

*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 2015-1

Abbey of Heiligenkreuz, Christmas 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It is 2015. Exactly 900 years ago both Morimond and Clairvaux were founded, two abbeys which had an enormous significance for our Order. So, in these two jubilees we truly celebrate our whole Order, since the vast majority of our monasteries owe their existence to these two abbeys.

This is the first time this year in which I have the opportunity to address all of you through a circular letter on the liturgy. Full of gratitude, I would like to recall a person, who until recently led the Secretariat for Liturgy and wrote several circular letters on the liturgy – P. Alberich Altermatt from the Abbey of Hauterive. For decades he carried out unimaginable efforts concerning liturgical work in our Order. As President of the Liturgical Commission, in 1998 he brought the new Cistercian Ritual to publication. With this effort, he accomplished something that many orders after the Second Vatican Council have not yet been able to do. This is only one example of many things for which we have P. Alberich to thank. Last year I had the pleasure of knowing him as a lecturer at the course for monastic formation. It was an unforgettable experience to see how his eyes began to brighten, whenever he begins to speak about the liturgy.

Secretariat for the Liturgy

This year, the General Chapter of our Order decided to preserve the essentials of the old statutes for the Secretariat for the Liturgy, even though these will be slightly revised. From now on, the Secretariat for the Liturgy is no longer composed of a secretary and two assistants, but rather of just one secretary, who may seek out cooperators within the Order. Moreover, this secretary will no longer be elected from the Synod of the Order but rather by the Council of the Abbot General. The tasks of the secretary are the following:

1. To prepare questions regarding the liturgy to be submitted to the General Chapter and to the Synod.
2. To offer assistance and suggestions to our monasteries for the preparation of the liturgy and to enable them to participate in initiatives which arise in the Church and in the monastic orders. This should take place first and foremost through circular letters, which will be sent periodically to all the monasteries.
3. To organize the yearly publication of the “Directory for Liturgy in the Cistercian Order”.
4. To promote the liturgical formation of monks and nuns.

5. To promote the translation of particular liturgical texts into the various vernacular languages.
6. To work together with all the congregations of the Order, as well as with other monastic institutes, and above all with the Cistercian family, concerning common liturgical questions.
7. To report to the Synod and to the General Chapter on the activities and suggestions of the Secretariat for the Liturgy, and, when necessary, request their approval.

I was recently entrusted with the tasks of the secretary. And so it is appropriate for me to introduce myself briefly. My name is P. Coelestin Nebel. I was born in 1988 near Vienna, and I entered the Abbey of Heiligenkreuz in 2007. In 2010, I began my studies in forestry, which I was able to finish in 2015. Over the course of the years, I have worked in the book-binding workshop, in the scriptorium, in the wash room and as a sacristan. Since 2011, I have been the master of ceremonies in the monastery. Since August 2015, I have also been active in the forestry business of the monastery. I am not a priest, nor am I a theologian; but I have over the years been able to work fairly intensively with practical aspects of the Cistercian liturgy.

Now I have the task of coordinating the liturgical efforts of our Order and of being available as a contact for liturgical questions in our Order. Our Order consists of over a hundred monasteries, and there are several congregations. In our monasteries very many different languages are spoken. For that reason, I must realize that I cannot fulfill this task alone. That means I need help. So I would like to invite the cooperation of all those Cistercians who in their own monasteries are responsible for the liturgy, who have formally studied liturgy, who work or have worked in the past with liturgical books, and all those who are interested in the liturgy.

I am reachable for all those who want to work together, and I am also reachable for all those who simply have liturgical questions, at the following address:

Post: Stift Heiligenkreuz, Markgraf-Leopold-Platz 1, 2532 Heiligenkreuz, Austria
E-Mail: liturgia@ocist.org
Telephone: +43 680 44 64 364 (cell) oder +43 2258 8703 (monastery)

Personally, I speak only German and a very simply English. If you write to me in these languages, it will be easiest for me to assist. For other languages I will first have to find a translator, which can make the process take longer.

General Chapter 2015

At the General Chapter, almost an entire day was devoted to the liturgy. First M. Christiane Hansen (Helfta) presented the results of the survey on the liturgy, which in a way manifested and documented the current situation of the Cistercian liturgy. She deserves our gratitude for her tremendous work, the results of which are very interesting. From the results of the survey, here I highlight and discuss four points:

1. In most communities the liturgy is celebrated by between 5 and 10 persons.
2. Liturgical Language: on a normal day 75% of the monasteries use the vernacular language in the liturgy of the hours.

