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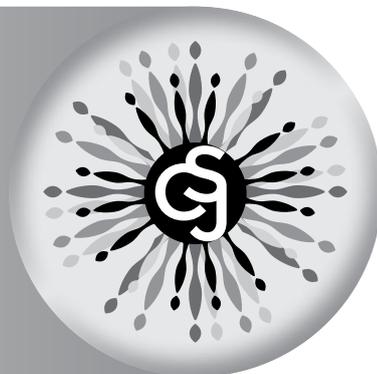
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GENERAL COUNCIL

Multiple Dimensions of Our General Chapter



Living the Dynamism of Reconciliation and Unity in the Peripheries of Our Fractured World

S. Sally M. Hodgdon
General Superior

Our long anticipated 2015 General Chapter to be held in Monte Cucco in Rome, October 4-29, is almost upon us!

The current energy in the General House is made up of a combination of ingredients: excitement, wondering how the Chapter will go, creative juices, tension, and relief that it is all finally coming together. The sights and sounds within our house and in the homes of our translators and communications team are filled with the 'sighs' and 'eye-rubbing' which come with reading documents, editing or translating them, proofreading, and then proofreading once more, only to receive new edits after others have reviewed them! Colors of images need

to be adjusted, shapes enlarged, signs reduced, booklets formatted and printed, flights and bus schedules verified. All of this is one dimension of the dynamism of living the General Chapter!

For more than 12 months the Congregation has been busy praying for all of us to be open to where the Spirit is leading during this General Chapter. We have used the monthly prayers prepared by different provinces, regions and missions. Each prayer has focused on a different theme, often including unique cultural nuances. We have reflected on the variety of calls for our presence of reconciliation and unity locally and in areas in which we have yet to respond. Our reading of several articles for reflection both offered material which grounded us in who we are called to be as women religious, and surfaced new questions around which we engaged in

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animated and challenging discussions. Meanwhile we continue to watch the chaos of the world around us, a world caught up in a tornado of conflicts, distrust, manipulation and deadly violence. More and more countries are involved in the refugee and migration crisis. Many days the news is about those who have died in their attempts to move to safer lands. Images of bodies of refugees and migrants washing up on shores, being found in locked trucks or of those who survived, weeping for their children who have died, fill our TVs and the internet. At the same time, some of our countries are experiencing serious recessions, global markets are unstable and political leaders fail to work well together. The religious persecution of many faiths increases and racial and cultural tensions are erupting.

Pope Francis calls all of us to share our homes and resources with the refugees and migrants in whatever ways are possible. The Church is in the final weeks of preparation for the Synod on the Family which will be held in October in Rome. The result of this Synod will hopefully be a holistic view of how the image of God is seen in each and every family, offering many families healing and peace and giving them a new sense of belonging in our Church.

One of the calls we have faced during the preparation for our Chapter is to discern new ways to be a unifying presence within the varied family structures of today. How will our reflections, deliberations and decisions at the General Chapter move us to respond to this complex world of ours? What will 'living the Dynamism of Reconciliation' look like in our varied contexts? Which 'peripheries' will we choose to be present to and what 'fractures' will we help heal? What we do know is that the Chapter will be surrounded by your presence through your daily prayers for those gathered in Rome.

Stay tuned to our website (csjchambery.org/evento/2015) and keep watch as this journey unfolds in greater detail in October!



Sisters Philo and Clementina gather the items for the Chapter



Sister Philo organizes the different booklets

An Immigration Crisis of Colossal Proportions

S. Linda Pepe
USA

Our world is enmeshed in an immigration crisis of colossal proportions. There is no escaping the heart wrenching picture on the news each morning and evening as we view pictures of men, women and children fleeing the violence of war, and/or the economic poverty that threatens their very survival. People have always migrated, but today we see the numbers reaching epidemic proportions. Lost within this crisis is the discussion of WHY so many are fleeing. What part have the rich industrial nations played in the violence and economic devastation in the birth nations of these immigrants, and what can be done to address the causes for which these peoples are fleeing?

Here in the U.S. the crisis of immigrants is being played out at our borders. We do not have a “refugee crisis” in the U.S. “Refugees” are accepted and benefits are available to them. It’s the immigrants, documented or undocumented that have little or no help available when they arrive. For the documented immigrant, life may be difficult, but not impossible. For the undocumented, the fear of discovery is always present. We need only to listen to some of our elected officials and those candidates hoping to be elected, to hear their “solutions” of more border patrols, longer and higher fences and massive deportations.



