



STATUTE OF FOUNDATIONS AND CLOSURES

GENERAL NORMS

Art.1

This Statute on Foundations and Closures has been drafted, revised and approved by the 2022 General Chapter of the Order.

Art.2

The Monasteries of the Cistercian Order are: *sui iuris*, that is, Abbeys, or Conventual Priors; Simple Priors, that is, dependent houses of a monastery *sui iuris*, of a chapter of a Congregation or in exceptional cases, of the General Chapter.

Art.3

The Monasteries of the Cistercian Order, as in ancient times, can enjoy full autonomy, either immediately from the foundation, or gradually attain it, or if necessary, gradually lose it. There are three classes of Cistercian monastery:

- (a) Abbey;
- (b) Conventual Priory;
- (c) Simple priory

Art.4

What is established in this Statute applies with equal right for monasteries of monks and nuns, unless the law expressly provides otherwise or is evident by the very nature of the matter.

Art.5

The prescripts of this Statute are in regards to the foundation of a new monastery or the demotion of one already existing. They abolish the practices that were in force.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF A CISTERCIAN MONASTERY

Conditions

Art.6

A new Cistercian Monastery is founded by the monastic presence of at least three professed with solemn vows, in a legitimately constituted house.

Art.7

The foundation of a new Cistercian monastery is made taking into account its usefulness to the Church and the Order. Therefore, before the foundation of the new monastery it is necessary:

- a) to assess carefully whether it is an opportune moment to begin the foundation, especially if there is already monastic life in the place, lest in a short space of time it is necessary to suppress;
- b) to seek information, principally from the Superiors of other Institutes of Consecrated Life of Religious, on the vitality of Christian life of the place, on vocations, on the religious sense of the people of the place, and on anything that seems necessary or useful to decide whether to begin the foundation, such as the cultural environment of the surroundings.
- c) to choose the place suitable for the foundation, and to provide for what is required to properly establish the religious life of the monks, such as a good generational balance, a good formation of the nucleus of founding monks and a good economic plan, and to foster good relations between the monasteries of the Order.
- d) ask the Diocesan Bishop for the prior consent prescribed by law and given in writing to erect the new religious house.
- e) the General Chapter will verify the fulfillment of these conditions based on a written report from the founding monastery. If the General Chapter is not in session, this responsibility belongs to the Synod who can delegate it to the Abbot General and his Council.

The Competent Authority

Art.8

The competent authority for the foundation of a new monastery is the authority of the Congregation or the Order, according to the norm of this Statute and of the Constitutions of each Congregation or of the Order, observing what must be observed in the law.

For the foundation of a new monastery, it is advisable that the founding community be accompanied by a member of the Order and/or the Congregation not directly related to the foundation.

Art.9

In the foundation of a monastery of nuns, having heard the opinion of the *Pater Immediatus*, if there is one, permission is required also from the Holy See as prescribed by law (cf. CIC can.609 §2)

Autonomy

Art.10

The new foundation, if it is not a monastery *sui iuris*, lacks any autonomy by universal law, so that it depends in everything on the founding monastery to which it belongs, and according to the law of the Chapter of the Congregation, and enjoys autonomy granted to it by the Superior of the founding monastery according to the norm of law.

The founding monastery of a monastery that seeks to be autonomous will set a prudent date of 20-25 years for it to reach autonomy. If, within the framework of this time, autonomy is not reached, the suitability to continue with the foundation or close it must be reassessed.

The founding monastery must guarantee the maturity and stability of the members of the founded house, maintaining the monastic vitality of both.

Both houses must establish and maintain a good relationship, both during the process of the foundation, and once the founded house has achieved autonomy, according to the spirit of the *Carta Caritatis*.

II. THE DIFFERENT RANKS OF MONASTERIES

THE SIMPLE PRIORY

Conditions

Art.11

The Simple Priory is erected according to canon law, in addition, the following conditions are to be met:

- (a) a monastic family having at least three professed with solemn vows, including the Prior;
- (b) a place suitable for a regular life;
- (c) conditions in which the community can provide for the necessities of life.

The Competent Authority

Art.12

Consent to erect a simple priory is given with the consent of the conventual chapter of a monastery *sui iuris* and by:

- a) the Chapter of the Congregation according to the norms of the Constitutions of a Congregation, for monasteries that belong to a Congregation unless it is not stated in the Constitutions of a Congregation;
- b) the Abbot General together with his Council, for monasteries incorporated directly into the Order according to the norm of the Constitutions of the Order.

