

**XXXIV GENERAL CHAPTER  
SOCIETY OF MARY (MARIANISTS)**

**REPORT OF THE  
OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE**

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# XXXIV GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY (JULY 2012)

## REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

### 1. OVERVIEW

#### *1.1 The principal areas of responsibility*

These have been defined in function of the directives of the last General Chapter:

- a. Ordinary work of the Council (various sessions: new superiors and assistants for education)
  - Link for General Council with African Zone MAC: Marianist African Conference)
- b. Visits: special attention to ministry, to vocation ministry, to formation, to the Marianist Family.
- c. Deepening of the charism:
  - Preparation and progress of the Chaminade Year (Fortes and WYD)
  - Development of Continental Centers of Marianist Formation
- d. Accompaniment of the work of the ICMF
  - Preparation session for accompaniers of the “Spirit of Zaragoza” retreat
- e. Youth ministry and vocation ministry
  - Contacts and meeting with those in charge of ministry
  - 3 Offices (two issues) – Vocsm bulletin (10 issues should have appeared by the time of the Chapter)
  - Other elements of youth ministry: Faustino Movement
- f. Formation:
  - Annual visitation of Chaminade International Seminary

- Study of the Chaminade International Seminary for the Leadership Assembly of 2009
- Visitation of formation communities and meeting of formators and some candidates and religious in formation
- Participation in various events: Charism 3 (2006 Nairobi) and 4 (2011 Bangalore), Horizons 2010, ...
- g. Study on Mixed Composition
  - Work with committee named by the Superior General
  - Symposium of January 2011
- h. With the Assistant for Temporalities: *Praying with the Prophets for Justice and Peace*, an Advent journey in prayer.
- i. Various periodical events: Conferences, retreats, etc.
- j. Preparation of General Chapter of 2012 (Preparatory Commission)

### ***1.2. Three areas of deepening***

Here I would like to develop three essential areas in particular, in which a great deal of work remains to be done: renewal of mission, especially in an updated definition of our pastoral priorities, stronger discernment and formation and a renewed ownership of our charism. Our present and future missionary dynamism and our capacity to effectively call new members to join us will certainly depend in great part upon our ability to make precise decisions in these three areas and to put those decisions into effective practice.

The experience of the last six years shows the tremendous variety of our situations, both personal and collective, due to differences in age, in cultures, in contexts, in history or in personal options. There are, nevertheless, many points in common which transcend all these differences.

### ***1.3. An opportunity to be grasped***

We are on the threshold of the Year of Faith (October 2012 – November 2013) and of the Synod on the New Evangelization (October 2012); we are also five years away from the bicentenary of our foundation, twelve years after the beatification and in sight of a not too far distant canonization of Father Chaminade. 2012 is also the year for the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vatican Council II, which proposed to the entire Church a project of *aggiornamento* within which religious life has held a prominent place. We are in a privileged period for living a renewal, propelled by recent graces and encouraged by those that are to come, from the inside as well as from outside our congregation. It is an opportunity to be grasped.

## 2. MINISTRY

The pastoral activity of the Society of Mary is very rich and has even broadened over the course of recent years. We can rejoice in that and find in it a source of encouragement. We are called to the proclamation of the Gospel, and the urgency of that mission is the source of inspiration for our life: it is from here that the motivation and energy for a profound renewal can come, personal as well as communitarian.

It is evident that our pastoral activity is developing within a context that is undergoing great changes. For example:

- a. the profound modifications of our context of life and mission which engender new questions and new challenges in both life and mission,
- b. a greater face-to-face encounter among religions and a new relationship of society and of the individual to the religious world,
- c. the expansion and diversification of our settings of presence and action,
- d. within the Church, the increase in the number and in the place of the laity and for us their growing role, whether or not linked to a drastic diminution of our personnel,
- e. the ever greater need to labor in networks, nationally or internationally, which affects both the Society of Mary and the Marianist Family,
- f. the need to struggle against the risk of a weakened charism

These are the elements which will reappear in the following commentary.

### 2.1 *A primordial need: a common strategy*

In beginning his mission upon return from exile in Spain, Father Chaminade initiated a new and thought-out ministry which he later developed and adjusted to circumstances. He knew he had to center himself upon what seemed to him most urgent: to form a community of young people, then one of adults in order to revitalize their faith and make missionaries of them; later, he oriented the activity of the first religious primarily towards the education of the young.

Today, as our global personnel diminishes, as our geographic distribution changes and as the missionary field undergoes profound transformations, what are the goals towards which we want to converge the focus of our efforts? Within our Units as within each of our works, the updating of our missionary priorities is a task to be undertaken constantly. That, of course, presupposes choices and adaptations that are sometimes painful, but necessary.

Father Chaminade uses the image of new levers which can move the world (Cf. *The Chaminade Legacy*, I-153 [p. 673]). What are the levers that we need to use to move the world today and lead it to Christ? If we don't put the lever on the right fulcrum, the task can be too heavy for us and fail to produce the desired fruits. From that can come discouragement, a poor reading of our charism and a lack of vocational attractiveness ("to be a Marianist, what good does that do?").

A good articulation of these missionary priorities at each level is a remedy for the temptation of dispersion of efforts into individual missions or in projects that are too personalized; it also allows us to more easily give orientation to our collaborators. It strengthens the community dimension of the mission, the community being "a unified apostolic group which supports, guides, and evaluates the work of each member" (RL 68).

### **Working in networks within the Unit and beyond**

If the various works of a Unit follow some common missionary guidelines, they will be able to develop their sense of belonging to the larger community and to strengthen their collaboration. Throughout our visitations, it became very clear to me that the spirit of unity and collaboration that reigns among the works of a Unit is today a key factor of the missionary dynamism of the whole. It benefits both the religious and their collaborators, as well as those who are reached by the mission. It strengthens the works, facilitates the work in common by the religious and the lay persons and the Marianist influence there becomes more perceptible – especially when there are few religious. Today, the works can no longer function like islands, still less the brothers. Certain Units have already a well-established tradition of annual meetings for reflection and coordination of works according to category.

This way of operating also facilitates collaboration with other Units and with the other branches of the Marianist Family. There are good examples of collaboration at these two levels in various areas of activity (vocation ministry, formation, sponsorship of school establishments, retreats, periodic projects, etc.). The assistant for religious life – and the one for education, if the Unit has one – has (have) an important role in coordinating this work.

### ***2.2 Two areas of activity: youth and adults***

I would like to focus my attention on these two important areas of our current pastoral activity.

## a. Youth

Our engagement with them remains our primary missionary activity. It remains linked mostly to our educational establishments: schools, universities or non-institutional ones, but it is developed also in parishes and other types of works.

In this task, we are faced with several challenges:

1. In the schools, to maintain *the balance between the search for excellence on the academic and pastoral planes*. How can we not sacrifice one for the other, but unite them?
2. *To have a meaningful impact*. How can we reach the largest possible number of youth in the most profound way possible? How can we address ourselves to all without neglecting those who are the most involved? Does our education effectively bring young people to a different life-style during their school years and beyond? The attitude of a certain number of our alumni challenges us: did their Marianist education really touch them? That is a question that the Church at large also has in the face of the current massive unbelief of a large part of the world.
3. *Among the laity, to increase the number of those who collaborate for pastoral goals*. We can depend upon a significant nucleus among them. But what can be done when the way of recruiting them does not permit privileging the most devoted or to strengthen their influence? When the community is older or absent, maintenance of the Marianist spirit sometimes becomes problematic.
4. *To attain today to a more personalized accompaniment of the students* in our institutions. This is certainly an important need of youth today.

**To support ministry, what kind of missionary strategy is to be chosen?**

Two options are currently in vogue: (1) to put the essential of our energy into the formation of the lay persons who themselves will have contact with the young people, or (2) consecrate the essential of our energy to the young people themselves. These two options correspond to two different missionary plans: generally, we try to mix the two models. Could we give a greater place to a third option that would consist in making the young people themselves the missionaries to other youth and thus concentrate the essential of our energies upon this driving nucleus? Would it be possible for us to combine that task with the formation of lay collaborators? If that were the case, would we not then have a fairly efficient model with Chaminadian overtones? Is this not one of the essential levers that Father Chaminade used to animate by himself a very large group of youth and adults?

**How many works can we animate with an authentic Marianist spirit?**

Considering on the one hand the service to the Church which we provide and on the other the effective impact of our activity, how can we think about *our future in our presence to youth?*

Should we limit more radically the number of works that we animate or should we keep them and accept a lesser impact of our activity upon them? Can we realistically see works last durably in a Marianist spirit without a community or is that an option without a real future? And when the community is present, is its impact sufficient? Can it find a balance of life at the heart of the mission?

One criterion of reflection could help us in the decision-making: for each of our current works, would there be *another possibility of animation* than our own which might offer it a greater guarantee of development in its Christian character?

b. Adults – families

It is easy to see their growing part in our apostolic activity: members of the Marianist Lay Communities, collaborators in our works, university students and young professionals, parishioners, participants in social works. This development seems to me to be an important element in the evolution of our ministry.

In the schools working with parents of the students has been strengthened and organized. Some works centered upon youth thus offer new opportunities for formation and evangelization of adults, motivated by their children whom they can, in their turn, better support. This is an area of apostolate worth exploring more profoundly, stressing the family as a cell of the Church. As recent examples of that ministry, we can note what is being done in Spain, in Argentina, or the presence of parents at the gathering of students from Marianist institutions at Lourdes (April 2011, France). In the parishes adult education and family ministry are generally developed, but the difficulty there is rather how to reach young people also.

