una caritate, una regula, similibusque vivamus moribus



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

Liturgical Circular Letter 2016-2

Stift Heiligenkreuz, December 30, 2016

Dear Confreres,

It is time once again that I send a liturgical circular letter to you all. I hope that the holy Year of Mercy for our communities and our entire Order was a year of grace and joy. The joy in God's merciful love can be a perfect time to propel us forth in the celebration of the holy liturgy.

Translations

First off I would like to thank you sincerely, who have looked upon neither the time nor the energy needed to have translated this letter into the nine principal languages of our Order. I always have a bad conscience when I need to ask for it, but unfortunately it is necessary, if the letter is actually to reach many in our Order. Once again: Thank you.

Feedback from my last Letter

Thank you for all of the feedback regarding my last letter. Such feedback as to the themes and content of the letter is always welcome and very important, so that I know, whether what is written is in fact helpful and of interest as well as to know whether my represented view also coincides with that of most of the Order's members. I am also eager to learn something in the process or to correct my view.

From one monastery I received the following feedback: "Thank you for the letter. It is a joint effort for us as a community. That is, we are talking about it. Everyone has received the letter to be used for personal study." I am genuinely pleased with such a response. It is quite clear to me: my letters are neither Holy Scripture nor suitable for *lectio divina*. What is considered within them is partially about very specific matters, which are not of interest to all. Yet I am pleased that the liturgy in this community has become a theme to be discussed and such liturgical themes are spoken of and thought about. The liturgy is an essential component of our monastic life. I consider it endlessly worthwhile, when we address views about it with one another, how each is affected by the conventual liturgy, how it corresponds to the community and where I do not conform with the

liturgy. And the things that do not conform, should be allowed to be addressed, so that one can find fruitful solutions. I do not mean to say, that one must bring everything to discussion, but one should very well find one's way to a liturgy that corresponds to the heart of the community. And to arrive at that, we must dialogue with one another.

I am aware that I am writing about a great many things in this letter, which apply more so to the rules and to the exterior aspects of the liturgy; nevertheless I am convinced that it is also important to address precisely these things and to clarify them. Where I can I would like to give suggestions regarding the heart of the matter and to encourage ever deeper consideration thereof. Unfortunately I am often successful in doing so only seldomly or not at all. Therefore I ask your pardon.

The Celebration of the Liturgy in Small Communities

I was asked by the Abbot General to formulate a few thoughts about how we can celebrate the liturgy in communities in which there are only a few monks or nuns. I happily comply with this request but wish also to mention in advance that it treats of suggestions that to me personally seem meaningful and logical. Whoever finds these suggestions adequate, can certainly adopt them, whoever does not, can feel free to adapt them.

As was already addressed in the Circular Letter 2015-1, in most communities of our Order the monastic choir is prayed by five to ten people in common. A few small communities have also aged considerably and lack the strength for much of what is needed in the liturgy. Thus the singing becomes more arduous for them, and the various movements which one used to carry out are simply no longer possible. It must be very difficult, when a community notices, that what has been cherished over centuries and constitutes the source and culmination of the monastic life, is no longer attainable as one would like it to be. The community as a whole must take up this challenging situation. And every community must also find its particular way as it deals with it. Here I want to suggest a couple of principles which can serve as an orientation in some places.

The following passage from the book of Deuteronomy offers itself as an essential inner attitude for the celebration of the liturgy: "Hear, O Israel, The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. Therefore you shall love the Lord, your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul and with all your strength" (Dt. 6:4-5). When Jesus sat in the temple he "looked up and saw, how the rich were laying their gifts in the offering-box. At the same time he also saw a poor widow who threw in two small coins. Then he said: Amen, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others. For they have all given from their abundance; but this woman who has hardly enough to live, she has given forth from her entire livelihood" (Lk 21:1-4). Here something essential also comes to the fore with regard to the carrying out of the Divine Office: one is called to give of himself completely, with everything one has. And whatever one has, whether a lot or a little, when all is given, it is never too little.

