

Exordium

UNIT FIVE

READING

THE *CHARTER OF CHARITY*

Reading the Charter of Charity

The problem addressed by those who laid the foundations of the Order was this: How can we ensure that local communities retain the desired level of fidelity to Benedict's Rule without weakening local autonomy? The Charter of Charity provides the answer.

Objectives

- a) To read closely the *Charter of Charity* [prior] and to become familiar with its contents.
- b) To appreciate the document's development in the light of its historical context.
- c) To become aware of the constitutional insight that the *Charter* embodies and to apply it to the contemporary situation.

READING THE *CHARTER OF CHARITY*

At the time of the foundation of the New Monastery, the monastic world was dominated by Cluny, a grand abbey that fed upon an empire of smaller, monasteries all of which remained under its direct authority. Considerable income was derived from these dependencies and, as a result, Cluny became very rich. In a paradox noted by Bernard, “for some unknown reason, the richer a place appears, the more freely do offerings pour in” (Apo 28). Molesme followed the same system, but on a smaller scale.

Because the Founders were serious about poverty and monastic frugality, some system had to be found whereby monasteries could band together to maintain the integrity of discipline, without thereby concentrating all power and resources in the abbot of a central monastery. The solution that was proposed by Abbot Stephen was that each monastery would have its own abbot and would keep its independence — if there was to be sharing of resources, this would be done voluntarily and on the basis of need and not through a system of taxation. The necessary vigilance and maintenance of discipline would be achieved through a continuing pastoral relationship between mother-house and daughter (filiation), annual visitation and the legislative and judicial functions of a General Chapter. Finally, in the event that Cîteaux itself becomes lukewarm, provision is made for intervention from below. The desired result of this whole arrangement was that, apart from a measure of supervision, each monastery would remain on a relatively small scale, able to live the life for which men become monks.

These dispositions were embodied in the *Charter of Charity*, the fundamental constitutional text of the Order. This is a less succulent text for reading than the *Exordium Parvum*, but it remains important because it is the skeleton on which contemporary Cistercian life is built.

- ! Each monastery enjoys the benefit of local autonomy — as St Benedict envisaged it — the capacity to respond creatively to local circumstances.
- ! At the same time each monastery is protected (through pastoral oversight and supervision) from potential abuses of local autonomy, such as loss of vision, lukewarmness, and misuse of authority.

**Which version of the Charter of Charity are we using
as the basic text in these notes?**

The Prior Charter of Charity (CC1).

1. The Formation of the Charter of Charity

At this stage you may wish to review some of the material in Unit Three.

a) Pre-Cistercian Models

In Unit 2C we discussed the possibility that Stephen may have become aware of the way in which Vallombrosa dealt with the tension between local autonomy and central oversight. Two other documents from Molesme may also have contributed to the evolution of his thought: the *Abbatiae Alpensis creatio* (the erection of Aulps into an abbey) and the *Concordia Molismensis* (the agreement between Molesme, Aulps and Balerne). Both these documents are translated in this Unit's **Primary Sources**.

The two documents from the Molesme chartulary illustrate the principal concerns of the *Charter of Charity*:

- ! The maintenance of monastic discipline by the strict adherence to the Rule of Saint Benedict, and
- ! the regulation of relationships between monasteries to provide some possibility for supervision and to avoid disputes.

Many phrases found in these two texts will reappear in the *Charter of Charity*. It is not unlikely that some borrowing took place.

b) The “Charter of Charity and Unanimity” of 1114

This is the document mentioned in the foundation charter of Pontigny. It has been suggested that originally it contained material similar to CC 1-3: written in the first person plural and in a style reminiscent of the Bible and the Rule of Benedict. Charity inspires the renunciation of material demands on the foundations while maintaining the right of pastoral supervision. Unanimity is expressed by accepting the interpretation of the Rule adopted at the New Monastery and following the revised liturgical usages and books in force there. There is a spiritual undertone to these three chapters — their purpose is expressed clearly in the final sentence: “So that there may be no discord in our conduct, but that we may live by one charity, one Rule and like usages” (CC 3.2).

