, only general norms that are of particular importance in the liturgical context of a Cistercian monastery are reproduced here. Special faculties, privileges, and decrees have not been included. Nevertheless, their validity is fully acknowledged and must be observed wherever applicable. No claim to completeness is intended.

*Questions, corrections, and additions can be sent to the "Commissio Liturgica Cisterciensis":
liturgia@ocist.org*

¹⁴⁵ In connection with liturgical vestments, altar cloths, altar vessels, books, sculptures, paintings, crosses, stained glass windows, and clothing, see *the earliest decisions of the General Chapter in Cîteaux* in: BREM H., ALTERMATT A. (eds.), *Einmütig in der Liebe, Die frühesten Quellentexte von Cîteaux*, Langwaden 1998, 125-126, 129, 133, 173.

¹⁴⁶ See Constitutions OCSO C. 27.

¹⁴⁷ See *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, nos. 281-287.

¹⁴⁸ Therefore, it is customary in Cistercian monasteries that all liturgical services are divided among the members of the community as far as possible and rotate within the community.

¹⁴⁹ See Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instr. *Eucharisticum mysterium*, May 25, 1967, No. 47: AAS 59 (1967) 565.

¹⁵⁰ For the Cistercians, this is the white cowl.

¹⁵¹ *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, No. 114.

Brief overview

The Cistercians

The Cistercian Orders are monastic religious institutes of pontifical right, some of which are clerical in character. Their abbots and father abbots are to be regarded as ordinaries. The Cistercians form an integral part of the local Church in which they live out their distinctive monastic vocation, and they remain subject to the authority of the diocesan bishops, to whom they owe faithful obedience and reverence in matters concerning pastoral care, the public celebration of divine worship, and other apostolic works. In all other respects, the Order possesses autonomous governance. This unique structure bears particular consequences for the celebration of the sacred liturgy and the responsibilities associated with it

The diocesan bishop

The diocesan bishop is to be regarded as the high priest of his flock, from whom, in a certain sense, the life of the faithful in Christ derives and upon whom it depends. His liturgical responsibilities include:

- ◆ He is the principal moderator of the liturgy within the diocese and regulates the liturgical life therein.
- ◆ His authorization is required for the following: the use of pontifical insignia by other bishops; the faculty for confessions; the construction of churches; and the celebration of Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal.
- ◆ He consecrates or blesses: priests and deacons; abbots and abbesses; churches, chapels, altars, cemeteries, and the holy oils.
- ◆ He is to be consulted with regard to: the erection of new sacred buildings, their renovation, and their furnishing.

The Abbot General

- ◆ He confers the blessing of abbots and abbesses, where applicable.
- ◆ He may appoint lectors and acolytes, if this faculty has been duly entrusted to him.
- ◆ Where the Constitutions so determine, he conducts canonical visitations on a regular basis.

The Father Abbot

- ◆ He presides at the profession ceremony whenever the superior of the house is not in sacred orders.
- ◆ Where prescribed by the Constitutions, he presides over the election of an abbot or abbess and confirms and installs the one elected.
- ◆ Where prescribed by the Constitutions, he conducts the regular canonical visitation

The abbot (ordained priest)

- ◆ He is the principal liturgist of the monastic community and directs its liturgical life. Within his own monastery, he may lawfully use the pontificals; in other monasteries of the Order, this requires the consent of the respective superior.
- ◆ He is responsible for ensuring the dignified celebration of the liturgy and for safeguarding the freedom of choice of confessors.
- ◆ His authorization is required for: the use of pontificals by other abbots; the faculty to hear confessions within the monastery; the conduct of liturgical acts in the monastery church; the ordination of confrères (by means of the letter of dimissorials); and dispensation from the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours.
- ◆ He admits members into the community, receives their profession, appoints them as lectors and acolytes, and conducts their funeral rites.
- ◆ He blesses chapels and other matters of significant importance for the life of the monastic community.

The abbess or abbot without priestly ordination

- “ The first liturgist of the monastic community and organizes its liturgical life. In her own monastery, she may use the pontificals (ring, staff, pectoral cross).
- “ Responsible for: the dignified celebration of the liturgy and ensuring the free choice of confessors.
- “ Permission is required for: the wearing of the pontificals of other abbots, liturgical acts in the monastery church, the commissioning of lectors or acolytes, dispensation from the Liturgy of the Hours.
- “ Admits members to the community and receives their vows and, if necessary, conducts parts of their funeral rites.

The various priests

- “ They celebrate the divine services and administer the sacraments in accordance with the principles set out here and in cooperation with the superior of the house. He does not interfere in any way in the management of the community.

The celebration of the liturgy in Cistercian monasteries

The celebration of the sacred liturgy in Cistercian monasteries is a proper right of the community, and the essential elements of the Cistercian form of life and spirituality are always to be safeguarded. These include, among others:

- ◆ The observance of the Order’s proper calendar and liturgical texts (cf. Missale Proprium for the celebration of Mass).
- ◆ In the approved *Rituale Cisterciense*, certain liturgical celebrations are regulated in a distinct manner: Holy Week; the rites of admission and profession; the Anointing of the Sick; the Sacrament of Penance; the election and blessing of abbots and abbesses; funeral rites; and the Liturgy of the Hours.

- ◆ Nothing is to be placed before the liturgy. It is to be celebrated with reverence, without haste, and ordinarily with singing.
- ◆ Simplicity and sobriety are to be observed in language, in form, and in art.
- ◆ The active participation of the entire monastic community in the conventual Mass is of primary importance. This is expressed in the concelebration of priests, the distribution of Holy Communion under both species, the participation of community members in liturgical ministries, and particular care for the sick and elderly.