**2.3 Two privileged apostolic orientations**

a. Faith communities

They constitute an essential reality for evangelization in a Marianist style. “to foster communities of dedicated lay people” (RL 71) is one of our traditional courses of action. This mode of action is all the more necessary today in face of the strong tendency towards individualism. It is evident that these

communities continue to bring a real dynamism to our evangelizing action wherever they are developed, both among youth and among adults.

In order to respond to the diversity of situations, they sometimes operate more like a federation of local communities than as a uniform whole. That responds especially to the sensitivities of youth for whom it is better not to over standardize projects. Notable in that dynamic of service to youth are: *LIFE* in the United States or *Guinomai* and *Senda* in Spain.

Again, among young people, we can see the more recent growth of movements inspired by models of Marianist sanctity: in particular those drawing inspiration from Faustino Pérez-Manglano Magro (Chile, Peru, Haiti, Kenya, Zambia, Ivory Coast, France, ...) or the *Movimento Michel* in Colombia-Ecuador, inspired by Miguel Ángel Quiroga.

Other groups involve a sometimes less direct, but also necessary, evangelization: scouting, glee clubs/choirs, social action groups, etc. Nor should the impact of purely cultural or sports activities be downplayed; they have always been an important element of our human and educational work, playing the role of a kind of pre-evangelization. Certain of our younger Units have not yet really developed a tradition in this area.

All these groups offer a privileged place for the formation of leaders for the Church or civil society, as well as a terrain favorable for vocation ministry. These observations lead me to formulate **three reflections**:

1. The missionary dynamism of our Units certainly demands particular attention to the development of these communities of faith and of life:
  - In developing them where few now exist
  - In assuring their coordination within the Unit
  - In creating international links with similar groups.
2. Without neglecting groups or movements coming out of other spiritualities, which also have their own value, should we not give priority of choice to those which can develop a Marianist character?
3. It would be worthwhile to develop some common reference points for the communities animated by a Marianist spirit (some "characteristics"). They could be adapted to the situation of each place and of each group, but could help to strengthen their Marianist character and to render communication easier among the various groups. Even when present in ways very different from one situation

to another, there could be, for example: faith, mission, Mary, development of the spirit of responsibility in the members themselves, etc.

- b. Faith and Culture dialogue: schools, universities, publishing houses, Internet. This is a fundamental element of our evangelizing activity, all the more so if we can still subscribe to the affirmation of Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 20: “The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, ...”

That is the concern that guided, to a great degree, the apostolic choice of the school since the first period of the Society and up until today. It is not merely a question of providing a catechesis, but of engaging in a dialogue of faith, knowledge and life; of providing an intellectual formation that makes evangelization possible. This is the sense in which the text of the Lineamenta for the next Synod on the New Evangelization (October 2012) supports the importance of education, picking up especially on the expression of Pope Benedict XVI about “an educational emergency” (Lineamenta, §20). This “faith and culture” area is developed today through very diverse activities: schools and non-institutional teaching, for youth and adults; university, publishing; Internet; etc.

Some particular points of attention in this domain:

1. Our tradition calls us to avoid the risk of withdrawal into purely catechetical or pastoral ministries, even in a situation of diminished personnel
2. The secular formation of the religious is always important (initial and on-going formation), including the case of a future orientation towards the priesthood
3. We need to multiply lay collaborators inspired by the Marianist spirit in every one of our areas of activity. For that, should we be developing more explicitly, especially among youth, a ministry for this type of “vocation” to a lay professional commitment to the Marianist spirit?

#### ***2.4 Parishes, shrines and spiritual centers***

- a. Parishes

Their number is tending to decrease. There are currently 39 parishes under the care of a community or linked to a group of works where a community is present and 7 parishes where a Marianist priest is pastor or assistant without

the active presence of a community on site. Three Marian shrines must also be added to these.

The parish puts us at the heart of society and very explicitly in the service of a diocese; this enriches our congregational experience. But it also presents a challenge to our mixed composition. In the dechristianized countries, we experience the difficulty of easily reaching young people.

The Chapter of 1986 described the characteristics of the Marianist parish apostolate ((§§ 12-22); a return to that document would be useful for evaluating and honing our presence in this area, both at the local and the general levels. The reflection now going on about mixed composition makes it particularly urgent for us to accept only those pastoral projects which allow for its full expression. We can promote a model of parochial animation which offers a broad place for lay religious and laypeople, one that can offer a significant contribution from our Marianist tradition.

b. Spiritual or retreat centers

At present we animate 14. They also present worthwhile opportunities for evangelization, especially in allowing for sessions or retreats for our students or collaborators, and in offering a place for interior formation. They can offer a worthwhile setting for on-going contribution by religious who have to cut down on their activities because of age or health reasons. Nonetheless, does not the multiplication of these within a given Unit risk putting us too far away from a real involvement in society, culture and more frontier settings of evangelization? I believe that could sometimes be a temptation and that we must be vigilant about this point.

## *2.5 Overall reflections.*

- a. Which levers are to be privileged? Or which should be abandoned?
- b. How can we continue to improve the formation of our collaborators in the Marianist spirit?
- c. Evangelize youth through youth; connect the evangelization of adults and youth.
- d. Strengthen the influence of the presence and contagion of our communities: make them more accessible and open.
- e. How can we strengthen our evangelizing impact in the schools and universities? What strategies must be selected? How can we invite people to join us in this area, raising up new vocations?

- f. Do we sufficiently use the potential of our international character to reach out to new targets, those who are relatively neglected by traditional ministry (for example: the students of sub-Saharan Africa in Tunis or the immigrants in Europe)?

### 3. THE FORMATION PATH

The preparation of the Synod on the New Evangelization highlights the necessity for forming new evangelizers, or promoting their renewal. That is also the goal of formation. Since the challenges are great today, and since we must respond to them with a reduced personnel, we need members who are carefully selected and well formed themselves.

#### 3.1 *Vocation ministry*

- a. Great contrasts

In the zones with many vocations, the major challenge is discernment. It can be difficult, but is essential, to have a team well prepared for that work. It must then be followed up in the subsequent stages by well prepared formators. In the zones with few or no vocations, the challenge is to continue to motivate the brothers to faithfully extend the vocational call and to support the often isolated candidates. Of course, the question of discernment remains essential there as well.

- b. An essential part of ministry and of education

Vocation ministry, youth ministry and education are all linked and mutually enriching. How can we make vocation ministry a constitutive element of our educational and pastoral work, helping each person to discover a personal call for his life? That is a matter of concern for all young people and all educators can share in such a project, each at his own level. This can be a motivating force for the pedagogical and pastoral plan of a work, whatever it be. The European Congress on Vocations (1997) had this valuable slogan: “vocation ministry is the vocation of all pastoral ministry.” Separated from an overall educational and pastoral plan, vocation ministry loses its depth, rendering the call more abstract.

- c. The work of all the religious

It is about “creating a vocation culture”: without that, a vocation minister will have few possibilities for action. Each community, each religious has a responsibility. Where there seem to be no vocations, each one remains

responsible for interceding for the vocations that are being born elsewhere in our family. The older brothers often have a determining role, by the witness of their fidelity to their commitment and the sense of fulfillment in their lives.

Vocation ministry impels us to cultivate some fundamental attitudes that are the source of renewal for ourselves:

1. Faith in God's call, in his capacity to renew our lives and our institutions,
2. Esteem and joy for our own vocation, and our concern to live it faithfully
3. Confidence in the generosity of young people today
4. Love for the congregation, just as it is today, and for its mission
5. A spirit of welcoming and of openness to the current mentality of the young
6. Community spirit

This renewal also derives from the fact that there is no credible vocation ministry without ongoing concern for the vocation of the religious who are already committed. I refer to what is said below about on-going formation, since this is one of its important goals.

d. A central goal for the years to come

Vocation ministry must evidently constitute one of the priority axes of action over the course of future years, not only because we need vocations, but also because, if it is well understood, it can be an engine of renewal in our own religious life and mission. In this work, we must attend to certain points:

1. Formation and follow-up of those responsible for vocations by the assistant for religious life and ministry
2. Elaboration of clear criteria for acceptance of a candidate (especially about the question of mixed composition). (See The Guide to Formation 56-67 and the Reference Text on Mixed Composition – Appendix III)
3. Coordination with the formators of the Unit (or of the Zone)
4. Involvement of all the religious, each according to his possibilities (with a universal meaning for the Units without clear perspectives for vocations)
5. Exchanges of news and materiel at the international level
6. Collaboration with all the Marianist Family

### 3.2 Current situation of initial formation

#### a. Statistics

At the beginning of December 2011, there were 55 prenovices in 15 different Units, in which 11 prenovitiates were operating. Some of these prenovices are being formed inside a classic active community, for others the prenovitiate is entirely oriented towards formation. Formation is under the responsibility of one religious, when the community is independent; he usually has an assistant.

There are 70 novices: 28 in first year and 42 in second year. They are from 10 different Units. Six novitiates receive them, all forming independent communities with a Master of Novices and an assistant. There are 63 scholastics (counting those in their first three years of formation) in 12 Units, spread throughout 7 scholasticates and several active communities. There are currently 17 seminarians, all in the International Seminary in Rome, from 8 Units. A table can clarify the global situation with distribution according to the Marianist zones:

	PRENOVITIATE		NOVITIATE		SCHOLASTICATE		SEMINARY	TOTAL IN FORMATION
	Pre-novices	Pre-novitiates	Novices	Novitiates	Scholastics	Scholasticates		
North America	7	2	12	2	12	1	0	31
(from. Haiti)	(5)	(1)	(5)	(1)	(8)	(1)		(18)
Latin America	10	3	6	1	3	2	2	21
Asia	21	2	24	1	17	1	8	70
Africa	16	4	28	2	28	2	6	78
Europe	0	1	1	1	3	1	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>		<b>70</b>		<b>63</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>205</b>
<i>Houses - total</i>		12		7		7	1	27

(In some Units the scholastics are in active communities not entirely dedicated to formation)

#### b. Some comments or questions arising from the data

1. A vocational awakening in Europe is urgent. It certainly does not depend entirely upon us (the situation of the other congregations is rather similar to ours), but what does depend upon us must be done.
2. The decrease of personnel is evident from one stage to another of formation: 55 prenovices, many of them for one year, 70 novices over

two years and 63 scholastics spread over three years. That decrease is normal, but nonetheless calls for being especially attentive to discernment and the personal integration of formation.

