

MISIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART

GENERAL BULLETIN

Special Edition on the 26th General Chapter
November.2023

“Be the change you
want to SEE”



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Dear brothers and sisters,

Dear brothers and sisters,

"Be the change you want to SEE"

"If you ARE not the message, what IS the message".

With these two missionary imperatives that we received at the end of the 26th General Chapter, we greet you all on the occasion of this special edition of our General Bulletin.

We warmly thank you for having accompanied us with your prayers during the preparation and the holding of this Chapter.

A General Chapter is a living and dynamic missionary "instrument" that has different stages of life. We are now beginning the post-Chapter stage, which is as important, if not more important, than the previous stages. In all of them we have experienced the Chapter motto: "Wasn't our heart burning when we were on the road?"

Therefore, following the methodology used - Communal Wisdom - and based on the four movements of the Spirituality of the Heart as a process, we come to the moment of the transmission of the Chapter Message. It is the time of "Mission", after Encounter, Intimacy and Conversion.

It remains essential for this moment of the Congregational journey to maintain the attitudes of Deep Listening, Communal Discernment, Participation and Co-construction of plans, new structures and missionary, strategic, synodal and intercultural actions - "from ego to echo".

We are in a time of grace and opportunities in which it is essential to avoid judgements, cynicism, clericalism and individualistic or only "provincial" mentalities that can continue to fragment us as a Congregational Body.

For this reason, this bulletin wants to be one more "musical" instrument within the great "orchestra" to which, now in the post-capitular time, the Holy Spirit calls us to participate and to make a new "music - new sounds" be born or strengthened. So that we can continue to be up-to-date prophetic responses, from our MSC Identity, to the evils of our times. Today more than ever the world suffering from wars cries out for such answers. The world needs us to continue to be the Heart of God on Earth.

In the near future we will receive more documents and proposals to continue the journey "back from Emmaus" with renewed spirit, structures and hope.

| *Abzalón A. Tovar, MSC*
(General Superior)

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OPENING MASS – 17.09



The 26th General Chapter of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart began with a Eucharistic Celebration on 17 September 2023 at 5 p.m. (Rome time) in Nemi, a small commune in the Lazio region outside Rome.

The Mass was marked by significant moments. It began with the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the enthronement of the picture of Fr. Jules Chevalier, recalling that the flame of the Spirit that glowed in the Founder's heart gave rise to the MSC Charism. The delegates brought a handful of earth from their MSC Entity. They placed it in a common receptacle before the altar, expressing the unity of their diverse paths and desire to walk together, creating a synodal journey.

During his homily, the Superior General, Fr Abzalón, lit the Chapter candle declaring the 26th General Chapter officially open. After communion, he called the delegates by name, and each replied in his or her language, "Here I am, Lord", in an attitude of availability to God for the service of the Congregation.

FIRST DAY – 18.09

The day began with the same fraternity with which the Opening Mass of the General Chapter was celebrated the day before. The first session was a time for community prayer in this relaxed atmosphere. Fr. Humberto Henriques, as he did in the online sessions to prepare this General Chapter,

reminded us that the process is a continuous prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit. Fr. Humberto lead the opening meditation by reciting the General Chapter prayer.

In this opening session, the formal business of the Chapter was enacted. Fr. Abzalón Alvarado, proposed the members of the different commissions and sought the approval of the Chapter. All matters were approved unanimously.

The day before, Abzalón said that the persons present here had been elected in each province by their confreres as delegates. We are a Congregation and a small representation is gathered here of a large fraternal community. Therefore, the following commission has special importance because its mission is to promote a fraternal, friendly and family atmosphere.

Chris Chaplin, explained how the sessions would use different documents to be displayed on the screens in the Chapter Hall and how the Chapter website can be accessed as a working tool. During the Chapter the facilitators will help us deepen the discernment process. Joe and Frances proposed a personal reflection and then in groups on the



experience of community wisdom. We are in a change of epoch, a time of synodality, and of working from communal wisdom. Also, it is a time to listen to what the Holy Spirit saying to us. Listening is an attitude that dominates all of what we do during these days. Another attitude is to share with one another what we hear and respect what other confreres propose. All this leads to the path from Ego

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to Eco. Prayer is essential in the whole process, connecting with the Spirit of God and being united to the Heart of Jesus. To foster this prayerful atmosphere, communal prayer takes place each morning, beginning in the Worship space of the Chapter Hall and then moving to small communal wisdom-sharing groups later in smaller rooms. Fr. Chris explained how these times of prayer are organised in groups. This concluded the morning session.

In the afternoon, the facilitators, Joe McKee and Frances Heery, our facilitators, conducted a session of internalisation and awareness of what this Chapter means for each of the capitulants personally and for all MSC. At the end of the session, Frances spoke about the VUCA world (Volatility – Uncertainty – Complexity – Ambiguity), a vision of society that we can reverse as Christians by changing the meaning of the acronym VUCA with the concepts (Vision – Understanding – Compassion – Audacity).

The day concluded with a Mass presided over by Fr. Daniel Auguie.

SECOND DAY – 19.09

The day began with Communal Wisdom Prayer. Fr. Chris Chaplin, read the Gospel on Emmaus (Luke 24:13-27), the same reading that inspired the journey towards this General Chapter. After a moment of silence and personal reflection, the capitulants went to different rooms to share their



reflections of prayer with one another.

Back in the Chapter Hall and before beginning the work of discernment, Br Joe McKee, one of the facilitators, presented the methodology that will be used on this second day: ‘World Cafe ‘... a method of listening and dialogue across language groups to enable the sharing of the concerns and proposals emerging from the Chapter for the Congregation. Each World-Café group has large



sheets of paper on the table to write, draw or doodle the ideas that arise during the dialogue and that will be put in a ‘parking space’ at the end of the day for delegates to ponder further. The reflections of all the working groups, written and drawn on the sheets that were given to them at the beginning of the day, were placed on boards and the walls of the hall for the Chapter reflection the following day.