Autonomy

Art.13

Unless otherwise stated, the simple priory, according to canon law, has neither its own members nor its own conventual chapter, but in all this it depends on the monastery *sui iuris* to which it belongs, or as required by law, on the Chapter of the Congregation, and enjoys that autonomy granted to it by the superior of the monastery *sui iuris*, in accordance with the norm of law.

Art.14

The monks residing in a simple priory retain the capitular rights in the monastery *sui iuris*, according to the Constitutions of each Congregation.

THE CONVENTUAL PRIORY

Conditions

Art.15

In the foundation of a monastery *sui iuris*, or in the change from a Simple Priory to a monastery *sui iuris*, in addition to the general requirements for foundations, the following is required:

- (a) a monastic family comprising a sufficient number of monks, so that it constitutes, in addition to the Prior, at least seven professed with solemn vows, who declare that they have a firm intention to belong to this monastery in a stable manner;
- (b) conditions in which the new community can provide for itself the necessities of conventual life;
- (c) well-founded hope that candidates will be received and formed to strengthen and increase the community, or that there will always be a reasonable number of monks, even if they must come from other monasteries;
- d) that they bear good witness to fraternal life in common (cf. CIC can. 602) and have suitable places to exercise the regular life (of a monastery).

Art.16

The General Chapter may grant a dispensation from the conditions stated in article 15 of the Statutes for Foundations and Closures for the erection of conventual priory after a presentation of a report from the Congregational Chapter in the case of a monastery incorporated in a congregation or a report from the Abbot General in the case of a monastery directly incorporated into the Order.

Art.17

A Simple Priory is not to be elevated as a monastery *sui iuris* until there is certainty of its stability and progress.

The Competent Authority

Art.18

The consent to erect a Conventual Priory, once the deliberative vote has been obtained of the Chapter of the monastery on which the simple priory depends, is given by:

- a) the Congregational Chapter according to the norms of the Constitutions of the Congregation for monasteries belonging to a Congregation, unless otherwise determined in the Constitutions of each Congregation;
- b) the General Chapter of the Order or the Synod of the Order, for monasteries not belonging to a Congregation and to be incorporated directly into the Order, according to the norms of the Constitutions of the Order.

To obtain said consent in the case of the direct foundation of a Conventual Priory, the presentation of a report and a study according to the criteria mentioned in article 7 of the present Statute must be made before the Congregational Chapter or where appropriate the General Chapter or the Synod of the Order.

Art.19

For the erection of a monastery of nuns the opinion of the *Pater Immediatus* will also be heard, if they have one.

Autonomy

Art.20

The Conventual Priory enjoys autonomy, that is, it has the rights and duties and privileges that the same law and the legitimate custom have attributed to a monastery *sui iuris*.

THE ABBEY

Conditions

Art.21

A Conventual Priory may be elevated to an Abbey if, in addition to the general requirements for foundations, and the conditions prescribed in Article 15 of this Statute, there is a monastic family composed of at least thirteen professed with solemn vows including the superior.

Art. 22

From these conditions, the General Chapter may grant a dispensation after a presentation of a report of the Congregational Chapter in the case of monastery incorporated in a Congregation or a report of the Abbot General in the case of a monastery incorporated directly into the Order.

The Competent Authority

Art. 23

The consent to erect an Abbey, with the approval of the conventual chapter, of a monastery *sui iuris*, is given by:

- a) the Chapter of the Congregation, for monasteries belonging to a Congregation, according to the norm of the Constitutions of each Congregation, after hearing the opinion of the *Pater Immediatus* if any; unless otherwise provided for in the Constitutions of each Congregation;
- b) the General Chapter of the Order or the Synod of the Order, for monasteries incorporated into the Order not belonging to a Congregation, according to the norm of the Constitutions of the Order and of these Statutes.

To obtain said consent in the case of the direct foundation of an Abbey, the presentation and study of a report in accordance with the criteria required in Article 7 of this Statute, before the Congregational Chapter must be made, or where appropriate the General Chapter or the Synod of the Order.

Art.24

A Conventual Priory of nuns is erected as an Abbey, after hearing the opinion of the *Pater Immediatus*, if they have one.

