

47th General Chapter
Renewing our Mission. Gratitude, Prophecy, Hope
Rome 07 October 2018

On this Sunday, the first day of work of the Chapter, the capitulars celebrated the Eucharist in groups according to Configuration, in the different chapels and oratories of our Generalate of Sts. John and Paul. Then in the aula they invoked the presence of the Holy Spirit and recalled the testimony of our father Founder.

Five forms of behavior will guide the work of the Chapter so that it becomes a true experience of growth and fraternity—punctuality, confidentiality, respect, understanding, and presence.

The group prepared itself to have a quiet day to be able to address the various issues later in greater depth. First, they reviewed the Preparatory Commission's work-- the different reports and evaluations from each Configuration, the survey in which all the religious were able to participate, and some answers received from the laity in the different places where they minister with us.

The Constitutions

The Capitulars studied numbers 126 and 127 of the *Constitutions* that deal with the functions and the great responsibility that participation in a General Chapter entails because this is the [highest] authority of the Congregation. Furthermore, beyond having legislative and elective functions, it has other responsibilities-- to discern the manifestations of the Spirit; to read the signs of the times; to be a dynamic force in ongoing renewal; review the status of the development and authentic nature of the Congregation; clarify common objectives; maintain solidarity and unity within a healthy pluralism; and evaluate and legislate.

Therefore, beyond the fraternal aspect of these days, the Capitulars wondered how they could be credible and how they could make their responses credible. In simple dialogue they noted the differences among them—coming from various areas of the Congregation, having very different cultural experiences, living our life in so many ways, but always with the certainty and need to focus on the same experience of the Spirit and of the charism that is received and welcomed as a gift for the Church and for evangelization. The teachings of our Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, may be the key to our life at this time. Before every Chapter, every mission, he was always attentive to the signs of the times, striving to respond to the challenges of society and the Church. Therefore, the Chapter needs to recognize today's challenges and be open up to God's action in order to make the changes that the Congregation needs most today-- to be and to live gratefully; to be and to live as prophets; and to be men of hope.

Fr. Christopher Monaghan, a Passionist of the SPIR Province (Australia-PNG), with great simplicity and depth, helped the capitulars to reflect on the theme of the Chapter-- "*Renewing our mission: gratitude, prophecy and hope*". Matthew's Gospel in Chapter 13 offers inspiration for this moment. In this text there are eight challenges-- first, new wine needs new skins; second, the parable of the sower, living with mixed results (Mt 13.1-9); third, being honest about who we are, the parable of the weeds and the wheat; fourth, being prepared to start planting seeds-- the parable of the mustard seed; fifth, living in hope, the parable of the yeast; sixth,

recognizing treasures when you see them, the parables of the pearl of great price and the treasure in the field; seventh, the ability to discern what we have to abandon, the parable of the net; and the eighth challenge, keeping old and new together, the parable of the Christian scribe.