To end this second day of work, Mass was presided by Fr. Juan Tomás García, dedicated to St. Joseph, as the father of Jesus. An image of St. Joseph occupied an important place in the hall throughout the day.

THIRD DAY – 20.09

The day began with the daily Communal Wisdom Prayer (Mark 6:30-34), personal reflection, and subsequent sharing in prayer groups.

Ho Tombokan, Indonesian delegate, welcomed the Papua New Guinea capitulants, Fr. Sylvester To Warwakai, Provincial Superior, Fr. Christian Waira

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and Fr. Fabian Manukailona. The whole assembly congratulated Fr. Abzalón on his birthday and Fr. André Claessens on the anniversary of his first



profession. There was also a remembrance for the Korean Martyrs, Ss. Andrew Kim Taegon & Companions.

The day's work began with Frances, the facilitator, who explained the main attitude that should be present in the day's work. Following on from the reading from Emmaus, the main idea of the day was the time for sharing at the table. It was a day of accompaniment as the issues that would be dealt with by the capitulants had to do with the attitude of 'being present on the road'.

The sharing in the morning was on the document 'General Administration Report' and on MSC Brothers and MSC Identity. In the afternoon session, two other themes closely related to accompaniment were also addressed:

Initial Formation: Fr. Humberto explained the process that started from the first document written on formation 30 years ago, the Valladolid document, to the current one, "Emmaus: Formation of the Heart", with Formation as an idea of accompaniment.

Safeguarding: The working sessions ended with a theme that the congregation has been dealing with for some time and will also be important in the future.

The day ended with Fr. Absalon's birthday celebration, where some capitulants participated in games and songs to liven up the party.

FOURTH DAY – 21.09

September 21, Feast of Saint Matthew. Both the morning prayer and the evening Eucharist were dedicated to the Evangelist. In the Communal Wisdom Prayer, the reading from James 2:14-26 was read, and then each capitulant reflected on the text personally and then in prayer groups.

Fr. Simone Volavola was the host of the day. He took care of communicating the daily housekeeping; the ordination anniversaries of Fr. Joe McGee and Fr. Herman Van Dijck, as well as the anniversary of their first vows and those of Fr. Carl Tranter, Fr. Michael Curran, and Fr. Ton Zwart.

The day marked the end of the discernment and work process with the documents provided by the General Administration, which were presented and commented on during the Online Pre-Chapter sessions. The morning began with a personal reflection on Finance, followed by a group presentation. At the end, there was a plenary where the capitulants were able to ask direct questions to the people in charge of drafting the document: Fr. Absalon, Fr. Chris Chaplin, Ms. Sofia Amante, Fr. Benny Laisana, and Fr. Michael Huber.

The morning we ended with a presentation by Frances, the facilitator, on the new role of the laity in



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the Church and the impulse that Pope Francis is giving them. The session was completed by the interventions and testimonies of Ms. Alison McKenzie, Secretary General of the International Council of the Lay Chevalier Family; Mr. Javier Trapero, Responsible for Communications in Spain Province; and Ms. Doris Machado, Deputy in the International Council of the Lay Chevalier Family.

The afternoon's work dealt with the final topics on the documents of the General



Administration: Secretariat, Communication, Archives, and Postulation: topics that required less time for dialogue but are of utmost importance for the overall development of the congregation. Then, it was time to conclude the work on the documents provided by the General

Administration. As the facilitator, Joe encouraged the whole assembly to discern and synthesise what had been discussed in these working sessions.

At the end of the day's work, a mass was celebrated, presided over by Fr. Carl Tranter, in which he reflected on the call of St. Matthew and how his particular vocation and transformation story could resonate with our own discipleship stories.

FIFTH DAY – 22.09

This day was dedicated to the memory of the Blessed MSC Martyrs of El Quiché. In the Communal Wisdom Prayer, the text from Psalm 119:97-105 was used for personal reflection and subsequent sharing in the prayer groups. After this time of prayer, Humberto Henriques opened the day's

work. He announced, among other things, the birthday of Ms. Doris Machado, Deputy in the International Council of the Lay Chevalier Family.

Work was done on the Reports from some of the Commissions established by the General Leadership Team according to the recommendations of the 2021 General Conference, namely:

Safeguarding Commission: Tim Brennan, as



head of the Safeguarding Commission, explained the importance of addressing the issue of safeguarding. Some provinces have had to address this issue. Tim wanted to convey to all the capitulants to “not congratulate yourselves for making the document; congratulate yourselves for putting it into practice in your provinces”. Joe, the facilitator, proposed a moment of dialogue and personal reflection afterwards with other capitulants.

Commission on International Houses of Formation: Humberto introduced the people who have been working on this issue in recent years, among whom was Bogey Cabrera who died recently. Carl Tranter, one of the members of this commission, intervened to explain the document. The main idea for the dialogue focused on the international aspect of MSC formation.

From the two themes of the afternoon, the first session continued the discussion on formation, an issue linked to the last session on the older MSC.

Ongoing formation: Chris Chaplin was in charge of leading this session, which he described as very important and underlined the need for the

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requirement to have Ongoing Formation coordinators and facilitators at the Entity level.

Ageing Commission: The dialogue revolved around the Compilation of Congregational feedback, a document dealing with the issue of ageing and proposals to address it. Joe was the facilitator, but Theo te Wierik and Sam Maranresy, provincials of the Netherlands and Indonesia respectively, showed a reality present in their provinces, stressing the importance of approaching

priority for the Congregation and how networking could be created. Regarding the Internationality & Mission Commission, the discussion focused on interculturality and what mission meant for MSC in a province that was not theirs.

After lunch, there was a meeting with Tim Brennan for those capitulants who had questions from the previous day about the Safeguarding Commission. In the meeting, they presented more concrete views on this issue and the MSC General Safeguarding Policy Document presented the previous day.

The afternoon was devoted entirely to dialogue on the structures of the congregation for the future.