Autonomy

Article 25

The Abbey enjoys autonomy, that is, it has the rights, obligations and privileges that are attributed to a monastery *sui iuris* by the same law and by legitimate custom.

III. DEMOTION OR CLOSURE OF MONASTERIES

Art.26

If the conditions which guarantee the autonomy of a monastery begin to fail (cf. Art.7 and *Cor Orans* 70), the monastery can be demoted without yet losing its autonomy, that is, going from Abbey to Conventual Priory, or gradually losing its autonomy, passing from a house *sui iuris* to an affiliated house, until it loses its autonomy completely becoming a dependent priory or being suppressed. For reasons of greater importance, one can always directly suppress a monastery, without the need to demote it.

All these reasons are serious and take on weight when the community does not meet the principal criterion: the persistent lack of vitality necessary for the living transmission of the charism.

Any decision regarding the process of demotion must come from charity, that is, with the greatest sense of responsibility, with experience and knowledge of human nature. Therefore, since these are very painful processes, a community must be accompanied for a long period of time with great sensitivity.

There must be discernment and decisions, gradually carrying out the demotion in charity. The community must prepare itself step by step with spiritual and psychological support, seeking the acceptance of the process by the members. Accompaniment in this process is the responsibility of the *Pater Immediatus* in coordination with the Abbot President and his council for monasteries belonging to a Congregation, or with the Abbot General and his council for directly incorporated monasteries.

DEMOTION OF A MONASTERY WHILE MAINTAINING ITS AUTONOMY

Conditions

Art. 27

When the members of an Abbey are reduced to the number of 8 and they have not received new vocations for a long time, the *Pater Immediatus* or the Abbot President in his place, should assess with the community what path their future should take.

The *Pater Immediatus*, or the Abbot President in his place, will present a report of the situation of this community to the Congregational Chapter or if the community is directly incorporated to the Order, to the Synod or the General Chapter. The report should permit an assessment of the spiritual health of the community, the situation of the personnel and the finances

as well as the possibility of regeneration. The report should also account for socio-cultural character of the monastery.

The Chapter should therefore assess whether concrete measures are necessary to support the monastery. The possibility of reducing the monastery to a conventual priory may be considered if it will be useful for the community.

The Competent Authority

Art.28

An Abbey is reduced to Conventual Priory:

- a) by decree of the Chapter of the Congregation according to the norm of the Constitutions of each Congregation, if the Abbey belongs to a Congregation;
- b) by decree of the General Chapter of the Order, according to the norm of the Constitutions of the Order if it is an Abbey directly incorporated into the Order.

Autonomy

Art.29

The Abbey demoted to a Conventual Priory does not lose the autonomy of which it enjoys as a monastery *sui iuris* according to norm of law.

DEMOTION OF A MONASTERY AND LOSS OF ITS AUTONOMY

Conditions

Art.30

If the members of an Abbey or a Conventual Priory drops to a number less than 7, the *Pater Immediatus* will begin an accompaniment of the community to determine what is the spiritual health of the community, its physical and economic health and its capacity for regeneration.

If, throughout this accompaniment, it is seen that the conditions mentioned in article 7 that ensure the autonomy of the community are lacking or the community is reduced to 5 members, without the founded hope of vocations capable of reintegrating the number necessary to maintain autonomy, then the *Pater Immediatus* will advise the superior of the community to ask the Abbot President or, where appropriate, the Abbot General, for the establishment of the *ad hoc commission*, established for nuns in *Vultum Dei Quaerere* and described in *Cor Orans*, to issue a report based on the criteria established in article 7 of this Statute assessing the possibility of losing autonomy.

The *ad hoc committee* is composed of:

- a) the Presiding Abbot, two major superiors freely chosen by him and the major superior of that Abbey, for monasteries incorporated into a Congregation or,
- b) the Abbot General, two major superiors freely chosen by him and the major superior of said Abbey for the monasteries directly incorporated into the Order.

The report of this committee shall establish:

- a) if the community can maintain its autonomy, it will remain as a conventual priory,

- b) if the community cannot maintain its autonomy, it must begin a process of gradual loss of its autonomy, becoming
 - i. a monastery affiliated with another monastery;
 - ii. a simple priory, dependent in everything on another monastery.