c) The Prior Charter of Charity: 1119-1152

As we have already seen in Unit 3, a constitutional document was drawn up for submission to Callixtus II in 1119. This was undoubtedly shorter than the text we know as the *Prior Charter of Charity*. In addition to the primitive text further chapters were added to clarify matters and to deal with new situations. There is some disagreement among the experts on whether the text confirmed in 1119 was the *Prior Charter of Charity* or a [hypothetical] earlier or intermediate version. Perhaps it does not matter. The *Charter of Charity* as it was practised was more like a document on a computer than the Ten Commandments graven on stone tablets; it was continually glossed, “interpreted”, supplemented and revised to make it a workable tool in the administration of an expanding Order. By the time of the Cistercian Pope Eugene III, changed conditions called out for such modifications that a new confirmation was sought and obtained.

d) The Posterior Charter of Charity: 1165-1173

The *Posterior Charter of Charity* continues in the line of the *Prior Charter of Charity* but incorporates further changes made by the General Chapter as well as matter from papal texts. The more significant of these will be discussed later in this Unit. It is the text of the *Posterior Charter of Charity* that has been received as the final version of the constitutional text.

e) Summary: The Direction of Change

As the *Charter of Charity* developed there is a consistent move away from the spiritual and fraternal tone of the primitive document towards greater legal precision, perhaps induced by the generally higher level of canonical awareness in the Church — already evident with the publication of Gratian's *Decretals* in 1140 and later coming to a climax during the pontificate of Innocent III (1198-1216). Some of the idealism of the early days had been eroded by events. The defection of Arnold of Morimond (1124) gave notice of the possibility even of abbots going gravely astray. As a result, measures were foreseen to deal with abbatial aberrations (CC 7.2). Moreover, some abbots were inclined to avoid correction by absenting themselves from the General Chapter: attendance was enforced and the reasons for absence were progressively narrowed and defined (CC 8.4). The case of Abbot Guy, Stephen's disastrous successor at Cîteaux (1134), demonstrated that it was unwise to assume that the Abbot of the Mother-House would necessarily uphold the values of the Order. As a result authority was moved away from the Abbot of Cîteaux towards the General Chapter, and mechanisms were set in place to depose him if necessary (CC 9.6). The collegial term "co-abbots" begins to be used in some contexts. Foundations from foundations demanded a broader juridical structure (CC 8.2) but the possibility of sub-groupings along the lines of filiation was viewed with suspicion (CC 8.3). Reliance on the local bishop is progressively reduced. The experience of famine and other hardships prompted thought for mutual relief (CC 7.4). As the years took their toll on abbots, provision had to be made for filling vacant offices — including that of the Abbot of Cîteaux (CC 11). Supplemented by the various statutes of the General Chapters, the impression given is of an organisation realistically adapting itself to changed circumstances, and endeavouring to maintain its original character by judicious fine-tuning.

From the *Exordium Cistercii* 2.12-13

Moreover, from the very beginning, when the new planting had begun burgeoning with new branches, the venerable father Stephen, with a keenly watchful sagacity, had provided in advance a document of admirable discernment, as a sort of pruning-hook, namely, to cut off, namely, the budding shoots of schism which, springing up, could at some time choke the burgeoning fruit of mutual peace. So it was that he wished this document to be given the appropriate name: Charter of Charity — because its every article is redolent of only what pertains to charity, so that well nigh nothing else seems to be pursued in any of its parts, save this: Owe no one anything, but to love one another.

2. A Close Reading of the *Prior Charter of Charity*

At this stage you may wish to review some of the material in Unit Four, Section 5.

a) The Prologue

This introduction was probably added with a view to the confirmation of 1152. The origin of the *Charter of Charity* is given as the need to have a basic constitutional text to which a local bishop must agree to accept, before a foundation is made in his diocese. Beyond this is the desire for the maintenance of peace — presumably on the supposition that the quality of monastic life is diminished in a climate of contention and litigation. Expressed more positively, it evokes the theme of **unanimity**. See Unit Seven. The hope is expressed that the monks in monasteries scattered all over the world might, though separated in body, be “indissolubly knit together in mind”: *animis indissolubiliter conglutinarentur*, the same sentiment expressed in the foundation charter of La Ferté: “separate in body, but not in soul”. The great proof that the Order is built on love is the fact that the new foundations are left financially independent and somewhat equal: they do not become money-making subsidiaries existing for the benefit of the parent organisation.

