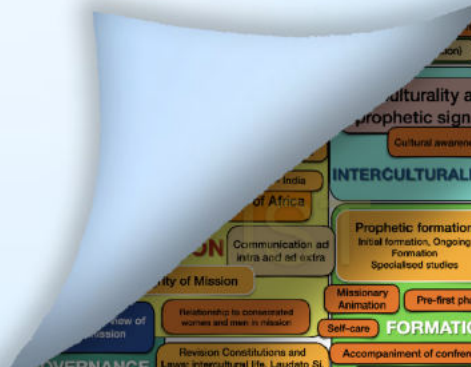


CAPITULAR ACTS

Rome, 16th May – 19th June 2022



Capitulants of the 29th General Chapter

AMALEBONDRA Jean-Marie

ANIPU Ignatius

ASERBIRE John

BAALADONG Anthony

BARNES Francis

BAZEMO Barthélémy

BOMANSAAN Francis

BWANAKWERI Bonaventure

CHABANON Gérard

DOUCET Réal

GRENIER Martin

HARELIMANA Prosper

HULECKI Pawel

JACQUES Georges

JOHNSTON Paul

KAPILIMBA Pascal

KAPYA Arsène

KIPILI Odon

KOLA Luc

LENGAIGNE Emmanuel

LUBUNGO Stan

MALLYA Oswald

MAMBWE Emmanuel

MARIA JOSEPH Leo Laurence

MOUNKORO Cyriaque

MUKANGA Jean-Jacques

NGAHY James

NGONA Emmanuel

NYEMBO Delphin

O'SHEA Brendan

PAM Dennis

PETITFOUR Pierre

PHIRI Felix

ROSSMANN Frank

SAWADOGO Didier

SEENAN Hugh

SSEKAMATTE Aloysius

TARPAGA Anselme

TRAORE Simplicé

VAN CAMPEN Ferdinand

ADDRESS OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL TO POPE FRANCIS

Vatican City, 13 June 2022

Holy Father,

On February 8, 2019, we had the joy and privilege of being welcomed with our Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa by you as part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of our two institutes. You urged us to seize the opportunity of the jubilee to rediscover the freshness of the Gospel, from which emerge new ways and paths of creativity for a more in depth evangelisation in today's world.

Two and a half years later, you are welcoming us back as our General Chapter. Coming from 24 different countries, we have been meeting just a short distance from here since 16 May. The General Chapter is another important halt for us to re-read the past. We have done so with gratitude. Then we look to the future with hope.

As a Missionary Society, we have been encouraged and carried by your strong words which have invited us, in fidelity to our origins, to commit ourselves fearlessly to the path of mission in order to bear witness to the fact that "God is always new, who impels us to set out relentlessly and to move beyond what is known, towards the peripheries and the frontiers" (*Gaudete et exsultate*, 135).

It is in this sense that we have chosen for our 29th General Chapter the theme of mission as prophetic witness, to re-read the different aspects of our missionary being in Africa and to the African world today. During this Chapter we reaffirmed our attachment to the missionary charism received from our Founder Cardinal Lavigerie. We want to respond to our common missionary vocation as brothers and priests by putting the Gospel at the heart of our spirituality. Thus, nourished by the love we have for Christ, we want to form ourselves continuously to live, in radical fidelity, the commitment of our missionary oath to be authentic

and credible apostles among ourselves and among the people to whom we are sent, as our founder invited us: "Be apostles, nothing but apostles".

In a world where individualism tends to overwhelm the spirit of community, where the unbridled quest for personal well-being calls into question the evangelical counsels, we continue to rekindle in our hearts the passion for mission and the desire to live this mission in true, sincere and fraternal communities. A simple lifestyle invites us to adopt an attitude of humility in our relationships with each other and with the people to whom we are sent. It invites us to "know how to enjoy the simplest things" (*Laudato Si'* 223). It helps us not only to have moderate and reasonable attitudes towards material things such as money and worldly ambitions, but, above all, leads us in a deeper way to being brothers who are easily accessible to all. It helps us to be all things to all people (1 Cor 9:22).

We welcomed with joy the announcement of a visit of His Holiness to the Democratic Republic of Congo and to South Sudan, where our brothers are present. We continue to pray that this visit will take place in the very near future for the peoples of these two countries who are in great need of consolation and peace.

We remain concerned about the situation of insecurity in many parts of the African continent which we entrust to your prayers, especially in the Sahel region of West Africa: Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali. Pray also for one of our confreres, Father Michael Mawelera, who was killed the day before yesterday in the diocese of Mbeya, Tanzania.

Holy Father, at this important moment for our Institute, we ask your fatherly blessing on us and on all our confreres so that we may keep alive the missionary charism of our Founder.

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA (WHITE FATHERS)**

*Clementine Hall, Monday,
13 June 2022*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I thank the Superior General for the words with which he introduced this meeting of ours.

Unfortunately, to my great regret, I have had to postpone my trip to Congo and South Sudan. Indeed, at my age it is not so easy to go on mission! But your prayers and example give me courage, and I am confident that I will be able to visit these peoples, whom I carry in my heart. Next Sunday, I will try to celebrate Mass with the Congolese community in Rome. Not next Sunday; 3 July, the day I should have celebrated in Kinshasa. We will bring Kinshasa to Saint Peter's, and there we will celebrate with all the Roman Congolese people — there are many of them!

I remember the celebration of your 150th [anniversary], which we experienced three years ago with your Missionary sisters. Please, give my regards to them too!

For this General Chapter, you have chosen to work on *mission as prophetic witness*. We will briefly reflect on this. But first, I want to tell you that I was very pleased to hear that you have lived these days “with gratitude” and “with hope”. This is beautiful. Looking at the past with gratitude is a sign of good spiritual health; it is the “deuteronomic” attitude that God taught his people (cf. *Dt 8*). Cultivating grateful remembrance of the journey the Lord has had us take. And this gratitude is what nurtures the flame of hope. Someone who does not thank God for the gifts he has sown along the way — albeit tiring and at times painful — does not even have a hopeful heart, open to the surprises of God and

trusting in his providence. In particular, this spiritual attitude is decisive to allow to mature the seedlings of the vocation that the Lord inspires with his Spirit and his Word. A community in which one knows how to say “thank you” to God and to one’s brothers, and in which one helps the other to hope in the Risen Lord, is a community that attracts and sustains those who are called to it. So, keep going in this way: with gratitude and hope.

Now we come to the theme of *mission as prophetic witness*. Here faithfulness to your roots, to the charism that the Spirit entrusted to Cardinal Lavignerie, is at play. The world changes, and Africa changes too, but that gift retains its meaning and strength. And it retains it in you to the extent that it always leads back to Christ and to the Gospel. If salt loses its flavour, what use is it? (cf. *Mt* 5:13). The Father General recalled the exhortation that the founder used to repeat: “Be apostles, none other than apostles!”. And the apostle of Jesus Christ is not one who proselytises. Evangelical proclamation has nothing to do with proselytism. If at any point one of you finds himself proselytising, please, stop, convert, and then continue. Proclamation is something else. The apostle is not a manager, he is not a learned lecturer, he is not an IT wizard. The apostle is a *witness*. This applies always and everywhere in the Church, but it applies especially to those who, like you, are often required to live out the mission in contexts of first evangelization or where the Islamic religion is prevalent.

Witness essentially means two things: *prayer* and *fraternity*. A heart open to God and a heart open to one’s brothers and sisters. First of all, to be in the presence of God, to let oneself be looked at by him, every day, in adoration. There, to draw the lifeblood, in that “abiding in him”, in Christ, which is the condition for being apostles (cf. *Jn* 15:1-9). It is the paradox of the mission: you can go only if you stay. If you are not capable of abiding in the Lord, *you cannot go*.

Recently, the witness of Charles de Foucauld was proposed to the veneration of the universal Church: it is another charism, certainly, but it has much to say to you too, as to all Christians of our time. “Drawing upon his intense experience of God, [he] made a journey of transformation

towards feeling a brother to all” (Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 286). Prayer and fraternity: the Church must return to this *essential core*, this radiant simplicity, naturally not in a uniform way, but in the variety of her charisms, ministries, and institutions; but everything must allow this original core, which goes back to Pentecost and the first community, described in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. 2:42-47; 4:32-35), to shine through.