3. Another question that seems to me very important for our reflection: do we have the means to support so many formation communities with qualified personnel? And if we have them today, will we have them in the future?

c. The formators: length of term and selection

The communities listed above have 33 formators in charge, joined as well by other religious.

1. **Length of term.** There is a great deal of mobility among the formators, too much in my opinion. Few remain in that responsibility more than three years. This work requires more stability because it is above all in forming that one learns to form. Too rapid a rotation of the formators does not allow them to acquire sufficient experience, which is advantageous neither for the Unit nor for the religious in formation.
2. **The selection of formators** is essential for our future as a congregation. The criteria are outlined in the *Guide to Formation* (1997) (§29-34). It is based on the grounds that a formator will principally form himself and reveal his capabilities; from early limited responsibilities he can then be moved on to greater responsibilities. It is important to foresee a close mentoring of these formators by their superiors, in particular by the assistant for religious life. But each Unit must also establish a plan for the preparation of future formators according to which it will be possible to select, form and mentor each one of them. That is an integral part of the administration of the personnel of the Unit. Among the formators must also be included those who will be responsible for on-going formation and for vocation ministry (Cf. GF 29). From this perspective, every Unit needs formators.
3. **Meeting of formators.** Within the next six years an international meeting of the formators should be organized. These have been held heretofore every ten years. We need to ask if it would not be necessary to organize them more frequently, perhaps in alternating worldwide meetings with continental or language group meetings? For the moment, the rhythm of renewal of formators means that many of them never benefit from this input for their work.

A future meeting should deal with certain of the topics mentioned above which seem to be the points to which we must be most attentive: discernment, mixed composition, coherence of the formation plan in each Unit, the relationship of formation community to active communities and on-going formation. This last topic could also be the object of a specific undertaking with the assistants for religious life.

d. Formation communities

One of the questions that arises today is that of the appropriate number of formation communities in the Society of Mary. It cannot be resolved independently by each Unit. The decision to open a house of formation cannot be made simply because the Unit has the number of personnel and candidates to benefit from it, but must be made also in consideration of the possibilities and needs of other Units that might be able to join it. It would be appropriate for the Zonal Conferences to continue this reflection in order to better adapt themselves to the needs and possibilities not only so that the candidates and religious might attain to a sufficient number, but also that it might be possible to find enough formators for this important activity. What is said in the report of the Superior General about the novitiate could be reflected in a similar way for the stage of the scholasticate.

e. Perseverance

Reading the statistics, one cannot help but notice the considerable rate of departures (see **Appendix I** on the last page of this report). Over 16 years, from 1995 to 2005, in only three years is the number of those who have persevered is higher than of those who left. More than once, that number is at a very low level. Over that period, 13% left after perpetual vows, not a negligible percentage. Perhaps, of late, there are some signs that we are moving in a positive direction, but confirmation of that remains to be seen. Hence, perseverance remains an important challenge.

These are not simply questions to be analyzed, but an invitation to consolidate the process of discernment carried out, or indeed the deep integration of formation, and also to strengthen the personal accompaniment of the religious in his personal life and in his apostolate. For the perpetually professed, we shall later return to the matter of on-going formation. We must **think about ways to lessen this number of departures**: whether in accepting with more discernment, or in accompanying more closely the life and activity of the brother; the intensity of the mission experience proposed also needs to be examined, since if it does not present sufficient challenges, it can lead to a spiritual anemia.

### 3.3 *Specific situations of certain stages of initial formation*

a. Some overall observations

**Reality of the experience:** I remember a particularly valuable remark of Fr. Adolfo Nicolas, Superior General of the Jesuits, during his visit to our Leadership Assembly in July 2009. He shared with us that during one of his visitations, when the stages of formation with their specific objectives were presented to him, he had simply asked: “and did that happen?” That is, in effect, a major question for the whole of the formation path: did what is envisaged for each step actually happen? And if not, why even consider that the candidate should begin the following stage? Will not a great number of difficulties arise as a result? If, on one important difficult point there has been no evident progress during one stage of formation, it is quite probable that there will be even more problems in the future. That questioning is particularly important at the moment of admission to perpetual vows or to the priesthood. A Eudist, after a long experience as a seminary superior, confided: experience has taught me that in case of doubt, it is always better to say “No.” Formation, and therefore the criteria of admission, do not rest primarily on acquired knowledge, but above all on the profound integration of criteria of life, on a personal transformation in the following of Christ.

b. **Consistency between formation communities and active communities:**

Without this consistency, formation will be rendered meaningless, perceived as a temporary effort from which one can quickly gain freedom. If the active life is of a style very different from that of a formation community, the spirit which animates it, the ideal that lives in it must be the same, and not self-contradictory. The welcoming of new members carries a great responsibility from this viewpoint. What good is it to teach regularity at prayer to a novice if the active communities do not maintain this effort? Or poverty, if later the use of material goods shows profligacy, etc.

### 3.4 *Preparation for priesthood and seminary*

a. **Admission to the priesthood** is an important decision. The study on mixed composition offers a point of reference which integrates this question into a larger context. In a note to superiors, the Extended General Council of January 2007 reaffirmed the importance of the second consultation before entry to the seminary, as specified in the Rule (RL 6.14), which presupposes that between the two consultations there is a time for enrichment of apostolic experience and potentially for formation.

b. **The seminary in Rome over the past 6 years.** It seemed desirable to raise again the question of the appropriateness of the location of the seminary as

the first ten-year period of the International Seminary was coming to an end (in September 2009). The General Council prepared a dossier for the Leadership Assembly of July 2009. A consultation was done involving all the superiors who then had or who had had a seminarian during those years, as well as all those who had been seminarians since 2004. The value of a common international seminary came out clearly. The General Council also went on to do a study of possible alternative sites, in particular in Latin America, in Asia and in Europe. According to these consultations and study, and taking into account the dialogue held with the superiors during the 2009 Assembly, it was apparent to us that moving the seminary would not currently present any guarantees of increase in the quality of formation. Furthermore, uncertainty about the future of the General Administration house itself made it difficult to decide the question at that particular moment. For all these reasons, the General Council decided not to change the location of the international seminary for the time being.

- c. **Seminary formators and Unit superiors.** A good outcome of seminary formation demands a continuing collaboration between the two authorities. The mutual rapports have been excellent during these last years, but we have nevertheless noticed that the manner of collaboration of the seminary team and the superiors needed a greater specificity in order to strengthen the process of discernment towards the priesthood. For this reason, we decided to write a *Directory of the Chaminade International Seminary* that would allow us to develop that clarification and to specify other aspects of seminary life. A first version should be finished between now and June 2013.
- d. **The follow-up of young priests.** *The Guide to Formation*, no. 183, proposes this for the five years that follow ordination. It is important to help the newly ordained to enter into his new mission according to the Marianist tradition. Upon returning to his own cultural and pastoral context, he needs to be initiated into certain aspects of the practice of the priesthood, to understand the way of collaborating with the lay religious or how to put himself at the service of the community and the works. The priestly life-style is not, from this point of view, a privileged one or more independent of the community or the superior. The assistant for religious life of the Unit or a priest delegated to that responsibility must implement this necessary close follow-up.

Because of the need for practical deepening and of maturation in the exercise of the priesthood, the assignment to the young priest of important responsibilities right after his ordination has often been revealed as a dangerous option both for him and for his Unit.

### 3.5 *On-going formation*

There is no credible vocation ministry without ministry to the vocation of the already committed religious. Personal and collective renewal is a continuing exigency of our life. The call of new candidates and the concern for the deepening of the vocation of the already committed religious are mutually supportive. When a departure is manifestly the result of a neglect of religious life, that reminds us, quite sadly, of this link. As already said (2.3.a.), harmony between these two dimensions is a condition of credibility, not only of formation but also of vocation ministry.

One of the important goals of on-going formation is the creative maintenance of our fidelity. I would like to cite here the beginning of article 186 of the *Guide to Formation*:

*A community and a congregation manifest their fecundity insofar as they know how to welcome new members and also in the way they help them grow and be faithful until the end. Thus, initial and on-going formation are linked and are the best expression of every religious group's path to conversion. We live under the sign of on-going formation; initial formation must be seen in the perspective of on-going formation.*

I think this is a point where we need a new start with new intensity. Few Units have any systematic plan for on-going formation. It would be desirable to remedy this. I believe that this is one of the immediate and concrete responses that we can bring to the need for renewal and adaptation that we feel today throughout the Society of Mary. That can be a great help not only for our better understanding of the world today and therefore for rendering us more capable of evangelizing it, but also for understanding and welcoming young people entering our communities.

