

3-2009

## II. Consolidation of the Congregation

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### Recommended Citation

(2009). II. Consolidation of the Congregation. *Anima Una*, 62 (62). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/anima-una/vol62/iss62/6>

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had pointed out our need to be aware that we can be wounded as we minister in demanding situations and that our congregational leadership needs to ensure that if this happens, confreres receive the necessary care and support without delay. During the discussion in plenary session in Ariccia, it was felt that as a Congregation we still need to make significant advances here. While an essential part of our mission is to struggle for justice and human rights especially for the poor and marginalised, we need constantly to ensure that within our Congregation we fraternally resolve any cases of injustice or violation of human rights as soon as they occur.

## II. CONSOLIDATION OF THE CONGREGATION

### 2.1 MISSION APPOINTMENTS

The question of First Appointment elicited animated discussion on the part of the confreres at the EGC and many felt more time could have been given to it to enable them thrash out more this very important matter that concerns all. There was a felt need that with the number that we get annually for first appointment we could organise their appointment better and in a more equitable way to assist the circumscriptions most in need of personnel especially the small groups, the fragile circumscriptions and the aging provinces.

- There seems to have been a general agreement that the question of First Appointment needs to be taken very seriously by all the parties concerned to make sure that First Appointments work.

- It was also generally agreed that it may not be possible to completely stop changes of first appointment but we need to do something to reduce the frequency and the number of changes that occur.

The discussion was focused on what can be done to stop the perceived frequent changes of First Appointments and suggestions were made on three areas and these have now been adopted by the General Council for action in the remaining 4 years of its mandate.

### **What can be done during Initial Formation:**

- Effort will be made to strictly follow the recommendations of the Rule of Life, our Chapter documents especially TA 6.10 and Guide for Spiritan Formation on Criteria for Discerning and Accepting candidates into the Congregation.
- The topic of First Appointment should be regularly treated in the formation houses using the Guide for First Appointment.
- Clerical and Career models of formation should be avoided and a Religious and missionary style of formation adopted.
- There should be an atmosphere of ongoing dialogue which is frank, transparent, and without pressure or manipulation which will enable the confreres be formed in the true spirit of the Congregation with zeal and passion for mission.
- During this process of formation, the young confrere will be helped to understand the priorities of the Congregation and will be made to understand that certain kinds of

work are not for him either as a Spiritan or because of his own ability or gift or disposition.

- The formation of young confreres will have a very strong content of interior and spiritual formation to enable them withstand the rigors of life in our contemporary world.
- A serious discernment about the attitude of the young confrere to missionary life needs to be carried out; here his real motivations need to be checked out. A prolonged trans-cultural experience (stage) would help to see the capacities of the young person to live the missionary life as well as enabling him to form part of the missionary project of a circumscription.
- Older and experienced confreres from the mission should be encouraged to visit houses of formation to share their missionary experiences with the younger ones.

#### **During the process of discernment:**

- The orientations in the Guide for “First Appointments” will always be followed.
- A very detailed and complete evaluation of the confreres for first appointment should be sent to the General Council.
- Before the actual appointment there should be dialogue and discernment between all the parties concerned in this case, the candidate himself, his superior of origin, the superior of his proposed appointment and the General Council.
- Where possible give the confrere one of the places of his choice.

- The aptitude of the young confrere will be considered side by side with the needs of the receiving circumscription.
- Avoid manipulation of the young confrere in his choices of places for his first appointment.
- When appointed the young confrere should know that his leaving for mission is for an undetermined length of time and not just for six years.

**In the place for first appointment: Welcome (Insertion/Integration)**

- The “Guide for First Appointment” is to be followed.
- The necessary communication between the superior of the receiving community and the confrere will be established.
- A welcome plan as well as a starting and settling-in plan will be drawn up for the young confrere.
- A confrere will be appointed to accompany the young confrere on first appointment on an on-going and personalised basis.
- Before taking on any work, the recently arrived confrere will be given sufficient time to get to know the reality of his new mission area.
- Regular meetings for confreres on first appointment within the circumscription and region will be programmed.
- The young confrere will be placed in a community which lives the Spiritan life in an exemplary way. The superior of the community will have patience and understanding and will know how to see the failures or

problems which may be experienced in the life and mission of the young confrere in a relative way.

- Radical and hurried decisions will be avoided in case there is a problem with the young confrere.
- The young confrere must be given a sense of belonging to the Congregation and to his circumscription of appointment.

**On whether to keep or change the expression “First Appointment”:**

*There was a unanimous support on the need to change the expression.*

**Suggested names:**

- 1) Definitive Appointment
- 2) Definitive Nomination for Mission
- 3) Place of Appointment
- 4) Circumscription of Appointment
- 5) Missionary Appointment
- 6) Consecration to the Apostolate
- 7) Consecration to Mission
- 8) Sending on Mission
- 9) Appointment at the end of Initial Formation
- 10) Obedience.

The General Council after deliberations has changed the name First Appointment to **Mission Appointment**.

These are the orientations that came from the Enlarged General Council which the General Council will follow for the next four years till the General Chapter in 2012.