Often, we are led to think of prophecy as an individual reality, and this is a dimension that always remains true, based on the model of the prophets of Israel. But prophecy is also and, I would say, above all, communitarian: it is the community that bears prophetic witness. I think of your fraternities, made up of people from many countries, from various cultures. It is not easy; it is a challenge that can be accepted only by counting on the help of the Holy Spirit. And then this little community of yours, which lives on prayer and fraternity, is called in turn to engage in dialogue with the environment in which it lives, with the people, with the local culture. In these contexts, where often, besides poverty, one experiences insecurity and precariousness, you are sent to live the *sweet joy of evangelising*. Saint Paul VI uses this word in his *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Evangelising is the mission of the Church, evangelising is the joy of the Church. Incidentally: take *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, which is still effective today, and it will give you many, many insights for reflection and mission. With you I thank the Lord for this tremendous gift of evangelization.

May Our Lady of Africa accompany you and protect you. I pray for you, I give you my blessing; take it also to your brothers and to the faithful of your communities. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

INTRODUCTION

LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL Embracing our missionary vocation as prophetic witness

Dear Confreres

The joy of coming together again

After a period of incertitude, the 29th General Chapter of the Society convened in Rome from May 16 to June 19, 2022 in a context of renewed hope as different countries in the world slowly started to lift the public health emergency imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and to ease the many travel restrictions related to it. It was a moment of great fraternal joy for 55 confreres and a Missionary Sister of our Lady of Africa to come together at the Generalate in a physical assembly after more than two years of social distancing and online meetings.

The atmosphere was solemn in Rome with the canonisation of Charles de Foucauld, ‘apostle of the Touaregs’, on the eve of the opening of the General Chapter. Our confreres, Bishops John MacWilliam and Claude Rault, respectively Bishop and Bishop emeritus of Laghouat-Ghardaïa in Algeria were in the house for the event together with Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald who had been invited to preside the inaugural Eucharist for the Chapter. In the middle of the Chapter, the news of the appointment of 21 new Cardinals of the Church, among whom our confrere Richard Baawobr by Pope Francis was announced a few days before the Pope received the participants of the Chapter in a private audience.

Thirteen confreres participated in the Chapter as ex-official members, twenty-seven as elected Deputies while fifteen were there as facilitators, consultants, secretaries, translators, IT technicians, spiritual director. The Missionary Sister of Our Lady of Africa was there as an observer. Guided by the well-known methodology of the pastoral cycle of See, Judge and Act, we

sought together, during five weeks, to come up with an understanding and a description of our mission for the next six years in what became the Society's first ever paperless Chapter, fulfilling thus, a recommendation of the 2016 General Chapter.

The Method

Concerning the method, the Chapter adopted the See, Judge and Act that most of your answers to the pre-Chapter questionnaire suggested. It is a simple, straight forward and clear method that is known to many.

The **SEE** phase had already started during the consultation in the Provinces and Sections with the proposition of possible topics for the Chapter that was followed by the Pre-Capitular Assemblies. The seeing went on during the first two weeks of the Chapter bringing together the different reports from the Pre-Capitular Assemblies. Each Province and Section was invited to present some salient elements of its report that were proper to it and of relevance to the Society as a whole. This created a feeling of "Esprit de Corps" or *SENTIRE CUM SOCIETATE* and helped the Chapter deputies to move beyond their Provinces, Sections and look at the Society as a whole.

Conscious that the Chapter was not about reinventing the wheel and that they could never exhaust all topics affecting the life of the Society in five weeks, the capitulants sifted among the many available topics, retaining those that they deemed needed to be deepened. The Chapter then decided to retain eight main subjects that are taken up in these Capitular Acts: the Charism, Mission in its various dimensions, Integrity in ministry and Interculturality. Time was consecrated to reflect on the identity of the Brothers in the Society following the presentation of the recommendations of the forum for Brothers that was held before the Chapter in line with the decision of the 2016 Chapter to carry out a general consultation about the Brothers. Formation was looked at from both the initial and on-going dimensions and Governance from the perspective of management of human and of material resources. The other subject concerns the wellbeing of Confreres.

The **JUDGE** phase was the key moment for discernment. It was, as much as possible, done with the background ecclesial context of the Synod on Synodality launched by Pope Francis in October 2021 and nourished with reflections from some of the Pope's writings particularly *Evangelii Gaudium*,

Laudato Si', *Fratelli Tutti* and his book *Let us Dream*. This phase emphasised on listening to the Spirit and to each other actively, valuing dialogue and exchange in view of walking together as we looked at the opportunities and challenges facing the Mission and our identity.

Under the theme of “Mission as prophetic witness”

During the preparation of the Chapter, the General Council had identified a prevailing theme from the synthesis of the different pre-Capitular assembly reports that summarised Mission as Prophetic witness. At the beginning of the Judge phase, this theme was proposed to be taken as the main thread that would guide the deliberations and the discernment process. The proposal was adopted and “Mission as Prophetic Witness”, became the perspective from which the Chapter reflected and deliberated on the different subjects mentioned above. The fundamental question asked by the Chapter can be summarized as “what are the consequences for the different aspects of our life as Missionaries of Africa when we live the Mission as prophetic witnesses in today’s world?”.

To accompany the reflection, capitulants were in the first place invited to state and affirm that which, in our identity as Missionaries of Africa and in our way of doing mission, was prophetic witness and which naturally called for consolidation. In the second place, they were asked to identify those attitudes or elements that place themselves as obstacles, preventing us from living the Mission as prophetic witnesses and which called us to conversion in order become more authentic and grow in our vocation. The weighing up of the affirmations and the obstacles led to the formulation of recommendations, giving to the texts of these Acts their structure. They start with an affirmation of those elements that make our living of the mission of the Society prophetic, identify and name what is perceived as obstacles to prophetic witnessing and end with recommendations.

The recommendations translate the various objectives that the Chapter fixed to help us grow in our vocation of being prophetic witnesses. The determining of the mode of implementation of the recommendations is proper to the third and **ACT** phase.

The Chapter continues...

Once the objectives were set, it was foreseen by the method and adopted by the Chapter that the Act phase be left for the Post-Capitular Assemblies in the various Provinces and Sections. Though it already begun with the formulation of the recommendations, the acting phase flows into the Post Capitular assemblies and becomes proper to each Province or Section, community and confrere. It is up to the Provinces and Sections to draw up a concrete Strategic and Action Plan for the next six years during their Post-Capitular Assemblies. In this way, greater responsibility is given to the Post Capitular Assemblies in a spirit of subsidiarity to come up with realistic strategic and action plans for the next six years taking into account the context of each Province or Section. The Assembly in Rome represented, so to say, a phase in the Chapter process that started with the pre-Capitular Assemblies and continues to the Post-Capitular Assemblies. From there, the call to examine our life style, in view of recommitting ourselves to our missionary identity and of living it more authentically, is expected to be relayed to every community and confrere.

Embracing our missionary vocation as prophetic witness

The 29th General Chapter comes as an occasion for us to remember that as disciples of Jesus and missionaries, our vocation is naturally prophetic. Our life carries with it a prophetic sense that is expressed in our Oath. When, during our Oath, we “swear on the Gospels to consecrate ourselves until death to the Church’s Mission in Africa... and promise and swear to observe celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom”, we actually accomplish an act that sends a message about God to those present and, undeniably, to those we are sent to and among whom we live it. The Oath is an intriguing act that raises some curiosity. Authentically lived, our commitment in the Oath is not only a means of self-sanctification but also still an effective testimony in today’s world. It makes of us messengers who proclaim that the God we serve and to whom we consecrate our lives is real and that love for God can satisfy one’s life. We affirm that it is possible to found our life in Christ. The Chapter invites us to embrace and to live our vocation as prophetic witness.

Mission is prophetic

Prophets are not necessarily those who predict the future. They announce first and foremost the Word of God. They do that both by words and deeds linking the living God to his people in the singularity of the present moment. Their words and actions reveal God and the Kingdom. They speak in the name of God to make his will be known. They tell of God's plan of salvation. Denouncing sin, they reprimand but they also speak of forgiveness and salvation by indicating the way of God (cf. Is. 1 – 4).

