

The Exordium Parvum

LETTER OF THE FIRST CISTERCIANS TO ALL THEIR SUCCESSORS

We Cistercians, the original founders of this monastery, make known to our successors through this present writing how canonically, by what authority, and by which persons, as well as what period of time, their monastery and manner of living had its beginning. We publish the sincere truth of this matter that they may the more tenaciously love the place as well as the observance of the holy Rule therein, which we ourselves with the grace of God have only just begun; that they may pray for us who have sustained indefatigably the burden and the heat of the day; and that they may labor unto death on the strait and narrow way prescribed by the Rule, so that after they have put down the burden of flesh they may repose happily in eternal rest. Amen.

I. *The Beginning of the Monastery of Cîteaux*

In the year 1098 of the Incarnation of our Lord, Robert of blessed memory, the first abbot of the monastery of Molesme which was founded in the diocese of Langres, and certain brethren of the same monastery appeared before the venerable Hugh, then legate of the Apostolic See and archbishop of the church of Lyons, and promised to place their lives under the custody of the holy Rule of Father Benedict. For the unhindered realisation of this intent, therefore, they begged him insistently to lend them the strength of his own support and of his apostolic authority. The legate, joyfully espousing their wish, laid down the foundations of their beginning with the following letter.

II. *Letter of the Legate Hugh*

Hugh, Archbishop of Lyons and legate of the Apostolic See to Robert, Abbot of Molesme, and to the brethren who together with him desire to serve God according to the Rule of Saint Benedict. Let it be known to all who rejoice in the progress of holy Mother Church that you and certain of your sons, brothers of the monastery of molesme, have stood in Our presence at Lyons and stated your wish to adhere henceforth more strictly and more perfectly to the Rule of blessed Benedict, which so far you have observed poorly and neglectfully in that monastery. But, since it is obvious that in view of many obstacles this could not be accomplished in the aforementioned place, We, providing for the welfare of both parties, those departing and those remaining, have concluded that it will be expedient for you to retire to another place, which the Divine Munificence will point out to you, and there to serve the Lord in a more salutary and peaceful manner. To you, therefore, who had at that time presented yourselves – Abbot Robert and brothers Alberic, Odo, John, Stephen, Letald, and Peter – as well as to all others whom you shall decide to add to your company according to the Rule and by common consultation, after deliberation We gave the order that you persevere in this holy endeavour. We confirm it forever by the authority of the Apostolic See through the impression of Our seal.

III. *Departure of the Cistercian Monks from Molesme and Their Arrival at Cîteaux, and the Monastery They Founded There*

Afterwards, with the support of such great authority, the aforementioned abbot and his monks returned to Molesme and from that religious community selected like-minded associates who were devoted to the Rule, so that those who had spoken before the legate in Lyons and those who were selected from the community numbered twenty-one monks. Knit together in such a band, they eagerly set out for the solitude that was called Cîteaux. This place, situated in the diocese of Chalons, was inhabited only by wild beasts, since it was at that time unusual for men to enter there because of the density of the woods and thorny thickets. Arriving at this place the men of God found it all the more suitable for the religious life which they had already formulated in their minds and for which they had come here, the more despicable and inaccessible they realised it to be for seculars. After they had cut down and removed the dense woods and the thorny thickets, they began to construct a monastery there with the approval of the bishop of Chalon and with the consent of the territorial lord. For, inspired by the grace of God, these men, while still living in Molesme, often spoke to each other, lamented and were saddened by the transgression of the rule of Saint Benedict, the Father of Monks. They realised that they themselves and the other monks had promised by a solemn vow to observe this Rule, yet they had by no means kept it; and therefore they had knowingly committed the sin of perjury. For this reason they came into this solitude with the authority of the legate of the Apostolic See, as we mentioned, to fulfill their vows through the keeping of the holy Rule. Then pleased with their holy fervour and having been requested in a letter by the aforementioned legate of the holy Roman Church, Lord Odo, the duke of Burgundy, with his means completed the wooden monastery which they had begun and provided them there for a long time with every necessity and generously supported them with land as well as livestock.

IV. *How That Place Rose to an Abbey*

At the same time, the abbot who had come here, upon the command of the aforementioned legate, received from the bishop of the diocese the shepherd's staff and the care of the monks; he also caused the brethren who had come with him to undertake their stability in that place in accordance with the Rule. This is how that monastery rose to an abbey canonically and with apostolic authority.

V. *How Those from Molesme Harried the Pope in the Matter of Abbot Robert's Return*

Shortly afterwards, some monks of Molesme, charged by their abbot, lord Godfrey, who succeeded Robert, went to Rome to the lord Pope Urban. They demanded that the oft-mentioned Robert be restored to his former place. Moved by their importuning, the Pope ordered his legate, the venerable Hugh, to see to it that, if it could be done, the abbot should return and the monks who loved the solitude be left in peace.

VI. *Letter of the Pope Regarding the Return of the Abbot*

Bishop Urban, Servant of the Servants of God, to his venerable brother and fellow bishop Hugh, vicar of the Apostolic See: greeting and apostolic blessing. We have heard in council the great outcry of the brethren of Molesme who vehemently demanded the return of their abbot. Indeed, they have said that on account of that abbot's absence regular life in their monastery had been subverted and that they had become hateful to their lords and neighbours. Now at length, having been prevailed upon by Our brethren, We command Your grace by indicating that it would please Us, to see to it that, if it can be done, the abbot be restored from the solitude to the monastery. But if you cannot accomplish this, let it be your concern that those who love the solitude may live in peace and those who are in the monastery observe the regular discipline.

