

News from the General Council



SEPTEMBER 2019

A. EXTENDED COUNCIL

ROME, 9-11 SEPTEMBER 2019

From 9 to 11 September 2019, the Extended Council of the Congregation, composed of the Superior General, the General Consultors, the Secretary General and the six Presidents of the Configurations met at the Generalate of SS. John and Paul, Rome. This was the first meeting of the Extended Council since the celebration of the General Chapter and for some of those present it was also the first gathering of its kind in which they participated.

The meeting began with a reminder of the role and functions of this Council - an advisory body to the Superior General, then the Presidents gave reports on the situation of their respective Configuration.



L/R: Aloysius Nguma, Mark-Robin Hoogland (CCH), Francisco Valadez (CJC), Gwen Barde, Juan Ignacio Villar, Vital Otshudialokoka (CPA), JOACHIM REGO, Tom McDonough (PASPAC), José María Sáez (SCOR), Luigi Vaninetti (MAPRAES), Mirek Lesiecki, Ciro Benedettini, Rafael Blasco (Secr.). Rafael Vivanco took the picture.

1. Review of the General Chapter.

The Extended Council gave time to a review and assessment of the work done in the General Chapter - dynamics, expectations fulfilled or disappointed, what worked and what will have to be improved in view of the future Chapter.

On the positive side, there was a good fraternal and open atmosphere. However, for many capitulars it was a first ever experience at this level. This contributed to some timidity and hesitancy, thus limiting one's active participation in the general assembly to a few interventions.

The Council paused to reflect on the capitular journey, as had been initially conceived of by the Preparatory Committee and how, in fact, it was put into execution. It seemed that some issues remained unresolved, while other issues, due to the constraint of time were not brought to a proper conclusion. The Extended Council recommends more care in the methodological organization of the next General Chapter.

During the Extended Council meeting, the first printed copies of the 47th General Chapter documents were distributed to the Configuration Presidents. These books have now been shipped to all entities of the Congregation.

2. Clarifications on the theme of the "charismatic plan".

The Extended Council devoted part of its time to clarifying what is meant by the term "charismatic plan", which for many of the participants in the General Chapter had been a source of confusion.

The origin of this expression was examined in the request contained in the document ***"Economy in the service of charism and mission"***, published by the Vatican Dicastery for Religious, which asked General Chapters for *"establishing the fundamental economic and administrative guidelines and developing a charismatic Institute plan that offers guidance in this area."*

The Extended Council is oriented to a "restrictive" interpretation of this recommendation, asking for the development of a document that serves above all in the economic sphere to discern the orientation and use of our goods while respecting the charismatic identity of our Congregation. Such a document already exists at the Provincial level for some of our entities.

In order not to lose, however, the possibility of carrying out a renewed reflection on our charism, it is thought to organize a consultation of the base with some specific questions.

3. Reorganization of the General Curia and new evangelization.

The General Council is considering some rethinking around the current structure of the General Curia offices. In particular, the hypothesis has been put forward, in line with the desire to renew our mission, to restore greater centrality to evangelization and new evangelization.

The Extended Council was asked about the idea of creating a dedicated office for the new evangelization under which the other areas of JPIC, communications, mission *ad gentes*, solidarity and lay people, could be reorganized.

With particular reference to Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), the Extended Council was reminded how this area represents an important element for our spirituality and formation - both initial and ongoing. Giving more attention to JPIC in the structure of the Curia and linking it to evangelization can also help to implement what is recommended by the General Chapter regarding the theme of respect for creation (Recommendation #4).

The project to reorganize the Curia is still in its embryonic stage and Council members have been able to express their views for or against such a working hypothesis.

4. Implementation of some General Chapter recommendations.

In response to the General Chapter's Recommendation #5 ¹, the General Council has already contacted an expert in the field of church communication to initiate some effective working paths and strategies.