When a community celebrates the liturgy together the manner should correspond to what the community can in fact manage together. Of course there always were and are elderly and sick members in our communities, who cannot complete the entire Divine Office or cannot fulfill certain rites or sometimes not at all—for such, exceptions are always made, as well as the

understanding of the whole community. But if a community is so arranged, that a large part of the convent would be affected by such an exception, then a way should be chosen, which renders feasible the participation and full joint completion of the majority of the members. In everything the principle should apply, that the inner quality of the prayer can hold up against the external quantity. A sign of the quality is that the texts are prayed slowly, harmoniously and with attention, and that the whole liturgy brings about tranquility and worship.

It is beautiful when one can together complete certain movements in choir, such as standing, kneeling, bowing, etc. Yet where that is not possible, then it is better, if the whole Office is prayed sitting and only standing for the hymn, Benedictus and Magnificat and the oration; when that also is not possible, then the entire Office can be prayed while sitting.

The sung Office is the most expressive form of the Liturgy of the Hours. But if a community strains itself with the singing, it is just as beautiful and proper, when the Office is switched over to simple recitation or, if only parts of the Office are sung, for example the Hymn and Benedictus and Magnificat. In communities that are vocally weak, a professionally accompanied vocal training can also afford an important contribution in raising notably the musical level of the choir. Such vocal training should be entrusted to those communities that are in possession of sufficiently good voices—above all to strengthen those that do not have such voices at their disposal.

In many communities of the Order there is the custom of praying the Psalter in the rhythm of one or two weeks. A certain number of Psalms therefore is prescribed per canonical hour that surpasses the strength of certain communities. Here also it would be entirely possible to determine the arrangement of Psalms, which divides the psalms into four weeks, for example, as in the Roman Liturgy of the Hours (*Liturgia Horarum*). This is at any rate preferred to the curtailment or elimination of certain times for prayer or its components. In this way all 150 psalms can at least be prayed over the span of four weeks. And it is precisely the praying of the whole Psalter that is the essential characteristic of the monastic Liturgy of the Hours. Even in the Roman Liturgy of the Hours terce, sext and none can be prayed. One of the small hours can even be shortened, when it seems sensible, and still the whole Psalter can be prayed.

Concerning the times at which each hour is to be prayed, it should take place, when the greatest part of the community can realistically participate. This is especially true for the conventual mass.

Processions can, if need be, also be carried out in choir (as the circumstances require even when sitting), when it seems suitable. When a procession can no longer be held it should simply be forgone. The reading of the Fathers prior to compline can also be held in the church, if the way in between proves too troublesome. Parts of the daily chapter can also be transferred to other places, where the community gathers. As a result unnecessary efforts can be avoided.

It is not only a very beautiful sign of the regard for the elderly and sick members of a monastic community, but also, in accordance with their monastic calling, when it offers them the opportunity to join the entire community in the celebration of the liturgy in the cloister (or in the church). In so far as this is somehow possible and meaningful, the sick and elderly should be assisted in reaching the church and getting a seat in the choir stalls (or in the vicinity) and allow the possibility to sing and pray together. This is especially important for the conventual mass. When it is not possible, an audio or visual transmission of the liturgy into the sick room can be a possibility to further support

the common prayer. Where this is neither feasible nor technically possible, radio or televised masses can be offered for the elderly and sick members of the community. By no means, however, should a worthy celebration of Communion for the sick be forgotten. For the weak and infirm priests—where it is somehow feasible—they should be given the opportunity to celebrate the mass, which typically takes the form of concelebration.

The above-mentioned suggestions for facilitating the incorporation of the sick and elderly into the community's prayer are of course written for those communities that truly are struggling with personnel and strength, not for those who are lacking in enthusiasm for the Divine Office. Communities, on account of specific circumstances, who have undertaken various supportive measures for the liturgy, should again return to the original form of the Divine Office, if these circumstances have ceased.

Of course men and women, who join a community should fulfill the entire liturgy—with all its forms and rituals—as the whole community (as much as possible, together) does so. It should not be overlooked, however, that a particular structure of rites and movements belongs to the Cistercian liturgy. To withhold all of these things from the young people, who know themselves to be called to the Cistercian way of life, can however also be problematic; moreover, they most likely would adopt them and live by them. Of course a procession cannot be achieved by one person alone and, when only one person bows in choir, then it is certainly not an expression of unified prayer. Here it is up to the competent superiors to find a way, which is suitable for both the individual and the community as a whole.

