

# SELIGNAC CENTERS LIFE CARTUSIENNE - *tentative adapted retranslation*



- The SELIGNAC CENTERS LIFE CARTUSIENNE - [source text](#), appears to be itself a translation from 2002 (early French documentation; in view of founding [La Maison Saint BRUNO à la Chartreuse de SÉLIGNAC](#)).
- The present *following* document aims to *revise and clarify* the 2002 English source translation; in view for [SBPCLC's](#) to draw for their [horarium](#), from its insights into Saint Bruno (carthusian/desert fathers) spirituality.
- Let us note that in 2003 the Reverend Father specified in the [11 guidelines](#): "*The name of the CLC: it would be desirable to make an explicit reference to **Saint Bruno**, rather than to the **Carthusian Order***" (Gd 10).

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## SELIGNAC CENTER (OF CARTHUSIAN LIFE) OF SAINT BRUNO SPIRITUALITY

### PROLOGUE

To the praise of the glory of God, Christ, the Father's Word, has through the Holy Spirit, from the beginning chosen certain men, whom he willed to lead into solitude and unite to himself in intimate love. In obedience to such a call, Master Bruno and six companions entered the desert of Chartreuse in the year of our Lord 1084 and settled there; under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they and their successors, learning from experience, gradually evolved a special form of hermit life, which was handed on to succeeding generations, not by the written word, but by example (Stat.Cart. 1, 1). Those monks who have praised solitude wished to bear witness to a mystery, whose riches they had indeed experienced, but whose full penetration is reserved for heaven alone; for in solitude there is ever being enacted the great mystery of Christ and his Church, of which our Lady is the outstanding exemplar, but which lies hidden in its entirety in the depths of every faithful soul, where to its unfolding solitude greatly contributes (Stat.Cart. 2, 1).

At Sélignac, it is in this same spirit that a team of lay faithful puts itself; at the school of Saint Bruno, to live an approach of God in solitude, silence and prayer.

### THE OBJECTIVE OF THE CENTER

The objective of the Center of Carthusian Life (CVC-SE) is to create in the (former) Chartreuse of Sélignac, a place of life where people, eager to experiment solitude and silence such as the Carthusian monks live them, can be withdrawn, permanently or temporarily, in order to taste the repose of the cloister and of the cell for prayer. A small community<sup>1</sup>, the permanent residents, will form the heart of the Center and will make it live according to the rhythm of life specific to the Carthusian monks, i.e. that the day will be characterized by an alternation of moments of solitude and moments of common life and meetings. The day will find its balance around the hours of prayer, of which the most significant will be celebrated, morning and evening, jointly in the Church, and of which the shortest (liturgical prayers) will be prayed in solitude in cell. With the Eucharist (or in the absence of priest, the rite of the communion), always preceded by the Praises of the morning, the night office, which could be celebrated during the late evening (around 21 H) or during the night, will most especially form the important praying moment of the day. Chant and readings alternate there in a harmonious whole for a duration of approximately one hour or a little more. The moments of silence will not be neglected. During the day significant moments will be devoted to 'lectio divina' or study which will alternate with times of manual work, in such a way that the first hours of the day as well as the last evening hours will be devoted to 'lectio divina', the word of God and study, and the middle of the day will be devoted to manual work and other occupations (between 9h50 and 16h00 approximately). The Center is born from a spiritual initiative of the Order of Carthusian monks. It is thus of first importance that it will always reflect, in its life and its concrete organization, the intention of the Order. All that will be undertaken must always be known to the Carthusian Order and done with its approval, which will be confirmed by persons speaking in this quality of officially representing the Order. However, the Center being primarily a lay faithful group, it is necessary that the pastoral authority of Mgr. the Bishop of Belley /Ars be recognized for all: his prior agreement is necessary on all the levels and at all the stages.

### TO START MODESTLY


The creation of the Center is like the grain thrown out into the ground, of the parable in the Gospel: "*The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how.*" (Marc 4, 26-27). This initiative, which one does not know yet how it will develop, has need that one lets it grow by itself, by its own sap. We (the Carthusian Order) are there only to accompany this development, not to program it in advance. This is why; one will start by constituting a small community and to give it life, around which the Center will have, gradually, to set itself up. One considers one period of experimentation which will be able to last three years. During the first year the Center will function only

for the periods of the school holidays. During the second year, the community will start to take more consistency and will get busy to give itself a more precise face. No significant work of installation of the buildings will be undertaken before the end of this probation period of three years, but three or four cells with the cloister as some rooms around the main courtyard, will be prepared to suitably accommodate the inhabitants of Chartreuse.