In this plan of on-going formation a special place must be given to mentoring of religious coming into the age of retirement or who are already there, and in general, for the **religious of the 3<sup>rd</sup> age**. The lengthening of life span and the proportionate growth of that generation requires particular care to their accompaniment in order to help them enter into their mission. Some Units have already been working in this area for a long time (Chile, USA, Spain, etc.) and could give witness to their experience. The special program organized in collaboration with the Marist Brothers (at Manziana in Italy) and which takes place every year in Spanish and English is very much appreciated by its participants; on this topic, information can be obtained from the Executive Director of the ICMF, Jack Ventura, SM. The facts prove that the religious life can be fruitful even into advanced age and the witness of the happiness of the fidelity of these brothers is a great message for our era, which so often neglects

the aged. Let us not deprive ourselves of the spiritual and apostolic resources of this group so numerous today.

#### 4. THE DEEPENING OF THE CHARISM

The renewal movement put underway by Vatican Council II was based upon a return to the founding intuitions of each institute. That tells us the importance of this point. In the weakened condition in which we find ourselves today, a strengthening of our charismatic identity is incontestably the way to go for maintaining a significant place in the Church's project of evangelization and for calmly envisaging our future. The last General Chapter gave us a clear orientation in that direction and we can today even better appreciate the pertinence of that choice.

##### **4.1. Publications** (*The Legacy of Father Chaminade, History....*)

Just recently the complete publication of the works of Father Chaminade in French was finished, with Volume 7 of *Ecrits et Paroles* [in English *The Legacy of Father Chaminade*]. This is the end of a more than a century-long project that began with *The Spirit of Our Foundation* in French in 1910, in the aftermath of the discoveries in the biography of Father Chaminade published in French by Father Simler in 1901. For the first time in the history of the Society of Mary and of the Marianist Family, we now have the entire corpus of the writings of Father Chaminade in a scientific edition accessible to all. Their publication in English and Spanish is also in process and will be available in electronic form for each of these languages. To that can be added a great number of research already accomplished from an historical perspective. Currently, Father Antonio Gascón is working on the third volume of the *History of the Society of Mary*, which will include four volumes. All of this work represents the extraordinary good fortune that we are the first to live with in the two hundred year history of the Society of Mary. It is also a responsibility.

##### **4.2. Current situations and needs**

That immense effort was especially the work of a generation of experts of whom many have already left us. We are not today totally lacking in new experts, but we certainly do not have enough for renewing us in the study of our charism and for maintaining the tasks of formation and of governance. It would now be appropriate that new specialists appear among the younger Units (India, Kenya, Congo, Haiti, etc.), where the needs are the greatest because of the significant number of candidates or of religious in formation, and where the possibilities are the greatest. The reading of our charismatic origins from out of another cultural context cannot but open new, as yet not evident, perspectives. It is, therefore, important that the young Units become aware of this new responsibility incumbent upon them for the service of the entire Society of Mary.

This work of deepening must be done according to a rigorous method of university quality. This helps to avoid several dangers against which a researcher must always struggle: to interpret before knowing, to make the Founder say what I would like for him to have said, or again, to repeat something as information without verifying it at the source to see if it has a serious basis.

What are we going to do in order to bring forth these new intellectuals within our congregation? That should be one element of attention on the part of the formators (it is in the formation period that these vocations to study are often born), of the superiors of the Unit, and of the General Administration.

#### *4.3. The continental centers of Marianist formation*

This proposition came from the General Administration as a response to the needs cited above. The idea is to render more accessible places of study and diffusion of the Marianist charism, first of all for the Society of Mary, but also for the other branches of the Marianist Family. The goal is to promote the emergence of specialists on the Marianist charism in each of the Zones and to support the work of diffusion.

Each Center coordinates projects of Marianist formation for its corresponding Zone. The basic Marianist documentation is stored there, especially that which is produced in the Zone. The person in charge oversees the organization of the locale and serves as contact for all the Units of the Zone to find out and to make known what is going on, to come up with some proposals himself, and to maintain or awaken interest for the study of the Marianist charism. The Center provides its services on site or at a distance, if necessary by Internet. Each Center is under the responsibility of its Zone; the latter delegates its administration to the Unit in whose territory it is housed, but keeps responsibility for setting its guidelines, budgeting and evaluation of performance.

In the name of the General Administration, the executive director of the International Center for Marianist Formation (ICMF), Bro. Jack Ventura, SM, provides coordination among the Centers, assists in the circulation of information among them, promotes some projects or responds to expressed needs, helps in forecasting and reviewing activities, in tandem with the Zones. He is, therefore, in contact both with the directors of the Continental Centers and with the Zonal coordinators. For that reason the plan calls for him to participate in a meeting with each Zonal Conference in order to discuss there the prospects for this work.

The project of the continental Centers will not develop unless the resources exist and persons have the opportunities to take advantage of them. The Chaminade Year

offered a first opportunity and the upcoming Marianist anniversaries can open more. Here is the current state of the project:

ZONE	Place and date of erection	Name	Director and Assistant	Accomplishments
Asia (AZC)	Bangalore-scholasticate (India) April 8, 2010	Morning Star (ACESM – Asian Center of Marianist Studies)	Fr. David Fleming, SM <a href="mailto:dflemingsm@yahoo.co.in">dflemingsm@yahoo.co.in</a>	<i>Chaminade Year Booklet</i> (12/2010 – Readings for Chaminade Year) <i>Asian Marianist Seminar on “Servant Leadership”</i> (Bangalore, August 8-21, 2011 ; 41 participants from 5 countries; SM, FMI et MLC)
Africa (AMC)	Abidjan-Village Chaminade (Ivory Coast) January 22, 2011	Bureau Africain de formation marianiste	Fr. Eugène Adingra, SM <a href="mailto:eugene_ad@yahoo.fr">eugene_ad@yahoo.fr</a>	Constitution and organization of Center
	Nairobi-Marianist Regional House (Kenya) January 22, 2011	Office for Marianist Formation in Africa	Fr. Callistus Jeje, SM <a href="mailto:calistusm@yahoo.com">calistusm@yahoo.com</a> Fr. Michael June, sm	Constitution and organization of Center
Latin America (CLAMAR)	Lima-Regional Administration (Peru) March 2, 2011	CELAFOM (Centro Latinoamericano de Formación Marianista)	Bro. Santiago Valencia, SM <a href="mailto:celafom0404@gmail.com">celafom0404@gmail.com</a> Sñra Rossana Zegarra, coordinator <a href="mailto:celafom1210@gmail.com">celafom1210@gmail.com</a>	Constitution and organization of Center
Europe (CEM)	Connected with Rome archives (AGMAR) and other European centers (The Madeleine, Zaragoza, ...)	CEFM (European Center for Marianist Formation)	Fr. Léo Pauels, SM <a href="mailto:leopauels@yahoo.fr">leopauels@yahoo.fr</a>	In process

Long before this initiative, there already existed in North America a center with its own operations (NACMS). Its experience has been a great help to this project.

North America	Dayton (Ohio)	North American Center for Marianist Studies	Mrs. Carol Ramey <a href="mailto:rameycap@udayton.edu">rameycap@udayton.edu</a>	
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From February 7 to 18, 2011, three Center directors-coordinators were able to participate in a training session in Dayton, guided by the competent team of NACMS and Bro. Tom Giardino.

#### **4.4 *The ICMF***

The International Center for Marianist Formation will celebrate its tenth anniversary in September 2012. The Center is directly under the authority of the GA, which provides its financing and follow-up. Its foundation had been decided by the General Chapter of 2001 and Bro. Tom Giardino structured and developed it successfully for nine years. The mission confided to him was to develop study and formation in the Marianist charism, to coordinate planning and production of materials in view of strengthening the on-going formation in this area. The Center has sometimes been the principal engine behind certain projects; other times it has above all lent its cooperation and technical know-how.

Since September 1, 2011, Bro. Jack Ventura, SM, is now in charge of the Center. It has moved to the Marianist Center in Philadelphia. The Marianist Center is a collaborative office, which houses Marianist LIFE, the Office of Formation for Mission, the Marianist Lay Formation Initiative and a branch of NACMS. All these ministries are particularly oriented to the initial and ongoing formation of Marianists in all branches of the Marianist Family. That location seems to open up some valuable prospects. Please do not hesitate to contact the director whenever you need to, since this center is at the service of the entire Society of Mary. His e-mail address is: [jventura@smcuria.it](mailto:jventura@smcuria.it). The ICMF executive director has been appointed to a part-time position; which also allows him to work for the US Province at the Office of Formation for Mission. From a budgetary perspective, we expect that, when a Unit requests a service from the ICMF, the Unit itself takes responsibility for any corresponding expenses. That is an operating rule that we have also counseled for the Continental Centers.

Appendix II, at the end of this document, offers a report from the former Executive Director of the Center (Bro. Tom Giardino) for the years 2002-2011 and new prospects from the new executive director (Bro. Jack Ventura). The activities carried out or now in process are described there. More information is available on the website of ICMF: [www.icmf.info](http://www.icmf.info).

#### **4.5. *IMRI – Mariology and theology in the Society of Mary***

The *International Marian Research Institute*, founded in 1975, is located at the heart of the University of Dayton. It is part of the Marian Library, founded in 1943. With Father Juergens' encouragement, the latter foundation had aroused at that time an international interest in putting together the first collection of documents. The

General Chapter of 1946 declared: “The General Chapter encourages all the provinces of the Society to cooperate in an effective way, under the control of authority, to this movement of Marian apostolate.” The members of the Society of Mary had recognized well the symbolic importance of that work, placed under the responsibility of the Province of Cincinnati, today under that of the Province of the United States.