After the legate had read this apostolic letter, he summoned a number of men of authority and piety and decided the following about the matter.

VII. *The Legate's decision in the Whole Matter Concerning the Monks of Molesme and Citeaux*

Hugh, Servant of the church of Lyons to his most beloved brother Robert, bishop of Langres: greeting. We have considered it necessary to let Your Fraternity know what we have decided in the meeting recently held at Port-d'Anselles regarding the matter of the monastery of Molesme. Several monks from Molesme appeared before Us in that place with Your letter; they described to us the desolation and the ruin of their place, which the removal of the abbot Robert had brought upon them, and forcefully implored that he be given back to them as father. For, they had no hope that peace and quiet could return to the monastery of Molesme or that the full vigour of the monastic discipline could be restored to its pristine state in any other way. Present before us was also Brother Godfrey, whom You have installed as abbot of that monastery, who stated that he would gladly yield his place to the same Robert as his father if We should decide to send him back to the community of Molesme. After having considered Your request and that of the monks of Molesme and having reread the letter of the lord Pope addressed to Us in this matter, which entrusted the whole matter to Our disposition and judgement, We, upon the advice of many religious men, bishops as well as others, who were with Us in council, have at length decided to acquiesce in Your wish and theirs and return Robert to the monastery of Molesme. This shall be done in such a way that, before his return, he shall go to Chalon and surrender the staff and the care of the abbey into the hands of Our brother the bishop of Chalon, to whom he had sworn obedience as abbots customarily do. Also, he shall free and absolve the monks of the New Monastery, who made their profession and obedience to him as their abbot, from that profession and obedience. Thereupon he shall be released by that bishop from the profession of obedience he has made to him and to the diocese of Chalon.

We have also given permission to return with him to Molesme to all those brethren of the new Monastery who will follow him when he leaves it, provided that henceforth neither side will attempt to lure or receive anyone to its side, except in the manner which blessed Benedict prescribed for the admission of monks of a known monastery. After he has done all this We release him to Your Grace, so that You may restore him as the abbot of Molesme; in such a way, however, that, if with his usual inconstancy he should again leave that same monastery, no one shall be put in his

place during the lifetime of the above named abbot Godfrey, without Our and Your, as well as Godfrey's, assent. We ordain by apostolic authority that all these provisions have the force of law.

With regard to the aforementioned abbot Robert's chapel [instruments] and the other things which he took with him upon his departure from the monastery of Molesme and with which he went to the bishop of Chalon and to the New Monastery, We have ordered that everything shall remain unharmed with the brethren of the New Monastery, with the exception of a certain breviary which they may keep with the approval of the monks of Molesme, until the feast of saint John the Baptist, so that they may copy it.

Present at this decision were the bishops Norgaud of Autun, Walter of Chalon, Beraud [Herardus] of Mâcon, Pons of Belley and the abbots Peter of Tournus, Jarente of Dijon, Gaucerand of Ainay, as well as Peter, chamberlain of the lord Pope, and many other honourable men of good character.

That abbot approved and executed all this, releasing the Cistercians from the obedience that they had promised him either at that place or in Molesme. Likewise, the lord bishop Walter of Chalon released the abbot from the care of that monastery. And so he returned with a few monks who did not find the solitude to their liking.

This is how through apostolic favour the two abbeys remained in peace and complete freedom. As a shield for his defence the returning abbot took along the following letter to his bishop.

VIII. *Commendation of Abbot Robert*

Walter, servant of the church of Chalon to his most beloved brother and fellow bishop Robert, bishop of Langres: greeting. Be it known to You that according to the decision of the lord archbishop Hugh, We have released brother Robert, to whom We had entrusted that abbey in Our diocese that is called New Monastery, from the solemn profession made to the diocese of Chalon as well as from the obedience he promised to Us. He himself as well has released and freed those monks who have decided to remain in the aforesaid New Monastery from the obedience and the profession they had vowed to him. I enjoin you, therefore, not to fear to accept him and to treat him as a man in good standing.

IX. *About the Election of Alberic, the First Abbot of the Monastery of Cîteaux*

Deprived of its shepherd, the community of Cîteaux assembled and through a regular election elevated a certain brother by the name of Alberic to be its abbot. He was well versed in both divine and human letters, and a lover of the Rule and the brethren. For a long time he had held the office of prior in the monastery of Molesme as well as here, and he had laboured much and long for the brethren to move from Molesme to this place, for which endeavour he had had to suffer many insults, prison and beatings.

X. *About the Roman Privilege*

After much resistance the aforementioned Alberic accepted the pastoral care. As a man of admirable forethought, he began to weigh what storms of tribulations might at one time or another shake and disturb the house entrusted to his care. Taking precaution for the future, with the consent of the brethren he sent two monks, John

and Ilbodus, to Rome. Through them he petitioned the lord Pope Paschall that, under the wings of apostolic protection, his monastery might forever remain peaceful and safe from the pressure of any ecclesiastical or lay person. The two brethren just named, supported by the sealed letters of the aforementioned archbishop Hugh, of John and Benedict, cardinals of the Roman church, as well as of bishop Walter of Chalon, went safely to Rome and returned before Pope Paschal had faltered in the captivity of the emperor. They brought back his apostolic privilege composed entirely according to the wishes of the abbot and his associates. We have thought it appropriate to hand down these letters as well as the Roman privilege in this little work, so that our successors might realise with how much deliberation and authority their monastery has been founded.