Jesus' life and mission was characterised by several prophetic features. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, he revealed the content and meaning of the 'signs of the times', he was critical of those who liked to monopolise the keys to the Kingdom and who did not let the little ones in, he spoke out against religious hypocrisy and helped to see clear through situations of his time that were difficult to discern. Finally, like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus was rejected by the powers in place.

The mission of the Church in the world is not different from the prophetic mission of Jesus, and our own missionary institute follows his way. While recognising the deepest bonds that link the Church with mankind and its history, so much that "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age... are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ... and that, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in the hearts of Christians", the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* also vowed to bring "to mankind light kindled from the Gospel, and to put at its disposal those saving resources which the Church herself, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, receives from her Founder. This stems from the conviction that human society deserves to be renewed" (Cf. GS 1-3)).

We live fully in the world, but we are not of the world (cf. Jn 17:11.14). The prophetic mission of the Christian believer in the world is based on that. As disciples of Jesus called to be salt of the earth, we are at the service of the world today in order to transform it in the perspective of Creation, of the Covenant, of the Incarnation and of the Paschal mystery. May the 29th General Chapter be for us an opportunity to recommit ourselves to our vocation to be better apostles in the African world, and only apostles.

With my Council, I promulgate and entrust you these Capitular Acts.

Rome, 30th September 2022

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'S' followed by 'Lubungo' and a small flourish at the end.

Stanley Lubungo
Superior General

ABBREVIATIONS

C&L = *Constitutions and Laws, Society of the Missionaries of Africa* (2018).

CIC = *Codex Iuris Canonici* / The Code of Canon Law (1983, with the new text of Book VI enacted on 8 December 2021).

CICLSAL = *Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*.

EG = *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis (2013).

FT = *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis (2020).

I = *Instructions aux Missionnaires*, Cardinal Lavigerie (Ed. Grands Lacs, 1950).

JPIC-ED = *Justice and Peace, Integrity of Creation – Encounter and Dialogue*.

LS = *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis (2015).

RM = *Redemptoris Missio*, Saint John Paul II (1990).

VC = *Vita Consecrata*, Saint John Paul II (1996).

1. CHARISM



Our Charism has been the common heritage of our Society for over 150 years. It is, above all, a gift of the Holy Spirit enabling us to build the Kingdom of God. This Charism identifies us and orientates our mission.

Our apostolate has always been lived according to the characteristics that make up our Charism. We are a Society of apostles, with Jesus as our model and sent by him into the world. We are animated by a passion for God and humanity. We bear witness to God's love, individually and in intercultural communities, to our brothers and sisters in Africa, the African world and wherever our Charism is needed.

We live our missionary oath in radical fidelity, calling us to be authentic and prophetic witnesses.

Our Charism has been constantly re-actualised during the different Chapters. In a new and prophetic dynamic, we wish to offer laymen and women today the possibility of sharing with us the Charism bequeathed to us by our founder.



1.1 THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

"The love of Christ compels us" (2 Cor 5:14).

The Gospel is at the heart of our spirituality. Listening to, and meditating on the Word of God every day, nourished by the love of Christ, we are continually formed to live in radical fidelity to our missionary oath, simple lifestyle, obedience and celibacy. This is what makes us authentic and credible apostles, amongst ourselves and the people to whom we are sent, in keeping with the invitation of our founder: *"Be apostles, nothing but apostles..."* (I n°41, p. 125).

In a world where individualism takes precedence over community spirit, the rampant quest for personal well-being does, however, challenge our way of living the evangelical counsels today. We can be tempted by worldliness to adopt the attitudes of others to money, power, sexuality and social media. Lack of personal and community prayer, poor quality of community life, and lack of authenticity in chastity and our relationships, inside and outside the community, can inhibit our faithfulness in observing the evangelical counsels.

Obedience is an integral part of our call. It is firstly obedience to God, embodied in obedience to the Society's decisions and those charged with the responsibility of leading it. Pressed by the flame of love, touched by the suffering of our fellow human beings and in obedience to the charism of the Society as nomads of the Gospel, we dare to leave our zones of material comfort and security to respond generously to the call to go to the existential peripheries to live the *"All to All"* in solidarity.

As our founder would say, lack of zeal is the enemy of the Society and Africa (cf. I n° 64, p. 325). We continue to rekindle in our hearts the *Caritas*; the desire to live this mission in genuine, sincere and fraternal communities.

Our simple lifestyle demands an attitude of humility in relationships with ourselves and the people we live with. It liberates us at all levels of life, inviting us to know how to enjoy the simplest things (LS 223). Simple lifestyle not only helps us to have moderate and reasonable attitudes toward material goods such as money and worldly ambitions but, above all, leads us in a more profound way to be brothers who are easily accessible to all.

The Chapter recommends that:

- 1.** Each confrere have a spiritual companion whom he meets regularly.
- 2.** We radically live the non-negotiable elements expressed in our missionary oath: obedience in all that concerns the apostolate, community life, simple lifestyle and celibacy. Ignoring these elements puts us on the fringe of the spirit of the Society.
- 3.** Confreres reaffirm their missionary oath at the end of each annual retreat or other events such as 8th December.
- 4.** Each community seek the necessary means to deepen its fraternal character through a community project which includes all aspects of community life, which is revised annually.
- 5.** Each confrere use social media and material goods reasonably, to foster a good community spirit.



1.2 SHARING OUR CHARISM WITH THE LAITY

«Apostolic love requires us to be "all things to all men" (cf. 1 Cor 9:22), that is to say, to be welcoming and open, to live close to people, and to be simple in our relations with them» (C&L 20).

Certain forms of association or cooperation with the Society may be envisaged according to the Society's own law (C&L 58).

We note with joy that lay people feel a call to share our Missionary of Africa Charism and express the desire for a specific missionary commitment. This is, for us, a sign of the maturity and fecundity of our Society especially after celebrating the 150-year jubilee. It is also a sign of the times, given our commitment to Africa and the African world. Our Society has a rich tradition of collaboration with lay people in its apostolate, e.g. groups of friends and families of the Missionaries of Africa which have been formed in several places and "Lavagerie" groups supporting us.

It is time to open our doors to lay people who wish to share our missionary Charism in a formal way, different from what we have known before. Nevertheless, the group that the Chapter seeks to establish will have a particular canonical and juridical status.

Pope Francis has made a call to this effect: *"I trust in the Lord, but I have this to say: let us prepare ourselves for what can happen and let us give our charism, our gift, to those who can bring it forward."* (Address of Pope Francis to the Augustinian Recollects 17.03.22).

What will be new?

The "Association" or "Third Order" (CIC, canon 303; C&L 58) will be independent in its organization and management of its material goods. It will be composed of lay people who feel a call to share the Charism of the Missionaries

of Africa through a formal commitment. This will be like the members of lay associations who live the apostolic life in their environment while being inspired by the Charism of a Society of Apostolic Life. The structure will be governed by the norms and requirements of Canon Law.

What will be the Mission of the “Association” or “Third Order”?

Depending on the context, the Association can adopt all or part of our missionary priorities. Thus, the Association would influence and develop our Charism. The members of the Association can initially participate in apostolic activities that correspond to our Charism where they live. Later, when the Association is sufficiently constituted, it will be able to discern the orientations most conducive to living our Charism.

The Missionaries of Africa will, in the beginning, ensure that the Associations which develop in different regions are united in their approach, bear the same name, know each other and collaborate.

What will be the role of the Society?

In the first instance, the Society, through the General Council and the Provincial Councils, will receive a formal request from the laity concerned. The Association will subsequently take charge of welcoming new members.

The Society will provide spiritual accompaniment and missionary formation and ensure the integrity in ministry. The formation will give a prominent place to the presentation of our Charism, our missionary priorities and the history of the Society. It will encourage the members of the Association to develop their spiritual life, particularly following Christ through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. To this end, the Provincial may appoint a chaplain who regularly reports to him on the progress of this group.

The Society will remain open to the possibility of a *missio ad extra* if, after discernment, there is a call in this direction. Some groups of lay people already exist and carry within them such a desire. The Provinces will discern with them the appropriateness of proposing such a step.

The Chapter recommends that:

- 1.** The General Council study the canonical and juridical procedures and establish the association.
- 2.** The General Council contact the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa to explore the opportunity to collaborate in this domain.