This institution, which participates quite explicitly in our mission to make “Mary known, loved and served,” offers great possibilities for deepening Marian theology. For us, the conditions are ideal, given the Marianist environment, but also thanks to the generosity of the Province of the United States which covers the cost of studies there. We will need specialists in Mariology and IMRI will need Marianist religious with doctorates capable of teaching and of taking up responsibilities within it. This corresponds to an even greater need which the Society of Mary must pay attention to: having within it good theologians. I think it would be useful to take account of this in our overall reflection.

#### *4.6. The Chaminade Year*

The Chaminade Year offered a magnificent opportunity to celebrate our Founder. Opening on January 22, 2010, and closing one year later, it has seen a great number of celebrations and initiatives throughout the world. It was often prepared and lived with the Marianist Family. That was the case at the level of the World Council of the Marianist Family which had set out some major guidelines. The visual support of a calendar helped our unity. The exceptional effort made for presenting the documents that came out of the World Council in eight languages also produced fruit in allowing all the countries to be involved.

The response was very enthusiastic and showed the increasing popularity of Father Chaminade in the Marianist Family. Many groups made pilgrimages to Perigueux or to the Madeleine in Bordeaux. The experiences shared with young people showed that they look upon him as a person who is close to them and they accept his message with real interest. That interest is also manifest beyond our usual circles, some publications having reached a very large public. We could see that when we ourselves draw close to our Founder and share his message, this arouses interest and dynamism. I believe that we need to figure out how to draw some lessons from this experience:

- a. For ourselves to continue to strengthen our bonds with Father Chaminade: “Know, love and follow Father Chaminade,” according to the words of Father Cortés’ circular. I believe these three verbs offer us a very good program to follow.

- b. In our apostolate to continue to make him known and loved around us among our students, our collaborators, our parishes and dioceses, etc.

If we follow up this burst of energy, we will continue to receive its fruits for our life, our apostolate and for vocations. It is also an invitation to continue to integrate the Marianist “saints” into our life and our apostolate. There is excitement growing around the young Faustino that needs only to be developed. His pronouncement as venerable on the threshold of the Chaminade Year could be read as an encouragement in this direction.

#### *4.7. Future Anniversaries: 2016-2017*

Some upcoming opportunities are going to be given to us to follow up the momentum initiated:

- a. The Synod on the New Evangelization, in October 2012. It offers an excellent opportunity to review our missionary projects, to give them a new boost and to invite all the baptized to be “missionaries.”
- b. The Year of Faith (from October 2012 to November 2013): it can be the occasion for a deepening an understanding of the role of faith as extolled by Father Chaminade and in our tradition. We can also pick up again his teaching about the prayer of faith in order to relaunch ourselves into that activity that was so important in his eyes.
- c. The jubilee of the foundation of our two institutes: 1816-2016 (FMI) and 1817-2017 (SM) offers an opportunity to return again into the dynamism of our beginnings and the message of our two Founders. We can certainly also learn from the personality of Adèle and celebrating it with our sisters could be a beautiful experience.

We will probably have to take some decisions during the Chapter on the way to live this double jubilee. Beyond what would be possible for the first two events mentioned, I would be in favor of organizing a three-year program:

- a. 2015: a year of preparation that could be centered upon the consecrated life (a deepening)
- b. 2016: the project of the foundation undertaken by Father Chaminade and Adèle; the personality of Adèle; the foundation of the FMI
- c. 2017: our foundation: the insights of Father Chaminade and putting them into practice.

The sisters of the FMI are going to reflect upon these matters and, later, we shall see how to collaborate with them, at least for the program during the year 2016, but perhaps even more than that.

#### *4.8. The study on mixed composition*

This came out of the last Chapter, which had begun the reflection but was unable to put together a capitular document on the topic. Mixed composition is going relatively well today, but we can see a slow clericalization appearing in the Society of Mary, and in the fact that in certain Units a very large majority of the young religious are asking for the priesthood at the time of their perpetual vows. So it is time for us to offer some new proposals to revitalize this fundamental element of our charism.

The committee named for this purpose (coordinated by Bro. Tom Giardino) organized, in May 2009, a consultation of all the religious, the Unit Councils and the formators. Starting from a synthesis of the results of that consultation, a small group of experts in different disciplines participated in a symposium of reflection in January 2011. A synthesis of those reflections was then produced. It can be consulted on the Chapter website. This is the document that has served as basis for the production by the General Council of the *Reference Paper on Mixed Composition* which can be found in **Appendix III** of my report. It is offered for your reflection and we hope it can be broadly adopted by the Chapter as a reference document in the Society of Mary for years to come (like the *Guide to Formation*). It will therefore not be discussed in detail but rather its major directions.

#### *4.9. The spirit of the Society is the spirit of Mary*

There has been little mention of Mary in this long treatise, perhaps because, according to our style, she is often active in a discrete manner. But that must not reduce her to a secondary position and I would not like to conclude these reflections on our charism without reminding myself and all of us that there could not be any path to renewal of our congregation that is not rooted in the missionary covenant that we have contracted with Mary, sealed by the vow of stability in the Society of Mary. That is our strength, that is what defines our identity in the Church and it is also the path we wish to propose for the following of Christ.

Our last General Chapter put the accent upon our desire to promote a “Marian style of Church.” This is rich in apostolic consequences, not only at the level of the SM, but also at that of the Marianist Family. It is a topic that remains to be gone into more deeply over these next years, within the Marianist Family, and perhaps also with the collaboration of other religious institutes who are feeling the same call today (the Marist fathers and brothers, for example).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The points touched upon during this presentation are numerous but convergent. As I mentioned in the last part, our present and future dynamism certainly depends upon our capacity for understanding, living and diffusing our charism. It is the gift we have received from God, through Father Chaminade, for the world and for the Church. The three areas described in the three sections converge towards the same goal. Be it through the apostolate, through our formation path, or again through the study, experience and diffusion of our charism, we always seek to better respond, according to the tradition inaugurated by Father Chaminade, to today's challenges.

Let us exercise freedom and boldness, realism and faith and hope in order to write a new page of that rich history. In particular, according to the wish of the Synod on the New Evangelization, we want to be able to show the world the face of "happy evangelizers."

One of the important decisions of the Chapter about the future of the SM will be the choice of those who are going to help the Society of Mary put into practice its orientations and decisions, I mean the election of the members of the General Council.

I am convinced that there are among the capitulants several who could quite surely carry out very effectively the important work incumbent upon the Office of Religious Life, quite probably much more effectively than I have been or will be able to do. For that reason, I invite the capitulants to bring to this point their vision and courage and not to hesitate to entrust this responsibility to him who will be likely able to fulfill this office well, with no other concern than to choose whoever will make the work of the Council more effective and thus serve the good of the Society of Mary and of its mission in the Church and in the world.



André Fétis, SM

Assistant General

Office of Religious Life



## APPENDIX II

### REPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR MARIANIST FORMATION



International Center for Marianist Formation

Centro Internacional de Formación Marianista  
Centre International de Formation Marianiste

#### REPORT OF: THOMAS F. GIARDINO, SM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, (2002-2011)

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

- a. For the General Chapter of 2006, I gave a comprehensive report on the first four years of the ICMF. However, since some of the delegates to the Chapter of 2012 will be new, I will summarize those first four years, since they formed the basis of the next five years and may serve the future. So, I will briefly recall the origin of the Center and then summarize its activities and achievements over the past nine years. I understand that you may want to use only what you believe to be appropriate for your report.
- b. The 2001 Chapter made a recommendation as follows:

*“That an International Center for Marianist Formation be established, open to all branches of the Marianist Family. This Center would aim to promote study and formation in the Marianist charism within the entire Marianist Family as it strives to live its missionary vocation, using, among various means, the new technology available today for education.” (“Sent by the Spirit” 41, b)*

## 2. BACKGROUND

- a. In November of 2000, the SM General Administration held a consultation in Rome with representatives of various branches of the Marianist Family on the topic of fostering ongoing formation within the context of our common vocation and mission. The *Guide for Formation in the Society of Mary* (#186-#208) provided the impetus and a framework for this phase of formation. The other branches of the Marianist Family also indicated a need (both those representatives present as well as later on in a meeting with the World Council of the Marianist Family), and all opted for collaboration in this effort, especially as we moved increasingly to a desire for “mutual formation” in various dimensions of our common mission.
- b. The General Chapter of 2001 responded positively to the proposal presented to it and in September of 2002 the ICMF began operation. The overall aim of the Center is *to provide ongoing formation resources that **complement** the particular formation that happens in the individual Units of the SM and in the other branches of the Marianist Family.*
- c. In the first four years, the ICMF developed initial strategies that formed a framework for its activities and which continued throughout its history. The three major concerns or dynamics that form this framework for the majority of our work are: **Life Development Concerns, Role Responsibilities and Marianist Themes.**” To this end the ICMF has provided service in a number of ways:
  1. The **design of varied ongoing formation programs** sponsored by the ICMF or other groups in collaboration with the person or Unit responsible.
  2. **Implementation of ongoing formation programs** as presenter or facilitator or coordinator.
  3. As **coordinator** for the selection and preparation of presenters in programs developed by others.
  4. **Consultation** that often serves as a catalyst for Units and groups to develop ongoing formation programs themselves.
- d. Over the years, there have been periodic meetings with diverse groups to listen to needs and inform them of our services: e.g. the World Council of the Marianist Family, the General Administrations of the SM and the FMI, the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities, the leadership of the

Alliance Mariale, Zonal Conferences in the SM, and with other individuals and groups concerned with formation at different levels.

- e. The General Assistant for Religious Life is our liaison with the General Administration with whom there have been regular meetings to discuss Center activities and from whom we receive feedback.