! Note the expression in vs 2: “Dom Stephen and his brethren ordained that...”. The verb is in the plural, indicating that the decision was made by many. See the following texts:

- a) EP 15.2: “Thereupon that abbot (Alberic) and his brethren ... unanimously enacted a statute...”
- b) EP 17.4: “It was in that same time that the brethren, together with that same abbot forbade...”,
- c) Preface to the “Stephen Harding” Bible: “By God’s authority and that of our community.”
- d) Preface to Hymnal: “By the common advice and consent of our brothers, we have decided. . . Therefore by God’s authority and our own...”
- e) Foundation Charter of La Ferté: “It pleased the abbot of that place, Stephen by name, and the brothers to seek another place...”

What conclusions do you draw from such texts about decision-making at the New Monastery? Are these texts simply covering up an autocratic reality or was there some effective degree of consultation or collegiality?

b) Chapters 1-3: The Primitive Nucleus

Chapter One begins with a reference to RB 61.10 and perhaps to Luke 17:10. Stephen's thought is probably presented back to front. His main concern was probably that though the monks sent to make new foundations were "separated in body", this was not to provide a pretext for any mitigation of the reformed observance that was followed at Cîteaux. Therefore he retained the duty of pastoral oversight and — it is implied — the right to make corrections if the young monasteries deviate from the ideal, ever so slightly. To preempt the objection that he is doing this only to get his hands on their money, he prefaces his statement of principle with a clear avowal that he has no designs on their temporal resources.

CC 4.5

The abbot of the New Monastery should take care not to presume to deal with anything or to give orders about or handle anything concerning the material goods of the place to which he has come, against the will of the abbot and the brethren.

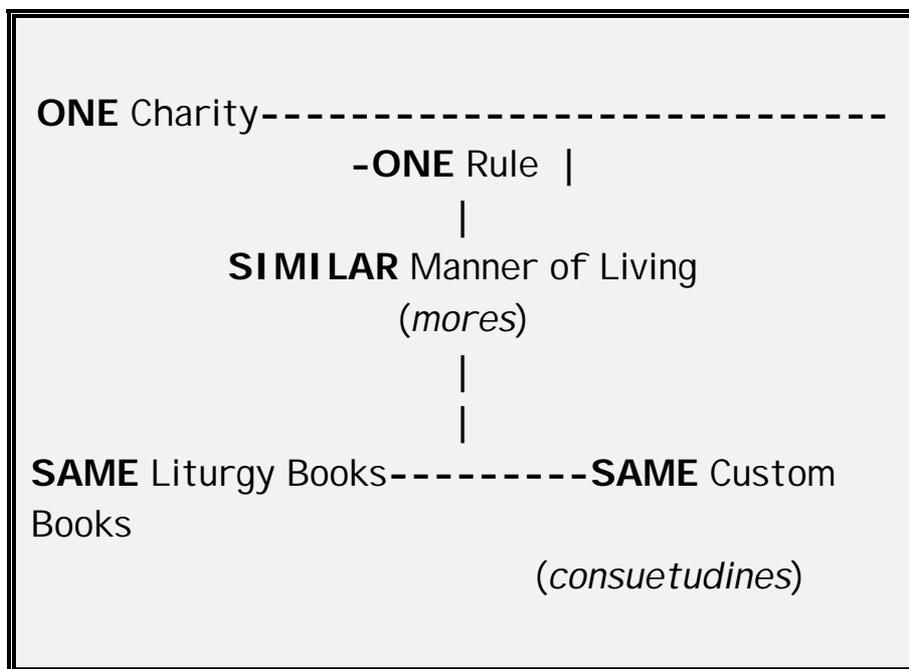
- ! Notice the human and monastic tone of Chapter One, probably designed to will the goodwill of the readers. The author writes as a monk, not as a lawyer.
- ! The importance of the value of poverty is reiterated.
- ! The place of the Rule of Benedict in the thinking of the first Cistercians is amply demonstrated in this Chapter.

Chapter Two enunciates the principle that new foundations must follow the "Cistercian" interpretation of the Rule of Benedict both in interpretation and in practice. At this point, the means of bringing about such unanimity are not stated. This ideal is the foundation of the Father Abbot's continuing authority over his daughter house, and of that of the General Chapter to intervene when there are problems.