The day concluded with a Mass presided over by John Chinnapan, delegate of Indian Union, together with Darwin Thatheus, Union Superior.



this issue from the perspective of closeness and affection for the MSC who are getting older.

The day ended with the remembrance of the Blessed MSC Martyrs of El Quiché in the Eucharist presided over by Raúl Ruiz, provincial of Central America and Mexico, together with Willy Méndez.

SIXTH DAY – 23.09

Alan Neville began the Morning Prayer with some texts from Fr. Jules Chevalier and our Constitutions. John Mulrooney was the day's host. He reminded everyone that it was the feast of St. Pius of Pietrelcina, more commonly known as Padre Pio.

The day continued with the Commission Reports: JPIC Commission, Internationality & Mission and Commission on Structures. On JPIC, it was discussed whether it could become a



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EIGHT DAY – 25.09

Like in the Creation story, the seventh day (Sunday) was a day of rest. The formal chapter sessions continued on Monday with the Communal Wisdom Prayer, led by Willy Méndez (text from 2



Corinthians 3,1-10). After the group reflection, the whole assembly congratulated Willy on his birthday. Ho Tombokan was the host for the day. It was a day dedicated to the Blessed MSC Martyrs of Canet de Mar.

Throughout the day, the capitulants worked on the Constitutions & Statutes Commission Proposals. It was clarified that changes in the Constitutions proposed by a General Chapter would need a two-thirds majority and the approval of the Holy See. On the other hand, changes in the Statutes could be changed by a General Chapter without the approval of the Holy See. A vote was taken on each of the proposed changes.

The day concluded with a Mass dedicated to the Blessed Martyrs MSC of Canet de Mar, presided by Paco Blanco, provincial of Spain, together with Willy Mendez, delegate.

NINTH DAY – 26.09

The ninth day of the 26th MSC General Chapter was the first of the two-day process for the Election of the Superior General of the Congregation. It was a day dedicated to discernment and began, as in previous days, with the

Communal Wisdom Prayer (Acts 15,22-31). Simone Volavola hosted the day.

Joe and Frances, facilitators, led the discernment process, this time with a question for reflection in the morning, inviting the capitulants to ask themselves, “What God are You asking for the Congregation today and into the future?”

In the afternoon, in the first session, the question was, “What kind of leader is God calling?”. This concluded the discernment phase. After the break, the voting took place to nominate candidates from whom the Superior General would be chosen the following day.

The day ended with a Mass. On this occasion,



it was a special Mass of the Holy Spirit, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten the capitulants in the final vote. Edwin Borlasa, Provincial of the Philippines, presided.

TENTH DAY – 27.09

The 26th MSC General Chapter reached a crucial moment. After the last day’s discernment sessions, the tenth day was the day of the election of the Superior General. In the Communal Wisdom Prayer, the text by Fr. Jules Chevalier, “The Heart of Jesus is the Center upon which all things converge”, was used together with the readings from Luke 24:28-32, which recalled the journey of the disciples at Emmaus, when they invited Jesus to sit at

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table, and the reading Philippians 2:1-8, which says, “he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.” It was Humberto’s turn to host, who reminded us that St. Vincent de Paul’s Feast Day was also celebrated in the Church that day.

In the first session in the morning, Frances, the facilitator, invited all the capitulants to a final moment of reflection, asking the question: “God, who are You calling to the service of leadership in the Congregation?” At that moment, a dialogue between brothers was recommended, small moments to discuss who should be the person to lead the Congregation for the next six years.

These meetings of dialogue, calm and serene, lasted the whole morning.

After lunch, all the capitulants were called back to the main hall to proceed to the voting. Before the vote, a final question was asked to make each voter aware of what he would participate in: “Who do you sense God is calling to ‘stay with us’



as our leader for the next six years?”

The election of the Superior General took place in the first round, and Abzalón Alvarado, was re-elected for a second term. An official communication was then sent out, which contained the main ideas of his speech after the election.

The day ended with a Mass of Thanksgiving presided by the former Superior General, Michael Curran, in which Abzalón made the Profession of Faith.

TWELFTH DAY – 29.09



After a restful excursion in Assisi, the capitulants returned to the matters for consideration raised in the first few days, i.e., on the Constitutions and other documents. The visit to Assisi was a short rest after the election of the Superior General.

The day began with the Communal Wisdom Prayer (1 Corinthians 12:12-31a). After that, John Mulrooney reminded the assembly of the Feast of Sts. Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Archangels and informed the capitulants that the Superior General’s consultation for General Assistants would take place over the next five days.

All the sessions, both morning and afternoon, were devoted to the final votes on the topics discussed in the previous days, i.e., Safeguarding, Formation, and Finance.

Once again, the day’s work ended with the

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Eucharist. It was presided by Ronnie Diniz, provincial of Rio de Janeiro, together with Mesías Neyra, provincial of Andean Union.

THIRTEENTH DAY – 30.09

“Beloved, let us love one another, because



love is from God” (1 John 4:7-16). This text was used for the Communal Wisdom Prayer in the morning. Ho Tombokan, as Host for the day, recalled that it was the feast of St. Jerome and greeted Moacir Goulart, provincial of Curitiba (Brazil) and Yvon Banackissa, superior of UAF, on their birthdays.

As the consultation by the Superior General for the General Assistants continued, the capitulants returned to the matters for consideration raised in the first few days. On this occasion, the dialogue was done in small groups by themes. Each member of the Chapter chose the one in which he or she wished to participate: Laity, Ageing, MSC Identity, Ongoing formation, Safeguarding, Secretariat and Communications, Structures (Territorial and General Administration), JPIC, Internationality and Mission. At the end of the day’s work, all gathered in the main hall and voted on the remaining proposed amendments to the Constitutions.

Finally, the daily mass was presided over

by Sylvester To Warwakai, provincial of Papua New Guinea.