Trying to climb the wall at the U.S – Mexican border

What our politicians and candidates in the U.S. fail to discuss when proposing their fence building or deportation solutions is that the influx of immigrants from South and Central America is very much the result of our past trade agreements that favored the industrial nations while exploiting the trading partners. Mass migration is also the result of climate change that has forced many farmers, unable to provide for their families, to search for employment within our borders. These workers became the core group of our 11 million undocumented immigrants. They were originally “invited” to the U.S. under “guest worker” visas. So who invited them? Our farmers who needed help to harvest in their crops. And with the blessing of the State Department, these farmers often advertised in South and Central America for seasonal workers. These

workers would come to the U.S. for six or seven months and then return to their nation of origin. Our borders were very fluid until we, the U.S., changed the immigration laws and imposed quotas. When this change occurred, the “invited guest workers” had to choose between working in the U.S. to support their families, or returning home with little or no hope of providing for their families. One common factor in the lives of all the undocumented immigrants in the United States is that they are all looking for the rights that many of us take for granted – food, shelter, employment, security, education. Amid all the blustery talk of deportation and border security within the United States, there are many humanitarian groups working at our borders to aid and comfort the immigrants. One particular group, women religious, have responded

to the Bishops' call to "Welcome the Stranger." They work at the borders in the detention centers with our incarcerated immigrants and their families, trying to protect their right of due process, by petitioning expedited hearings for women and children seeking asylum, most often from the violence of the drug cartels. In addition to this advocacy, they provide food, clothing and secure needed medical services for the immigrants and their families after a long and desperate trip. Women religious at the borders are the living signs of the Gospel message in today's world. The immigration crisis is far from over; perhaps it has only really started, and it is the wakeup call for a world that has become selfish and preoccupied with acquiring wealth



Crossing the Rio Grande to arrive in the U.S.

and sustainability at the expense of the impoverished. Securing borders, mass deportation and refugee camps are not the solution, we must begin to address the causes for global migration – poverty, climate

change, economic insecurity, war, unemployment. The first step to resolving the crisis is to acknowledge that we can, if we wish, do something to address the causes for mass migration. The choice is ours.

Centre International Looks to the Future

S. Barbara Bozak

USA

During my recent stay at the Centre International Saint-Joseph in Le Puy, France, I was very aware of the exciting events the Centre has experienced in the recent past and others that are foreseen for the near future. After a few years of struggle, a permanent staff of two sisters is in place. Sisters Line Rioux of the US province of the Lyon congregation and Eluiza Andrade da Silva of the São Paulo province of the Chambéry congregation are welcoming the many guests, presenting programs and overseeing all the maintenance of the property. They offer hospitality to those who come for a week-long



Eluiza (l.) and Line (r.) working in the office at the Centre

program, to groups who offer their own programs at the Centre and to those who come to spend a few

hours or one day learning about the origins of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Le Puy. The fact that between the

two, three languages: French, English and Portuguese, are spoken fluently facilitates communication with the many visitors.

In the month of June the Centre invited Sisters of the French federation to celebrate the 10th anniversary of its opening. More than eighty sisters gathered for the day-long celebration which included the Sunday Eucharist and meal at the house of the Institut Saint Joseph (the congregation established in the 1990's when seven French congregations, including that of Le Puy, came together), followed by a time at the Centre where the staff gave the visitors information and engaged them in conversation. This day marked a new relationship between the Sisters of France and the Centre, one that will continue and grow as the archives are re-opened.