## **THE COMMUNITY<sup>2</sup>**

The success of the Center will depend in major part of the quality of the small community which is like its vital core. One must thus choose with much care the people, very few at the beginning, who wish to engage and give them there an adequate initiation and a formation to the life of the Carthusian monks and their specific form of prayer. The members will be able to engage themselves, temporarily or definitively, only under the responsibility of the Carthusian Order of monks, and after three years minimum of presence, according to methods' still to be specified and defined<sup>3</sup>. The community has as a task, not only to create the framework favorable for the life of personal prayer in solitude, but also to make so that the liturgical celebrations reflect at the same time sobriety and interiority specific to the Carthusian monks, with a very clear accent on the common listening of the Word of God and the study of the monastic tradition of the desert. The community must experiment, instruct and determine by itself the measure of its observance (prayer / food / sleep / work / relaxation, etc.). To facilitate this assumption of responsibility, there will be one<sup>4</sup> person responsible, chosen in agreement with the Reverend Father of Chartreuse. The other Community responsibilities will be distributed between all the members, so that all will feel continuously and jointly persons in charge of the good functioning of the house. One will attach a great importance to liturgical animation, and the material furnishings, for the correct operation of the house. To this end, the community will meet Sunday, day of common life more pronouncedly, at the beginning of the afternoon (or already Saturdays in the evening, if that appears better) in order to discuss and to share together and in order to give an answer to the questions which were posed during the week. More particular times will be devoted to the formation, the retreatants and the spiritual and human consolidation of the community. The Order of the Carthusian monks will place at the disposal of the Center its prayer books and its lectionaries, but it is for the community to adapt them (by often shortening them) to its own needs. In all that and so that the spirit of Chartreuse is kept in all, frequent exchanges with the Carthusian monks will be necessary, especially at the beginning, according to periodicities and methods' to be determined by mutual agreement. The Order will make it so that the Center is regularly visited by people elected by it. As concerns the priest who resides in the house, either permanently (it is the ideal) or periodically, he will be responsible of the task to ensure the sacramental life of the community and to lead the common prayer, according to the Carthusian rite. However, he will not be the person in charge of the Center, and the spiritual accompaniment does not return to him exclusively or necessarily, the structure of the Center being defined as lay faithful and non-clerical. He will be able to possibly help the community on the theological and spiritual training level.

## **STATUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE CENTER**

They will have as a base, extracts of the '[Statutes of the Carthusian Order](#)'  in a form adapted to the condition of devoted lay faithful and people living in the Center. Above all, one will insist on the importance of the guard of the cell, which is as the matrix from which the life of the Center and each one of its members, will gather their stride and depth. It will be taken care that the various occupations of the day, balance each other: hours of common prayer, solitude, exchanges, readings, work and relaxation. During the week, the meals will be usually taken in cell, but on Sunday and the feast days, a meal at least will be taken in community. The meetings and the mutual accompaniment will be at the same time encouraged and framed, ensuring for all a total freedom of conscience. One will determine by mutual agreement up to what point the relations and the communications with the outside will be possible and desirable (newspapers/radio/TV/computer laptops, etc.). One will preserve at the Chartreuse a certain level of monastic enclosure: the entries will thus be supervised. However, this enclosure will be characterized at the same time by its openness, because the Center will function, and the community will always live, in a spirit of total transparency, comparable to the local Church, and in the ambient world. In the succession of times, the day is the basic unit; thus the extreme importance of a flexible and balanced schedule, which gives to all above enumerated elements their proper place; comes then the week, and finally, the liturgical year, paced by the celebration of the mysteries of Christ. Those make it possible, for all the residents of the Center to make memory of the principal stages of the History of Salvation, and interiorizing them to the fullest, especially during the time lived in solitude.

## **SEVERAL POSSIBLE FORMULAS OF INSERTION**

The degree of solitude can vary from one member to another and the integration in solitude will be progressive. Members will not be authorized to enter into a stricter solitude, than such who have already reached a certain interior level of experience in monastic spiritual life, who know and practice the prayer of the heart; and they can be assigned some accompaniment, in to what it is necessary to embrace. With them, and others who will choose a stricter solitude, one will leave more time for lectio and meditation. The others will take part more in the activities of the house. The particular forms of engagement will be specified later on, they will emerge mainly from the experiment lived during the first times.