2. MISSION



As Missionaries of Africa, we have broadened our traditional understanding of primary evangelization, previously seen as taking the Gospel to places where it was not known. We have been at the forefront of inculturation, sowing the seeds of the Gospel through our immersion in the language and culture of the people. In line with our Charism, we have not ceased to act in favour of Justice and Peace and to promote dialogue and encounter with believers of other Christian denominations, believers of Islam and those of African Traditional Religions.

We respond today to the challenges of the contemporary world by going to the fractured zones, to the peripheries of society and of the Church, where others would not go. Our zeal for mission helps us venture out and remain present in difficult pastoral commitments in and out of Africa, such as the apostolate with migrants, prisoners, street children, and the fight against human trafficking.

Our intercultural life is a challenge and an inspiring example to an increasingly polarised world where tribalism, racism, religious fundamentalism and greed divide people. Through our closeness to people, we bear witness to the boundless love of a God who chose to become one of us.



2.1 PRIMARY EVANGELISATION TODAY

«It has been my rule to preach the gospel only where the name of Christ has not already been heard, for I do not build on another's foundations; in accordance with Scripture, "those who have never been told about him will see him and those who have never heard about him will understand"» (Rom 15:19-21).

As a Missionary Society, since our foundation we have accepted the challenge and invitation to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Africa, especially in places where Christ is not known (cf. C&L 1-9). We have lived this mission by immersing ourselves in the language and culture of the people, striving to use various means to inculturate the message of Christ in the African world.

The challenges of our contemporary world call us to continue incarnating the Good News of Jesus Christ also in the 'socio-cultural contexts' of the African world not touched by the gospel message (cf. RM 33). We continue to nurture the faith planted by our predecessors in maintaining long term commitments such as parishes, training and empowering catechists and other lay people. This enables them to proclaim the Good News to others and provides us fertile ground for vocations and financial support for our mission.

As we thank God and appreciate what our society has achieved over the past 150 years, we also acknowledge the obstacles we are facing in trying to be "nomads of the gospel" as our original call and mission requires of us.

We have become aware that at times we may think our presence is irrelevant under the illusion that all Africans are evangelized. We also recognize that clinging to comfort zones and to financial security weakens our missionary zeal. Such preoccupations often paralyze and hinder our audacity to move into the unknown, due to a lack of trust in Providence. We have become aware that our lack of stability prevents serious commitment towards learning the language and culture of the people and renders our missionary insertions superficial.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, our missionary zeal urges us to respond once again to the call of our founder, to be all things to all people, apostles and nothing but apostles, and to go to peoples of the African world *“who do not yet believe in Christ, who are far from Christ, in whom the Church has not yet taken root and whose culture has not yet been influenced by the Gospel”*(RM 34).

The Chapter recommends that:

1. Confreres invest fully in at least 6 months of language and cultural immersion before beginning full time missionary work.
2. Considering the investment done by learning the language and immersion in the culture, any appointment be for a minimum of 6 years in striving for stability and for the good of the Mission,
3. Faithful to our charism, all insertions have a clear commitment to the peripheries.
4. In view of better insertion, each sector designates an experienced confrere who knows the reality on the ground, to accompany confreres and the community on first and new appointments.
5. The media-team in each Province and Section be reinforced in order to give confreres the opportunity to share and publish online their experiences of primary evangelization.
6. Confreres use also social-media for evangelization following the *Ethical Guide to Social Networks* (Prot. 22 0210).

2. 2 ENCOUNTER AND DIALOGUE



Islam, Ecumenism, New Religious Movements and African Traditional Religions

Jesus met many people as he travelled through Galilee and Judea. Most of them were transformed by his words, gestures and presence, as we can see in the Gospels: the conversation with Nicodemus (Jn 3), the encounter with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-42), the healing of the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mt 15:21-28), etc. Encounter is at the heart of our mission and invites us to enter into dialogue with all cultures and religions.

Since the foundation of our missionary Society, we have always "*had a particular interest in Muslims*" (C&L 1). Our presence in Ethiopia, Jerusalem and our activities among the Churches of the Middle East have exposed us to the ecumenical dimension of the Christian faith. In Sub-Saharan Africa, we encounter traditional religions firmly rooted in the culture of the peoples who welcome us. We respond to these realities by deepening our knowledge through a variety of studies. Our participation in the many publications on linguistics and anthropology manifest our interest in Encounter and Dialogue. In addition, we are involved in specialised centres such as PISAI, IFIC, IRDIS, Sénoufo, Kungoni, Fenza and others.

Encounter and Dialogue are not always easy. We face obstacles such as insecurity, fundamentalism and the political manipulation of religions. In addition to these external phenomena, there are fears and prejudices based on mutual misunderstanding between some of our confreres and members of local churches, Muslims and followers of traditional religions. Few confreres are trained in the field of African Traditional Religions. Some candidates and confreres are reluctant to be sent to predominantly Islamic countries. We have also failed to sufficiently highlight the work of our predecessors in the field of encounter with Islam.

The Chapter recommends that:

1. Candidates in formation and their formators by making clear choices in their studies and pastoral commitments commit themselves to “the mystique of living together, of mingling and encounter” (EG n°87) with Muslims, Christians of other Churches, new religious movements and followers of African Traditional Religions . That the candidates in the first phase of formation be trained in the research of traditional practices in their respective cultures, instilling in them the desire to meet the followers of African Traditional Religions.
2. A permanent community in Jerusalem, committed to meeting with Jews, Muslims and Oriental Churches for mutual understanding, reconciliation and peace be maintained.
3. We awaken and sensitise the local Church and collaborate with it in order to promote Encounter and Dialogue with Muslims, with other Christians and followers of African Traditional Religions. It further recommends that confreres be sent for studies aimed at a better understanding of African Traditional Religions just as in Islam and ecumenism. These confreres commit to the research and publication of their work, especially in all that concerns inculturation.
4. Our parishes and specialized centres be proactive in proposing activities aimed at encounter and dialogue for peace building and respect for the environment in the spirit of Laudato Si' and Fratelli Tutti.
5. We continue the daily dialogue of life and faith. We live inter-religious dialogue with all people of goodwill in order to counteract the extremist currents that impose their ideologies and religious fundamentalism while violating the dignity of human beings.



2.3 JUSTICE and PEACE, INTEGRITY OF CREATION (JPIC)

"I am a man, injustice to other men revolts my heart. I am a man, oppression outrages my nature. I am a man, cruelty to so many of my fellow men inspires me with horror. I am a man, and what I would like to see done to give me back my freedom, my honour, the sacred bonds of the family, I want to do to give the sons of these peoples their honour, their freedom, their dignity." (Cardinal Lavignerie, Conference on African slavery, Rome, Church of the Gesù, 28 December 1888).

We are revolted by the sufferings of our brothers and sisters. Environmental degradation and climate change are affecting our "common home" and, more particularly the African peoples. Rampant insecurity and migration from the African world to the northern hemisphere and within African states are growing. Poor governance and socio-political instability open the door to the tyranny of multinational corporations that grab land, plunder and exploit natural resources, manipulate government structures and impoverish the population. It is for these reasons that JPIC-ED is a priority for Missionaries of Africa today. Our various commissions in Africa and outside Africa are involved in organizing JPIC activities and training sessions. The Society invests in our various centres, and subsequently several confreres have been trained and appointed in this field. In order to make our action effective, a Co-ordination for the whole Society is in place and guides us. A vade-mecum for JPIC-ED animators has been elaborated for the Society. Each province and section updates it according to its own context.

Our commitment to JPIC is not new to us and is not merely confined to specialists. Many confreres are passionate about JPIC and give a wonderful testimony; carrying out very simple activities in their immediate environment. We journey in solidarity with the people in whose midst we live, daring to defend their rights and dignity at the local level and the forums of decision-making. The existential experiences that confront us push us to commit

ourselves concretely to the service of Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation by networking with other collaborators.

However, our commitment is often restrained due to the lack of interest and ignorance of some, the fear of commitment and the difficulty of reading the signs of the times. The magnitude of the task can sometimes make us feel powerless causing us to leave this ministry in the hands of specialists and local people. We sometimes underestimate the injustice in our own communities and towards our collaborators. We also neglect to work with local churches and others in the same ministry.