Chapter Three aims at the preservation and propagation of the liturgical reforms enacted "with much labour" and "with so much sweat" at the New Monastery: the hymnal, the Mass chants and perhaps the amended Bible. The reason given is the convenience of a single usage since monks are often going from one monastery to another. [!] Underlying this overt justification is probably the desire to see the "authentic" texts generated at Cîteaux have maximum circulation. The Chapter ends

with a fine statement of principle: “So that there may be no discord in our conduct, but that we may live by one charity, one Rule and a like manner of living.”

- ! We will study some of the vicissitudes of the Order’s early liturgical history in Unit Nine.
- ! Note the different qualifications used to indicate unanimity. Although there is one Charity, one Rule and one Order in which all use the same liturgical texts and customaries, the way of life as lived in different monasteries is not said to be “one” or “the same” but “**similar**”. The word “uniform” is not used here.



Modern notions of “unity” tend to be reductionist — they involve the reduction of the many by the elimination of alternatives. A more ancient view of unity was that it was the force that glued together (*conglutinare*) realities that are, by their nature, different. Unity brought harmony to difference; it was not considered incompatible with plurality. A good example of this can be found in Bernard’s sermon *De diversis* 42.4 where the “same manner of living” (*unius moris*) is described as having many irreducible forms. When we read medieval texts about unity we need to avoid projecting back on to them our narrower modern preconceptions.

- c) Chapters 4-7: The Basic Structures of the Order

Chapter Four has a grand title: “The General Statute between Abbeys”, but its content is mundane.

- i. The Abbot of Cîteaux has the place of honour in other monasteries that he visits — except that he ordinarily eats in the common refectory instead of with the guests. The reason given “to preserve discipline” is hardly valid since commonly the abbot ate with the guests (See RB 56 and *Ecclesiastica Officia* 109). The monks’ refectory belonged to the prior’s sphere.
- ii. The same courtesy is shown to all abbots of our Order. This concern about having the first seats, like so many other trivialities, is a matter which is not important in itself, but has the capacity to cause ill-feeling and resentment. By defining issues of precedence their capacity to cause trouble is defused.
- iii. Only the local abbot can profess and consecrate novices — even when the Father Abbot or the Abbot of Cîteaux is present. In the *Prior Charter of Charity* the profession of novices was judged a sufficient reason for an abbot to absent himself from the General Chapter (CC 8.4). This concession was removed in the *Posterior Charter of Charity*.
- iv. The Abbot of Cîteaux has no right to interfere in the ordinary administration of other monasteries — unless there are abuses against the Rule or the Statutes of the Order. In that case “he should charitably apply himself (*studeat*) to making correction — studying the question rather than acting on first impressions — with the advice of the local abbot and, if he is in the house, in his presence. The dignity of an autonomous community demands that the local abbot is not unnecessarily overruled in his own community.

The *Posterior Charter of Charity* adds here a severe paragraph based on Eugene III’s *Act of Confirmation*: “No church or person of our Order may dare to ask from anyone a privilege against the common institutes of this Order or to retain one, if acquired through any means whatever.”

Chapter Five enjoins at least an annual visit to see how things are going. This paternal “visit” later became a regular “visitation” with the publication of the statute

On the Form of the Visitation. More frequent visits were to be regarded as cause for rejoicing.

The Difficulties of Annual Visitation

The annual visitation of each monastery by the father-abbot became [] impaired by the hardships of travel as by the excessive number of visits some abbots of numerous “daughters” were obliged to make. Cîteaux had 24 directly affiliated houses, Pontigny 16, Morimond 27 and Clairvaux over 80. Since the visitation of such a multitude of dependent establishments by these and other abbots in similar position was clearly impossible, they either delegated their powers or the visitation was delayed, but in either case the effective supervision of subordinate communities was bound to suffer.

Louis J. Lekai, *The Cistercians*, p. 50

Chapter Six speaks about abbots visiting Cîteaux. Curiously, it seems to regard the as normal the absence from his monastery of the abbot of the mother-house! In that eventuality the visiting abbot acts in his stead in merely honorific functions, but the running of the house is left to the prior.