3. Psalmody: in the Order there are at least 9 different schemas for the Psalmody in use. These are oftentimes mixed together. Most often the division of the Psalter outlined in the Roman Breviary ("Liturgia Horarum") is prayed.
4. Books: Over 25% of the monasteries make their own books. Many communities use (at least some of the time) the old liturgical books from Westmalle, above all for musical notation.

The great number of liturgical languages in our Order and the diverse schemas that are used for the Psalmody make it more difficult to publish liturgical books for the whole Order. In this respect, the individual monasteries, congregations or language groups are left to their own resources. But since many monasteries are not prepared for such an effort, it is necessary to have a closer network of cooperation, so that such tasks can be accomplished. I believe this network is very important. Unfortunately, the Abbey of Westmalle no longer produces liturgical books for the Cistercian family. And yet we all know the printing quality of the liturgical books from Westmalle, which are still in use in many monasteries. Our Order, however, since the Second Vatican Council has not been able to publish liturgical books for the next generation. That is a shame. It is especially painful to have to accept that neither the *Graduale Cisterciense* nor the *Antiphonarium* were produced for the current liturgical norms. Many monasteries have realized this state of affairs and have produced liturgical texts for their own monasteries. For the Liturgy of the Hours, Marienstern (Germany), Boulaur (France), San Bernardo Chiaravalle (Italy), Waldsassen (Germany), Helfta (Germany), Sticna (Slovenia), Hauterive (Switzerland), Heiligenkreuz (Austria) and several others (that are unknown to me) have put into a digital form a part or nearly all the Latin hymns and antiphons for the Church calendar. All that through years of work carried out alone, without working together. Let us imagine how much work they invested. If they had spoken with each other at the right time, they would have been able to save themselves years of work. We need a new network, so that in the future we can combine our energies, and so that our efforts can yield fruit for the whole Order. Monasteries in which the liturgy is celebrated in the vernacular also need such a network, so that others might share their fruits.

The General Chapter recognized this difficult situation and called for the creation of a *Thesaurus liturgiae*. This should be created in the form of an online platform accessible to all the members of the Order through the internet. In this platform, liturgical files can be uploaded, examined and downloaded by everyone. Furthermore, this platform will offer a forum where liturgical questions can be asked and discussed by everyone. I have already taken the first steps, which should help us have such a *Thesaurus* soon. Further information will be forthcoming.

In addition, the General Chapter encouraged the publication of a new *Usus Cistercienses*. This collection of Cistercian customs, which in part goes back to the middle ages, was published for the last time in 1955 at Casamari. This book should be adjusted to our times and to the current liturgical norms, and then given to the monasteries as an orientation and recommendation for the future. I am very grateful for suggestions or assistance in this area.

The Abbot General made two remarks in the discussion over liturgical themes that I would like to relate. First, he challenged those monasteries in which the liturgy is prayed in Latin (either partially or entirely) to do as much as possible such that the monks and nuns can truly learn Latin. Second, he praised the practice of many monasteries, according to which Terce, Sext and None are prayed without being shrunk into one small hour. It is important to him that these hours

are prayed as much as possible at their canonical times. If however they are set together, then at least the appropriate hymn should be used before the hours. That means, for example, that if Terce and Sext are prayed together at 12:00, one should pray the hymn for Sext and not the hymn for Terce.

Questions from the individual Monasteries

Even though I was entrusted with this new task just a little while ago, I have nevertheless already received a few questions. I would like now to present these and then try to answer them.

• *On Marian memorials, are the concluding antiphons for Lauds and Vespers sung or are they omitted?*

This question might perhaps be surprising, but it is completely justified, since there are different opinions and traditions in this regard. During the times in which the small Marian office was still prayed, it was omitted on Marian feasts, since already the whole *Officium Divinum* was in a certain way prayed for the honor of the Mother of God. For this reason, in many places the antiphon also fell out on these days. This custom is, as far as I know, represented in a few monasteries of the Order today. In what measure it corresponds to contemporary sensibilities should be determined for each concrete situation. In any case, in the General House in Rome the concluding antiphons are sung every day. My suggestion would be that one returns to this practice, especially since in the Roman ritual the Marian antiphon after Compline is prayed every day of the year. Even the Directory of our Order does not anticipate any exceptions. Thus is spared also the discussion of whether one should or should not sing the antiphons on feasts of the Lord that have an office with a particularly Marian character (for example, February 2). But, of course, each monastery is free to further its own tradition.