XI. *Letter of the Cardinals John and Benedict*

To our lord and father, Pope Paschal, to whom always and everywhere the greatest praise is due, John and Benedict, with total submission. Since it is Your office to provide for the needs of all churches and to give a helping hand to the just wishes of petitioners, and since the Christian religion must grow by leaning on the support of Your justice, we beg Your Holiness most insistently to lend a merciful hearing to the carriers of this letter who, upon our advice, have been sent to your Paternity by certain religious brethren. In truth, they ask that the decree which they received from Your predecessor, our lord Pope Urban of blessed memory, in regard to the peace and stability of their monastic life and which, in accordance with the same decree, the archbishop of Lyons, then legate, and some of his fellow-bishops and abbots, had established between them and the abbey of Molesme, from which they had seceded in consideration of the religious life, may through the privilege of your authority forever remain undisturbed. Indeed, we ourselves have seen and vouch for the evidence of their truly religious life.

XII. *Letter of Hugh of Lyons*

To his most reverend father and lord, Pope Paschal, Hugh, servant of the church of Lyons, with total submission. The brethren bearing the present letter, journeying to the Highness of Your Paternity have passed through Our lands. Since they live in Our province, namely in the diocese of Chalon, they asked Our unworthy self for a letter of recommendation to Your Highness. You should know, then, that they come from a place that is called New Monastery. They migrated to that place, after seceding from the community of Molesme with their abbot, in order to lead a stricter and more consecrated life according to the Rule of Blessed Benedict which they had resolved to keep by abandoning the usages of certain monasteries maintaining that in their weakness they were unfit to bear such a burden. For that reason the brethren of Molesme and certain other monks of their neighbourhood do not cease to attack and disturb them, thinking that in the eyes of the world they themselves are valued less and looked upon with contempt, if such exceptional and new kinds of monks are seen living in their midst. Therefore, We humbly and trustfully ask You, Beloved Father, that You receive with Your usual kindness these brothers who, after the Lord, place all their trust in You and therefore seek refuge in Your apostolic authority; also, that You free them and their place from such molestation and disturbance, and corroborate this through a privilege of Your

authority. For they are the poor of Christ: they have no defence through riches or power against their enemies, but place all their hope in God's mercy and yours.

XIII. *Letter of the Bishop of Chalon*

To his venerable Father, Pope Paschal, Walter, bishop of Chalon: greeting and due submission. As Your Holiness ardently desires the advancement of the faithful in the true religion, so must they not lack the shelter of Your protection and the encouragement of Your consolation? We therefore, humbly beg that You approve what has been done in accordance with Your predecessor's order and the decision and rescript of the Archbishop of Lyons, then legate of the Apostolic See, as well as other bishops and abbots who had been witnesses and participants in this decision, with regard to certain brethren. Longing for a stricter life they have, upon the advice of saintly men, departed from the monastery of Molesme; Divine Mercy has placed them in Our diocese; their envoys, the bearers of this letter stand before You. We also beg You to deign to corroborate with a privilege of Your authority that that place might remain a free abbey in perpetuity, saving however, the canonical reverence due Our person and Our successors. Also the abbot whom We have installed in that place and the other brethren ask Your Kindness most insistently for this confirmation to secure their peace.

XIV *The Roman Privilege*

Bishop Paschal, Servant of the Servants of God, to the venerable Alberic, abbot of New Monastery, situated in the episcopate of Chalon, and to all his legitimate successors in perpetuity. An aspiration that is obviously aimed at a religious purpose and the welfare of souls is to be fulfilled by the will of God without delay. Therefore, sons most beloved in the Lord, We accede to Your petition without any difficulty, because We applaud your religious fervour with paternal affection. We decree, therefore, that the place which You have chosen in order to live in monastic tranquillity, shall be secure and free from the annoyance of all men; also, that the abbey shall exist there forever and be particularly sheltered under the protection of the Apostolic See, saving the canonical reverence due to the diocese of Chalon. By the words of this present decree We, therefore, forbid anyone whomsoever to change Your way of life or to receive monks of Your monastery, which is called New Monastery, without the recommendation demanded by the Rule, or to disturb Your community through any kind of guile or violence. The settlement of the controversy between you and the monastery of Molesme – which Our brother, the bishop of Lyons, then vicar of the Apostolic See, made together with the bishops of his province and other religious men, at the command of our predecessor, Urban the Second of Apostolic memory - We confirm as eminently reasonable. You, sons most beloved and most dear in Christ, must, therefore, remember that one part of You has left the broad roads of the world; yet another part, the paths not straight enough of a monastery too relaxed. In order that You may be considered more and more deserving of this grace, You must work to keep always in Your hearts the fear and love of God so that to the degree that you are free from the noises and pleasures of the world, by so much the more You should strive to please God with all the powers of Your mind and soul. Indeed, should any archbishop or bishop, emperor or king, prince or duke, count or viscount, judge or any other clerical or lay person whosoever knowingly dare to counteract this Our constitution, and upon two or three warnings not make amends

for his wrongdoing through an adequate satisfaction, let him be deprived of the powers and honours of his dignity and let him know that he is liable to divine judgement because of the wrong he has done; and let him be excluded from the most holy Body and Blood of our God and our Lord, Jesus Christ, and undergo severe sentence at the Last Judgement. But may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ rest upon all those who respect the rights of this monastery so that they may receive the fruit of their good deed here on earth and find the reward of eternal peace before the stern Judge.