Similarly, in response to Recommendation #6, on the Passionist Family ² the Extended Council has been committed to gather information on the lay groups of its own Configuration in order to have a more complete picture of our relationship with the lay people and other members of the Passionist Family around the world.

¹ *"The General Chapter recommends that the General Council establish a passionist consultative commission on social networks which, with the help of experts in the field, can help the congregation to establish new directions for our digital presence and for our social media platforms. A General Consultor shall chair this commission".*

² *"The General Chapter recommends that the Superior General and his Council examine the possibility of the creation of an international commission, composed of religious and lay Passionists, to promote cooperation and exchange between the various lay groups associated with our Congregation".*

5. Third Centenary: Programs and Initiatives.

The Extended Council listened to the report of the President of the Jubilee Commission on the preparation and implementation of the various planned initiatives.

In particular, the members of the Council were informed of the request for *indulgences* for the Jubilee and the conditions and places where it will be received during the Jubilee period. In addition, a brief update was given on the preparation of the International Theological Congress in Rome (21-24/10/2021), the course for the formators (1-22/11/2020) and the meeting of all Passionist bishops (20-25/11/2020).

6. Belgium.

The Superior General informed the Extended Council about the situation of the former Province of St Gabriel (Belgium). Having decreed the suppression of the Province GABR, the General Chapter stated that *“the Superior General with his Council, and in dialogue with the interested parties, will decide the matter of the religious, the two houses and of the former Province”*.

The entity of Belgium is now under the responsibility of the Superior General. As a result of this and pending further developments, the Superior General appointed Fr. Frans Damen as his delegate, to ensure the care of the religious of the former Province. He has also decided for all the religious currently present in the house of Wezembeek (Brussels) to move by the end of December 2019 to the house of Kortrijk. This is particularly so for the better management and care of the religious.

7. Economy and use of the Solidarity Fund.

The Extended Council listened to the report of the General Econome, Fr. Vincenzo Carletti.

In particular, the norms established by XV General Synod (2015) regarding the use of the Solidarity Fund was presented to the members of the Council.

It was reiterated that all Provinces, Vice-provinces and Vicariates have a duty to contribute to this fund, with the annual income contribution of two percent. So too all the entities of the Congregation have the opportunity to ask for help from the Solidarity Fund, in accordance with the norms established at the General Synod, which we summarize below:

- Each year the Superior General sets the maximum amount to be issued for that year (RFS #7).

- Formation grants are given priority in the disbursements of the fund (RFS #7).
- An entity may not receive more than 25% of the amount set for that year (RFS #7).
- Requests must be approved by the Major Superior of the requesting entity (RFS #8).
- Requests must be sent to the Office of the Secretary for Mission and Solidarity, who will present them to the General Council with his own assessment and recommendation (RFS #8).
- Each request must have a complete description of the project and quote (RFS #8).
- Each request must be accompanied by information on the economic condition of the requesting entity (RFS #8).
- Decisions on granting subsidies are taken twice a year (April & September) #8.
- After the grants have been assigned, the receiver has to give the Secretary for Solidarity and Mission regular reports of how they were used (RFS #10).

The Superior General explained that in recent years there has always been an attempt to respond generously to requests received from all areas of the world where the congregation is present (Europe, Asia-Pacific, Americas and Africa), as well as from our Passionists monasteries of contemplative nuns.

The next gathering of the Extended Council is scheduled for 26-28 November 2020.

B. GENERAL COUNCIL

ROME, 12-14 SEPTEMBER 2019

From 12 to 14 September 2019, the General Council met in Rome, with the presence, for the first time, of the new General Secretary: Fr. Rafael Blasco Bordejé.

1. New General Procurator.

During the gathering, Fr. Antonio Munduate, General Procurator attended one session to present the legal cases related to his office. However, Fr. Antonio concludes his service with this consultation. Fr. General, with the consent of his Council, has appointed Fr. **Alessandro Foppoli** as new General Procurator, who will continue, at the same time, to play the role of special secretary of the Fr. General.

