

¹**On the *Charter of Charity***

²Before the Cistercian abbeys began to flourish, the abbot, Dom Stephen, and his brethren ordained that, in order to avoid any cause of conflict between bishop and monks, in no way would abbeys be founded in the diocese of any bishop before he had ratified and confirmed the decree drawn up and confirmed between the monastery of Cîteaux and the others which had issued from it. ³In this decree, then, the aforesaid brethren, taking precaution against future shipwreck of their mutual peace, elucidated and decreed and left for their posterity by what covenant, or in what manner, indeed, with what charity their monks throughout abbeys in various parts of the world, though separated in body, could be indissolubly knit together in mind. ⁴They considered that this decree should be called the *Charter of Charity*, because, averting the burdensome levying of all exactions, its statute pursues only charity and the advantage of souls in things human and divine.

¹**That the Rule is to be understood
and kept by all in one manner. II.**

²Now, however, we will and we command them, that they observe the Rule of the blessed Benedict in everything just as it is observed in the New Monastery. ³Let them not introduce a different meaning in the interpretation of the Holy Rule; but as our predecessors, the holy fathers — that is to say, the monks of the New Monastery — understood and kept it, and as we today understand and keep it, so let them too understand and keep it.

¹**All are to have the same liturgical books and customs. III.**

²And because we receive in our cloister all their monks who come to us, and they likewise receive our monks in their cloisters, it therefore seems to us opportune, and this also is our will, that they have the usages and chant and all the books necessary for the day and night Hours and for Mass according to the form of the usages and books of the New Monastery, so that there may be no discord in our conduct, but that we may live by one charity, one Rule, and like usages.

¹**The general statute between abbeys. IV.**

²When, however, the abbot of the New Monastery comes to any of these monasteries to make a visit, the local abbot should give him precedence everywhere in the monastery, in token of the fact that the church of the New Monastery is mother of his church; and, as long as he remains there, the visiting abbot should take the place of the local abbot, except that he eats, not in the guesthouse, but with the brethren in the refectory in order to preserve discipline — unless the local abbot is absent.

³Indeed, all visiting abbots of our Order should do likewise. But if several should be visiting, and the local abbot is absent, the senior of them should eat in the guesthouse.

¹**That the mother is to visit the daughter once a year. V.**

²Let the abbot of the senior church visit once a year all the monasteries
3 he has founded; and should he visit more often, let them for that reason rejoice all the more.

¹Of the General Chapter of abbots at Cîteaux. VII.

²Let all the abbots of these churches come to the New Monastery once a year on the day they decide among themselves, and there let them treat of the salvation of their own souls; if something is to be emended or added to in the observance of the Holy Rule or of the Order, let them so ordain it, and let them re-establish among themselves the good of peace and charity.

³But if any abbot proves to have been less zealous for the Rule or too intent on things secular, or habitually prone to any vice, let him there be charitably proclaimed. Let the one proclaimed prostrate and fulfill the penance assigned him for the fault. But only abbots are to make this proclamation.

⁴But should any church fall into intolerable poverty, let the abbot of that monastery take care to make this matter known before the whole chapter. Then let the abbots, one and all, enkindled by the most intense fire of charity, hasten to relieve the penury of that church, according to their resources, from the goods bestowed on them by God.

¹Of the statute between those who issued from Cîteaux and those whom they have begotten; and that all are to come to the General Chapter, and the punishment of those who do not come. VIII.

²But when any of our churches has grown by the grace of God to such an extent that it can construct another monastery, let them observe between themselves the same agreement we observe between ourselves and our brethren.

This, however, we do will and do reserve to ourselves: that all the abbots from every region are to come to the New Monastery on the day they decide among themselves, and there they are to obey in everything the abbot of that same place and the Chapter in the correction of things amiss and in the observance of the Holy Rule and of the Order.

³But they do not have an annual chapter with those whom they have begotten.

⁴However, should on occasion bodily infirmity or the blessing of novices prevent one of our abbots from being able to come to the aforesaid place of assembly on the appointed day, he should send his prior thither, who will take care to make known to the Chapter the reason for his staying away, and who will also, should we decree or change anything, bring this information back home to his abbot and brethren. ⁵But should anyone for any other excuse ever presume to stay away from our General Chapter, let him prostrate for his fault at the Chapter of the following year, and make satisfaction by the penance for a less serious fault for as long as the master of the Chapter judges.

¹Of the death and election of abbots. XI.

²Upon the death of their father, the brethren of the New Monastery are to send three messengers to the abbots, as we have said above — or more should they so wish — and are to gather there as many as they can summon within fifteen days; and with their consent, let them appoint as their shepherd one whom God has foreseen. ³In the meantime, however, the lord abbot of la Ferté is to take the place of the deceased abbot in everything, as we said earlier regarding a different matter, until another abbot may, upon being elected, receive with the help of God both the place and its pastoral care. ⁴Also in the rest of the monasteries widowed in whatever manner of their own pastor, let the brethren of that place convoke the abbot of that church which gave them birth, and in his presence and with his advice let them elect for themselves an abbot from among their own brethren or those of the New Monastery or from the other churches. ⁵For Cistercians are not allowed to take to themselves an abbot from churches outside [the Order], or to give their own monks for the same purpose. But whatever person the monks elect from whatever monastery of our Order, let them receive him without opposition.