XV. *The Institutes of the Cistercian Monks who Departed from Molesme*

Thereupon the abbot and his brethren, mindful of their vows, unanimously resolved to establish and keep the Rule of Blessed Benedict in that place. They rejected what was contrary to the Rule, namely full mantles and furs, as well as shirts of fine linen, cowls and breeches, combs and blankets, mattresses, a wide variety of dishes in the refectory as well as fat and everything else which was against the purity of the Rule. Making thus the rectitude of the Rule the foremost concern of their life, they followed or conformed to the pathway of the Rule in ecclesiastical as well as in other observances. In this way, having put off the old man, they rejoiced in putting on the new.

And since they could not find either in the Rule or in the life of Saint Benedict that this teacher had possessed churches or altars, offerings or burial dues, tithes of other people, or ovens or mills or manors or serfs, and that women had ever entered his monastery or been buried there, with the exception of his sister, they renounced all these things saying: Where the blessed father Benedict teaches that the monk must avoid worldly affairs, there he distinctly explains that these things must not have any place in the actions or in the hearts of the monks who must live up to the etymology of their name by fleeing all these things. They also said that the holy Fathers, who were the instruments of the Holy Spirit and whose decision it is sacrilege to transgress, divided tithes into four distinct parts: namely, one part for the bishop; the second for the parish priest; the third for guests who come to the church, or else for widows and orphans or for the poor who have nothing else to live on; the fourth for the repair of churches. And since in this list they did not find mention of the monk who possesses his own lands whence he gains his livelihood by his own labour and by keeping animals, they rejected this as an unjust usurpation of the rights of others. Thus having rejected the riches of this world, the new soldiers of Christ, poor with the poor Christ, began to consult with one another as to the question of the way by which, and with what work or occupation, they should provide in this life for themselves as well as for guests who would come, rich and poor alike, whom according to the Rule they should receive as Christ.

Thereupon they decided to admit, with the permission of their bishop, bearded lay brothers and to treat them in life and death as their equals, excepting only the status as monks; and to admit also hired workers. For they realised that without the help of these men they would be unable to observe fully the precepts of the Rule by day and by night. They also decided to accept landed properties which lay removed from the dwellings of men, as well as vineyards and meadows and woods and also streams, in order to install mills-but only for their own use-and for fishing, and horses and various cattle useful to the requirements of men. And while they established granges for the practice of agriculture in a number of places, they decreed that the aforementioned lay brothers, and not the monks, should manage those houses,

because according to the Rule the dwelling place of monks ought to be within their cloister. Since those holy men knew that blessed Benedict had built his monasteries not in towns or around fortified places or in villages, but in places removed from the traffic of men, they promised to imitate him. And since he placed twelve monks and a father abbot in new monasteries, they decided to proceed in the same manner.

XVI. *About Their Sorrow*

It caused some sorrow to the aforementioned abbot and man of God and to those with him that in those days only seldom did anyone come there in order to follow after them. For the holy men longed to hand down to their successors for the future benefit of many this treasure of virtues that had come from heaven. Yet almost all those who saw or learned about the unusual and almost unheard-of rigour of their life, instead of approaching them, hastened to avoid them in both spirit and body, nor did they cease from doubting in the ability of the monks to persevere. But the mercy of God, which inspired His own chosen ones to form this spiritual army, did not cease to swell and to complete their ranks, to the profit of many, as the following will show.

XVII. *About the Death of the First Abbot and the Election of the Second and Their Institutes and Their Happiness*

The man of the Lord, Alberic, however, after he had practiced fruitfully regular discipline in the school of Christ for nine and a half years, went home to the Lord, full of glory in his faith and virtues, and therefore deservedly to be rewarded by God with eternal life. His successor was a certain brother by the name of Stephen, an English man by nationality, who had also come to that place from Molesme, a lover of the Rule and of the place. During his time, the brethren and this abbot prohibited the duke of that land or any other lord from keeping his court at any time in that monastery as they used in times past to do on the occasion of great feasts. Furthermore, lest anything remain in the house of God-where it was their wish to serve God devoutly day and night-that savoured of pride or superfluity or that would ever corrupt poverty, the safeguard of virtues, which they had chosen of their own free will, they resolved to keep no crosses of gold or silver but only painted wooden ones; no candelabra, but only one of iron; no thuribles, but only of copper and iron; no chasubles, but of fustian or linen, without a pallium of gold or silver; no albs or amices but of linen, similarly without a pallium of gold or silver. They gave up entirely the use of all pallia and copes as well as of dalmatics and tunics. But they retained the use of chalices of silver or, where possible, of gold-plate, but not ones of pure gold; and the communion reed of silver or, where possible, of gold-plate; stoles as well as maniples of silk only, without gold or silver. Moreover they explicitly ordered that altar cloths be made of plain linen and without ornamentation and that the cruets be without gold or silver.

In those days the monastery increased in its possession of lands, vineyards, meadows and granges; but it did not decrease in religious fervour. Therefore in those days God visited that place and showed forth His deepest mercy to the brethren who implored Him, who cried out to Him, and who wept before Him, who day and night groaned long and deep, who drew near the brink of despair because they had almost no successors. For now the grace of God sent to that monastery so many literate and noble clerics and laymen who were as powerful as they were distinguished in the world that at one time thirty men eagerly entered the cells of novices, and by fighting

bravely and strongly against their own vices and the temptations of evil spirits, they completed their course. Through the example of these men who were old and young, men of every age group in diverse parts of the world were encouraged, since they saw through these that what they feared impossible in the observance of the Rule was, indeed, possible. They started to flock together there in order to place their proud necks under the sweet yoke of Christ, to love fervently the rigorous and burdensome precepts of the Rule, and they began to make that community wonderfully happy and strong.