Affiliation

Art.31

The affiliation of one community to another *sui iuris* serves to help, support and sustain the affiliated community in order to overcome the difficulties that have led to the affiliation or to accompany it in its suppression. This method is designed to help the community both spiritually and materially, with the bonds of charity to accept one's reality.

- a) The community affiliated to another autonomous monastery has its autonomy suspended, the latter becoming its major superior, the major superior of the autonomous monastery.

After hearing the opinion of the members of the affiliated monastery, the major superior of the affiliating monastery appoints a local superior *ad nutum* for the affiliated monastery, according to the law of the Congregation, if the monastery belongs to a Congregation, or of the Order, if it is directly incorporated.

- b) The members of the affiliated monastery are not integrated into the chapter of the affiliating monastery, even if before the affiliation an absolute majority vote of the chapter is necessary of the affiliated community. The affiliated community may convoke local chapter meetings.

- c) The affiliated monastery maintains the capacity to welcome candidates to the novitiate, novices to temporary profession and temporary professed to solemn profession, although the novitiate and initial formation must be carried out in the affiliating monastery.

After being voted by the chapter of the affiliating monastery, the profession will be issued for the affiliated monastery.

- d) During the time of affiliation, the finances of the two monasteries is administered separately.

Art.32

A conventual priory of monks is affiliated with a house *sui iuris*,

- a) by decree of the abbot president and his council, if it is a monastery belonging to a Congregation,
- b) by decree of the Abbot General and his council, if it is a monastery directly incorporated into the Order,

always after having been requested by the *ad hoc* committee referred to in Article 31

If it is a monastery of nuns, the affiliation must be made by the Holy See (cf. *Cor Orans* 54).

Demotion to Simple Priory

Art.33

Two years after the affiliation of a community to a monastery *sui iuris*, an assessment should be made whether the conditions for which the community was affiliated still exist.

If the results of the assessment show that the community remains under the same conditions, the community will remain affiliated. If, on the contrary, the situation is already irreversible, the affiliated community will be reduced to a Simple Priory.

The affiliated community that is demoted to Simple Priory is fully integrated into an autonomous monastery, so it loses full autonomy. Its assets are integrated into the monastery on which it depends, without prejudice to the wills of the founders or benefactors, and the rights legitimately acquired.

Art.34

An affiliated community of monks is demoted to Simple Priory:

- a) by decree of the Chapter of the Congregation, according to the norm of the Constitutions of each Congregation, if the community belongs to a Congregation;
- b) by decree of the General Chapter of the Order, or by the Synod of the Order in accordance with the norm of the Constitutions of the Order if it is a community immediately incorporated into the Order.

The demotion of an affiliated community of nuns to a simple Priory belongs to the Apostolic See (Cf. CCC can. 616 § 4) observing what in law must be observed.

SUPPRESSION OF A MONASTERY

Art.35

The demotion of an affiliated community to a Simple Priory is in fact the suppression of the community, even though it was accomplished gradually.

The suppression of a community, even if it is *sui iuris*, can be carried out directly for serious reasons that justify it.

The community *sui iuris* can always request its own suppression.

Art.36

A community *sui iuris*, having consulted the Diocesan Bishop, can be demoted by:

- a) decree of the Chapter of the Congregation, according to the norm of the Constitutions of each Congregation, if the monastery *sui iuris* belongs to a Congregation;
- b) decree of the General Chapter of the Order, or by the Synod of the Order in accordance with the norm of the Constitutions of the Order if it is a monastery *sui iuris* directly incorporated into the Order.

An affiliated monastery is suppressed according to Article 34.

Art. 37

The Suppression of a community *sui iuris* of nuns belongs to the Apostolic See (cf. CIC can. 616 § 4) observing what in law must be observed.

Art.38

Suppression can be done by directly integrating one community into another as a Simple Priory, or by closing the monastery and incardinating its members to another monastery of the Congregation or the Order.

The decree of suppression must establish the mode of suppression.

Art.39

As for the property of a suppressed abbey, the prescripts of the law are to be observed, while respecting the wills of the founders or benefactors and the rights legitimately acquired.

CONCLUSION**Art.40**

The Congregations of our Order and the monasteries directly incorporated into the Order are obligated in future foundations and demotions to observe the prescripts of this Statute, as long as the General Chapter of the Order or the Synod of the Order do not provide otherwise, according to the norm of the Constitutions of the Order.