



CONGREGATION OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

47th GENERAL CHAPTER

Rome, 6-27 October 2018

Report of MAPRAES Province/Configuration

Introduction

I thank and praise the Lord for all of you, dear brothers from all parts of the Congregation. Each of you is a gift of the Lord to his people, to the Congregation and mutually to each other.

I especially thank Father General and the General Council, the General Econome and the Secretary General and all those who have shared the responsibilities, decisions and service during these years of the life of the Congregation. I remember those who are ill or in distress because of health issues and various life situations. They are living and active members of the one body of the Congregation. I especially wish to remember our young religious in the houses of postulancy, novitiate and student residences and those who are located in various pastoral and formation experiences.

PART I: THE STATUS OF THE CONFIGURATION

The canonical structure of the MAPRAES Province

The MAPRAES Configuration consists of a province organized into 8 regions and 3 missions *ad gentes*, including Italy, France, Portugal, Angola, Nigeria and Bulgaria (RP 104). The Provincial Superior assisted by his Council (RP 105) leads the Province. In turn, each Region, consisting of several local communities, is governed by a Regional Superior with delegated authority from the Provincial Superior in accordance with ordinary law. He is assisted by two Consultors. (RP 106).

General Statistics (as of 8 July 2018)

- Total number of professed religious: 416
- Median age: 63.421 years
- Total number of houses: 60 (*Domus Erectae* and Residences)
- Priests: 356
- Brothers: 37 (of which 6 are permanent deacons)
- Students: 22 (4 with Perpetual Vows, 18 Temporary Vows)
- Novices: 6

Statistics by Region

	Total	Median age	Priests	Brothers	Students
CFIXI	25	62.11	19	4 + (1)	1
CORM	69	68.941	62	6	1
DOL	65	60.286	52	1 + (2)	12
FAT	33	54.478	27	4	2
LAT	46	63.81	43	2	1
MICH	14	69.456	12	1	1
PIET	91	68.847	83	7 + (1)	1
PRAES	66	63.784	58	6 + (2)	
OUTSIDE REG.			3		3

PART II: ANALYSIS OF THE STATUS OF THE CONFIGURATION

Strengths

1. There is a newfound awareness of the Mission of the province: the Restructuring process has "forced" us to identify those elements that unite us and make us a community called by the Lord, renewing our awareness of the mission entrusted to us. In particular, "the MAPRAES Province should focus on new evangelization as an expression of our life and our apostolate related to our ecclesial communities present in the territory. Our lifestyle will be centered on the living presence of Jesus crucified and on our fraternal life aware of the frailties that we experience".

2. This "refocusing" especially made us question our place within the current ecclesial panorama, to discern how the Spirit is asking us to inculturate the Passionist charism. Attentive to the signs of the times and the Pope's current Magisterium, we have heeded the strong challenge to--

- a. Refocus our lives around the figure of Christ Crucified, which defines the charismatic identity of every religious, through a personal relationship with Him in prayer and the witness of our lives.
- b. Reorganize community life around listening to the Word of God, so that it becomes that which orientates the choices of each community, and offers guidance and support for the ongoing formation of each religious.

- c. Redirect personal and community projects and resources in preparation for renewed commitment to the apostolate centered on the New Evangelization, in the context of where the province is calling us.

3. *The option for community and fraternal life.* Our post-modern times have changed our perspective of the future that appears more like a "threat" than a "promise". The "crisis" now has become an ideology that has invaded all areas. Consequently, there are the negative phenomena typical of our society like loneliness, fragmentation, anguish and helplessness that take on a new, more dramatic meaning. Faced with this scenario the eschatological-prophetic dimension of community life and especially fraternity life becomes more even more essential. However, in order to witness to this challenge, it is necessary that the latter be included and experienced not only in terms of organization and in terms of structure, but also be valued and rediscovered in terms of human-relations.

4. *Unity analyzed according to the Regions in order to evaluate the differences.* The route envisioned by the process of Restructuring led us to express Solidarity in institutional unity, based on a vision, a strategy and a united operational program. Once the Province was constituted, an urgent need appeared to find a structure of government that could guarantee unity and ensure an adequate territorial animation and governability. While respecting and valuing the sense of territoriality, we wanted to promote true cooperation in the process of Restructuring and Solidarity in formation, personnel and finances. It was a major decision based on the understanding that full integration of people and facilities is needed in order to achieve true unity and requires a gradual approach and time.

5. Unity and consistency in the phases of the formation of the young starting from vocation promotion, through the various stages of formation, and the composition of interregional formation communities. For this reason we chose to implement vocation promotion and initial formation in individual regions, but also to have three houses of postulancy distributed in the province (Portugal, Italy Centre-North, Central and southern Italy), one single Novitiate at Monte Argentario and the theology residence in Naples, as well as the structures present in the missions *ad Gentes*.