XVIII. *About the Abbeys*

From that time forward they established abbeys in various dioceses, which under the Lord's rich and powerful blessing so prospered from day to day that within eight years among those who had gone forth from Cîteaux itself and those who in turn sprang forth from them, twelve new foundations were to be counted.

Exordium Cistercii, Summa Cartae Caritatis et Capitula

EXORDIUM CISTERCII

I. *Departure of the Cistercian Monks from Molesme*

In the diocese of Langres there lay, as is well known, a monastery by the name of Molesme: it was of great renown and outstanding in religious fervour. Within a short time of its foundation God in his goodness enriched it with the gift of his graces, raised it to honour with the presence of distinguished men, and caused it to be as great in possessions as it was resplendent in virtues. But, because possessions and virtues are not usually steady companions, several members of that holy community, men truly wise and filled with higher aspirations, decided to pursue heavenly studies rather than to be entangled in earthly affairs. Accordingly, these lovers of virtue soon came to think about that poverty which is fruitful to man. They realised that, although the life in that place was a godly and upright life, they observed the rule they had vowed to keep in a way short of their desire and intention. They spoke amongst themselves and asked one another how they were to fulfil the verse: "I will fulfil my vows to you, vows which I made with my own lips" [Ps. 65:13]. What more needs to be said? After common deliberation, together with the father of that monastery, Robert of blessed memory, twenty-one monks went out to try to carry out jointly what they had conceived with one spirit. Eventually, after many labours and extreme difficulties, which all who wish to devote their life to Christ, must endure, they reached their goal. They came to Cîteaux, which was then a place of horror, a vast wilderness. Realising that the asperity of the place accorded well with the strict design they had already conceived [in their minds], the soldiers of Christ found the place, almost as though divinely prepared, to be as alluring as their design had been dear.

II. *Beginnings of the Monastery of Cîteaux*

Thus in the year 1098 of the Incarnation of our Lord, supported with the counsel and strengthened with the authority of the venerable Hugh, archbishop of the church of Lyons, and at that time legate of the Apostolic See, and of the God-fearing man, Walter, bishop of Chalon, and of Odo, the illustrious duke of Burgundy, these men began to transform the solitude they had found into an abbey; abbot Robert received the care of the monks and the shepherd's staff from the bishop of the diocese; and under him the monks vowed stability in that place. But, after a short time it happened that abbot Robert was reclaimed by the monks of Molesme, and was returned to Molesme on the order of Pope Urban II and with the permission and consent of Walter, bishop of Chalon. He was replaced by Alberic, a religious and holy man. For the sake of peace this wise agreement was made between the monasteries and confirmed by the pope: henceforth neither of them would [permanently] accept the other's monk without a proper recommendation. Through the solicitude and industry of its new father and with God's generous assistance, the New Monastery thereafter advanced in holiness, excelled in fame, and witnessed the increase of its temporal goods. The man of god, Alberic, who successfully ran his race for nine years [Phil. 2:16], obtained the crown of eternity in the tenth year. He was succeeded by the lord Stephen, an Englishman by nationality, an ardent lover of and staunch champion of religious life, poverty, and regular discipline. In his days the words of Scripture came true: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just and His ears hear their prayer"

[Ps. 33:16]. The little flock voiced its one and only complaint: that it was small in number. As I said, the "poor of Christ" came to fear and to dread almost to the point of despair one thing alone: that they might not be able to leave behind heirs to their poverty. For their neighbours applauded their holy life but abhorred its austerity and thus kept from imitating the men whose fervour they approved. Yet God, who can easily make great things from small ones and many things from a few, beyond all expectation, so aroused the hearts of many to the imitation of these monks that in the cell where the novices are tested, thirty had come to live under the same discipline: clerics as well as laymen, even nobles and men of power in the eyes of the world. Upon this so sudden and happy heavenly visitation the barren one which had no offspring began, not without reason, to rejoice; "Once forsaken, she now came to have many sons" [Is. 54:1]. And God did not cease to multiply His people, and to increase their joy, so that within about twelve years the happy mother came to see twenty abbots, drawn from her own sons as well as from the sons of her sons, like olive branches around her table. Indeed she did not think it out of order to follow the example of the holy father Benedict whose rule she embraced. Hence, as soon as the new plantation began to produce offshoots, blessed father Stephen in his watchful wisdom produced a document of admirable discretion; it served as a trimming knife that was to cut off the outgrowth of division that, if unchecked, could suffocate the fruit of mutual peace. Very appropriately, he wished the document to be called a charter of Charity, for, clearly, its whole content so breathed love that almost nothing else is seen to be treated there than this: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another" [Rom. 13:8]. This charter, arranged by the same father and confirmed by the aforementioned twenty abbots, was also approved by apostolic authority. It contains in greater detail those things that we have said: here, however, we shall restrict ourselves to a brief summary.