## **SPIRITUAL BASES**

One will prepare a collection of some basic texts, fit to introduce into the experiment of Carthusian solitude and the form of prayer specific to the Order: 'Two letters' of Saint Bruno and his 'profession of faith'; 'The Letter on the solitary life' of Guigues I; 'The Scale of Paradise' of Guigues II; 'The Golden Epistle' of Guillaume of Saint Thierry; extracts of recent pontifical Documents; comments of the Statutes by RP Dom Andre, etc. However, one will leave with each a great freedom in the choice of his readings and his spiritual orientations. With anybody, one will not impose a particular form of spirituality. The resident of the Center will especially let himself form by the rate/rhythm and the framework of life marked by solitude and silence, spiritual sobriety and the vigilance of the heart, according to the word of the tradition of the desert: "Sit down in your cell and it will teach you all!" Amongst the most significant qualities of the spiritual man, one counts docility to the Spirit, and interiorized comprehensions.

## **THE GREETING OF RETREATANTS**

Once the well-established community, (even in a form still very restricted), the Center will be able to open with a limited reception of retreatants who wish to share its life, for a more or less long time. Some members of the Center must be trained in this greeting of retreatants, and to be available to initiate the new ones who arrive, and to accompany them during their stay. Retreatants will be selected seriously, so that usages do not come to disturb the life and peace of the house. It is thus to the persons in charge of the Center to determine if such person is ready to make a retreat or not. For them also there is the possibility of living either in a cell within the cloister, or in a more open life with a more significant participation in the charges of the community. One will offer to them the framework of life of the community; which could however be adapted on the whole to the capacities and the needs for retreatants; the essential rules of the Center, a climate of silence and solitude, turned towards the interior man and the listening of the Lord, being safeguarded. With time, the community will see by itself, to how many it must simultaneously limit the number of retreatants present, but it seems that the total figure should never exceed a dozen. One will ask retreatants, financial participation, which will be useful, at least partially, with the economic operation of the Center<sup>5</sup>. In addition, in a future to be determined and exceptionally, one will not exclude a priori the possibility of receiving groups restricted for sessions of studies or spiritual initiation, provided that they are integrated in the life line of the Center and the intentions of the Carthusian monks. In addition, the community could be able to admit people from outside, intent on seeking to participate at the hours fixed for the common prayer. Lastly, the community will reserve itself, according to a rate/rhythm which still remains to be defined, times of greater solitude where the hosting of retreatants will not be open.

## **ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE CENTER**

To remain in the spirit of the Carthusian order, the residents of the Center must endeavor to keep the Chartreuse of Sélignac in its rusticity, separateness and control. The life that one carries out in it, must breathe in all, sobriety and simplicity specific to the Carthusian monks; however adaptations to the concrete condition of the occupants of the Center will be possible. All the residents, but especially the members of the community, commit themselves in carrying out a poor life, characterized mainly by detachment compared to the conveniences of modern life. During the three years of experimentation, the Order will ensure, in all or major part, the ordinary maintenance and the operation of the Center. Subsequently, it must be able to provide for its own needs, especially taking into consideration the financial contributions of retreatants, as far as possible. The company owner 'Rural Medicis' will undertake to keep in good state the buildings, and will take care of the good management of the agricultural and forest property.

In Chartreuse, time of the Epiphany, 2002.

## **Notes**

1 When one employs the word 'community' here, it should be heard in a direction still largely opened, because it is progressively, with its creation, that it must reveal by itself its own consistency and its density. At the stage where we are, nothing is thus already defined in a precise way, except this point: that the creation of the CVC with SE must rest on a stable core.

2 A this hour, it is still difficult to define the concrete face of the community. It will be probably constituted, starting from people who will have already made an experiment in solitude. For that, the Center will have to already practice certain hospitality for retreatants, before the community takes a certain consistency.

3 Currently, the Church knows several forms of engagement, especially adapted to the state of lay faithful. It still remains to be specified which, or which would be most appropriate for the life in the Center.

4 One makes it clear here that the community could be, and be probably mixed. What is completely normal since the Center is primarily lay faithful. One will see with experimentation, which concrete framework, it is appropriate to give to this co-education, but one will always pay attention to avoid ambiguous situations.

5 However, the financial question should never be prejudicial, in order to make a stay in the Center.