6. *Preferential option for young people.* In the wake of one of the "international mission" aspects identified by the 46th General Chapter of the Passionists, we wanted to devote space to the young generations. In particular, we strove to "promote, in the context of initial and on-going formation programmes, efforts to understand the reality of today's youth and so help them to develop an attitude of openness, listening and welcoming of youth". In particular, through various workshops, it was important to understand what is commonly referred to as "the fragility of today's youth", as opportunities and stimuli that may indicate areas for growth towards which all can aspire.

7. *A renewed spirit that animates prophetic discernment of leadership.* The efforts of the province did not aim to "save one's own life" (Lk 9.24), but to donate

one's own resources for the cause of the Kingdom. This is the spirit that is inspiring even those regions and cultures different from the West, requiring specific attention and presenting unique challenges such as Bulgaria, Angola and Nigeria.

Fragility

Fragility associated with the socio-cultural context

1. The province shares this common reality within the **geographical and cultural areas** to which it belongs and regards an objective reduction of ministries and services. This is linked to rapid reductions in the numbers of men and women religious, existing strengths and aging and the consequent loss of intergenerational exchange. Summing up the crisis that religious life is experiencing, we can identify some key elements, which are leading to a reduction in resources available to various Institutes:

- a. Diminishment of vocations
- b. Aging
- c. Lack of inter-generational interaction.

Fragility associated with the process that we are experiencing

1. The new "hermeneutic" horizon is still unknown to most religious, whom seem rather reluctant to concede to taking a chance on the Province, preferring to remain wedded to regional projects. Added to this disaffection for the province are those religious who are responsible for what is called the "silent schism". These are religious who do not take a position "against" this or that decision, but they are learning to live "without" it, seeking life elsewhere. It is "belonging" without passion, which leads to the crisis of charismatic and social bonding.

2. **Geographical and cultural distance between leadership and those at large.** The centralization of government and the increasing the size of the Province have had as a side effect of the perception of authority that is "more distant", compared to how it used to be, despite the regional superior who should be "the presence of the Provincial in a territory". At this time, there is a pervading sense of vagueness and procrastination because the new province somehow "had to fix everything." Now that the time has come to act and implement shared projects, even if the religious at large appear to persist in a state of numbness, waiting for other solutions to problems.

3. **Difficulty in undertaking a common process considering realities that have different “speeds”.** We are continuously exposed to the risk of being slowed down, waiting for those who are in trouble, who weigh down those who want to move at a faster pace and at the same time threatening to settle for the minimum, forgetting the attractive and motivational power of ideals.

The fragility related to situation of the MAPRAES communities.

1. **The charismatic-spiritual deficit of the communities, and thus of the religious living there.** We should recognize the "climate" that reigns within many communities that is marked by resignation, spiritual laziness, toward any proposal that is summarily dismissed as "we've already done that" or "useless". Yet we know that in order for religious life to be evangelically effective it must be humanly meaningful, posing the question of how to find the motivation that urges us towards continuous research and spiritual dynamism. How to get the Religious to live the spirit of prophecy that their life entails, even if they break the mold and stagnant and consolidated situations?

2. **The prevailing mentality sees the solution of the current crisis in a mere increase in personnel,** instead of focusing on the general change of structures and mentalities, which are the real obstacle to a genuine proposal of evangelical life and therefore credible from the point of view of vocations. This is even truer when looking at the Church, whose future is marked by a progressive decrease in numbers, but with the task of shining as "the fundamental sacrament of salvation".

3. Its function may not depend only on the question of the digital **generation gap**. After the great desert of the years of 1968-1975 a "middle age" group was formed which is a mere 15% crushed between the 60% of the over 70 years old and 25% of the younger generation and which constitutes the current leadership. While trying to intercept the changes and address them in the most efficient manner possible, we fail to make a connection between the other two generations, perhaps because they are numerically insignificant, but also because they are too dispersed on activities and animated by a strong zeal, however without adequate reflection.

4. **JPIC** – the issues related to justice and the integrity of creation still struggle to find a place in the theological-spiritual “heritage” of the Configuration. However, on a social level it has some relevance for the "common people" regarding issues such as the problem of refugees and migrants, the reception of new cultures, legality, etc. In this sense, it is also trying to "accommodate significantly" terms such as the "crucified of today" (Const. 65).

Areas of Growth

1. *A unified vision of the Province from which emanates a strategy and a unified government.* With the birth of the MAPRAES Province, the "hermeneutic

horizons" have changed in which choices are made. The factors and context have changed to thinking about the discernment of our presences that should requalify our evangelization projects in ways that are meaningful for the Church of today.

We need to work on two levels, each with a specific purpose:

Planning Level-- reclaim projects to revitalize and improve the presences in view of a charismatic effectiveness in the territory.