News in the Church and the Order

The new *Directorium* of our Order is ready and has been sent. Our sincere gratitude to Br. Xavier Guanter and the Abbey of Poblet. This service happens behind the scenes and is enormously important for so many communities and the Order as a whole. I want to take this opportunity to encourage again the regular use of this *Directorium*.

Pope Francis has named 27 new episcopal advisors for questions pertaining to the liturgy. The Vatican publicized the list of the new members of the Congregation for the Divine Office and the Discipline of the Sacraments on October 28, 2016. Among the bishops, which now belong to the Vatican's authorities on liturgy are the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki and the bishop of Lausanne, Geneva and Freiburg, Charles Morerod. Moreover, the Holy Father named Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin as well as two other cardinals from the Curia as members of the Congregation: Beniamino Stella, Prefect of the Congregation of Clergy, and Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Papal Advisor of Culture. Joyfully for our own Cistercian Order is the naming of Archbishop Bernard-Nicolas Aubertin, O.Cist., Archbishop of Tours and a professed member of Lérins. Also the long-standing papal Master of Ceremonies of Pope John Paul II, Archbishop Piero Marini, is now a member. As Prefect of the Congregation of the Liturgy, Cardinal Robert Sarah of Guinea has been active since 2014. Plenary assemblies of the Congregation are infrequent.

On August 15, 2016 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the Instruction "Ad resurgendum cum Christo" concerning the burial of the dead and the care of ashes in the case of cremation. The Church here strengthens her position, according to which for Catholics inhumation

is given as the clear preference, because it was the form of interment for Jesus. "Where the decision for cremation is made out of reasons of a sanitary, economic or social nature, the Church sees no doctrinal grounds to forbid this practice." This was for the first time pronounced with such clarity. Yet the ashes of the deceased should also –like the body—be buried in a cemetery or in the vicinity of a church, in a "sacred place." Explicitly forbidden is the preservation of the ashes in a living space of one's home or as an object of remembrance. Similarly forbidden is the scattering of the ashes in the air, on land or in water. I assume that cremation in the majority of the communities of our Order will not be the rule; yet I would like to at this point clearly state, that—whether inhumation or cremation—it should be carefully observed, that the body of the deceased monk or nun should be present at their funeral mass in the church, in so far as this is possible and all sanitary, economical and social reasons are not preventing it.

In my last letter I wrote, that the Brazilian Congregation in its congregational chapter had decided to adopt the Portuguese Breviary according to the 'Heiligenkreuz arrangement.' In the meantime the Congregation decided to arrange its breviary on the basis of the format of Heufelder, since it corresponds to what many communities already use. The work involved for this project has been taken up principally by the Monastery of Hardehausen-Itatinga.

With a letter from June 29, 2008 the Prefect of the Congregation for the Divine Liturgy for all bishops conferences, formulated and clarified the wish of then Pope Benedict XVI, that in the future the name of God YHWH may no longer be pronounced in the liturgy. This instruction is already a number of years old, yet I believe, that this letter is in many places entirely unknown. I would like to cite its most important points: "In consideration of the Jewish tradition and the early Christian tradition that never pronounced God's name, but replaced it with a form of "Lord", the following is decreed: (1) In the liturgical celebrations, singing and prayers the name of God ought to be used neither in the form of the Tetragrammaton YHWH nor be pronounced. (2) For the translation of biblical texts into modern languages, which are to be used for liturgical use, that should be followed what has already been prescribed in no. 41 of the Instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam*, that is, that the divine Tetragrammaton is to be translated with a name equivalent to Adonai/Kyrios: "Herr", "Signore", "Lord", "Seigneur", Señor", etc. (3) With the translation of texts for liturgical use, in which the Hebraic term Adonai is used along with the Tetragrammaton, then the term Adonai is to be translated with "Lord" and for the Tetragrammaton the term "God" will be used, as it is followed in the Greek translation of the Septuagint and in the Latin translation of the Vulgate."