Chapter Seven is about the General Chapter. Provision is made for an annual chapter of abbots to be held at Cîteaux. Originally the abbots simply joined the conventual chapter of the mother-house in a joint sitting. This later evolved into a meeting for abbots alone. The choice of timing for the General Chapter is left open in the text. Later it drifted towards September and this was codified in 1162. The chapter had many overlapping functions:

- i. Attention was given to the spiritual situation of each abbot.
- ii. The Rule of Saint Benedict and the statutes of the Order were adapted or more explicitly interpreted to suit new situations — the group of abbots having the right to issue such an ordinance.
- iii. The sense of concord and love within the Order was restored (if necessary) and strengthened.

- iv. Negligent, worldly or vicious abbots were proclaimed in the chapter and given a penance.
- v. Monasteries in dire financial straights were assisted by all the abbots “enkindled by the most intense fire of charity”.

After CC 7.3 the *Posterior Charter of Charity* deals with controversies, grave faults, different opinions, discords and seeks to prescribe means to minimise their harmful effects and provide a clear resolution. This inclusion doubtless reflects the experience that later generations had of stalemated General Chapters. At the same time it must be said that reserving the final decision “to the abbot of Cîteaux and those who appear to be of saner counsel and more suitable” is scarcely sound jurisprudence — opinions may differ concerning those who qualify!

In all the provisions of CC 4-7 it is possible to see nothing more than the practical implementation of the desire that monasteries live in an effective state of mutual love. The impression left by these Chapters is that at the time they were composed, the Order was still a relatively simple affair that could be administered by a few fraternal and informal structures — projecting onto the Order the pastoral methods that worked in local communities. Very rapidly, however, in the wake of geographical expansion and the aggregation of existing monasteries, the composition of the Order became more complicated

The bad news is that the material is distributed differently in the two versions of the Charter of Charity

Order of CC1 Chapters in CC2

(CC1) 5: Visitation

(CC1) 6: Reception of Daughter-Abbots

(CC1) 10: Precedence between Different Filiations

(CC1) 8: Granddaughters

(CC1) 7: General Chapters

(CC1) 11: Deaths and Elections

(CC1) 9 Contemptuous Abbots

A more logical order, but cross-reference is difficult.

d) Chapters 8-11: Afterthoughts.

The final chapters of the *Charter of Charity* attempt to address some elements of the new situation.

Chapter Eight with its long title opts for a single order as the best means of preserving the values of the reform, rather than allowing the monasteries to splinter into filiations. It also provided for cross-fertilisation and the possibility of more disinterested pastoral intervention — later General Chapters often called on the services of uninvolved abbots to mediate disputes or to investigate charges.

All are to come to the annual chapter. If there is good reason for the abbot occasionally to be absent, the prior is to come so that no community will be deprived of the ongoing pastoral solicitude of the college of abbots. An autonomous and cloistered community can easily become centred on itself to point where honesty and common sense are compromised — a closed system. Interaction at the level of the Order serves as a kind of “reality-therapy”. “Outsiders” ask questions where “insiders” cannot (or are not permitted to) perceive any problem.

Chapter Nine concerns delinquent abbots. The erring abbot is warned four times — either personally by the Abbot of Cîteaux or by the prior of Cîteaux or by letter. Following the precedent of the Rule of Benedict in a similar situation, (RB 64.4) the matter is referred to the local bishop for action. If the bishop is not suitably zealous for the integrity of monastic values, then the Abbot of Cîteaux is to step in, supported by other heavyweights in the Order. They are to depose the transgressor and offer such advice to the community that a worthy successor is elected.

! To be noted is the curious double-barrelled approach: first the bishop and then the Order, with no clear demarcation between jurisdictions. This is not good legal drafting: so the *Posterior Charter of Charity* omitted recourse to the bishop. The Abbot of Cîteaux takes action in the first instance.

If the monks refuse to accept this pastoral intervention they are excommunicated — with the option of transferring to Cîteaux for those who wish to escape censure (CC 9.4-5).

Mechanisms are then enunciated for coping with the situation resulting from when the Abbot of Cîteaux goes astray (CC 9.6-12). Again, recourse to the bishop is eliminated from the procedure in the *Posterior Charter of Charity*.

Chapter Ten has more rules about abbatial precedence — the point about the celebrant (the one vested in alb) being advanced beyond his native seniority is omitted in CC2.