Structural Level—make the structure manageable based on the resources that we estimate will be available (Reconfiguration), beginning with making the trend of diminishment become a "manageable" minimum.

2. *Project of requalification and re-dimensioning of the presences.* In this sense, requalification of the presences means –

- The number of religious “necessary” for a good level of community life.
- Rediscover the ability to live in community.
- On-going formation programs based on the Passionist charism, in which the local Superior plays a key role.
- By means of a community project, effectively find the best way to express the community's ability to bear witness to our presence in the territory.
- Avoid the dispersion of young religious, since today they often live alone and have to face heavy responsibilities, which often are crushing.
- Requalification of the way of "living" in the territory especially in the outlying areas of large cities and major shrines (San Gabriele, St. Maria Goretti, St. Gemma Galgani, Scala Santa, etc.) reconfiguring them so that they can express a more explicit international and ecclesial dimension and become centers and workshops of new evangelization.

Dangers that we are confronting

1. **Close-mindedness towards change:** there are those who feel that they have the right to break away from proposed programs or who are victims of laziness and fears. They find different schemes for returning to doing what they have always done. They do not perceive the true extent of the crisis we are experiencing.

2. **Rigidity of and in structures:** despite the fact that more than three years have passed since the birth of the MAPRAES Province, the structure is rigid and focused on "plugging the holes" of the present, undermining thus the realization and the formulation of genuine planning since resources are mainly used to that effect. Rigidity and conformation to the current structures does not facilitate change.

3. **Difficulty in entering into a relationship with the world of youth:** compared with the Passionist missionary zeal of the 1970's-80, today we are witnessing a "dangerous" withdrawal into an apostolate of moderate "commitment". They work and are engaged, but enough to leave some time for their "private life". Youth Ministry requires "total" availability in order to enable a profound emotional interaction that is created in the space of spiritual guidance, where we will guide them by walking alongside them.

4. **Fragmentation:** the dispersion of limited apostolic resources in profitable contexts, but with little charismatic impact (chaplancies, service to virtual parishes, etc.) plus the ever increasing individualism that undermines shared initiatives and projects of new horizons and new ways of presence in a territory.

PART III – Prophetic and encouraging aspects

Successful Initiatives

1. **Provincial plan for the presence in the territory:** The progressive reduction of the resources at our disposal has providentially led to a process of discernment in order to understand in which direction we should invest our limited resources and what needs to be renovated in order to enliven the life and mission of the communities. We then identified those communities to invest in during the next four years. At the same time, it was necessary to identify those realities – according to the criteria at the provincial level – that have limited potential as compared with others. For the latter, we have begun a gradual process of suppression.

2. **Reinitiating the on-going formation concept centered on community:** This topic was developed in 2013 in the first CEB workshop for the local superiors animated by [the Italian theologian] Amodeo Cencini. It was the first step that outlined the theoretical framework on which concrete initiatives related to community life were constructed. The central idea is that on-going formation does not identify a time period that starts after initial formation. "Formation" is first and foremost a process of conformation-assimilation to the mindset of the Son, and as such lasts a lifetime. Is it more correct to speak of "continuing formation" (ongoing

formation) as "process" that can only be done where you live, that is, in the community itself, that is called to prepare initiatives for its members. In light of this key idea, various initiatives were prepared which have taken the form of:

- a. Workshops for young religious and Superiors.
- b. Retreats on a Provincial level.
- c. Organization of the printed materials and personnel to preach retreats during the main liturgical seasons.

3. **The Word of God as the driving force of community life:** From hearing the word of God we can not only discover a sense of where to direct our efforts, but also the strength to persevere in an attitude of *ob-audire* which is the "mode of being" more effective in addressing any challenge related to the renewal of community life.

4. **The provincial and local community project as a renewed tool for sharing community life:** Community life should be reevaluated in order to create a warm and humanly livable environment that exists "by desirability" and not because of formal constraint. To strengthen the elements of convergence and membership we must integrate all aspects of life in common, even seemingly minor elements, such as taking care of organizing recreational activities, in order to discover the spiritual dimension of "lightness". Support the local Superior in his role as facilitator of the community. The local superior is the strength and weaknesses of fraternal life in community.

5. **The new project of the student residence in Naples:** The Commission for initial formation studied some strategies to improve formation. What emerged as a decisive factor was that the students develop a deeper sense of belonging to the Province and that they develop an openness and a missionary zeal that is more in line with current ecclesiology, which speaks of a "outward focused Church" toward social and existential peripheries. The city of Naples was identified as the most suitable place where this project, at the retreat of Santa Maria ai Monti, not only ensures proximity to a prestigious theological Institute (the Pontificia Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Meridionale) but also offers the opportunity to engage in various forms of apostolate.