With the Decree "Resurrectionis dominicae" of June 3, 2016 the Congregation for the Divine Liturgy was aligned with the wish of Pope Francis, who had decided, "that the liturgical celebration of St. Mary Magdalene in the Roman General Calendar must be raised to the rank of a feast, in place of a memorial, as has been the custom." Therefore, the "Apostola Apostolorum" will now be celebrated in the same liturgical rank as the Apostles, to whom she first announced Christ's resurrection. In our Order St. Mary Magdalene was already highly esteemed at an earlier time, and so her Office is adorned with many individual antiphons, that can now once again be used. For the mass a new special preface was created for this purpose, which is still to be translated into the various languages before it can be used. All other liturgical texts of the new feast are to be taken from the Sacramentary or the Liturgy of the Hours. The first reading for the vigil from the Common of Virgins fits thematically only partially for Mary Magdalene, but is to be used until an alternative is to make up for this deficiency.

Pope Francis has expressed in an interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro, S.J., which recently appeared in an Italian book, some views on questions of the liturgy. Father Spadaro asked the pope in the interview about the desire of some believers to return to the old form of the liturgy. "Pope Benedict has made a fair and generous gesture, in so far as he has opened up a certain mentality of various groups and people, who are nostalgic and have distanced themselves. But that is an exception. Here we are also speaking about the 'extraordinary' form of the rite. That is not the ordinary form." The Second Vatican Council and the Constitution on the Liturgy "Sacrosanctum Concilium" 'must' be changed according to its meaning. In the past, principally by the Prefect for the Congregation on the Divine Liturgy, Cardinal Robert Sarah, suggested a 'Reform of the Reform'. Seizing that idea, the pope formulated it in the following way in the interview with Fr. Spadaro: "to speak of a Reform of the Reform, is a mistake." (Source: Vatican Radio)

I was asked by the Abbey of Westmalle in Belgium to share, that they have found a large amount of old liturgical books in their attic. Mostly they are unbound editions of Antiphonaries. The contact there is Br. Guerric Aerden, OCSO: brguerric@trappistwestmalle.be or by mail: Antwerpsesteenweg 496, 2390 Westmalle, Belgium.

Activities of the Secretariat of the Liturgy

From November 6 to November 13, 2016 I was together with five monks and nuns of our Order, who came from various cloisters, to work on a new draft of a book of usages. It was a very constructive and work-intensive week. We could determine very quickly, that the new text must be fundamentally distinct from its previous edition, both with regard to content and style. There is still much work ahead for us. We are very grateful for your support and suggestions.

Various monks and nuns of our Order and that of the Trappists came together from November 30 to December 7, 2016 in the French Abbey of Boulaur for a sponatneous meeting. Questions discussed principally dealt with certain larger liturgical projects (e.g. the Breviary, Gradual and Antiphonal) that could be worked on together in the future. Particularly gratifying and enriching at this meeting was the participation of Fr. Jorge Guido Gibert (previously from Poblet, now at Viaceli). He was earlier a professor of Liturgy in San Anselmo and a collaborator with the Congregation on the Divine Office. Moreover he has also created a scheme of the psalms, which among others has been assumed in the Breviary of Heiligenkreuz. It was decided, that now a succession of French-and German-speaking cloisters would like to work together on a breviary, which contains all notes. The Latin text should be uniform with a vernacular translation added in a second column. The psalms arrangement of Gibert will be used as the basis for the book. In the selection of material the "Liturgia Horarum" will be followed, whereby Cistercian rubrics should be kept, as far as is possible. Whoever wants to work on this project or can give useful suggestions or help, should contact me. It is also a goal of this project to make accessible to everyone all the materials which arise from it in an online database.

Through numerous changes in the Roman General Calendar an adaptation of our Order's calendar has become necessary. Whoever has suggestions or proposals, should contact me. It would be nice, if we could once again determine this calendar together with the Trappists, and reach a certain agreement with the Benedictines.

Answers to Questions Received

• How many cloisters have the custom of proclaiming the date of Easter in a solemn manner? Today that is no longer needed.