FOURTEENTH DAY – 01.10

The day’s work was different. In the morning, after the Communal Wisdom Prayer (Psalm 91) and the announcements of Simione Volavola, host of the day, the first session again went back to the matters for consideration raised in the first few days.

There was an extraordinary intervention by Daniel Auguié, who wrote a letter to all the capitulants, written in the person of Fr. Jules Chevalier, in which he encouraged all MSC to remain firm in the mission and shared with them the difficult situation that the house and the Sanctuary at Issoudun have been going through. Then, the Superior General’s consultation for General Assistants continued.

After the conclusion of this first session, the delegates of the different provinces and unions,



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as well as the representatives of the Laity of the Chevalier Family and the other guests of the General Chapter, had a day of rest. The reason was the holding of the General Conference in the second session of the morning and the whole afternoon, to which only the Provincial Superiors and the General Administration were summoned.

As every day, at the end of the sessions, the closing mass took place, presided by Herman Van Dijck, substitute for the Provincial of Belgium, together with André Claessens, Assistant General.

SIXTEENTH DAY – 03.10

The day went by without much in the way of



news. After the last day's papal audience, there were no birthdays or feast days to celebrate the next day. Humberto Henriques was the host for the day, which started as usual with the Communal Wisdom Prayer (Luke 10:1-9), ... "Cure the sick who are there, and say, 'The kingdom of God has come unto you'".

The day's work was devoted to reviewing and approving, where appropriate, the conclusions and recommendations documents that the capitulants worked on Saturday. Two topics to be discussed were not accepted, pending tomorrow's approval of the proposed amendments, modifications and clarifications: Safeguarding and Structures (Territorial and General Administration).

At the end of the day, during the last of the

breaks, the official T-shirts were distributed to each of the capitulants, as well as to the invited guests and all the staff of the General Chapter. At the end of the day, the Mass was presided by Sam Maranresy, Provincial of Indonesia, together with Gregorius Hertanto, delegate of Indonesia.

SEVENTEENTH DAY – 04.10

The morning began with the usual Communal Wisdom Prayer. A text of Pope Francis from the Encyclical, 'Laudato Si', and another text from Fr. Jules Chevalier (MSC Const. n. 21) were used.

On the 17th day of the Chapter, the General Team was formed. After several days of proposals, consultations, and conversations with different capitulants of the General Chapter, Abzalón presented to the assembly those he considered most suitable to form his most direct work team. There were still some working documents to be voted on before Abzalón presented the General Council. He did so in the last session of the morning. His proposal contained four names, although he clarified the possibility of enlarging this team with one more assistant that he was unable to choose during the days of consultation at the General Chapter. The four persons who have been elected as part of the General Team were:

- Chris Chaplin, Australian, from the Province of Australia.
- Bernard Mongeau, Canadian, from the Province of the Dominican Republic



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- Simon Lumpini, Congolese, from the Francophone Union of Africa
- Franciskus Bram Tulusan, Indonesian, from the Province of Indonesia.

Abzalón also said that he would have people he trusted to develop the different topics discussed at the Chapter and that they would be in direct contact with some of the councillors. For example, Carl Tranter would be in charge of accompanying the provinces of Europe in their process of becoming communities under the Generalate and of the possible formation of the MSC European Union. On the other hand, Humberto Henriques would be accompanying the development of Initial Formation. For other issues, such as JPIC and communications, Abzalón would also be consulting on the possibility of forming teams with MSC confreres and lay people, under the supervision of a General Assistant.

The election of four members of the General Team and the other proposals for persons responsible for specific areas, were ratified by the



capitulants.

The last working session was devoted to approving the documents on congregational structures and safeguarding. Both were accepted.

Eduardo Paixão, delegate of the Province of São Paulo, together with Jairo Mendoza, delegate Central America & Mexico, celebrated the day's Mass. At the end, Abzalón gave a gift to the new

members of the General Team. To Chris and Bernard, he gave it by hand, and to Simon and Franciskus, he gave it through their respective Provincials, Yvon César Banackissa and Sam Maranresy. Eduardo, who presided at the Eucharist, also presented Abzalón with an image of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, created by Mozambican artisans, in gratitude for his support during the hardest moments of his mission in Mozambique.

EIGHTEENTH DAY – 05.10

After today's Communal Wisdom Prayer, Fr. Ho, delegate of Indonesia, greeted the Capitulants in Indonesian and Mandarin. He also congratulated Fr. Benedict Ko, Provincial of Korea, on his birthday, and Fr. Benecit acknowledged Sr. Nicola, MSC, on the anniversary of the death of Fr. Hubert Linckens, MSC, founder of the MSC sisters.

It is the last day of the Chapter, and Br. Joe and Frances invite everyone to reflect on what they have experienced during these weeks and how they can pass it on to their provinces and unions upon their return. They are asked two questions to be shared around the tables:

- What has nourished your soul?
- What touched your heart during these days of the Chapter?

There was a feeling of hope and encouragement for the future and the challenges ahead. The internationality, the



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energy of the younger MSC, the fraternity experienced among all the Provinces, and the idea of working together were all valued.

Joe, based on the ideas launched by Marshall McLuhan, on 'The medium is the message', and by Ghandi, on 'Be the change you want to be', invited the Capitulants to think about their ideas when they arrived here and what they now carry with them when they leave here. In other words, what the experience has been during the Chapter and what they can pass on.

In the afternoon, gathered by regions, proposals were made on how to transmit what has been discussed and reflected on during these three weeks.

Today's Eucharist was dedicated in a particular way to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The presider was Stephen Hackett, Provincial of Australia, and concelebrated with Fr. Theo te Wierik, Provincial of Netherlands. At the end of the Mass, a floral offering was made to Our Lady by all the Capitulants.