6. **Development of the First Proclamation:** A course of "Re-sponsible for the apostolate" was prepared during three weeks' time and assisted by Don Carlo Stanzial, to explore the reasons and the dynamics of evangelization and of the New Proclamation, in order to formulate projects of evangelisation. It is not a theoretical course, but an experience of preparing to make decisions in this field that is so complex. Along these lines, within the framework of the spiritual exercises, we are developing strategies in order to achieve rebirth in the spirit of St. Paul of the Cross in the experience of Castellazzo (40 days).

7. **Drafting of Provincial Financial Regulations:** As requested by RP 176, Regulations were drawn up by the Finance and Solidarity Commission and approved on 2 December 2015 by the Provincial Superior with the consent of his Council and the extended Council and distributed with the main purpose of ensuring an efficient and transparent administration. This Regulation was revised to reflect the last document: "Economy at the service of our charism and mission" of the CIVCSVA and has become a permanent formation tool.

8. **Unification of the administrative system of the regions and communities:** The diversity of approaches and traditions in managing finances has led to the need to center everything on a single administrative model that is now implemented in an accounting program used by almost all communities.

9. **Formation of Economes:** Several initiatives were organised to help Economes not only in the use of accounting software, and in the drafting of financial statements and budgets.

Hopes for the Future

Hope is a theological virtue that has as a source not our actions, but our relationship with God Himself. For this reason, we cannot assess "hope" from data (statistics, successes, difficulties, etc.). However, it should emerge from an authentically contemplative and prophetic stance that can seize those elements of the Kingdom of God around which we are called to work by the Spirit. Faith in Jesus urges us toward processes that we are enacting in order to make this exodus, this exodus from the known and the "it has always been done this way". With this in mind, investing in "hope" means identifying those resources that support processes that –

1. Set people in motion.
2. Enable the acquisition of knowledge and experience within the topic.

The support elements that have been identified are the following:

1. **Listening to the Word of God** who speaks through two voices: personal-communitarian listening to Sacred Scripture in light of the Spirit and increasing attention to the process that Church is experiencing, in particular in light of the Magisterium of Pope Francis.

2. **The role of young Passionists:** Responsibility of elders and the birth of new generations.

3. **Renewed vision of leadership at all levels:** While those in authority "govern" and "is the one who is able to motivate others", the Superior is "able to convince and motivate others to do things" through the "creation of a vision", the "mobilization of commitment", the "recognition of needs", the "presentation of

new values". This occurs not only at the level of the relationship between central leadership/base, but as a paradigm to implement within each experience of collaboration and cooperation (on the levels of apostolate, community, budget, etc.) in order to overcome the current impasse of one paradigm that is applied and lived by the president-authority and of the population-executors.

SECTION IV - CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

The Challenges of MAPRAES

Three Challenges that the Configuration is addressing and that it wishes to share.

1. **Process of/in Solidarity:** Structurally it is expressed in provincial unity that makes progressively concrete and real the exchange and support of energies and resources for formation, personnel and finances. However, structural change has as its goal supporting spiritual and human to openness of mind and heart towards new forms of communion and collaboration ad intra and ad extra (in religious life) (in the apostolate and witness in society).

2. **Situating ourselves charismatically inside a "minority" Church within a changing world** with particular attention to the new realities to be evangelized. This challenges the meaning and the mode of our mission according to an ecclesial vision, including the ability to witness and the languages to be used.

3. **Charismatic openness to the Passionist Lay Movements:** With the establishment of the Passionist Family groups that until now revolved around our spirituality, they have assumed a spiritual physiognomy that enables them to be "partners" in a shared charism.

Key issues to resolve

Three issues or concerns that you want to present to the General Chapter.

1. **General Differences:** For "collaboration is the new form of communion", we need to find bridges and languages for communication between the two generations at the "extremes" of the province so they can each enrich the other. In young people, there is a readiness to transcendence, an ability to get passionate about issues of solidarity, justice and freedom. On the other hand, religious life, with its standardized styles-too often out of a cultural context-and the excessive effort at managing of works, cannot attract the deepest desire of young people, creating a vacuum that makes generational interaction and the necessary dialogue between generations difficult and exhausting.

2. **A new mind-set towards a shared vision of the Province:** Longstanding and deeply rooted traditions and customs of the former Provinces that make up today's MAPRAES, along with a differentiated history of belonging to the same Configuration, are now at the heart of the differences – which is valid in itself – by which we "view" the Province, resulting in a more or less strong willingness to engage in its planning. Traditions and customs are a value in themselves and help to establish their own identity and belonging, become problematic when they become a "coercive force" that censors and blocks growth.

3. **Timing:** Giving priority to processes also means taking into consideration the time necessary for their deployment and evolution, finding the right balance between "time to recover" and patient waiting for maturity. Fundamental in this are moments of evaluation, which should include an honest analysis of the factors at stake, but also the time needed for common growth.

- Fr. Luigi Vaninetti
Provincial Superior