The Chapter recommends that :

- 1.** Each Province and Section reflect on the injustices within our Society and on how we deal with our collaborators.
- 2.** We commit ourselves to collaborating with the local Church and civil society actors in concrete actions in favour of peace and reconciliation. That during its Post-Capitular assembly, each Province and Section determine issues of JPIC requiring profound analysis and concrete action, to be addressed during the next six years. Each community find a concrete commitment to JPIC outside its usual functioning.
- 3.** Our insertions be models in the field of JPIC by working for the formation of the laity, involving especially the youth. Through animation in social issues and education for peace, we accompany people to take their own destiny in their own hands for a better social cohesion.
- 4.** The Society continue to maintain and join other congregations that are involved in areas where decision making affecting the future of Africa takes place, e.g. Washington, Brussels, Geneva and Addis Ababa. That confreres continue to be trained for this type of ministry.

5. We all familiarize ourselves with the available tools, such as our vademecum for JPIC-ED and the Church's social teaching. We share our experiences widely and engage with existing networks.
6. Following Pope Francis' call for ecological conversion, each community join the Laudato Si' platform (Laudato Si' Action Platform) and take concrete actions within their context.



2.4 LISTENING AND COLLABORATING WITH THE LOCAL CHURCH

“For this reason, my joy has been fulfilled. He must increase but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30).

Faithful to our Charism (C&L 9), we are sent to be at the service of the local Church, enhancing its evangelizing mission in concrete situations, and giving priority to the peripheries. As initiators, we courageously go to areas and situations where our Charism is most needed. One mark of our identity is our willingness to live among the people, by learning their language and culture and developing meaningful relationships that help root the gospel in their lives.

In response to the invitation of the local Church, we first listen to her needs and discern how we can participate in her evangelizing mission. This allows us to recognize and respond to priorities that can be of service to the Church and are in line with our Charism. Our international and intercultural

communities, our availability and humility to serve the local Church, and our approach to a people-based mission are both a positive witness and a challenge to the Churches we serve. Our unfailing commitment to JPIC-ED, Ecumenism, Inculturation, etc. is a reminder that the mission of the Church has a broader scope.

However, reluctance to properly learn the language and to explore in depth the culture, curtails what we can do within the local Church and reduces the impact of the witness we give. We also acknowledge that conflicting expectations over pastoral priorities between the Missionaries of Africa and the local Church compromise the distinctive character of our identity and charism. Similarly, the lack of stability in our communities does not allow full integration into the local Church. Furthermore, there is often a historical precedent between ourselves and the local Church which creates expectations we are unable to meet.

The Chapter recommends that:

1. We cultivate a positive and loving attitude towards the people we are sent to serve since they are our priority. For this reason, we must learn their language and explore the culture thoroughly, ensuring the required minimum of 6 months. It further recommends that we live among them for a reasonably stable period of time with an appointment of no less than six years in one place.
2. We develop the mind and attitude of anthropologists, inspired by the example of our predecessors in the Mission. This will help us to understand the people we are sent to, and facilitate a greater movement towards inculturation.
3. In serving the local Church, we do more to promote our distinctive character (Charism) in our insertions, instead of doing what everyone else does. There is a need to ensure that JPIC-ED, Ecumenism and Inculturation, find a place in our ministry.

4. We participate fully in activities organized in the local Church (diocesan meetings, commissions, ongoing formation programs, etc.). Such encounters help to strengthen relationships with different collaborators (the Bishop, local clergy, religious congregations, lay groups, etc.) and allow for more meaningful collaboration.
5. We courageously and positively live our simple lifestyle, our ministry and love for the people as prophetic witnesses to the local Church. We also remain open to being challenged by the local Church for the good and the advancement of the Mission.
6. The necessary measures be put in place to accompany new confreres and their communities in view of a better insertion, especially in their first term of mission. An experienced confrere be assigned for this task.
7. We acknowledge the historical precedents that can be obstacles to the Mission. Where called for, we embark on a path of healing and renewal both for ourselves and for the local Church.





2.5 MISSION OUTSIDE AFRICA (EUROPE/AMERICAS/ASIA/ GENERALATE)

"Our Constitutions and Laws state that our aim is *"to proclaim the Gospel to the peoples of the African World"* (C&L 1).

Today the African world goes far beyond the geographical boundaries of the continent due to globalization, with its influence on economic and political situation. We are challenged by the presence of millions of Africans living outside Africa, especially those living in the peripheries. While reaffirming our commitment to the African continent to which our founder pledged his unfailing love, we are called, through our Charism, to reach out to these Africans. We acknowledge and affirm the work done by the two previous General Councils of reinforcing existing insertions in Asia, Europe, and the Americas by appointing confreres, both young and experienced. Those confreres have been warmly welcomed and appreciated not only by those to whom they were sent but also by the local Churches with whom we continue to collaborate closely. Our insertions outside Africa have also been an occasion to strengthen the intercultural and international aspect of our mission while providing us with a profile and visibility that allow us to engage in missionary and vocation animation. Our insertions have allowed the passion and love for Africa of our elderly confreres, to live on in the younger confreres. We acknowledge that these projects greatly help to keep our missionary charism alive and active.

Notwithstanding the positive achievements of these insertions, we realize that not all confreres have embraced the idea and necessity of mission outside Africa. Some confreres argue that we were founded for Africa and should remain within the geographical boundaries of the continent. Others see our new insertions as a dispersion of scarce human resources as well as the betrayal of our founder's will. This lack of unanimity to engage in the mission outside Africa has prevented us from responding to invitations from some local Churches where our Charism is needed. Other challenges include strict immigration policies, a reluctance of provinces in Africa to release

confreres, a lack of enthusiasm in the receiving sectors. Lack of proper discernment in the appointment of confreres has contributed to difficulties in some of these insertions.

The Chapter recommends that:

- 1.** Our house in Rome also become a portal to the African world. In addition to its existing functions, let it serve as a place for regular conferences and debates concerning Africa as well as a meeting point for Africans living, studying and teaching in Rome.
- 2.** Considering the current immigration restrictions in India, an evaluation of the viability of maintaining two formation houses in India (a First Phase Center and an Aspirancy) and one in the Philippines (a First Phase Center) be undertaken. This evaluation explore the best options for both formators and candidates in line with the formation system of our Society. It will also take into consideration the manner and impact of vocation animation in both places and find the best way forward. The evaluation will involve the members of the General Council in close collaboration with the confreres of the Section of Asia (SOA).
- 3.** Where possible, new insertions in line with our Charism be opened in Provinces and Sections outside Africa with the support of the General Council.
- 4.** In appointing confreres to insertions outside Africa, the General Council ensure that interculturality and internationality are observed. All efforts be made to avoid staffing these insertions exclusively with nationals of the Sector where the project is situated or with confreres originating from the same geographical area.
- 5.** Stability in all these insertions be ensured with an initial appointment of a minimum of ten years, assuming that confreres adapt positively to the new environment. The appointed confreres have had a positive experience of mission in Africa and be willing to respond to the specific pastoral commitments of concerned Provinces and Sections.

3. INTEGRITY IN MINISTRY



“Whenever you did it to one of the least of these who are my brothers, you did it to me.” (Mt 25:40).

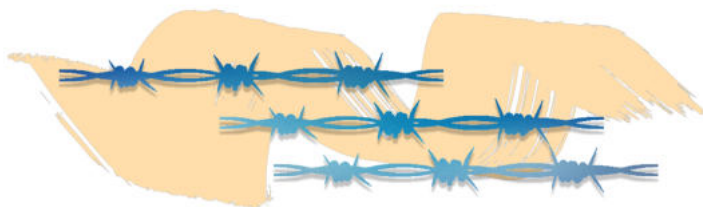
Integrity in ministry is part of our vocation to live the Gospel radically in all areas, in line with our missionary oath to follow Jesus Christ. We reflect this presence by giving witness to his love while also living in fraternal communities concerned for the well-being of all. We rejoice in the witness of those who built on the legacy of our founder, who himself made prophetic gestures in the area of Integrity in Ministry (Cf. *Instructions pour la direction du college St. Louis de Carthage*, nov. 1880).

We continue the work of our predecessors by creating conditions that promote a healthy personal balance. We develop a sound financial management policy. Our policy on the protection of minors and of persons in situation of vulnerability emphasizes the care of the victim, because any abuse of a person’s dignity is a sin against God. We emphasize on prevention and training programmes for confreres, candidates and our collaborators. We share our experiences and raise awareness in the local Churches.