Chapter Eleven makes provision for deaths of abbots and the subsequent change of government. Although elections are specified, their modalities are not specified nor the extent of influence exercised by the Father Abbot in giving “advice” to the electors.

- ! To be noted in CC 9.6 and 9.12, the role assigned to the abbots of La Ferté, Pontigny and Clairvaux in CC1 is expanded to include Morimond in CC2.
- ! In CC 11.3, the interim regency of the abbot of La Ferté of CC1 is replaced by that of the four proto-abbots, including Morimond in CC2.
- ! In CC 11.2 “New Monastery” becomes in CC2 “Cîteaux the mother of us all”.

In our reading of the *Charter of Charity* it is important not to become absorbed in legal and historical issues, but to keep refocusing on the reasons behind the regulations and the spiritual principles that are operating. The purpose of the document was to build up a spirit of mutual love among Cistercian monasteries, to create a community of communities so that each would be assisted in maintaining fidelity to the specific grace of the charism. When EC 2.13 says, “its every article is redolent of only what pertains to charity” it enunciates an important principle for interpretation. If, in our reading, we drift away from the spiritual plane we are liable to misread the text that is before us. Only if we are attentive to the human and monastic values of the *Charter of Charity* will it serve as a means of renewal and growth.

- ! **Extra Reading** as for Unit Three.

Exordium

Unit 5: Primary Source 1

Abbatiae Alpensis Creatio [Draft translation only]

We wish to make known to all the children of the Church, both present and future, what we the monks of the monastery (*coenobium*) of Molesme and the brothers of the monastery (*locus*) of Aulps have determined concerning the ordination of the abbot of that monastery and his subordination.

Previously when the land was owned by our church and existed as a fully dependent cell, the brothers of that place — by God's inspiration — adhering more strictly (*arcius*) to the precepts of our holy Father Benedict, and encouraged by the counsel of certain religious men, and instructed also by the authority of the Rule, petitioned us to grant them an abbot for themselves. They persevered as supplicants in our chapter with this petition so that finally we agreed that at the death of the abbot of that place, all his successors would, as this first abbot has done, seek and obtain [authorisation] from our monastery and would enter into office there by receiving the charge of that place from our abbot

When our abbot (Molesme) happens to come to that place all reverence is shown to him, both in the seat assigned him as in the measure of wine (*iusticia*) according to the Rule.

If it happens — which God forbid — that the evil of discord erupts between these brothers and their abbot, our abbot, and no other, will be summoned to examine the situation and bring peace.

It is also decided that if some brother of that place is scandalised about something and he takes refuge with us or one of ours tries to do the same with them, he is not to be received without the permission of his own abbot.

If it happens — may God avert it — that these brothers apostatise from this strictness that they have adopted and return to secular life, then this place will revert to being what it was before, a cell of ours.

This is decreed by Dom Robert, first abbot of Molesme in the presence of the undersigned: Dom Guy, constituted as first abbot of that place, Alberic, prior of Molesme, Ada, Monk, Walter, Monk, Liescelinus, Monk, and Stephen, Monk, by whose hand this is written.

[A list of other signatories follows]

Exordium

Unit 5: Primary Source 2

Concordia Molismensis [Draft translation only]

The Abbot of Aulps and the Abbot of Balerne have a mutual disagreement. They have quarrelled for a long time on the matter of the subordination of the church of Balerne, by which it should be subject to Aulps. Finally, with equal consent and with the same mind, they have made petition to Molesme, so that by the judgement or pact of Dom Robert, the first abbot of that place and the other brothers, this long controversy might be quietened. Both abbots agree to confirm and ratify in perpetuity the counsel of the church of Molesme.

Under the presidency of Dom Robert, the abbot of Molesme, and in the presence of Dom Lambert [], and with the whole community of brothers in attendance, the peace and concord of the aforesaid churches was determined thus.

It was decided by the aforesaid abbots that setting aside all past quarrels and agreements, the abbot of Balerne would be subordinate to the abbot of Aulps in such a way that if the abbot of Aulps comes to Balerne he will have the first seat. All will obey whatever disposition or ordinance he makes according to justice and in accordance with the Rule, and following the counsel of the abbot or brothers of that place.