• *In our monastery we only pray the antiphons before the psalms. What should one do with the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat* – in this case are the antiphons prayed again afterwards?*

In our Order, it was traditional to pray the antiphons only before the psalms. In this sense, we are speaking about *Anteiphonen*. It was also a custom to sing the antiphons only partly before the psalm, and only afterwards to sing the whole antiphon. Both of these forms, however, cannot be found in any current breviary, nor in the Roman *Liturgia Horarum*. Perhaps it would be meaningful if the common practice was followed, in spite of these traditions in our Order.

• *Are there fixed rules for when one must stand, sit and kneel during the Mass?*

Physical postures are dealt within Paragraphs 42 and 43 in the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani 2002* (General Instruction of the Roman Missal). It is worthwhile to read through both paragraphs entirely, but here I would like simply to give a citation in order to answer the question.

“The faithful should stand from the beginning of the Entrance Chant, or while the Priest approaches the altar, until the end of the Collect; for the Alleluia Chant before the Gospel; while the Gospel itself is proclaimed; during the Profession of Faith and the Universal Prayer; and from the invitation, Orate fratres (Pray, brethren), before the Prayer over the Offerings until the end of mass, except at the places indicated here below.

The faithful should sit, on the other hand, during the readings before the Gospel and the Responsorial Psalm and for the Homily and during the Preparation of the Gifts at the Offertory; and, if appropriate, they may sit or kneel during the period of sacred silence after Communion.

In the Dioceses of the United States, they should kneel beginning after the singing or recitation of the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) until after the Amen of the Eucharistic Prayer, except when prevented on occasion by ill health, or for reasons of lack of space, of the large number of people present, or for another reasonable cause. However, those who do not kneel ought to make a profound bow when the Priest genuflects after the Consecration. The faithful kneel after the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) unless the Diocesan Bishop determines otherwise.¹

• *Should one kneel or bow when entering the church?*

This is a debated question. Both are correct. Paragraph 274 of the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (General Instruction of the Roman Missal) says the following:

“If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary, the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself. Otherwise, all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession.”

In the Cistercian Ritual of 1998 we find on Page 43 those points in which the Cistercian Order may depart from the Roman Missal: In Point 2.2.a. we find the regulation: “A deep bow substitutes the kneeling prescribed in the Roman rite.”

It is meaningful to maintain in the various monasteries the practice which is common and familiar. But in any case, it is meaningful to think over physical postures and movements in the liturgy, such that one grasps their deeper meaning and so that one can make them fruitful for one's own liturgical spirituality.

Liturgical Themes from the Church and the Order

Ordo Cantus Officii – Pope Francis has approved his first liturgical book. It is the second edition of the *Ordo Cantus Officii*. The first edition appeared in 1983 under Pope John Paul II, and it is here reworked and expanded. Not without humor can one observe that the first liturgical book approved by a Jesuit pope who never sings concerns liturgical chant. This book is an important step for which we have waited since the liturgical reform. During the creation of the *Liturgia Horarum*, the content received greater attention, and less attention was given to the possibility of

¹NB: For this paragraph, the German text cited by P. Coelestin is slightly different than the English text found in the instructions published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010), 20. Briefly stated, what the German text leaves open the English text specifies: in the German text the custom of kneeling from the Sanctus to the end of the Eucharistic Prayer and again for “Behold the Lamb of God” is considered laudable and to be preserved where it exists, but in the English text the custom is prescribed as the norm in dioceses of the United States. In the German text, kneeling is the norm only during the words of consecration (*während der Konsekration*). – Translator

singing the various parts. Thus, antiphons were provided that do not exist in the Gregorian musical tradition. Antiphonaries that wanted to adopt the order of the *Liturgia Horarum* were forced to seek out other antiphons or to compose their own. Of particular significance are the antiphons for the Magnificat and Benedictus in Ordinary Time. All three books go their own way: the *Liturgia Horarum* has one text for both the Magnificat antiphon for first and second vespers and the Benedictus antiphon, which is based on the Gospel and suited to the reading cycle for years A, B or C. The *Ordo cantus officii* 1983 has an antiphon which is the same every year for first vespers but varies for lauds and second vespers according to years A, B and C. For the most part, the *Ordo cantus officii* 2015 has other antiphons than those in the edition from 1983 and in the *Liturgiahorarum*. For first vespers, the antiphons are based on the reading for Vigils from Sunday – which can be selected according to whether one uses a one-year or two-year lectionary. In this respect, the new book is more an occasion for confusion than order. Nevertheless, there are good suggestions for antiphons for new saints. It should be mentioned that there are no notes in this book. There is only a directory, which cites the sources in which one can find the desired musical notation. Since it was published as an *editio typica*, it should be consulted during the preparation of new breviaries and antiphonaries, especially when these are in Latin.