The proclamation of the date of Easter is indeed no longer necessary. How many communities do it, I do not know. I find it meaningful for three reasons: (I) The new Sacramentary (and *Directorium* of the Order) provides for the possibility (optional). That alone I find worth while considering. (2) January 6, compared with December 25 in the Roman Liturgy, is celebrated less solemnly, so that we have another element that can adorn this important feast. (3) As the text from the Missal shows, there is a close connection between the feasts of the Epiphany and the Resurrection of the Lord. Those are my personal reasons. Each can see it as he wishes. Of course everyone can find the date of Easter in the calendar or on the Internet. Nevertheless I personally find this tradition quite beautiful and it will only be kept, if it is used.

• For the Office of female Doctors of the Church, can the Magnificat antiphon for Doctors of the Church "O Doctor optime" be used?

The Cistercian *Directorium* treats these women as virgins and doctors of the Church. That means, that both commons should be possible to use. In the Sacramentary there is no reference to a specific common, because all the prayes are special. The problem is that the few holy women have only been Doctors of the Church for a brief span of time, and the Common for Doctors of the Church is tailored to men. Therefore almost all breviaries refer to the Common of Virgins. I know of no binding rule that it should remain the case. What the Magnificat antiphon, "*O Doctor optime*" concerns, as far as I know, is that in several cloisters it is already being used for female Doctors of the Church, yet the gender is adapted to "*O Doctrix optima*". To what extent the gender should as a consequence be adjusted, I do not know, since even in the Sacramentary the women are named "Doctor" (masculine).

• In the Roman tradition are there several melodies for the "Te Deum"? Could we also use these in our Order?

I know only of the "Te Deum", which has a tradition in our Order. In many cloisters only this one is used. It has never been (so far as I am aware) customary to have several melodies for a chant (except the Ordinaries of the mass and "Benedicamus Domino" and hymns for the smaller hours. Of course, the stressed simplicity forbids it to be diversified. Moreover, the reform of the chants according to strict principles would have been unnecessary, if something else had been put forth, which possibly did not correspond so well with these principles. But if they like, they could of course use the simple Roman "Te Deum".

When is an "Oremus" prayed before an oration, and when not?

The "Oremus" ("Let us pray") is in principle prayed ALWAYS before the oration. In the introduction to the Roman Missal of 2002 there is the topic of the Collect in point 54 of the GIRM. There it says: "Next the priest calls upon the people to pray and everybody, together with the priest, observes a brief silence so that they may become aware of being in God's presence and may call to mind their intentions. Then the priest pronounces the prayer. […] The people, joining in this petition, make

the prayer their own by means of the acclamation *Amen*." This rule applies not only for the Collect, but also for all of the orations of mass and the Divine Office. There is however three significant exceptions: During lauds and vespers the "Oremus" is omitted after the Our Father and immediately following, the oration is spoken. Why? The "Oremus" invites one to quiet personal prayer which is then gathered and concluded in the oration. Since ordinarily the intercessions precede the Our Father, the personal petitions have already been spoken (should have at any rate), wherefore the oration concludes the Our Father. For this reason the Our Father does not have an 'Amen'. The 'Oremus' is also omitted before the Prayer over the Offerings. The reason for this is also very clear: on the one hand, the whole preparation of the gifts should be used to call to mind that one stands before the presence of God and is to direct the petitions in their heart toward God; on the other hand, the 'Orate fratres' prayer precedes the Prayer over the Offerings, which is responded to by the faithful and corresponds to the meaning of the 'Oremus' and the silent prayer that follows. It is important in all circumstances to make a truly noticeable pause after the 'Oremus', so that the faithful can actually recollect themselves. In the course of the history of the liturgy this pause, lasting the length of an 'Our Father' became the norm, whereby the original meaning of this pause was well known. In the reformed liturgy all these silently prayed 'Our Fathers' were without exception omitted, yet they have been preserved in numerous cloisters; therefore, I would like clearly to bring this practice to your consideration. In no. 195 of the "General Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours" it adds: "The Lord's Prayer is to be prayed solemnly three times a day: in the mass, at lauds and at vespers." With this regulation the dignity of the Lord's Prayer in the liturgy should be prayed clearly and with solemnity.

• Must a Responsorial Psalm be prayed at mass every day?