However, ambition for power and money, imbalance in personal life, lack of authenticity and sometimes stress and burnout can contribute to acts of counter-witness that destroy lives. We feel ashamed of the abuse caused by confreres. We ask for forgiveness from the victims. We commit ourselves to restoring justice and to participate actively in the processes of reparation undertaken by the Church (CIC can 1376).

The Chapter recommends that:

1. We make all our communities places of sharing where every confrere can talk about their difficulties without fear of being judged so that matters are dealt with on time.
2. Confreres with difficulties (financial or sexual abuse, addictions, etc.) be offered help immediately before the situation deteriorates.
3. Confreres with difficulties be accompanied, as far as possible, in their Province and Section of appointment without sending them back to the country of origin..
4. Confreres involved in any form of abuse be made to take responsibility for their actions and agree to follow and participate responsibly in the appropriate treatment offered to them.
5. Our policy of financial management be strengthened through systematic financial reporting of our pastoral activities, regular audits of our accounts and activities by independent professionals.
6. Clear guidelines for "financial scandals", taking into account CIC canon 1376, be elaborated and made known to confreres for implementation.



4. INTER-CULTURALITY AS PROPHETIC WITNESS



“Communities of consecrated life, where persons of different ages, languages and cultures meet as brothers and sisters, are signs that dialogue is always possible and that communion can bring differences into harmony” (VC n°51).

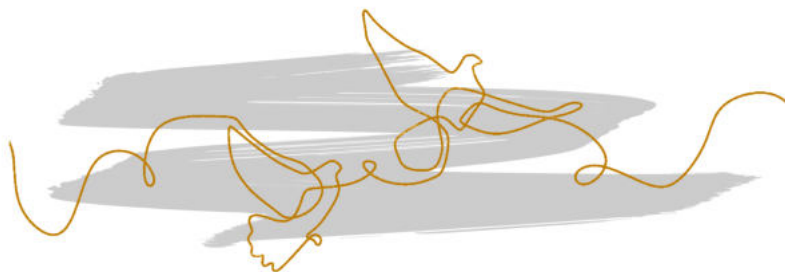
Cardinal Lavigerie gave our Society the international character that we now know: *“I declare that I will not keep a single one of you who does not surround with the same love all the members of the Society, regardless of which nation they belong.”* (I n°105, p. 260). The Society has gradually been enriched by new nationalities and is now composed of confreres from 36 different nationalities, giving a strong prophetic witness in our contemporary society.

As in several parts of the world, our Society also faces the challenge of interculturality. This calls us to greater openness to the other, respecting and appreciating our cultural differences. Intercultural living is the result of a personal and community conversion that begins in the early years of formation and continues throughout our missionary life. As Pope Francis emphasizes, it is *“an opportunity for the enrichment and integral development of all”* (FT n°133).

From the very beginning of the Society, cultural, international and inter-generational diversity has always been part of our identity and a witness to our mission. This diversity enriches us in our community living and is a witness to the local Church and among peoples of diverse cultures with whom we live and work. Our intercultural living expresses our commitment to learning from other people in humility and gratitude, transforming our

communities into places of sympathetic hospitality where different sensibilities and cultures can gain strength and significance unknown elsewhere and thus, highly prophetic... (CICLSAL, *New wine in new wineskins*, n°40). This is an embodiment of our desire and openness to go beyond our languages and cultures to willingly love and embrace the culture of the people to whom we are sent. In doing so, we become a sign of hope for peace and unity, building bridges among peoples and cultures in our world today.

We are the fruits of our human and fragile society. The times in which we live are characterized by divisions and hatred based on nationalism, ethnicity, individualism, religion, gender, racism, etc. There exist prejudices towards certain cultures and nationalities, resulting in immigration complications and restrictions in our mission. We don't remain unaffected by such serious challenges, at times indulging in inter-generational and intercultural conflicts in our communities and mission. We recognize a growing tendency towards nationalism in our voting system for positions of responsibility, which some confreres consider as a desire for power, thus bringing mistrust, prejudice and apathy towards certain nationalities. We acknowledge the existence of sectarian groups, cliques, and a number of confreres of the same nationality in their country of origin who influence decision-making. The lack of knowledge of the two official languages of the Society hinders some confreres from being available for an appointment to some areas of mission. All these obstacles have serious repercussions on our intercultural community living and the call to be prophetic witnesses.



The Chapter recommends that:

1. In order to remain faithful to our Charism, all our pastoral-based communities, formation houses, candidates and formators alike, truly reflect our international and intercultural character. We witness, not only as individuals; but most importantly, as community. Our interculturality is a style of life and mission that shows who we are.
2. The value and necessity of knowing both English and French be fostered at all the levels of our formation in such a manner that, at the end of their initial formation, all our candidates have a mastery of the two official languages of the Society. This is an advantage in our availability for the Mission.
3. Seminars, workshops and retreats on intercultural living be organised, not only in our formation houses but also at all levels, Province, Section, Sectors and communities. This provides a forum for us to be aware of and share about what we live and experience in our communities and mission. The recognition and deep respect for our cultural differences is the starting point of all our activities.
4. Only in exceptional circumstances may a confrere be recalled for “*home service*”. While acknowledging the value and necessity of “*home service*”, the Chapter strongly discourages the increasing tendency among confreres to request to be recalled to their Provinces or Sections of origin.
5. Those in leadership serve our intercultural communities in a spirit of communion, helping them to offer, in a world marked by many divisions, the witness that it is possible to live together and to love one another even in our differences (cf. The service of authority and obedience, n°25b).

5. IDENTITY AND FORMATION OF THE BROTHERS



We are a Society of brothers and priests living in fraternal communities. The combination of these two facets of our Society is a treasure to be preserved. By our oath, our common vocation is to be missionary disciples proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ by placing ourselves at the service of the people we are sent to. Our missionary vocation is well presented by our vocation animators.

The brothers have a particular vocation within our Society. Since the beginning they have significantly contributed to the proclamation of the Good News, the development of the Mission and the life of the Society by being very close to people.

However, their vocation is sometimes misunderstood and devalued. The influence of clericalism both in the Society and in the wider population has contributed to the lack of understanding and appreciation of the brother vocation. The decline in the number of brothers in the Society affects their visibility. Their formation lacks clarity in the context of an ever-changing world with the growing demands of the Mission.

The Chapter recommends that :

- 1.** Vocation animators and formators help brother candidates to discern, clarify and specify the professional field in which they would exercise their missionary life according to the specified needs of the Society, in order to offer them a holistic formation. The General Council specify the fields of formation to be proposed to brother candidates. This will guide their formation in the first phase, appointment to the Stage and to a fourth phase centre with appropriate programmes. When a brother does not have a profession at the end of his initial formation, he should complete his training.
- 2.** Brothers be also appointed in our different specialized centers.
- 3.** Brothers continue to be appointed in our formation houses and as missionary and vocation animators for better visibility.
- 4.** A coordinator, who is a brother, be appointed to accompany and animate the formation of brothers.
- 5.** A committee chaired by this coordinator, under the supervision of the Secretary for Initial Formation, deepen the reflection on the formation to be given to the brothers and submit it to the General Council.

6. FORMATION IN VIEW OF PROPHETIC WITNESS



Our formation as Missionaries of Africa is a lifelong process. Initial Formation is just the beginning of a long journey for which we ourselves have the first responsibility. The Society offers us many opportunities for renewal in the mission, adapted to every age and specific needs.

We are grateful to God for the variety and quality of the candidates and for the formators who accompany them and seriously prepare them for missionary life.



6.1 VOCATION PROMOTION, INITIAL AND SPECIALIZED FORMATION

"What are you looking for?" "Come and see", (John 1: 35-42)

Our intercultural and international formation system continues to prove its worth. It is based on the essential dimensions of missionary life (spiritual, human, community, intellectual, apostolic) and takes into account the coherence from one phase to another. The Society ensures the formation and accompaniment of confreres who are generous and available to accomplish their mission as formators. Our formation is marked by a tradition of simplicity and proximity between formators and candidates. It is oriented towards the

formation of apostles and prophets as our Founder wrote: “*Be apostles, and nothing else*” (I n° 41, p.125).