NINETEENTH DAY – 06.10

On October 6, a first Friday, during the Votive Mass to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the General Chapter ended. At the beginning of the celebration, each person present took for their entity a small jar containing a mixture of the earths brought

by the delegates to the opening Mass. This was an expression of the internationality of the Congregation and the common willingness

to move from "*ego to eco*". Recalling the disciples on the road to Emmaus, who recognising Jesus in the breaking of the bread returned in the middle of a dark night to announce Easter in Jerusalem, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (and all present) were sent to their "Jerusalem's" to tell of their experiences at the Chapter and everything that had set their hearts aflame.

Father Abzalón, blowing out the main candle, declared the 26th General Chapter closed. However, nobody left empty-handed! Before the Chapter candle was extinguished, each participant lit a small candle in its flame, and together they chanted *Ave Admirabile*, committing to carry the Chapter light to their entities to illuminate all the corners of the earth.



RE-ELECTION



Mario Abzalón Alvarado Tovar, msc, has been re-elected as Superior General of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. The election occurred at the 26th MSC General Chapter in Nemi, Rome, Italy. His confreres have entrusted him with a new mandate, thus giving their confidence to the work that, together with his Team and General Administration, he has carried out in the last six years (he was first elected in the General Chapter of 2017).

Abzalón thanked his confreres throughout the congregation, his Leadership Team, and the Laity of the Chevalier Family for their support during the previous mandate. He also had a special and moving word for his own family.

“We will continue with shared leadership,” this was the first idea he wanted to convey to the assembly. He is well aware of the challenging work for the coming years, and while knowing that he’s vulnerable, aware of his limitations, he trusts in the grace of the Holy Spirit, “transforming me in order to transform”.

His personal commitment to the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart will be listening to the language of the heart, and his attitude will be one of learning together with all his confreres. “Help me to continue going to the provinces and unions without answers, but with questions so that together we can build the answers.” He expressed his willingness to work together and his commitment to service.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Pray for us. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere! Forever!

PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS



ALISON MCKENZIE LCF
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHEVALIER FAMILY COUNCIL

As we walked the Emmaus road together, many things made my heart burn throughout the Chapter. Firstly, being in the presence of so many great missionaries, ministering humbly in their own and many other countries around the world; each one working to make the Sacred Heart of Jesus a tangible presence everywhere has been inspiring. And further, I recognize and acknowledge that my life also contributes to this mission. What would those first disciples who walked with Jesus so downcast make of all that has happened?

Secondly, as the future has been discerned during the Chapter, I have witnessed a profound way of discussing, deliberating, and even disagreeing about the next step, and have witnessed true and deep fraternity and brotherhood in action, where everybody is more concerned with the good of the whole than with their viewpoint. Decisions have been made gently and slowly, and my observation is that excellent recommendations for the future have been achieved.

I have been in the presence of a group of people who know how to live genuinely human lives through their flaws and graces, people who know how to break bread together, pray deeply, sing and dance and eat and laugh together, and I am deeply grateful for the invitation to not only participate but to belong to this Family fully.



P. JAIRO URIEL SEVILLA MENDOZA. MSC
PROVINCE OF CENTRAL AMERICA & MEXICO

The General Chapter was an experience of deepening my understanding of being MSC and getting closer to my brothers, the structures, entities and all that makes up our Congregation. It was a space of encounter fraternity, where together sharing the same charism, spirituality and mission, we seek to continue being witnesses of God's love in the world and a moment of grace to strengthen and build networks that allow us to make the heart of Christ loved everywhere.



PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS



P. THEO TE WIERIK, MSC
PROVINCIAL OF THE NETHERLANDS' PROVINCE

For me, the number of relatively young confreres during the Chapter was striking because I (72) have been the youngest in my family, and my Dutch Province, for years! The new 'meeting style' at round tables with six/seven fellow brothers involved everyone in the various themes. There was a great openness and willingness to listen to and understand each other.

Partly because of this, the atmosphere during these three weeks was optimal. It is excellent that the lay representatives within the Chevalier family were also present throughout the Chapter. We were all pleasantly surprised that two brothers were elected to the General Leadership Team. This choice again made it clear that we are 'brothers' first and foremost. It is also nice that the decision was made to establish a European Union because of the ageing members in the current European Provinces.

With great compliments to all who helped in the (long) preparation for this General Chapter.



P. SIMI VOLAVOLA, MSC
PACIFIC ISLANDS PROVINCE

I was blessed to be a part of the 26th General Chapter where I was introduced for the first time to a global experience of our congregation. I listened to my brothers from different parts of the world as they shared their stories and reflections on what it means to be an MSC in their respective corners of Christ's vineyard.

I will never forget the powerful sense of God's presence in each one whom he has called to Himself as His missionary and through whom and with whom He continues to speak to and touch the lives of countless souls all over the world. It was witnessing their commitment to quietly listening to the Spirit each day and all day before sharing the fruit of their prayer and reflection that made my heart burn within me. The process of discernment of Communal Wisdom modelled on the Emmaus walk with the Risen Christ provided the space within each of us to listen deeply. This, in turn, provided us the opportunity to appreciate one another as true brothers. I have come away rejuvenated in my vocation as an MSC and filled with great hope for the future of our little society.

PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS



P. JULIUS BRITHO KATJIPA, MSC
PROVINCE OF IRELAND

Walking along the way to Emmaus was an amazing experience; a privileged reality with numerous twists and turns, full of excitement bringing us into a moment of prayer, reflection, dialogue and sharing. There was a remarkable reception of brotherhood and belonging.

My heart was inflamed with a life-giving experience. I felt revitalized, connected, and fulfilled as a Missionary of the Sacred Heart. Oh, what an eye-opening and privileged time it was to experience Jesus in the breaking of the bread by celebrating the Holy Eucharist, in expressing the rich diversity of our cultures through uplifting music, sharing the LOVE of the Heart of Christ among us, through us and with us. Together, we can make a difference by keeping this flame burning.



JAVIER TRAPERO
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Living this General Chapter from the inside has been a great experience. I have worked in other congresses as a professional, but this one had something special from the very beginning. Personally, *I wanted to contribute as a lay person* as much as I could to the Congregational process, but once in Nemi, *I felt like another MSC*. That's how I was treated, and that's how I experienced it. In addition, I have been captivated by countless mission projects that I did not know about.

