

## 02 Preface, 1994

---

,  
United States

Decree Concerning the Effective Date for the Revisions Introduced by the General Chapter of 1994 This Decree was issued by Abbot General Marcel van de Ven on April 25, 1995 at the definitory meeting held in Strahov to the end that the effective date for the introduction of the changes introduced by General Chapter of 1994 is August 28, 1995, the Solemnity of St. Augustine.

[<<Click here to go to Constitutions Chapters>>](#) Preface, 1994 In composing the Constitutions of the Premonstratensian Order, the General Chapter gathered in the Abbey of Wilten in Innsbruck in the years 1968-1970 fittingly examined the manner of life, prayer and activity of the canons regular of St. Norbert, a process which truly engaged all the communities and members of our institute. This gathering duly adapted these elements according to the mind of the Second Vatican Council's decree, "Perfectae Caritatis" issued on October 28, 1965, concerning the appropriate renewal of religious life taking into consideration as well the motu proprio of Pope Paul VI, "Ecclesiae Sanctae" dated August 6, 1966, as well as other conciliar documents.[1] An effective and proper renewal already had been in progress since the meeting of the 1962 General Chapter. During this chapter it was proposed that a list of twenty-three questions which especially concerned adaptation of the Order's governance be published and undergo a more profound examination after the chapter. These questions along with many others gathered from every segment of the Order [2] were subjects of exhaustive study during the next few years, a study conducted by different groups of experts which had been constituted by the Colloquium in Averbode on March 21-23, 1966. As a result of the efforts of the experts, eight schemata were prepared concerning: the physiognomy of our canonical Order, lay brothers, sisters, prayer, common life, apostolic activity, the government of the canonries and of the Order as well as the issue of formation. As the subject matter for the next General Chapter, and by the letter of the Order's Definitory meeting in the abbey of Postel on December 14, 1967, these schemata were ordered to be published. In considering such varied material, discussions arose especially concerning the right balance between the spiritual principles and the juridical norms, both of which were considered necessary for insertion into the Constitutions. On August 8, 1968, the Fundamental Code, containing a synthesis of the spiritual values of our Order drawn up by the Central Commission of the Chapter of renewal and translated into four languages, was proposed to the Capitular Fathers. Emanating from one fundamental concept, that our life is a life of ecclesial communion, there flows the entire spiritual and social structure of our Order: This ecclesial character of our canonical life, as provided by St. Norbert, our founder, and St. Augustine, our teacher, moves the members to the communion of the Church which is both already given as gift by Christ, yet always needing to be built up continually in our communities. This same ecclesial dimension is to come forth in the form both of the worship of God and also in charitable service toward the brethren in the manner specifically entrusted to us in our threefold complementary ministries: The ministry of hearing the Word of God and preaching. The ministry of celebrating the Liturgy and the consecration of the temporal order. The ministry of building up both the ecclesial and human community in love. From this same ecclesial dimension there arises in singular fashion the ground of both our lifestyle and our apostolic activity. The Provisional Fundamental Code, which meanwhile had been translated into Latin, enjoyed the force of law from September 22, 1968 until the second session of the General Chapter which met in 1970, during which time it replaced the 1947 Statutes except for those matters not contained in the

## 02 Preface, 1994

---

Fundamental Code. Together with the provisional Code a decree was issued concerning the introduction of experiments in three regular observances.[3] In the period between the two sessions of the General Chapter, this Fundamental Code was emended by an intersessional Commission which met in the Abbey of Wilten from July 14 to August 10, 1969, which was responsible for all the various suggested amendments submitted to the Secretariat of the General Chapter by June 15, 1969. At that same time a Book of Customs for the whole Order (*Liber Usuum totius Ordinis* - LUTO) was prepared. The second session of this General Chapter met in the Abbey of Wilten from July 20 to August 9, 1970.[4] Since the capitular fathers were dissatisfied with the Book of Customs, they determined by vote that the spiritual principles and the juridical norms be published in a single code and at the same time, as a third part, there be added spiritual and practical instructions of an exhortative nature which strictly speaking bound neither members or communities. The Decree promulgating the Constitutions, however, added the following: "Since the present General Chapter intended to determine only the matters affecting the inspiration for our life as well as the central government of the Order, and now having established the more general and quasi-fundamental norms for the governance of canonries and houses, it leaves to the local communities the competence for determining in accordance with their respective needs what must be determined... The task of the next General Chapter will be to decree more precisely and effectively those matters which experience teaches still need to be ordered." [5] In subsequent General Chapters, the Constitutions promulgated in 1970 were emended for various reasons. In 1976 the normative part of the Constitutions was carefully reviewed and revised by the General Chapter meeting in the Abbey of De Pere and afterwards was published under the title "The Second Part of the Constitutional Norms of the Canons Regular of Premontre." With the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law in 1983, the Juridical Commission of the Order accommodated our constitutional law to the content of the new Code. In that same year these accommodations were approved by the Abbot General with the consent of the Definitors of the Order in virtue of n. 284 of the Constitutions. This approval would remain valid until the next General Chapter. That General Chapter of the Order met in Steinfeld, a former Abbey of the Order, in 1988 and ratified and caused to be published our Constitutions adapted to the new Code. (Session 11a, part one, Protocol, pp. 88-89.) That same Chapter also established a commission which, after taking counsel with the competent commissions of the Order, was to undertake a total review of our law and especially the Constitutions with a view toward the General Chapter to be held in 1994. The Commission for the Review of the Constitutions, engaged in the task of examining the current Constitutions, therefore saw to it that the law of the Order could be published in one volume, excepting those other norms of the Order's proper law which were not constitutional. Accordingly and with careful attention to the observations which had been made by the Order's Juridical, Liturgical and Canonical Life Commissions, this Commission presented a revised text containing all the necessary emendations to the Capitular Fathers. Finally the 1994 General Chapter meeting in Marchtal, a former canonry of the Order, after approving certain emendations, ratified and promulgated the revision successfully completed by the Commission for Reviewing the Constitutions. Footnotes: [1] Vatican Council II, session VII. nn. 3 and 4. -- Back [2] See *Fontes Fratrum O. Praem.*, for use by the capitular fathers, the periti and the canonries, coordinated by the Secretariate for the Preparation of the General Chapter, 1968; Schlaegl Abbey, 1967, 363 pp. -- Back [3] Protocol of the General Chapter celebrated in Wilten Abbey (Innsbruck) from July 22 to August 22, 1968; The Secretariate of the General Chapter, 1968, 64 pp. -- Back [4] Protocol of the General Chapter celebrated in Wilten Abbey (Innsbruck) from July 20 to August 9, 1970; The Secretariate of the General Chapter, 1970. -- Back [5] Constitutions of the Order of Premontre approved and promulgated by the General Chapter of

---

## 02 Preface, 1994

---

1970, celebrated in Wilten, p.5. -- [Back](#) [Click here to go to Constitution Chapters](#)