SUMMA CARTAE CARITATIS

III. *General Statute Between Abbeys*

According to the tenor of the Charter, it was established among all abbeys of the Cistercian Order that: Mother-abbeyes may not exact any temporal goods from their daughter-abbeyes. A Father-Abbot visiting the monastery of an abbot-son, shall not bless that one's novice as monk, nor shall he admit an outsider for permanent stay, nor lastly, decree or ordain anything in that place against the local abbot's will, except in what relates to the care of souls. If he finds anything contrary to the Rule or to the Order in that place, he may charitably correct it, with the counsel of the local abbot. But, if by chance, the local abbot is absent, he shall correct whatever he finds amiss. The abbot-son yields his place to the Father-Abbot not only in the chapter room, but everywhere else in the monastery. However, the Father-Abbot shall eat with the brethren in the refectory, for the sake of discipline, except in the absence of the local abbot. All other visiting abbots of the Order shall do likewise. But if several abbots come and the local abbot is absent, their senior shall eat in the guesthouse. Further, every abbot shall visit the abbeyes founded by his monastery with paternal solicitude at least once a year. Whenever an abbot-son visits his mother abbey, he shall be given due reverence as befits an abbot. He shall occupy the place of the abbot in everything pertaining to the Order, but only in the absence of the abbot of the mother abbey. For, when that one is present, the abbot-son shall yield to him in all things, as to a father.

Hence he shall not eat with the guests when the Father-Abbot is at home, but in the refectory with the brethren.

IV. *The Annual Chapter of Abbots*

The abbey of Citeaux, the mother of all, wisely reserved to itself the prerogative that every abbot must visit it once a year at the same time, to meet one another, to tend to the affairs of the Order, to strengthen the peace and to preserve charity. At Citeaux all shall reverently and humbly obey the lord Abbot of Citeaux and that holy assembly when dealing with the correction of wrongs, and if they are accused, they shall seek pardon. Only abbots shall make accusations. The assembly also made this wise provision: should it come to pass that the extreme poverty of any one of the abbots become known to the assembly all shall provide for this brother's relief according to the dictates of charity and [each] in the measure allowed by his own situation. Only two reasons shall justify [an abbot's] absence from the annual chapter: illness of the body, or the blessing of a novice. An abbot, to whom one of these applies, shall send his prior as his representative. But if anyone shall ever presume to stay at home for any other reason, at the next chapter he shall seek pardon for his fault and offer satisfaction according to the judgement of the abbots. And this shall be held to a lesser fault.

V. *On the Faults of Abbots*

Should an abbot be found to scorn the Rule or the Order, or to be careless and negligent in the care entrusted to him, straightaway he shall be warned by his Father-Abbot, in person or through his prior or by letter, up to four times. If he refuses to correct his ways, then, through the same Father-Abbot the wrongdoing shall be made known to the bishop and to the clergy of the diocese of the transgressor. If, perchance, the wrongdoing persists uncorrected because of their disinterest, the Father-Abbot shall summon at least two of his co-abbots and, all going to the place in question, they shall depose the incorrigible man from his office and urge the brethren to elect at an early date another who will be worthy. If they defy the visiting abbots, that is, if the abbot is unwilling to resign his office and the monks are unwilling to elect another abbot, they shall be excommunicated by the visiting abbots. Should any of these evil doers eventually regain his senses and, having pity on his soul, refuse to accept its death sentence, seek refuge in the monastery from which his own was founded, he shall be received as a son and monk of the community until he is restored to his own monastery whenever it was reformed. Further the abbot of Citeaux, since he is the head of all and has no abbot over himself, shall see to it that those measures, which have been decreed against other transgressors, shall be applied to himself as well. By common agreement this charge has been entrusted to the abbots of La Ferte, Pontigny and Clairvaux so that they, acting in the name of all and in behalf of all, shall zealously apply to him everything in the sequence stated above. But there is this exception: If he resigns [his office], the three abbots shall not themselves provide a new abbot nor shall they excommunicate him if he proves defiant. Instead the prior of Citeaux shall send three or more messengers to the abbots of Citeaux's direct filiation and summon as many abbots as are able to assemble within fifteen days. Then, upon the removal of the accused, they shall cause the monks to elect, in their presence, a new abbot. If the monks refuse to listen, the assembled abbots shall excommunicate both the monks and the accused abbot. If any of the monks, regaining his senses and

anxious to save his soul, should at length seek refuge in one of the above mentioned abbeys-La Ferte, Pontigny or Clairvaux-he shall be received as a brother and a member of the house until he is returned to his own monastery, once it is reconciled through the mercy of God. In the meantime, however, the yearly chapter of abbots shall not be held at Citeaux but in a place designated by the three abbots mentioned above. Let it also be known that as long as the community of Citeaux is without an abbot, his place shall be held by the abbot of La Ferte. The election of the abbot of Citeaux shall always be done in the manner and sequence described above. In other monasteries, however, upon the death of the abbot, the Father-Abbot of the deceased shall be summoned so that in his presence and with his advice, the brethren may hold a regular election. Whomever they elect from any Cistercian monastery they shall receive without objection. But Cistercians may not choose their abbots from other orders or release their own monks to these orders for the same purpose.

VI. *What Shall be the Law Between Abbeys not Bound by Filiation*

Between abbeys that are not of each other's filiation this shall be the law: Every abbot shall yield his place to a visiting abbot throughout his monastery, to fulfil the Scriptures: "They give one another precedence with honour" [Rom. 12:10]. If two or more arrive, the senior of the guests will take the higher place. All shall eat in the refectory, except the local abbot. Wherever else they meet, they shall enjoy seniority according to the antiquity of their abbeys, so that the abbot of an older abbey shall take precedence. There is one exception: if one is vested in alb, then, preceding everyone else, he shall preside in everything, even if he is the junior of all. Also, after they take their places, they shall bow to each other.