The answer is very easy: Yes. Always. In the GIRM no. 61 we read: "The responsorial psalm follows the first reading, which is an essential component of the Liturgy of the Word and has a great liturgical and pastoral meaning, since it fosters meditation on the word of God. The responsorial psalm has to correspond to the first reading and is as a rule taken from the Lectionary. The sung delivery of the responsorial psalm is preferable, at least what brings about the people's response. [...] In place of the suggested psalm in the Lectionary, the 'gradual' can also be sung from the Graduale Romanum." The 'tractate' is likewise a responsorial psalm, which can be sung, if no 'alleluia' is sung during a mass (i.e. Lent and masses for the dead). Neither the 'alleluia' nor the 'tractate' is a substitute for the responsorial psalm that follows the first reading. 'The alleluia is sung all year round, except during Lent. The verses are taken either from the Lectionary or from the Graduale [Romanum]." Singing the 'gradual' on weekdays and the 'tractate' on other weekdays is no longer envisaged. Equally counterproductive is the custom, which has become naturalized in many places, to sing a common church hymn after the reading. The reasoning behind the responsories was explained by the famous liturgical scholar from Innsbruck, Fr. Josef Andreas Jungmann, S.J.: It is in keeping with early church tradition in all Christian rites, that the Word of God is responded to with the Word of God. That means that we too should use this responsory, that we may meditate on the Word we have heard and so answer it with the Word of God. The responsorial psalms, as they are provided in the Lectionary, fit quite well with the preceding reading in most cases, whereas such was not the case for the 'gradual' and the 'tractate'. The reason is fairly simple: On the one hand, both the 'gradual' and the 'tractate' were part of the Proper of the mass, which means, that these responsories were often in line with the order of the mass and not the Lectionary, thus they were best suited for evoking the mystery of the celebration, rather than aligning with the readings from Scripture. On the other hand, there is only a narrow selection of the vocal pieces from the *Graduale*, which are oriented toward the older selection of readings, which did not know many of the current readings. Nevertheless, this form of a responsory remains meaningful, since it reacts to the Word of God with the very same Word. And we know well, that we frequently do not truly understand God's Word in our life, or how our response to this Word must remain only an attempt at one.

• Do priests, who do not live in the cloister, have to fulfill the obligation of the requiem mass for their deceased confreres (e.g. the celebration of three masses)?

In principle, yes. Specifically such matters are to be left to the decision of the superior on an individual basis.

• To what extent is the particular diocesan calendar binding for us?

In points 24I-243 of the General Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours, the following points are defined: "At the celebration of choir and in the community the hour is established according to the particular calendar of the diocese, the community's order or the individual churches. The communities of the Order celebrate with the local church together the dedication of the cathedral church and the feast of the principal patron of the place or the region, in which they are resident. [...] At prayer in the individual churches one can hold to the calendar of the region or to that of its own, excepting solemnities and feasts of the particular calendar." Concretely that means, that we Cistercians must only adhere to our Order's calendar, in which the Roman general calendar is integrated. Moreover the dedication of the cathedral church of the local church and the feast of the principal patron of the place or the region is to be celebrated to show the connection with the local church. In principle, however, the calendar of the Order is held above the diocesan's calendar. In general it would be meaningful to take care that a selection of saints of our Order should find a place in our liturgy. Therefore it should be noted, that the time in the year's liturgical cycle can maintain a certain character and not be overladen with diverse memorials of the saints.

When is the memorial of the dead for November 14 to be celebrated, if it falls on a Sunday?

In this case, the solemn memorial of the dead would be omitted, since it is an 'officium festivum', that is, it is to be celebrated similar to a feast (of course without a Gloria). Feasts are suppressed and omitted by a Sunday (except feasts of the Lord).

Is it still possible to pray the hymn in the old way, that is, after the Responsorium?

In the Roman liturgy the hymn was moved radically and without exception to the beginning of the hours. Even the Carthusians were compelled to assume this new directive. In our Order the possibility was kept to be able to pray the hymn in the old way. In the "Rituale Cisterciense" 1998 the new Roman arrangement for our Order was officially assumed, with the proviso that the order should be followed which St. Benedict states in his Rule. Therefore both are possible and both have their reasons.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to thank all of you very much, who look after the liturgy in our cloisters. If I can help further in one way or another, I would be pleased to assist.

Sincerely, Br. Coelestin Nebel O.Cist.

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