The Centre is important not only as a common "home" for the Sisters of St. Joseph worldwide, who come for programs and visits, but also plays a vital role in supporting the work on the archives, which is advancing well. Due to structural problems, including humidity in the building, the archives, held by the Institut Saint Joseph, have not been open for visits for the past several years. Now, with the structural



The Centre Board: Nancy Sullivan (Canada), Maria Goretti O'Connor (Annecy), Odile Gaillard (France), Catherine Barange (Lyon), Nicoletta Danna (Italy), Ieda Tomazini (Chambéry), Monique Vallon (Institut Saint Joseph), Patty Johnson (USA), Simone Saugues (Translator).

issues resolved, the archives should be ready to receive visitors within the next year. In addition to the restoration of original manuscripts and texts, facsimile editions will be prepared for display. And there will be an interactive exhibit in five languages to engage visitors with the story of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the many contexts it has been lived and continues to be lived. While the Centre staff is not responsible for the archives they have been and will continue to be a point of reference for those who wish to

visit the archives, something no one even dreamed about when the Centre was opened eleven years ago. Both Line and Eluiza are open to the many challenges they face, from simple housekeeping responsibilities to leading retreats and guiding pilgrims. They look forward to offering more programs for Sisters, associates and partners in ministry to help assure that our charism of "unioning love" (to use an expression of Marcia Allen, CSJ, of Concordia, Kansas) becomes an always greater force in our divided world.

Being a Missionary Today in the Amazon

S. Dominga Zolet

Brazil

Our inspiration comes from the words of Pope Paul VI: "Christ points to the Amazon," and the local reality, celebrated by the artist Manoel Nerys: "I am a missionary, I am the people of God. I am an Indian, a

caboclo of mixed race living the life of the mission here in this great abandoned church. I am a messenger of God who is my brother." Historically, evangelism on the ground in the north of the Brazilian Amazon region is difficult and challenging for several reasons, including geography, distance, climate conditions, exploitation of human labor,



The Brazilian Amazon

environmental degradation, cultural and religious diversity, and shortages of human and material resources. Seeking to encourage the local missionary spirit on site and to give it an Amazonian face, a course was held June 15 to 30 in Belém, in Pará, called, "Being a missionary today in the Amazon." The objective was to train missionaries for an enculturated evangelization in the Amazon, in fidelity to Jesus Christ and the Church.

And so the Church walks closer to its people. In 2015 the themes included: the Church in the Amazon, its history and mission; knowing more about the Amazon, its people, nature, challenges, reality, social and environmental policy; religion, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue in the Amazon and popular religiosity. Twenty-eight people participated, among whom were many young missionaries, women, laity, priests and religious, and Brazilians from different regions of the Amazon along with other nationalities!

The course is organized and offered annually by the Regional Pastoral Institute of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil, northern region. The Institute establishes partnerships with other entities, being careful to direct its efforts towards those who arrive or are in mission in the Amazon Region.

This year, I had the joy to participate and contribute to the course material. It was a deep experience of sharing and surely loving what we know! For those who visit the Amazon, and to be an authentic missionary, one needs to be immersed in this context, in its vast geographical, cultural and religious plurality.



Participants in the course "Being a missionary today in the Amazon"

LOCAL REALITY

The Amazon region is composed of more than 5.1 million square kilometers, about 60% of the Brazilian territory, distributed in eight states. Colonization of the Amazon was undertaken by European peoples accompanied by the presence of missionaries. The Church there has a weak structure and has few resources to enable effective action due to the widespread poverty of the population, the long distances and scarce means of transport. The rivers are the major roads. In the Amazon, there is a strong rural exodus. Unfortunately, already in 2009, around 78% of the population lived in the urban areas. For example, in the city in which we live, Marituba, its population went from 30 thousand inhabitants to 140 thousand in 15 years.

Today, consecrated religious are few in the northern region. For example, 43 congregations are present with 291 religious in the States of Pará and Amapá, a negligible number compared to other regions of Brazil and its vast territory. We, Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry, are present in this region, with communities in Marituba and Manaus, with three members in each.

In our community, we are Odila, Mercedes and Dominga (all older than 67 years), working in alternative health projects, leadership training, and being present in the settlement of Canaan, which began seven years ago with more than 15 thousand inhabitants. We contributed also with educational activities in the Conference of Religious of Brazil and in the Regional Pastoral Institute.

NEW SAINTS

S. Louise-Emma Boillot (96)	France	31/07/2015
S. Placida Sciscioli (95)	Italy	15/08/2015
S. Ann Lucy Fernandez (85)	Nagpur	16/08/2015
S. Gecyra Libera Guiotto(85)	Caxias do Sul	16/09/2015

Raising Money for Tabor House

S. Navya Neelam

Pachmarhi Province, India

The 21st annual Tabor House Tag Sale was held at the Provincial House of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the US province, July 16-19, 2015. A tag sale is an event where donated used items are offered for sale at a reasonable price. Held every July as a fund raiser for Tabor House, this tag sale attracts many people, both those who can't afford to buy new items and those go looking for a bargain.