Meanwhile, in compliance with the Statutes of the newly established Monastic Congregation of the Passionist Nuns and at their request, Fr. Antonio Munduate continues in his role as General Assistant of the Passionist Nuns. In order to better carry out his service, Fr. Antonio has transferred to the monastery of St. Joseph at Monte Argentario as it is easier accessible to the newly established headquarters of the Passionist Nuns in the monastery of Tarquinia (VT).

2. Passionists International.

Fr. Joachim informed the Council that the three Superiors General of the Congregations involved in the Passionists International project (i.e. Fr. Joachim Rego, Congregation of the Passion; Mother Aureliana Aguirre Rodríguez de Guzman, *Hijas de la Pasion*; and Sr. Eileen Fucito, Sisters of the Cross and Passion) have confirmed the recommendation made by the Board of Passionists International, by appointing **Fr. John Kathoka Muthengi** as the new "Executive Secretary" replacing Fr. Mirek Lesiecki who was elected to the General Council at the General Chapter.

Fr. Mirek Lesiecki is appointed as the representative of the Superior General to Passionists International - a role so far held by Fr. Giuseppe Adobati (former General Consultor and now First Consultor of MAPRAES).

3. Myanmar Mission.

The mission of Myanmar (formerly Burma) is entrusted to the PASPAC Configuration. However, from a strictly legal point of view, it is directly under the authority of the Superior General, who appointed Fr. Gwen Barde, General Consultor, as his delegate for the mission.

At this meeting, Fr. Gwen updated the Council on the situation of the mission in the Diocese of Patheingyi (72,000 Catholics, 35 parishes and 85 diocesan priests). The agreement provided for a commitment of the Passionists for three years (expiring in September 2020), especially in the field of the training and doctrinal and spiritual updating of the clergy. The Bishop has asked to extend our commitment for a further three years.

At present our religious are also involved with assisting in the formation of seminarians at the Minor Seminary.

There are already some young people who are indicating interest in joining our Congregation.

Our service as preachers is particularly in demand in this land, but language learning still requires a lot of effort. At the moment, Passionists are present with two religious from Japan and India. It is hoped that a third missionary will be available soon.

4. Jubilee: icon journey and scheduled events.

To complete what has already been said during the Extended Council, Fr. Juan Ignacio Villar and Fr. Ciro Benedettini (members of the Jubilee Commission) informed the meeting about the progress of the Jubilee Icon's journey in

different parts of the Passionist world. The experience is proving very positive and is having a remarkable success, both in renewing the attention to the work of the Congregation and in raising awareness of the themes of *gratitude, prophecy and hope*, to which the celebration of the third centenary is linked.

The General Council also analysed the various hypotheses for the gathering of the formators and Passionists bishops in Rome, with the occasion of the jubilee. More detailed information will be given as these events approach.

5. General Curia Calendar and Canonical Visits.

In 2020, three Provincial Chapters (SPE – Netherlands; REG – Mexico and Dominican Rep.; PATR – Ireland and Scotland) and 1 Vice-Provincial Congress (VULN – Bavaria and Austria) will be celebrated. Each of these events will be preceded by a canonical visit by a member of the General Council. As in recent years, Fr. General has delegated the General Consultor for this task: Fr. Mirek Lesiecki for VULN, SPE and PATR; Fr. Juan Ignacio Villar Cabello for REG. The Superior General reserves to himself the possibility to make a *fraternal visit* to some communities of the aforementioned Provinces and Vice-Province.

6. Responding to some specific requests.

The Superior General and his Council approved the decrees and proposals submitted by the 29th Provincial Chapter of SPIR (Australia, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea).

In addition, it approved the request submitted by MAPRAES for dispensation from application of the Constitutions No. 165d for the reappointment of some Local Superiors of the Province, beyond the ordinary end of their term.

The next ordinary gathering of the General Consulta will be from 25 November to 3 December 2019.

Fr. Rafael Blasco Bordejé, C.P.
Secretary General