VII. *No One Shall Receive a Lay-Brother Wishing to go to Another Monastery*

None of us shall dissuade any man who wishes to enter any other one of our abbeys, nor entice anyone to our own abbey; but rather each of us shall retain that one who chooses of his own accord, after a change of mind, to remain. If after arriving at the place of his choice he should regret his decision before the completion of the period of probation, he shall be free to leave if he so desires. But if he leaves after his admission, he shall not be accepted anywhere without the consent of that monastery.

VIII. *On Fugitive Monks and Lay-Brothers*

If a monk, or lay brother, secretly flees from one of our monasteries and comes to another, let him be persuaded to return. If he refuses, he shall not be permitted to stay in that place for more than one night. If he is a monk, he shall be deprived of his habit, if he is wearing it, unless there is evidence that he had been a monk before he entered our Order.

IX. *The Founding of New Abbeys*

It has been decreed that all our monasteries must be dedicated to the Queen of Heaven and Earth. No monastery shall be constructed within cities, castles and manors. No abbot shall be sent to a new place without at least twelve monks and the following books: a psalter, a book of hymns, a book of collects, an antiphonary, a gradual, the Rule, a missal; and without the prior construction of such places as an

oratory, a refectory, a dormitory, a guest-house, and a gate-keeper's cell, so that the monks, may immediately serve God and live in religious discipline. No living quarters, only animal shelters, shall be constructed outside the gate of the monastery. Also, to preserve an indissoluble and lasting unity among our abbeys it has been established: first, that the Rule of blessed Father Benedict shall be interpreted and kept in one and the same way; secondly, that there shall be found the same liturgical books, the same food, the same clothing, and lastly, the same customs and usages in everything.

X. *Which books must not be Dissimilar*

The missal, Gospel book, book of epistles, book of collects, gradual, antiphonary, book of hymns, psalter, lectionary, Rule and calendar of saints shall be used everywhere in one and the same way.

XI. *On Clothing*

Clothing shall be simple and inexpensive, without underclothes, as the Rule prescribes. But this must also be observed: the outer cowls shall not be flocked with pile on the outside; and the day-shoes shall be made of cowhide.

XII. *On Food*

In addition to what the Rule prescribes about the pound of bread, the measure of drink, and the number of dishes, this must also be observed: the bread must be coarse, that is, prepared with a sieve. Where wheat is scarce, however, rye may be used. This rule shall not apply to the sick; they, and also the guests for whom it has been prescribed, shall be served wastel-bread. To those who are bled, there shall be given a pound of white bread, once, during the bleeding.

XIII. *No One May Eat Meat or [Food prepared with] Lard in the Monastery*

In the monastery cooked dishes must always and everywhere be prepared without meat or lard; an exception is made [only] for the brethren who are seriously ill and for our hired workers.

XIV. *Days When We Eat Lenten Food*

Except for those who are ill, we fast during Lent, before Christmas [Advent], in the Septuagesima season, on all Fridays, and on the four Ember days in September. Also on the vigils of Saint John the Baptist, Saints Peter and Paul, Saint Lawrence, the Assumption of Saint Mary, the apostles Matthew, Simon and Jude, All Saints, and the apostle Andrew. Nothing shall be bought for a guest, unless he is ill.

XV. *Where the Monks' Food Is to Come From*

Food for the monks of our Order ought to come from manual labour, agriculture, and the raising of animals. Hence we may possess, for our own use, streams, woodlands, vineyards, meadows, lands far removed from the dwellings of seculars, and animals, except those which tend to foster curiosity and to show

themselves off rather than serve a useful purpose, such as deer, cranes, and other animals of this kind. To raise, feed, and take care of animals we may keep granges, either in the neighbourhood or at a greater distance. These are to be supervised and managed by the lay brothers.

XVI. *No Monk May Live Outside the Monastic Enclosure*

A monk whose proper home, according to the Rule, ought to be the monastery, may go to a grange as often as he is sent, but on no account may he live there for any long period of time.

XVII. *Women May Not Live in Our Houses*

At any time whatsoever-be it a time for cultivating or preserving food, or a time for washing particular objects of the monastery when this is necessary, or lastly, a time of any need whatsoever-it is absolutely forbidden for our lay brothers and us to live under the same roof with women.

XVIII. *Women Shall Not Enter Within the Monastery Gate*

Women shall not be received as guests within the courtyard of our granges, nor shall they enter within the gate of the monastery.

XIX. *There Should Be No Association with Laymen for Feeding cattle, Cultivating Land, Giving or Receiving Shares in Crops and the Like*

In raising our animals and cultivating our lands we are not allowed to have joint dealings with laymen, such as giving or receiving shares or profits.

XX. *These Affairs Are to be Managed by Lay-Brothers*

As has been said, these affairs are to be managed by lay brothers or by hired workers. As we do with monks, we take under our care lay brothers with the licence of the bishops, who are members of our family and helpers in our work. We hold them to be our brothers and, equally with our monks, sharers of our goods both spiritual and temporal.

XXI. *On the Probation of Lay-Brothers*

We impose a probation period of one year on those who come to us as new arrivals. At the end of that year, in chapter assembled we receive the profession of him who wishes to remain and who deserves to be retained.

XXII. *A Lay-Brother May not Become a Monk*

Once he has taken his vows, a lay brother shall not become a monk even if he greatly desires it; but he shall remain in the vocation of his calling. If, under the influence of the devil, he shall have taken the habit of a monk or canon regular from any bishop or abbot, he shall after that never again be admitted to any of our monasteries.