This "fund raiser" was started by Loretta Dyson in 1994 to help out S. Laura Herold, CSJ, the founder of Tabor House. Tabor House, a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry in West Hartford, seeks to offer safety, security and care to homeless men living with HIV/AIDS. With an annual budget of about \$ 500,000, it needs funds from private sources since only 60 percent of its budget has been covered by two government grants - one state, one federal - for housing people living with HIV/AIDS. Thus Tabor House also solicits annually from a database of donors as well as receiving the proceeds of the tag sale.

The giant tag sale is organized by Loretta Dyson and her son David who work at it almost the whole year. As the date approaches, advertisements are posted in newspapers, on television and the Tabor House website, as well as in many parishes and public places.

What is amazing is the number of volunteers who come to help in organizing this giant tag sale. Numerous volunteers from churches, schools, universities and industries in the area help set up and run the four-day event. David Dyson contacts the major businesses in Hartford, the insurance companies, banks, and others who let their employees volunteers while still



People of all ages come to the Tag Sale



Looking for treasures at the Giant Tag Sale

being paid by the company. He visits schools and motivates the students to donate time to this event as their required service project. The students enjoy the work at this tag sale. It was amazing the way David and his group of volunteers worked the whole time in St. Joseph's Hall for a full week to prepare for and run this event.

Items offered for sale include household things: kitchen items, lamps, window curtains, holiday decorations, games, small appliances. Many who are lacking financial resources find items they need. On the final day anything left is free for anyone who wants them. On that day

it really benefits the poor and they can even sell these items they pick up. Well it's worth the hard work. In the first year they made \$ 1,000. Now in the 21st year \$ 20,000 was made from the tag sale to support Tabor House. Not only a fund raiser for Tabor House, this Tag Sale benefits the whole society. It is a symbiosis, building up a mutually beneficial relationship between different people or groups.

Sister Navya is presently in the United States, enrolled in a communications program in Hartford.

In the Defense of Human Rights

S. Dominga Zolet, S. Odila Teresinha Cadore and S. Terezinha Mercedes Breda
North/Northeast Region of Brazil

Every year on its anniversary, the Human Rights Society of the State of Pará in northern Brazil pays homage to people and entities prominent in the commitment to human rights. In 2015, the entity chosen was our Congregation, and the tribute was held on August 7. Representing the Congregation were the three Sisters who currently reside in Marituba, Pará: Odila Teresinha Cadore, Terezinha Mercedes Breda and Dominga Zolet. On this day, two other people who have excelled in defending human rights in 2015 were also honored.

The Human Rights Society has completed 38 years of struggle and resistance in the harsh Amazon reality. We are not speaking of numbers, as one can find these on many internet sites. We recall that Pará is one of the states of Brazil richest in natural resources, but with a population that is impoverished. In this state, there are cities with the lowest human development index in the country and where the largest number of crimes goes unpunished.

In 2005, the Society signed a partnership with the community of the Sisters of Saint Joseph for the implementation of a program to support and protect witnesses, victims and relatives of those threatened



Sisters Dominga, Odila and Terezinha of the Community of Marituba receiving the award

with violence. Then we went on to welcome into our house people served by this program, and we were pleased to see that their lives have been preserved.

One of the people served was Eliane from a nearby state, who after registering 10 incidents of abuse by her husband, needed protection from being threatened with death. She remained about 20 days in our house and then went to a safe haven. We have news that she recently resumed her life in a new marriage.

Another landmark was the situation of Mrs. Silva, who with her two teenage daughters and a seven-year-old boy came from another location nearby, where she denounced local authorities who enticed her daughters to work in drug trafficking and prostitution, leading to her being threatened with death. After a month with us, they went to a residence and today have a new life, including a place where they can



The Plaque honoring and displaying appreciation for services rendered

keep in touch with their family. In addition to this support, we contribute to discussions and seminars, aiming to involve public authorities and civil society with this issue. The Sisters of the Marituba Community were encouraged and driven to achieve this partnership with the Human Rights Society as a way of living the options of the General Chapters, of following the direction of the Commission for Justice and Peace, and of course, through following Jesus of Nazareth!

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