### 3. ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- a. **Preparation for Perpetual Vows.** After several surveys and consultations within the SM and the FMI, the Center gathered an international team of Marianist sisters and brothers who developed two programs to respond to the needs expressed. Each program is adaptable to local contexts and cultures. The two programs:

1. *Stella Maris* is a systematic series of Marianist topics to enhance the preparation of temporary professed in the two, three or more years prior to the petition for perpetual vows. A method of readings, personal reflection, shared prayer and sharing with a formator and or with other candidates is suggested. All of the materials in French, Spanish and English are available on the ICMF web site. Units within the SM and FMI and various groups in the larger Marianist Family have used these resources in initial and ongoing formation, for retreats at the local and Unit levels and other creative ways.
2. The *Spirit of Zaragoza* responds to the need expressed by many for a more intense preparation of the candidate once they have been approved for perpetual vows and before the actual ceremony of profession. A significant number of responses to the consultations from all groups asked for a type of retreat that was grounded in Marianist content and method.
  - Such a retreat was been developed and there have been two training Seminars for formators to learn how to use and adapt the retreat for their own context. The SM and FMI General Administrations sponsored a training session in 2007 for 20 SM and FMI formators from various countries and the Province of the US sponsored a training session in 2011 for 18 SM, FMI and MLC members, also from various countries.

- The retreat has been used in its full 30 day version many times in various countries for the preparation of perpetual vows. Also, it has been adapted by groups not only for use as a preparation for perpetual vows, but for annual retreats, local community retreats, etc., and there are plans for an adapted version to be conducted for MLC members beginning in February 2012 in the USA.
  - At the suggestion of the SM and FMI General Administrations, a *Guide for Directors* has been developed and is or will be available in Spanish, French and English. The response of formators to the *Guide* has been gratifying; it seems to have been a beneficial tool for understanding and using the retreat elements and a significant resource for the Vow of Stability, the central theme of the retreat.
- b. **Renewal Programs in Collaboration with the Marist Brothers.** Participation in these ongoing formation opportunities of time for reflection and renewal has gradually grown to include religious from various Units. There are programs for various age groups [see the web site for descriptions: <[www.icmf.info](http://www.icmf.info)>]. The most frequented have been the Third Age programs in Spanish and English. The Marists have not conducted a program in French in several years.
1. The feedback has been consistently positive both from our own religious as well as the Marists. Gratitude is due to many individual Marianists and Marianist communities who have assisted in giving presentations, serving as chaplains or guiding the Marianist Heritage pilgrimages or offering fraternal hospitality to our men.
  2. These programs respond to the call of the 2001 General Chapter: "That the General Administration investigate collaboration with other religious congregations in developing specific on-going formation programs, especially for our senior religious." (*Sent by the Spirit* 41c)
- c. **Horizons.** Horizons 2010 was the fourth instance of this popular program for religious in perpetual vows and under 41 years of age. Its theme was: "*To deepen and broaden the identity of young adult Marianist religious as committed, global missionaries of Mary.*" A total of thirty-six religious participated: 27 SM from 14 Units and 9 FMI from 7 Units. They benefited from the generous and competent contributions of an international group of translators, presenters, staff and coordinators from the SM, FMI and the MLC. This was the first time that the Marianist Sisters participated and the feedback was extremely positive for this initiative. Plans are now underway for the next program.

- d. **ICMF Web Site.** In order to enhance our ability to make certain of our programs known and available to more persons in the Marianist Family, the ICMF developed a web site some years ago to serve as a place to access the various resources we developed and to offer news of upcoming programs. The challenge is to keep the multilingual site relevant, lively and to provide the right combination of information to motivate persons to access it.
- e. **E-learning courses on Marianist Topics.** In collaboration with various groups in the Marianist Family, the ICMF has collaborated in the development of courses delivered via the Internet that stimulate the heart and mind. The benefits of e-learning or virtual learning are that participants can partake in courses with persons from various branches of the Marianist Family in different parts of the world, but at times that fit their individual schedule.
1. Over the years the ICMF has cooperated with various Marianist entities to develop and implement these courses: the North American Center for Marianist Studies who handle all ten English courses; Grupo SM and now the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation of the University of Dayton for the four Spanish courses. The new Latin American Center for Marianist Formation has assumed responsibility for the administration of these courses and will be developing new courses as time goes on. It should be mentioned that there has been a fine response among educators in Marianist schools in Latin America, especially for the course on Marianist education.
  2. The French courses have been temporarily suspended but the Maison Chaminade and the Province of France were instrumental in beginning that project.
  3. The topics of the courses include: the Marianist charism, Marianist education, Leadership in the Marianist tradition; Mary, Social Justice; the System of Virtues, the Founders, the Three Offices, Marianist Prayer, Marianist Community, and more are in the process of development.
- f. **Leadership Education.** At the request of various Units or Zonal Conferences, the ICMF has developed leadership education programs for groups of directors of local SM communities, Unit councils and assemblies as well as for groups of SM, FMI and MLC members in various Units. We also designed and implemented strategic planning processes for Units. We have also implemented education programs for Unit Chapter delegates, which has been a need especially in the younger Units.

g. **Other activities in the area of Role Responsibility formation**

1. In collaboration with the General Assistant for Religious Life in the Society of Mary, the ICMF assisted in the design and implementation for **The Tabor Experience**, a program for recently ordained SM priests; the **International Formators' Meeting**, and for the periodic **Seminar for New Unit Leaders**, among other programs.
2. In a project sponsored by the North American Marianist Family Council, the ICMF assisted the "Marianist Lay Formation Initiative" to design and implement a yearly program for the formation of persons committed to the establishment and maintenance of Marianist Lay Communities.
3. The ICMF coordinated the establishment of a **Marianist International Program of Studies** at the University of Dayton. This accommodates SM religious from SM Units, offering finances that will cover tuition and living costs for those Units needing this resource. This program has now been assumed by the Province of the United States and the University of Dayton as they are the source of the funds that are used by the students.
4. In partnership with the Association of Marianist Universities, the ICMF collaborated in the design and implementation of yearly formation programs for **Marianist Educational Associates**. These are faculty and staff from the three Marianist Universities who are publicly committed to grow in a deeper knowledge of the Catholic and Marianist traditions of the Universities in order to better embody and witness to those traditions personally and as institutions.

h. **Marianist Themes.** Along with the e-learning courses, this area includes a variety of content and approaches with a particular focus on the dialogue between faith and culture. This emphasis was most easily seen in furthering the initiative started in the project regarding "Contemporary Theology and Marianist Spirituality." The following is a listing of some activities in these areas.

1. The project initiated some years ago by the Society of Mary General Administration entitled, "Contemporary Theology and Marianist Spirituality," has yielded several fine books on important dimensions of the general topic. These books were published in their original languages, either Spanish or English, and have been distributed throughout the Marianist Family. The ICMF worked with individuals and groups regarding a translation of the original versions into another language, thus making it available to more members of the Marianist Family. Here,

again, we worked closely with the *Maison Chaminade* in Bordeaux and with the North American Center for Marianist Studies.

2. The ICMF completed a project of making available in DVD and CD formats in French, Spanish and English a video program entitled: **“Where We Were Born: Scenes from our Foundation.”** (This is an adaptation of an original 1997 slide program produced by the SM and FMI of Spain.) These have been used by formators at all levels as well as various Marianist apostolic works.
3. At the instigation of the previous General Council, the ICMF began a process of reflection within the SM on the vital matter of **mixed composition**. A presentation was made at the General Chapter of 2006 and as a result of the discussion of the delegates, the present General Council engaged the ICMF to work with a commission to design and implement a survey and a symposium on this important topic.
4. The aim was to offer to the delegates of the General Chapter of 2012 recommendations for practical orientations in the areas of vocation ministry discernment, initial formation practices, the ministry of brothers and priests together, local community living and governance structures. The next steps are now in the hands of the Chapter delegates.

#### i. Zonal Formation Centers

1. From the beginning of its existence, the ICMF envisioned some type of “continental coordinators” as we first called them. That is, persons or entities who would respond to the needs of Marianist persons and groups on the various continents we live and serve. While the idea seemed right, the implementation was not feasible as originally conceived.
2. However, the present General Council -- under the leadership of the Assistant for Religious Life and in dialogue with various Zonal Conferences -- continued to think and plan for a system that would fulfill the need. Significant movement in this direction has taken place.
3. In February of 2011, the ICMF in collaboration with the North American Center for Marianist Studies (the Zonal formation center for North America), conducted a training seminar for the new directors or coordinators of the emerging centers for Western Africa, Eastern Africa and Latin America. The director of the Asian Center also attended, though it had been in existence for several years. It should also be mentioned that the Asian Center [ACEMS] recently implemented a very successful “All Asia Seminar on Marianist Servant Leadership,” with key participants of the SM, FMI and MLC from Japan, Korea, India, the Philippines and China.

4. The ICMF will continue to foster coordination and communication among these and other Zonal Centers [e.g. in Zaragoza]. As is often the case, in a number of these Centers, the directors also have other time consuming ministries and it has proved immensely demanding to keep up a consistent presence and action for the goals developed. Attention need to be paid to this by Zonal and Unit superiors if the promise is to be fulfilled.
5. These Centers, along with the ICMF, have the challenge to be concerned about the **next generation of Marianist Studies experts and popularizers** – both lay and professed religious. The ICMF in conversation with leadership and formators around the Marianist world need to identify likely persons and then to advocate for experiences and education that will stimulate their motivation and talent.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The ICMF will continue to offer its modest contribution to the present generation and the next generation of Marianists in service of Mary's mission. It shares the perspective of the SM *Rule of Life*: "...one of the most important tasks of leadership in the Society is to provide opportunities for continuing formation at regular intervals in the life of each member." [art.90]

We also recognize that the horizon of leadership is broad and evokes a continual theological and pastoral rethinking of ongoing formation as part of the Church, because the aim is anchored in our Founder's call for us to be formed by Mary in conformity with Christ...the ever ancient and ever fresh source of our life.