XXIII. *What Incomes We Renounce*

Our very name [of monks] and the constitution of our Order prohibit [the possession of] churches, altar revenues, burials, tithes from the labour or harvest of outsiders, manors, serfs, land-rents, oven and mill revenues, and all other incomes of the kind, as contrary to the purity of the monastic vocation.

XXIV. *Whom Do We Admit for Confession and Communion, and to Whom Do We Grant Burial*

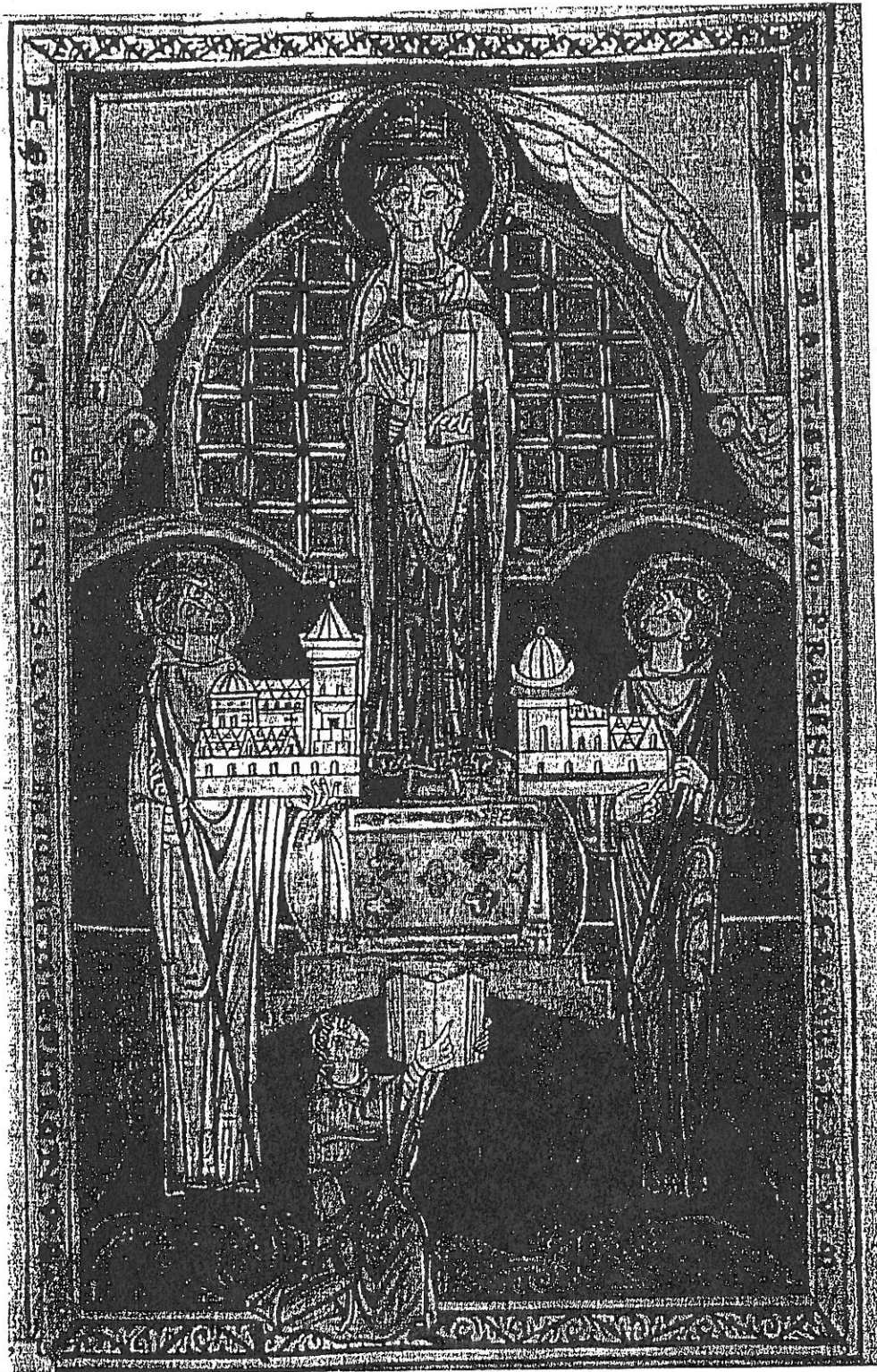
We receive no outsider to confession or to holy communion; nor do we grant burial to any outsider unless he is a guest or one of our hired workers who dies within our monastery; nor do we accept offerings from outsiders during the conventual Mass.

XXV. *What We May or May Not Have in Gold, Precious stones and Silk*

The altar linen and the vestments of the ministers, except the stole and the maniple, must be without silk. The chasuble must be of one colour. Every ornament, vessel and utensil of the monastery must be without gold, silver or precious stones, except the chalice and the communion reed. We are allowed to have these two things made of silver or of gold plate, but never of pure gold.

XXVI. *On Sculptures, Paintings and Wooden Crosses*

We may not have sculptures anywhere; we may have paintings, but only on crosses; and we may have crosses made only of wood.



A contemporary illustration of Abbot Stephen Harding (*right*) presenting his church of Cîteaux to the Virgin. On the left is the abbot of St Vaase. Both are dressed in the unbleached white habit of the early Cistercians (Bibliothèque Municipale, Dijon).