If the abbot of Balerne is found in anything to be a despiser of the holy Rule or if in any case that needs correction he has been excessive, he is to be admonished by the abbot of Aulps twice, three times or four. If he remedies the situation, good. If he is in contempt or presumes to rebel against [the abbot of Aulps] the latter will invite him to his own chapter at Aulps and treat his case there, but according to God, as befits such a person, without any violence.

If the case is serious or such that it cannot be remedied in this manner, then [the abbot of Aulps] will notify the abbot of the church of Molesme who will take charge of the correction personally or by another whom he knows to be worthy.

If the abbot of Balerne feels that he has been burdened unjustly then, in the same way, he may licitly make appeal to a hearing of the church of Molesme, having first advised the same abbot. Neither of them may make any appeal for any other hearing on any business or disagreement whatever before Molesme withdraws from it.

If for the sake of the discipline of the church or some necessity the abbot of Balerne wishes to have some of the brothers of Aulps with him, [the abbot of Aulps] will charitably give to him as many as he can, instructing them that they are to obey the abbot of Balerne as they would himself. Nevertheless, neither of them should receive without common consent anyone of their own professed to reside in his monastery.

Moreover Aulps will impose no violence or exaction on the temporal resources of Balerne, nor the monks of Balerne on the possessions of Aulps — except in so far as they serve each other in charity.

If Dom David relinquishes his abbacy in some way, he may freely go to Molesme or, if he prefers, to the church of Aulps, but not to another [monastery].

Enacted in chapter in the year of the Lord's incarnation 1110 by Dom Robert, first abbot of that place in the presence of Dom Lambert Pultariensis. The witnesses for each party are: William, the prior of Molesme, Girbaudus, claustral subprior, Toeobaudus, cantor, Walter, secretary, Richerius, chancellor, Robert, cellarer — and indeed the whole community, small and great, old men and juniors. S. Guy, abbot of Aulps and Andrew, monk. S. David, abbot of Balerne and Stephen his monk.

Exordium

Unit 5: Individual and Group Reflection

1. What three points struck you most strongly in your latest reading of the *Charter of Charity*? Write them down and share them with others.

a)

b)

c)

2. Read what Pope Eugene III wrote in his *Act of Confirmation* in 1152. Do you agree with this interpretation of “unanimity”?

“The purpose of that decree was that the Rule of Blessed Benedict will, for all time, be observed in all the monasteries of your Order in the same manner as it is observed in the church of Cîteaux. Also, in the reading of this Rule, no member of your Order may bring any other meaning beyond the simple and common understanding [of the text]. Rather, just as those things that have been defined are recognised, let [the Rule] be understood by all, and inviolably observed in uniformity (*uniformiter*). You are entirely to maintain all the same observances (*easdemque penitus observantias*), the same chant and the same liturgical books in all the churches of your Order. No church or person of your Order may dare to ask from anyone a privilege against the common institutes of this Order or to retain one if acquired through any means whatever.” (PL 180, col 1542ab.)

3. Read this quotation from the statute *De Forma Visitationis*. Does it express adequately the spirit of the *Charter of Charity*? Does it correspond with your experience of the regular visitation?

In making the visitation let the Visitor use the greatest care and diligence in faithfully and prudently looking into any excesses that need correction and into the maintenance of peace; and, in as far as he can within the limits of the Order’s discipline, let him guide the minds of the brethren towards a further-reaching reverence for their own abbot and towards the grace of mutual love in Christ.

4. Are the Order’s present structures of pastoral oversight effective? What sort of “abuses” should the Visitor seek to correct?

5. How can a General Chapter effectively assist a particular community in upgrading its living of monastic values?

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24 April 1998

Dear Participant:

We have now reached the half-way mark in our reflection on the Cistercian reform: we have looked at the history, the personalities and the documents. It is now time to begin reflecting more systematically on *values*.

You will find, as we progress, that we will need to continue returning to the material we have just completed. On the other hand, many of the questions we address directly in the months to come will have already been anticipated in our review of history and our reading of the texts. Please be patient with the repetition, it is meant to help you absorb the total picture — rather than merely make contact with a series of unconnected facts.

It remains important that the material that is being distributed be adapted at every level to suit your needs and possibilities by regions or cultures, by communities, by individual monks and nuns. It is often in the task of adaptation that real assimilation and growth occurs.

Thank you for your continuing support during this centennial year.

Michael

Fr Michael Casey