However, there is a lack of rigour in applying the vade-mecum, in the selection and follow-up of candidates as well as in evaluations and psychological reports by some animators and formators. A spirit of entitlement, misunderstanding of freedom, lack of deep motivation, lack of availability for certain mission environments and certain attitudes marked by clericalism prevent candidates from being true missionary witnesses ready and available to respond to the needs of the Mission.

Specialized formation in view of prophetic witnessing must take into account the realities that challenge us today: insecurity, violence, migration, precariousness, ecological crises (climate, environment), fundamentalism, New Religious Movements, the decline in religious practice (atheism), African Traditional Religions, inter-religious dialogue and a lack of rootedness in the faith.

The Chapter recommends that:

- 1.** The Provincials ensure that the vocation animators receive a formation appropriate to their mission.
- 2.** The selection of candidates be made following the objective criteria contained in the Vade-mecum for Initial Formation.
- 3.** The candidates be initiated from the very beginning of their formation into the spirit of discernment and prophetic commitment, and learn the two languages of the Society.
- 4.** That Initial Formation be truly an "initiation" in which the foundations of our missionary Charism are established in response to the challenges of today's world (cf. C&L 107). This will enable new confreres, at the end of their Initial Formation, to be ready and available to respond to the needs of the Mission.

5. The period of apostolic training (Stage), which is a crucial phase in vocational discernment, be done in a community where the candidate has a substantial experience of insertion confronting him with contemporary challenges. This will enable him to progress in his discernment and guide his reflection in the Fourth Phase.
6. Specialized studies be oriented towards new fields of study such as migration, ecological crises, social analysis, psychological accompaniment, canon law, etc.



6.2 ONGOING FORMATION

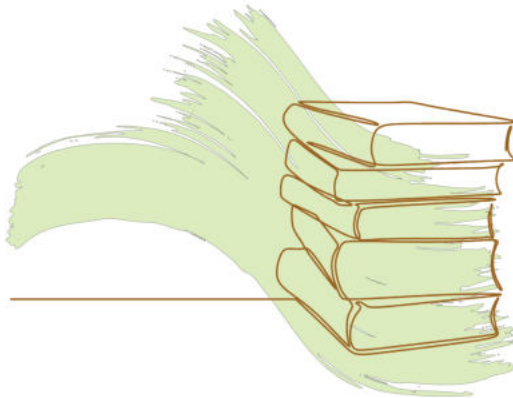
“There is an urgent need for a culture of Ongoing Formation” (CICLSAL, New Wine in new Wineskins, n°16, 2017).

Like the new wine poured into new wineskins (cf. Mk 2:22), formation is a lifelong process. This means that Ongoing Formation is an integral part of our missionary life. It should be holistic, touching all aspects of our lives and not just a response to difficulties. It enables us to nourish our missionary zeal, ensuring greater awareness of the signs of the times and the changing face of Mission, making our mission relevant today. Our Society recognizes the importance of Ongoing Formation and offers many opportunities to help confreres in this area.

However, some of us do not recognize the importance and necessity of Ongoing Formation in their lives; therefore, they are not open to the many opportunities presented by the Society (Jerusalem, ICOF, etc.) and the local Church.

The Chapter recommends that :

1. Ongoing Formation be considered as a personal responsibility enabling us to be true witnesses to those we are sent to. To take time not only to renew ourselves through various sessions, but also by reading books and the various publications of our Society (Petit Echo, booklets on the history of our Society, etc.) as well as participating in online formation sessions.
2. To invest more in the formation of confreres who can become resource persons for the accompaniment of confreres.



7. WELL-BEING OF CONFRERES



The Society takes care of its members at all stages of their lives. It encourages them to look after their health and well-being, thus allowing them to render effective service to the Mission.

We are all co-responsible for each other, respectfully accompanying confreres in difficulty in a fraternal spirit.



7.1 SELF-CARE

“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest”; for there were so many coming and going that there was no time for them to eat.”
(Mark 6:31)

The most precious gift we offer is ourselves. The fruitfulness of our ministry depends largely on a balanced and harmonious life. This is why each confrere is responsible for taking care of himself, for his good and that of the mission. The Society provides means (retreats, renewal sessions, sabbaticals, local, weekly and family leave, etc.) to help us stay physically, spiritually, mentally and intellectually healthy for the mission. This is reinforced in our community life through the care we give to each other, personal relationships, recreation, prayer, outings and regular meetings.

Unfortunately, and for various reasons, some of us do not make good use of these opportunities, which negatively affects our wellbeing as well as our emotions and effectiveness in the mission.



7.2 ACCOMPANYING CONFRERES

“We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” (Rom 15:1)

The Society is committed to caring for confreres, accompanying them at every stage and in every situation of their lives. It does so in a spirit of charity, truth, honesty and dialogue for their own good and that of the Mission (cf. C&L 56, 2). As brothers, we are all concerned and responsible for the well-being of each other, and we support each other. We receive those in difficulty with compassion and understanding, without judgment. We listen to them and offer them the special care they need as a sign of solidarity. Our communities play an important role in caring for and accompanying confreres, especially those in difficulty.

However, some of our communities are not ready for accompanying confreres, lack empathy and sensitivity, nor are they properly prepared to face such challenges. Regardless of what our Society offers or the assistance available in the community, the healing process can only begin when the confrere in difficulty recognises his problem and accepts the help offered.



7.3 SENIOR CONFRERES

The Society is grateful to its senior members for the gift of their lives in the service of the Mission. They remain missionaries at heart through their prayer and interest in the development of the Society and of Africa, which they dearly love and to which they remain very attached. As retirement from active life sometimes brings important changes, confreres have to be accompanied with respect and affection. Senior confreres greatly appreciate visits from younger confreres and news from their former places of mission.

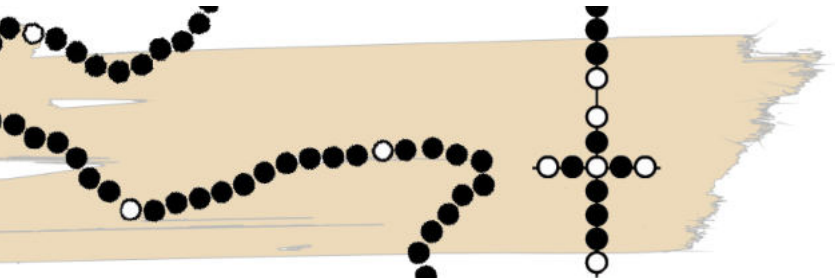
We admire the dynamism and commitment of some senior confreres in pastoral work, in the animation of sectors and individual meetings with Muslims and with migrants.

A growing number of senior confreres in Europe and America live in homes where there are other consecrated and lay persons. This is in general appreciated. Some continue to write about the experiences of their years in the missions and thus give witness to their families and young people. Several communities of seniors are in contact with one formation house or another. The African provinces are also becoming aware that some of their confreres are getting older. They are already thinking about how best to prepare for the retirement of their senior confreres.



The Chapter recommends that:

1. We come up with guidelines and tools to raise awareness of the need for self-care and how to lead a balanced life, for example, the publication of a digital newsletter to animate confreres on ongoing formation and self-care.
2. While recognising the significant role of community life in the healing process of a confrere, we explore a more creative approach, involving relatives, friends and professionals in finding solutions to the complexity of situations.
3. We discuss the use of gadgets during community activities so as to improve the quality of our community life.
4. Each confrere recommit himself to his missionary Oath by leading an authentic community and apostolic life (prayer, balanced life, self-discipline, etc.) and avoiding being a counter-witness (staying and going out late, excessive alcohol consumption, absences without reason, etc.).



8. GOVERNANCE



Confreres are the Society's greatest asset, therefore, the responsibility of those in leadership is paramount. The General Council, Provincial Superiors, Section Superiors, Provincial Assistants, Provincial Delegates and Community Superiors all exercise their ministry at the service of confreres in a spirit of subsidiarity, with a firmness marked by benevolence.

The Society ensures that internationality is respected at all levels of the Society, recognizing that interculturality is a prophetic witness wherever we are sent.

The financial situation of the Society calls for prudence and updating in its management. Trusting in Providence, we rely on the competence and transparency of the bursars, who collaborate closely with the Provincial Superior or with the Section Superior. The generosity of many benefactors, income-generating projects, the spirit of solidarity, and the contribution and efforts of the confreres are the essential elements that contribute to a fair balance of our annual budgets and balance sheets.