*"Starting afresh from Christ means once again finding one's first love, the inspiring spark which first gave rise to the following.... Thus it will be important that all consecrated persons be formed in the freedom to learn throughout life, in every age and season, in every human ambient and context, from every person and every culture -- open to be taught by any fragment of truth and beauty found around them. But above all they must learn to be formed by everyday life, by their own community, by their brothers and sisters, by everyday things, ordinary and extraordinary, by prayer and by apostolic fatigue, in joy and in suffering, until the moment of death."*

[From "Starting Afresh from Christ: a Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium," Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life Instruction - June 14, 2002]

**REPORT OF: JACK VENTURA, SM  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, (2011- )****1. INTRODUCTION**

This short appendix is meant to compliment the reports already written by the General Assistant for Religious Life and the former Executive Director of International Center for Marianist Formation (ICMF). The first six months has been filled with a large learning curve and communicating to the global Marianist Family the ministry of ICMF. A shift in understanding the role of ICMF is attempting to portray ICMF as a ministry of the General Administration, being a support to the newly created Continental Centers for Marianist Formation and enhancing the existing programs and activities already being maintained by ICMF.

**2. TRANSITION**

The transition and move of ICMF from Dayton, OH to Philadelphia, PA did not proceed as smoothly as expected. Several weather occurrences, a minor earthquake and the establishment of a new community residence delayed the actual move for several weeks. An unexpected telephone strike postponed the installation of an upgraded telephone and internet system for approximately 10 weeks. The new Administrative Assistant for ICMF did not arrive until the end of October, 2011. However, I am very happy to say that ICMF has settled very nicely in their new home at the Marianist Center.

As stated in the report from the Assistant for Religious Life, my time at ICMF is half-time. The remaining time is spent as the Associate Director for the Office of Formation for Mission for the Province of the United States. I assist Bro. Stephen Glodek, (Director) in the planning, designing and implementation of programs and services for the formation of people interested in Marianist Lay Communities and our mission in Marianist apostolic works. A particular focus of the work of the Office involves board and staff formation for Marianist institutions.

**3. CONTINUATION OF EXISTING ACTIVITIES**

Because of the exceptional development of activities and programs created by the former Executive Director, ICMF continues to offer support and monitor the development of the following programs:

- a. Stella Maris
- b. The Spirit of Zaragoza Retreat
- c. Renewal Programs in Collaboration with the Marist Brothers.
  - The dates were published at the beginning of 2012. ICMF monitors the attendees and aids in the pilgrimage to our shrines in Bordeaux and Zaragoza.
- d. E-learning courses on Marianist Topics
  - ICMF attempts to monitor the number of students taking e-learning courses through the cooperation of the Continental Centers for Marianist Formation. At this moment in time, the students who are from South America needs to be applauded.
- e. Horizons (Summer 2016)
  - Because of the number of brothers and sisters eligible for the program and the change in General Administrations for both the Marianist Sisters and Society of Mary, a date will be confirmed in the future. The Marianist Sisters are interested in participating again in the program.

#### **4. COMMUNICATION**

In an effort to communicate more efficiently and effectively, ICMF instituted a newsletter entitled *In-Formation*. At the present time, this short newsletter is being sent quarterly to all Units in the Society of Mary, the Marianist Sisters and members of the Marianist Family.

The Executive Director is in regular contact with the General Assistant of Religious Life for the Society of Mary with monthly conference calls. He also attempts to communicate with the zonal conference presidents and the directors of the continental centers for Marianist formation on a regular basis.

Plans are underway to redesign the ICMF web-site to make it more user-friendly ([www.icmf.info/eng\\_home.asp](http://www.icmf.info/eng_home.asp)). The challenge to keep the multilingual site relevant, lively and to provide the right combination of information to motivate persons to access it continues to exist.

#### **5. CONTINENTAL CENTERS FOR MARIANIST FORMATION**

Because of the excellent leadership of the Assistant for Religious Life the continental centers for Marianist formation are either established or are in process of becoming established. During the first year, much work has been accomplished getting them

organized. ICMF has also attempted to network these centers with each other and the global Marianist Family.

While significant movement has taken place, there are several challenges that need to be addressed in the future. These are:

- a. The directors-coordinators have other time consuming ministries and it has proved immensely demanding to keep up a consistent presence and action for the goals developed.
- b. These centers have very limited financial resources depending on how the Zonal Conferences understand the value of a continental center for Marianist Formation.

## **6. RELATIONSHIP TO THE SOCIETY OF MARY & THE MARIANIST FAMILY**

In an effort to make known the resources ICMF and the new executive director can offer the Society of Mary and the Marianist Family, ICMF has visited and/or attended the following gatherings.

- a. The World Council of the Marianist Family, Rome (31 October – 4 November 2011 )
- b. Visit to CELAFOM (CEntro Latino Americano de FOrmación Marianista), Lima (5 – 12 December 2011)
- c. The Virtual Learning Community for Faith (VLCFF) Annual Conference, Dayton (7-9 March 2012)
- d. African Marianist Conference, Nairobi (12 – 17 March, 2012)
  - Continental Center for Marianist Formation for Eastern Africa
- e. Stella Maris Program/Retreat – Province of US ( 8-17 June 2012)

The major objective for my presence at these gatherings is to give visibility to ICMF and assess the current needs of formation in these regions.

At the present time, plans include to attend the following conference gatherings:

- a. North American Marianist Conference (Quebec, October 2012)
- b. CLAMAR (Lima, October 2012)

## **7. CONCLUSION**

In summary, the challenges facing ICMF for the next three years are time, finances and dedicated personnel/mentors to accompany the formation process, which are

similar challenges facing the entire Society of Mary and the Marianist Family. In addition, the part-time position of the Executive Director and lack of additional languages are added challenges. However, with the collaborative efforts of all members of the Marianist Family, ICMF will be able to complement the already existing initial and ongoing formation programs and services being offered around the world.

At the time of writing this small report, plans were being developed to have a better understanding of the programs and activities of each of the continental centers for Marianist formation. Any new developments that would have occurred from the writing of this report and the time for the General Chapter will be reported verbally by the Assistant of Religious Life.

## APPENDIX III

### MIXED COMPOSITION

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

During these last several years, the General Council, following the mandate from the last General Chapter, (cf. MM, appendix 1.2) has undertaken the “work of reflection, study and preparation of a document” on the theme of Mixed Composition. Following a consultation with the entire Society on this topic, a Symposium took place from January 4-8, 2011. The objective of this Symposium was to evaluate the results of the consultation as well as deepen and update the understanding of Mixed Composition in the Society of Mary, looking ahead to this next General Chapter. In order to contextualize the theme properly, the Symposium focused its deliberations by taking a closer look at canonical aspects, at the historical and theological fundamentals, and the contemporary socio-cultural contexts in which we find ourselves. From there, it analyzed the implications that mixed composition ought to have on vocational ministry, formation, apostolic activities, community life and governance in the Society.

In as much as the results of the consultation, as well as those of the Symposium, have previously been published within the Society, it is assumed here that this Information is already known to the capitulants. Thus, this current document takes into consideration these results and is offered to the Chapter as a working document which may serve as a basis, should it be judged appropriate, for its orientations and its decisions regarding this fundamental aspect of our charism.

#### 2. BASIC PRINCIPLES

We should begin by reaffirming the basic principles that underpin our mixed composition and make it relevant for our life and mission in the Church and in the world as expressed in our tradition and in our life, and that serve to assure its survival as we face the future.

- a. Mixed composition is a distinctive feature that “comes from the original inspiration of the Founder and from his long experience of community life among lay religious and religious priests.” (GC 1986, 96).
- b. There is only one Marianist vocation, which is common to all members of the Society of Mary: “The same Spirit is manifest in a variety of complementary

gifts and ministries” (RL 12). The more faithfully and completely that we live the gift of our Marianist vocation in the Church, the more *inclusive* and universal our mission will be (two particular characteristics of our charism).

- c. The Society of Mary considers mixed composition to be a precious charism, and even more, “a treasure for the whole Church” (GC 1986, 96). It constitutes an important element of Marianist ecclesiology, and as such, expresses, at least partially, our identification with the local and universal Church as well as our loyalty to the same. Thus, mixed composition “seeks to portray a more faithful image of the Church” (RL, 13).
- d. Since mixed composition is not only a tool for organization, but also an important element of our spirituality, it goes hand in hand with certain aspects of our corporate and spiritual identity and it articulates them. Mixed composition configures and supports, in a very concrete and special way, the life, prayer and activity of the Marianist community. We would like to stress the following:
  1. The quality of a lived faith in a state of “unity in diversity;”
  2. The place of Mary in our lives understood as integrating, inspiring and configuring reality;
  3. The living reality of community life as a union in Christ, trying to have “but one heart and soul” (RL, 9);
  4. The universality of our mission flowing from the words of Mary at Cana: “Do whatever He tells you” (RL, 10).
- e. Mixed composition gives a very particular apostolic dynamism to the mission of the Society, as well as its particular form of presence and action in both the Church and the world. It allows, in a special way, our apostolic efforts to have wider and richer impact:
  1. It attracts a wide variety of talents;
  2. It permits a greater openness and sensitivity to cultural and social situations;
  3. It offers a wider range of apostolic and ministerial possibilities;
  4. It invites a great sense of *inclusiveness* and of complementarity;
  5. It promotes the prophetic character of our commitment to apostolic witness, service and formation.