I was also captivated by the personal stories of the MSCs. I savoured all of that, as well as the fraternal atmosphere and the enthusiasm to continue in the mission. The desire to collaborate, to feel like a global Congregation, without being anyone more than anyone else. I was delighted to see the Chevalier Family Lay People represented with the same enthusiasm and desire to work together like a real family. Above all, I remember the moments shared at a table where Indonesians, Filipinos, Koreans, Cameroonians, Brazilians, Guatemalans, Peruvians, Australians, Irish, Germans, French ... from all corners of the earth, we were all one.

By the way, I have also taken photos, videos, interviews, news ...

PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS



P. FERNANDO CLEMENTE SANTOS, MSC
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CHAPTER

Being part of a General Chapter is always a unique experience, providing a much broader vision of our religious family and an experience of the vitality of our charism. However, being part of the team organising the Chapter's logistics enables you to experience these same things in a different way and with a different intensity.

Being Secretary General of the Chapter gave me the opportunity to realise how everyone did their best, according to their role, to ensure the smooth running of our meeting. Everything worked organically, thanks to the excellent teamwork we had. Even though I was exhausted, I ended the Chapter pleased and grateful for everything.

“The General Chapter experience reveals to us that the feeling of “we” creates our interconnectedness portrayed by a spider web, which reminds us of our brotherhood in equality, dignity and respect that signifies our being MSC and enriching our unity in diversity, so as to share the love of the Sacred Heart with all those we meet and serve.”

(Table Group Inspirational Reflection)

“We are glad that we are here, and we have been inspired and enriched by the variety and extent of the ministries so many MSC and lay MSC are involved with. Our charism and spirit enliven each of us to face the challenges in our ministries. The charism lived in each of us lifts us up and also provides an answer to what so many ask of us.”

(Table Group Inspirational Reflection)

“It is worthwhile being MSC. We are instruments and God acts progressively in His own way. We listen and dialogue, opening ourselves to the whole, not to the particular to achieve an authentic and current identity.”

(Table Group Inspirational Reflection)

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE
GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART**

Clementine Hall, Monday, 2 October 2023



Dear Brothers, good morning and welcome!

I greet the Superior General and all of you at this meeting, which is taking place during the 26th General Chapter of your Institute.

On 8 December 1854, Father Jules Chevalier founded the *Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* in Issudun, France, a foundation that would be followed in time by those of the *Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart* and the *Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart*, joined by lay associates, known as the *Laymen of the Chevalier Family*.

From the beginning, he thought of you as missionaries, committed to making God's love known in the world in order to obtain from men a response of love. And it is beautiful, in this perspective, that you have chosen to be guided on the path of the Chapter by the Gospel pericope of Emmaus (cf. *Lk 24:13-35*). We can derive three fundamental attitudes from it, to reflect on your charismatic identity and your missionary commitment: to know the Heart of Jesus through the Gospel; to deepen its message in fraternal sharing; to proclaim it to all in the joy of mission.

First: to *know the Heart of Jesus through the Gospel*, that is, by meditating on His life. It is there, in fact, that He continues to make Himself our travelling companion (cf. vv. 25-27). Fr Chevalier liked to define the Gospel as the book "of the Sacred Heart", while inviting everyone to contemplate in it the charity with which the Saviour allowed Himself to be touched by all poverty, happy to pour out the tenderness and compassion of His Heart on the little ones and the poor, the suffering, sinners and all the miseries of humanity. Moreover, the explanation of the Scriptures that Jesus offers to the disciples of Emmaus along the way is not theoretical: it is the direct testimony of the One who fulfilled what he is talking about, loving the Father and his brothers and sisters to the cross, receiving in his flesh the wounds of the nails and allowing his Heart to be pierced for pure charity. The Risen One, who makes Himself known in the breaking of the Bread, is the One who conquered death by giving life, who showed mankind the Father's love by loving them without measure

with His divine and human Heart, and who therefore knows how to speak words that make the breast burn! This is how one gets to know the Heart of Jesus: by contemplating in the Gospel his immense mercy, like Mary, whom you venerate under the title of "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart" and who knows how to show us the Heart of her Son precisely because "she kept these things pondering them in hers" (*Lk* 2:19). This then is the first invitation: to know the Heart of Jesus by meditating on the Gospel. And on this, do not be afraid of silence, do not be afraid!

For this strong experience to become light for the journey, it must also pass through the enrichment of sharing. Here is the second element: *deepening and understanding the Word in fraternal sharing*. At Emmaus, the disciples, immediately after recognising Jesus, ask each other in amazement what they had experienced (cf. v. 32). It is an invitation also for us to make a gift to one another of the wonder that is born in the heart when one encounters the Lord. Before meeting him, the two companions discussed failures and disappointments, afterwards they rejoice at having seen the Risen One! Sharing was also important in Fr Chevalier's life. In the seminary, he passed on his fervour and his dreams to some sensitive companions, whom he used a play on words to call the knights (*chevaliers*) of the Sacred Heart. And it was in meeting one of them again after years of distance, animated by the same zeal, that he saw the long-awaited sign to begin the foundation. Therefore, in the work of this Chapter, as in the ordinary discernment of your communities, I invite you too to always put fraternal sharing of your encounter with Christ, in the Word, in the Sacraments and in life, at the basis of everything and before everything else. You will then be able to address even the most pressing problems constructively. Sharing among yourselves.