8.1 MANAGING OUR HUMAN RESOURCES TOWARDS MISSION AS PROPHETIC WITNESS

“Do nothing out of partiality or vainglory, but in humility look on others as being above yourselves” (Ph 2:3).

Our administrative structures are at the service of the Mission as prophetic witness, and favour internationality and interculturality. Those in charge of these structures (Provincials, Assistants, Delegates) pay great attention to the confreres they lead by visiting communities and ensuring regular contact, testifying to a spirit of co-responsibility and subsidiarity. The Provincial Delegates play an essential role in ensuring a close relationship with the confreres and the local Church, while at the same time having an apostolic insertion in the environment. There has been significant progress towards the internationalisation of the leadership in the Provinces and Sectors. The various meetings between the General Council and the Section Superiors promote collaboration at the level of governance. The mega-Provinces have enabled us to broaden our missionary vision. These Provinces have equipped themselves with charters/statutes for their internal organisation.

However, when it comes to governance, our documents (charters, *vademecum*, etc.) are not well known, and our various procedures are not always followed. It is often difficult for confreres in the same Province or Sections to get to know each other because of the long distances. Moreover, a nationalistic or partisan tendency is developing in the choice of leaders, at the expense of Mission, interculturality and internationality. This calls for a process of personal conversion.

The Chapter recommends that:

- 1.** During the Post-Capitular Assembly the evaluation, revision and update of charters and statutes that govern each Province and Section be foreseen: in particular, the role and responsibilities of the Assistant, the Provincial Delegates, the division of Sectors and other points according to the specific context of each Province, Section or Sector.
- 2.** The planning for the renewal and formation of resource persons be done at the provincial level: vocational animators, formators (propaedeutic and first phase), bursars, Child Protection Delegates (CPD), JPIC-ED coordinators, etc. in dialogue with the General Council, while allowing new confreres a first missionary experience of six years.
- 3.** Provincial Assistants, Provincial Delegates and community animators be given good leadership training.
- 4.** In order to continue the Society's mission of prophetic witness in the Province of Europe (PEP) and in the Americas (AMS), let the leadership in these provinces be assured in reference to inter-continentiality and in close collaboration with the General Council.
- 5.** The animation of our structures of governance be reinforced through the use of new means of communication and investing in better internet connections to alternate between physical and online meetings.



8.2 MANAGING OUR MATERIAL RESOURCES IN VIEW OF MISSION AS PROPHETIC WITNESS

The practice of solidarity is essential in our financial system. It requires the participation of all confreres, individually and collectively in the budgeting and daily management of our resources. While we acknowledge the importance of Divine Providence, the Society insists on personal responsibility and puts it as a core value in managing our material resources.

In view of the Mission, we give priority to sustainability and better management of all our resources by insisting on auditing, training of bursars, starting new income generating projects as well as other important investments. We acknowledge the generosity of our benefactors and confreres in and outside Africa. They are a blessing and a constant reminder that the Society is not self-sufficient. Each confrere plays a key role towards self-sufficiency by collaborating with bursars at all levels, development committees and the local Church.

Despite making a lot of progress in our financial administration and management we still need to emphasize the need for the personal involvement of each confrere in ensuring the best care of our resources through realistic budgeting and the call to a simple lifestyle. We do not give an authentic witness when we use improperly our available resources. We sometimes lack good management, zeal, enthusiasm, transparency, skills, accountability, the sharing of vital information, the humility to accept and request material help from the local Church and our families. We are not always responsible enough for the maintenance of our fixed assets. We are too preoccupied about the diminishing income. We also lack adequate community reflection on financial issues and on the increase of personal projects.

The Chapter recommends that:

1. Structures for fundraising initiatives be set up in all Provinces and Sections in partnership with the laity and competent people, while strengthening already existing fundraising activities. For this it further recommends that inspiration and collaboration be sought from friends of Missionaries of Africa in America and Europe.
2. In the parishes where we work, we ask the Bishops for possibilities to fundraise for the Society and that this be included in the contracts. In the same line, in all other pastoral insertions and projects, we take concrete steps towards self-reliance and solidarity.
3. In the spirit of synodality and following our Constitutions and Laws, clear information be provided and broad consultations undertaken concerning the selling, the buying, and the development of properties. Where possible, properties also have an income generating orientation for the mission of the Society.
4. Faithful to our Constitutions and Laws (C&L 104), each confrere hand over to the local bursar all salary and extra stipends received from his pastoral engagement.
5. Each Province produce clear guidelines for the means of transport, make them known and implement them.
6. The General Council set up a committee to review our Society's financial system.
7. The annual contribution to the Solidarity Fund be reduced from 2,5% to 1% of our ordinary expenses.

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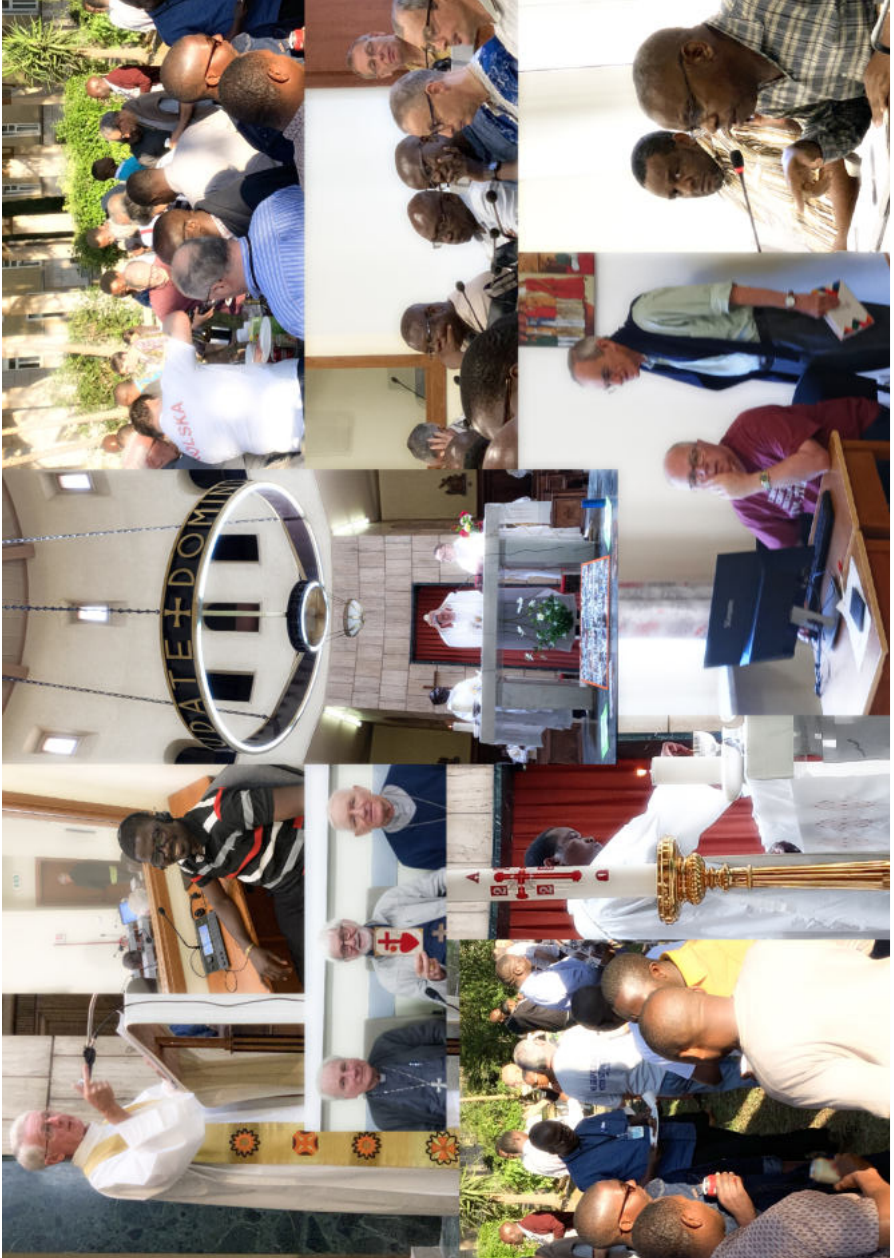
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29th General Chapter