Beatification of Pio Heredia Zubía und seventeen companions from the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance on October 3, 2015 – Our Cistercian family rejoices over the beatification of eighteen new blessed from Spain. A lot of information about the new blessed can be found on the internet at:

http://www.ocso.org/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=218&lang=en

On this website one can also find and download propers for the mass with readings and a complete office in Spanish.

The feast day for the new blessed is December 4. The prayer for the day and a reading for vigils exist in English, Spanish, French, Italian and Latin. These can be found on the following website:

http://www.ocso.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1048:martyrs-of-viaceli-4&catid=37:general-news&Itemid=77&lang=en

It would in any case be nice, if the memorial of these martyrs found a home in a few monasteries of our Order.

Here I would like to show only the Latin prayer for the memorial:

Deus, Pater noster,
qui beátos Pium, presbyterum,
et sócios, mártýres,
Matre Dei adiuvánte, imitatóres Christi
usque ad effusiónem sánguinis effecísti,
concéde, quæsumus, ut, eórum exémplo et intercessióne,
fidem verbo operibúsq; firmiter profitéri valeámus.
Per Dóminum nostrum Iesum Christum Fílium tuum,
qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti, Deus,
per ómnia sáecula sráeculórum.

The following are provided as readings for the memorial:

- Reading: Revelation 12:10-12a
- Psalm 125:1-2ab.2cd-3.4-5.6
- Alleluia Verse: John 12:25: “Qui odit animam suam in hoc mundo, in vitam æternam custodiet eam.”
- Gospel: Matthew 10:28-33

Directory *divini officii* – As in the past, this year the Directory was again shipped to all the monasteries in the Order. For that we must thank the Abbey of Poblet. In a particular way we thank Br. Xavier and Fr. Lluís, who carry out this service in the background. I am aware that in many monasteries only the cantors actually have the Directory in hand. That’s too bad. In the Directory we have an expression of the liturgical solidarity of our Order, which we should try to cultivate. In this regard, I would like to encourage us to keep the Directory current. In many monasteries, some memorials have disappeared or been added. So, please send this information to Fr. Xavier via email: biblioteca@poblet.cat

Choir Master– In the Declaration of the General Chapter of the Cistercian Order from 2000 we find mentioned the office of the Choir Master. In Paragraph 101, we read: “The Choir Master assists the abbot in preparing and seeing to the worthy celebration of the Eucharist and the Opus Dei.” I think it would be important to energize this office, or even to introduce it in the first place. In many monasteries, the cantor or the superior takes care of liturgical matters. That is also good. But it would surely be meaningful and necessary in each monastery to have a person responsible for the liturgy, someone who seeks to develop his or her understanding of liturgical issues and who is closely connected to others occupied with similar tasks. When the need arises, such persons could also serve as masters of ceremonies during the liturgy, especially when it is necessary to prepare large liturgical celebrations.

Jubilee Year | Year of Mercy –On December 8, 2015, the extraordinary Jubilee Year began, which Pope Francis announced as the “Year of Mercy”. It was not an accident that the beginning of the jubilee was chosen to take place on the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. About this, there are information, texts and suggestions on the website of the Vatican: www.vatican.va or <http://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va>. From a liturgical point of view, I would like recall the “new” votive mass, which since 2002 can be found in the Latin *Missale Romanum*. It is also included in those translations of the missal that have come out since that time. Especially in the “Year of Mercy” it seems appropriate to consciously choose this mass more often. Furthermore, it might be meaningful to offer special penance services or opportunities for the sacrament of confession in the monastery or for those who come to the monastery. Even a Chapter of Faults, which is customary in many communities, could be a helpful means by which to renew the experience of reconciliation and mercy in the individual communities.

Having arrived to the end of this letter, I would like to invite you to send me any wishes, criticisms or suggestions that you might have, which have to do with the liturgical letters or with the general work on the liturgy in the Order. I would also like to wish you all a very happy and blessed Christmas.

P. Coelestin Nebel O.Cist.

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