And we come to the last aspect: the *joyful proclamation in the mission*. The disciples of Emmaus leave without delay, return to Jerusalem and tell what has happened (cf. vv. 33-35). You have chosen as a motto for your chapter work the words: 'from ego to echo', that is, from self to common home, to family, to community, to creation. It is a strong expression and a commitment for your future, especially for discernment about new types of ministry to which you should open yourselves. There is no shortage of challenges: witness the Martyrs of your congregation and the many areas of charity in which you have already been called to work on all continents. The poor, the migrants, the many miseries and injustices that continue to renew themselves in the world urgently question us. Faced with them, do not be afraid to allow yourselves to be caught up in the compassion of the Heart of Christ; as your Founder said, allow him to love through you and to manifest his mercy through your goodness. And do this with courage, as he did - for example, when he accepted the mission in Melanesia and Micronesia, albeit with limited strength - allowing the irresistible tenderness of the Sacred Heart to shape, modify and even upset, if necessary, your plans and projects.

Please do not be afraid of tenderness! God's style can be said in three words: closeness, compassion and tenderness. God is like that: close, compassionate, tender. Be like this with others. But this closeness, this compassion, this tenderness you will receive in dialogue with Jesus. Prayer is so important to bring this about. Without prayer, things do not work, do not go. Thank you, dear brothers, for what you are and what you do! Continue your work with enthusiasm. Flee from sadness, which is the cankerworm that ruins personal and consecrated life! That sadness that brings you down, not the good sadness of repentance, that is another thing, but that daily sadness is a woodworm that ruins. I bless you from my heart. And I recommend t h a t y o u pray for me, because I need it, this work is not so easy!

Thank you.

BERNARD MONGEAU, MSC



Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk ... to a land that I will show you. (Gn 12, 1-5)

It is with joy that I accepted being elected general councilor for six years. Some see this call to serve as a job or a heavy administrative burden. Rather, I view it as a time of grace, as a way of serving my brothers and sisters out of love. It is accepting, like Abraham, to leave my country and go where I am called. It is agreeing to overcome my fears, to break my ready-to-think and my routines, to take a new look at my spiritual life which will discover its multiple riches and its unsuspected beauties. Beyond my limits and my difficulties, my spiritual life presents itself as a wonderful adventure that is truly worth living. It is an invitation to uninstall myself, to get going and to leave (Dt 26:5). Which makes me stand in solidarity with migrants. My spiritual journey is therefore not complete. I still have a part of the road to go with traveling companions who will enrich me, who will bring me something, so that I can in return provide my brothers and sisters with the means to grow spiritually.

It is also a way of updating our motto which is that of Being on earth the Heart of God. How will this be done (Lk 1:34)? By taking the time to listen and name the hope that our brothers and sisters carry in their hearts. It's opening my heart and that of others to make them beat, which can be a path of humanity. It is knowing how to make myself present when I am in the presence of a wounded or poor heart. It's giving heart to the heart of the world. It's bringing hope to a hurting world. It is welcoming the other and putting myself in loving presence with the other. It is accepting to enter through the wound in order to access the paths of salvation and life. It is making my heart a tent of meeting for God and for my brothers and sisters, a kind of zone free of oppression and communion. It is being able to tear away the veil of humanity that hides reality from us to reveal the mystery of God. It is being able to bear witness to the Peace that inhabits my heart. It is to demonstrate today the tenderness and mercy of the Father in favor of my brothers and sisters. It is, like Him, knowing how to set the table, tie the apron and serve out of love like Him (Robert Lebel). It is an experience of faith, for which I give thanks! This is what makes my heart beat. Pray for me and the new council that the Spirit will come upon us.

My name is Bernard Mongeau and I was born on September 5, 1953 in Montreal, in the Province of Quebec in Canada. After completing my high school studies in Alberta, I undertook post-secondary studies in Montreal before undertaking theology studies at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Ontario with the intention of becoming a secular priest for the Diocese of St. Paul, Alberta. With the help of my spiritual guide, I realized that God was calling me to be a brother within a non-contemplative religious community. After corresponding with the person responsible for MSC vocations, Paul Desaulniers, he wrote to me: are you the one who should come? This is how my love story with our Little Society began, as Jules Chevalier said. A few years later, I made religious profession on September 7, 1980 as a brother. Subsequently, I studied accounting at Laval University in Quebec. Since then I have served the community as local treasurer, assistant to the provincial treasurer and finally as provincial treasurer and provincial councilor from 2008 until the merger of our religious province with that of the Dominican Republic. in November 2022.

GENERAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

CHRIS CHAPLIN, MSC

I'm from the Australian Province, born in 1961 in the small city of Adelaide, in the centre of the southern Australian coast. I joined the MSC in 1980, at the age of 18 after a second attempt at my last year of school – I failed the first time. God works in surprising ways for it was through this that I ended up taking my current path of my life. I had thought to be a De La Salle Brother and had arranged with their vocations ministry to join them at the conclusion of school. Failure meant trying again, and also the opportunity to realise that my life was full of MSC whom I admired and respected in my home parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. MSC were frequent visitors to my childhood home and had good friendships with my parents.

I began initial formation in Croydon, Melbourne. Studies undertaken at Yarra Theological Union were hard work; I'm no academic. My third year was an immersion in a diocesan parish in the poorer suburb. I completed units in Clinical Pastoral Education, was enriched by parish relationships, and participating in a ministry team. Novitiate brought me to my first and greatest love, God, as I knew him through my interior life, particularly in spaces of solitude and silence. I made first vows in 1984. I returned to studies in Melbourne, then Sydney, completing B. Theol. in 1985 and a M. Theol. equivalent by 1986. Deaconate followed in Darwin, northern Australia, and ordination to priesthood while there in 1988.

After 6 years of parish ministry, I undertook studies in spiritual accompaniment. This began a life-long ministry of spiritual direction and retreats that I have great enthusiasm for and still engage in. I had 3 years as director of St. Mary's Towers Retreat Centre, Douglas Park. My whole life in ministry I have been blessed to facilitate retreats, workshops, etc. Even as a member of the General Leadership Team over the last 6 years a great deal of my ministry has been in this field, and enabled me to have energy for my current portfolio of ongoing formation

I received my qualifications in Psychotherapy in 1999 after 6 years training and have been in practice since. This is the second wonderful thread in my life. The first thread being my own interior life, that led me to discern in my early thirties a particular

expression of our spirituality of the heart. I lived for 12 years the eremitical life as an MSC, in northern New South Wales and later in southern Victoria. Strangely it was this life that led me to the 2017 General Chapter, and to being asked to join the General Leadership Team.