### 3. THE CURRENT SITUATION

As the General Chapter of 1986 already pointed out, over the course of recent years, many circumstances have change, be they in the Church or in the SM. These

changes are having a clear impact on how we live mixed composition and can become a threat if we are not attentive to their consequences among us. Included among these are:

- a. the decrease in the number of priests in the universal Church and the resulting and insistent call from bishops to assist in parish ministry;
- b. a certain tendency towards “clericalizing” the presence of the Church in society, more preoccupied with priestly vocations than the lay state, and therefore, there is less interest in the pursuit of the vocation and mission of a lay religious;
- c. the growing awareness of the mission of the laity and their participation in apostolic tasks previously reserved to religious, which ends up bringing into question the identity of the lay religious;
- d. the particular difficulties of understanding the identity and role of lay religious life within some social and cultural contexts in which special status is granted to priests in relation to the lay religious;
- e. a decrease in the number of lay religious in the majority of religious institutes and the decline of their percentage in the Society of Mary, relative to the number of priests;
- f. the fact that often our candidates come from “afar” and, especially in the younger Units, come from parochial contexts, without knowledge of lay religious life, Marianist or not, nor previous direct contact with our life and our mission.

#### 4. STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

In response to this situation, and stemming from the principles already expressed, the Chapter establishes the following strategies for action which should be kept in mind throughout the entire Society of Mary:

- a. **With regard to Vocation Ministry and Initial Formation**
  1. The vocation materials that the various Units produce should highlight the life and ministry of both lay religious and religious priests together. An integral part of the story of our Marianist religious life must be to present

the role of those religious who specialize in scientific, educational, socio-cultural and technical fields.

2. As regards vocational discernment, those persons interested in Marianist religious life, above all those who come without having had significant contact with us and with our works, must be instructed from the beginning about our mixed composition and experience it in practice. The best way to do this is to show them how to live and work together in community and mission.
3. Those responsible for promoting vocations and for initial formation should help candidates discern the authenticity of their call to Marianist religious life. The issues regarding living mixed composition occupy an important place among those aspects that require discernment. Is the candidate truly open to Marianist religious life, where lay religious and religious priests share the same vocation? Is he open to guidance and formation from formators and superiors in the choice and development of his vocation (either as a lay religious or religious priest), who will ultimately have to authorize his personal orientation toward lay religious life or religious priesthood?
4. The Assistant General for Religious Life will coordinate among the Units a process for reflecting upon and improving the methods and pedagogy used to promote and discern Marianist vocations. The *Guide for Formation in the Society of Mary* is a good starting point from which to develop a series of common “topics for conversation,” outlining the characteristics of a Marianist religious vocation and, in particular, the aspect of mixed composition.
5. In initial formation, from the first discernment until the moment of perpetual profession, regular monitoring of the discernment about orientation toward the lay or sacerdotal state is necessary, especially by applying the criteria and processes indicated in the *Guide for Formation*.
6. Nowadays, and considering the issue of mixed composition, it is necessary that the formation of both the Marianist lay religious and that of the Marianist priest, reach a relatively high and equivalent level.
7. The personal aspirations of each religious should always be considered in light of the mission (immediate, medium-range and long term) of the Unit to which he belongs.
8. The ratification of the admission to perpetual vows on the part of the Superior General includes that of the orientation of the religious, be it towards the lay or sacerdotal state. All subsequent changes in orientation must include his approval, with the consent of his Council (cf. GF 164). In the case of brothers orientated towards the priesthood, such ratification does not finalize their orientation, which must be confirmed with

corresponding approvals for admittance to the seminary and successive ordinations.

9. With regard to formation, whether for religious priests or brothers, it is of the utmost importance that Units of the SM collaborate effectively with each other. We ask the General Administration to continue stimulating this interrelationship.
10. The formation of religious in the area of mixed composition will benefit, as is to be expected, by participation in the Three Offices which characterize our governance: the Office of Religious Life [cf. RL 7.18, f) and h)], the Office of Education [cf. RL 7.19, a) and b)] and the Office of Temporalities [cf. RL 7.20, c) and d)]. Therefore, in all Units, collaboration should be developed between these Offices and their mutual participation in plans and programs of formation, both initial and ongoing. All religious, be they oriented towards the sacerdotal or lay state, should be formed in all aspects concerning the Three Offices, including theological and spiritual areas, as well as those which are cultural and secular in nature.
11. The Marianist Family is the charismatic environment in which the Society of Mary develops. Fostering relationships and mutual collaboration with the other branches of the Family, especially with the Marianist Lay Communities, helps us to better understand our identity as religious and exhibits in a special way the richness and apostolic fruitfulness of mixed composition.

#### b. In Apostolic Activities

1. Unit Councils should promote mission projects and works that benefit from the exercise of our mixed composition. This enriches our life and mission thanks to the complementarity and reciprocity of the gifts of each religious (cf. RL 73).
2. The mission of the Society is developed through the mutual collaboration between lay religious and religious priests. The latter “express this commitment in a variety of ways, **principally** by offering their ministry first of all to their Brothers, and then by **joining their Brothers** in serving God's people” (RL 13). On all levels of governance, those works and services that favor the common mission of both lay religious and religious priests should be promoted and supported. These include those that fall within the scope of the relation between faith and culture, technical or professional formation, working for justice and peace, and especially educational institutions (cf. RL 74; 5.10).
3. Units should support and guide those religious involved in technical, manual or administrative work, especially through the Office of

Temporalities. In order to be able to work properly, “those who will work in technology and manual labor should be educated in their specializations, in social and economic questions, and in the teachings of the Church on labor and justice” (RL 6.15).

4. We note that the parish apostolate presents a challenge for our mixed composition. Previous General Chapters have urged us to be sure that both our parish work and community life there facilitate the interaction between lay religious and religious priests. We need to evaluate the status of mixed composition in the parishes that we currently direct and be very mindful of this component of our charism when we consider assuming new commitments. Each Unit should evaluate and determine whether or not to continue directing those parishes where it is difficult to have meaningful apostolic work for lay religious and/or maintain the practice of mixed composition.

**c. In Community Life and in Governance**

1. Care should be exercised to assure that mixed composition is truly lived in each local community, avoiding the situation where the community is composed only of religious priests or only of lay religious.
2. Attention should be given on all levels, including at the local community level, to the exercise of governance by means of the Three Offices. It is a fundamental feature of our way of life by which we seek the participation of all and develop a sense of complementarity and totality in our community life and in our mission.
3. In keeping with the guidelines of the General Chapter of 1986 regarding new foundations, (cf. #49), we reiterate that, in order to adequately implant Marianist life, we must express its essential elements in a way that can be understood in new contexts. Among these elements we must pay particular attention to mixed composition. This attention is reflected in:
  - a concern for adequately presenting the lay religious vocation;
  - the recruitment, orientation and formation for diverse ministries in the Society of Mary;
  - the preparation of lay religious in the areas of culture, science, technical and manual work;
  - the orientation of the mission as indicated in the previous section;
  - the mentoring and integrating of our young religious priests into the common mission.

*Articles of the Rule of Life concerning parity in the structure of governance:*

*87: Novice Master and Assistant Novice Master*

*97: Superior General*

*100: Assistant General for Religious Life*

*102: Provincial and Assistant Provincial*

*7.33: General Chapter*

*7.50: Mixed Composition of the General Council*

*7.78: Provincial Chapter*

*7.111: Regions*

In the Consultation conducted regarding mixed composition and in the Symposium, two themes emerged in relation to the governance of the Society of Mary. The first was the consideration that the position of Superior General might be open to lay religious. The second was to consider whether or not representation rules regarding councils and chapters ought to be modified from the current “parity” of representation to a process that was either completely open, without any regard to categories, or a proportional representation based upon the number of lay religious and religious priests in each Unit (or in the Society, as would be the case for the General Chapter). Another theme that emerged from the Symposium was that, at the regional level, there is a gap with regard to the definition of an assistant regional superior. At the provincial level, when the assistant provincial is a priest, he “will carry out the acts of jurisdiction for which the sacerdotal character is required” (RL 102); therefore, why not have the same “faculty” also at the regional level, particularly in those Regions “established with the view of their eventually becoming a new Province?”

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the Symposium with respect to these were:

- a. On the issue of opening the office of Superior General to a lay religious, we would recommend the status quo, i.e. that there be no change to articles 97, 100 of the Rule of Life that reserve the office of Superior General and Assistant General for Religious Life to a priest member of the Society. Our basic rationale is: a) presently this assures the Society a greater autonomy within the canonical structures of the Church and in so doing helps us protect our mixed composition; and b) traditionally, it was the desire (intention) of our Founder. (Further study and reflection is required to understand the meaning of this intention in terms of Blessed Chaminade’s understanding of

the Society as a mirror of the Church and what this may mean in the present age).

- b. On the issue of representation for councils and chapters, we recommend no change at the General level. However, at the Unit level, it is sometimes difficult to maintain this equality. There is merit for the Chapter to consider whether a change is appropriate or not on this issue.
- c. On the issue of recognizing “jurisdictional power” of an Assistant Regional Superior, we recommend further canonical consultation on this possibility before the General Chapter and should the results be favorable, that a change be made to Book II which would allow for the office of Assistant Regional Superior to be defined and established along the lines of the Provincial and Assistant Provincial (RL 102), if so desired, through the Charter of the Region.

**For your Information:** The full text of the Mixed Composition Symposium Document is available on the Capitulant Website ([LINK](#)) for those who wish to consult it.