In the middle of all that, I had 6 years in formation in the Pacific Union, including two as Novice Director. Strangely, and grossly unprepared, I also ended up as head of practical trade school in Fiji for 2 years.

These two threads are what burns deeply in my heart. Walking with God in the interior journey, and accompanying others as they connect to themselves and God. I think this colours how I approach the portfolios and mandates of the General Administration.

Spirituality of the Heart is this process of connection, and I have a deep longing to explore with others and write about this amazing gift that comes to us from our Founder. At the last Chapter I was asked to continue this journey with the Society for another 6 years. My prayer is that I can do that by drawing deeply from this spirituality, our communal well, and through it strengthen the Society for the mission of Divine Love we embrace.



BRAM TULUSAN, MSC



My name is Fransiskus Bram Tulusan. I was born in Kotamobagu, Indonesia on October 20, 41 years ago. My first vows was in 2003 and ordained as a priest in 2011. The most of my ministry was spent in formation houses (2010-2023). The last three years have also been involved in safeguarding ministry, which is a new and very challenging mission.

The experience of being MSC for 20 years has made me strongly discover that being God's heart in the world is a mission that will never be completed. We cannot say 'enough' about being God's heart in the world because this is a mission that demands continuous self-giving just as Jesus who totally gave himself for us. Being God's heart in the world has always been my spirit in carrying out any missions given by the church and congregation.

Always do not make yourself the center but make yourself as the channel of His grace for anyone. In

the last general chapter I was elected as a member of the general council in Rome. A mission that I had never imagined before. There was a big doubt inside about how come or why me? I was reflecting hard about this. And then the experience emerged when I always reminded the formandi that being a missionary means being ready to be sent out anytime. So whenever the congregation calls we must be ready to answer.

On behalf of our mission my answer is yes for this mission. God has pulled me out of my comfort zone all this time and sent me to go to a deeper place.



GENERAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

SIMON LUMPINI, MSC

I am Brother LUMPINI MBALA Simon, msc from the Democratic Republic of Congo (Francophone African Union). I completed my novitiate to South Africa, studied Pastoral Theology in Yaoundé, Cameroun, and Management and Administration of School and Training Institutions (GAISF) in Kinshasa. In 2020, I was appointed formator for the pre-novitiate in Kinshasa.

I was on the road (Emmaus) from the Limeté community when I received a message from the General Superior. He called me later and proposed I become a member of the General Leadership Team. This proposal was a complete surprise to me, and I reminded him who I was. However, he reiterated it was Br Simon from the Righni pre-novitiate whom he was appointing to the Leadership Team, despite the fact I was not a delegate at the General Chapter. I confess his proposal came as a shock! Moreover, I was planning the 2023-2024 pre-novitiate, so this all felt like a ‘dream’. I told him I could not answer him immediately and needed time to reflect and pray on his request.

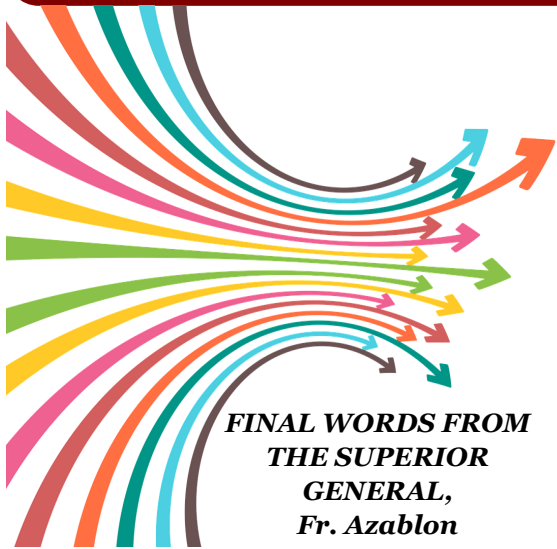
Following our conversation, I went to the chapel to pray and meditate on this proposal and asked God, ‘Why Simon?’, and my response was, if it’s God’s will, why not! *God does not call those who are able, but he enables those he calls.* When Abzalou called back, I informed him my response was, ‘Yes, I accept’. Then, what felt like a dream had become a reality. I remembered that God can call wherever we are ... *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord”* (Isaiah 55:8).

On 4 October 2023, on the Feast of St Francis



of Assisi at 3:00 p.m. Kinshasa time, I was elected General Assistant by the capitulants in Rome. *“We are all servants but do not have the same workload. To each person, according to his abilities, God entrusts responsibilities. When He calls us, he fills our lives with his presence according to the volume of the container we bring. Let us not let His graces die in us”.*

When Fr BANACKISSA Yvon, msc (Union Superior) made the news public, I went to the chapel to thank God. Afterwards, I received calls from the Brothers and Sisters everywhere to congratulate and encourage me. May your prayers, Brothers and Sisters, accompany me so that God’s will be done, and Mary, Our Lady of the Sacred heart, pray for me.



**FINAL WORDS FROM
THE SUPERIOR
GENERAL,
Fr. Azablon**

Let's get out of here to Be the compassion of God.

To be missionaries in order to continue to make God's love known and facing the challenges of today's reality.

To live synodal relationships. With an ardent heart to live closeness, tenderness and compassion with prophetic boldness.

Combat Sadness and Discouragement. Be the change you want to see. If you and I are not the message, what will be the message?

Let us return from Emmaus to Jerusalem to continue transforming and transforming ourselves in order to build, with an MSC identity, an authentic ecosystem of the Chevalier family.



All photos and Pope Francis' message can be downloaded from the website:

<https://general-chapter.msc-chevalier.org/>



Misionaries of the Sacred Heart

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Corrections:

John Walker, MSC (Australian Province)