## 2.2 ORGANISATION OF THE CONGREGATION: UNIONS OF CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS, PLURI- NATIONAL CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS, SRL 184.1

### 2.2.1 Synthesis of the Discussions at the Enlarged General Council

Changing circumstances have caused an evolution in our organisation, which General Chapters have approved. Circumscriptions which are not directly touched remain indifferent. Lack of understanding leads to resistance. There are doubts and fears about loss of identity. In places the lines of authority seem not to be clear. Hence the need for sharing and animation. It is important that documentation received be circulated in the circumscriptions.

Situations of circumscriptions vary considerably. Some are small but with possibilities for growth. Others, small or large, do not have possibilities for growth, and some are unable to provide services of leadership and animation. Perhaps there is need for greater possibilities for the General Council to intervene when things are critical in circumscriptions. At what point should an entity cease to be a circumscription? Do we need guidelines as to how to manage this reality?

Unions are not “super-provinces” and do not have juridical status. There is a moral authority to what is accepted in common. Some have built up permanent structures over a period of time; others have adopted forms of statutes. Each Union seeks a way of working together with which the circumscriptions can be happy.

We can envisage the possibility of changing the functioning of the General Council in such a way that General Councilors would accompany the Unions in a closer way.

Organisation continues to evolve. We trust we have taken the decisions in the right way. The future will reveal if they serve mission and the confreres. Our human reality remains, therefore there are problems posed by nationalism and ethnicity, both in Unions and Pluri-National circumscriptions. We continually need to face up to, and overcome these. The lived reality and the unity of the Congregation are more important than the terms used to designate groupings.

Three attitudes emerged at the EGC: (i) a new interest about this among the confreres; (ii) some confusion about it on the part of some participants; (iii) a concern for the unity of the Congregation (e.g. common vision, common mission).

### **2.2.2 Practical Orientations for the Years 2008 to 2012**

After having listened to opinions expressed at the EGC, the General Council has adopted the following practical orientations:

- Need to accompany the evolution of the organisation of the Congregation;
- Assemble in one booklet all the recent GC documents on this topic and on other questions;
- Clarify the legal basis for the Unions of Circumscriptions;
- Define more clearly the question of the sabbatical year;
- Review the 'Guide for the Organisation of the Congregation';
- Respect the conditions for accepting new missions (e.g. China, India, Liberia etc.);

- Organise, in preparation for the next chapter, a meeting of all the co-ordinating Superiors of the Unions of Circumscriptions;
- Study the question of the harmonisation between the mandate of the Superior General (eight years non-renewable) and that of circumscription Superiors (three years, renewable);
- What can be done about circumscriptions in decline?

## 2.3 SPIRITAN PRESENCE IN LATIN AMERICA, ASIA, AFRICA

### 2.3.1 Latin America

**Torre d’Aguilha 4.2:** *“Special attention will be paid to all the circumscriptions of Latin America, keeping in mind the fragility of these groups and the potential for the growth of the Congregation in this area”.*

### ITEMS PRESENTED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE EGC 2008

#### 2.3.1.1 Spiritan Mission in Latin America Today – A Mission that Began in 1885

The young Brazilian Province, founded in 1990, is constantly challenged by situations where it is short of personnel for formation, administration and maintenance of its missionary projects.

The districts of the Centre and South of Brazil are either integrated in the Brazilian Province (Germans and Portuguese) or are headed in this direction (Dutch and Irish).

The International Groups of Mexico and Paraguay: Spiritan presence since the late 1960’s. Priorities are clear: Mission to

the poor indigenous and rural people and the formation of young native Spiritans.

The Porto Rican Foundation: Spiritans have been present in Porto Rico since 1931. Their number is much diminished today.

The Bolivian and Dominican Republic international communities were founded:

- Bolivia in 2003 by the Latin American Union (UCAL)
- Dominican Republic in 2005 by the North American and Caribbean Union (UCNAC).

### **2.3.1.2 Challenges for the Latin American Church Today**

- The Aparecida Conference/CELAM V (May 2007) diagnosed two principal challenges for the Church in Latin America: social problems and the erosion of Catholicism.
- The Amazon, the Antarctic and Ecology appear as missionary horizons that we must all face up to.

### **2.3.1.3 EGC 2008: Consolidation of the Congregation in Latin America**

The discussions were tranquil but it was very clear at the EGC that the Congregation must consolidate Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America. This means that the Torre d'Aguilha recommendation must be taken on seriously and with determination. Present for more than 100 years in the 'continent of hope' and having disinterestedly served the local Church, it is imperative that Spiritans now invest in the promotion and formation of Spiritan vocations. The appointment of confreres on mission appointment to the UCAL union is already a reply to this question but per-

sonnel must continue to be appointed (experienced confreres included), in particular to the Bolivian mission.

### **2.3.1.4 2008-2012: Building a Vision of Spiritan Presence and Mission in Latin America**

The central objective of UCAL is to strengthen collaboration and solidarity between the circumscriptions around certain priorities: Mission, Formation, Mission appointments and Lay Spiritans.

Enthusiastic implementation by the Superiors of the Latin American Union's Guidelines (to be approved by the General Council).

Discussion in the circumscriptions of the Torre d'Aguilha 4.2 guideline, until the meeting of UCAL in April 2009 and an evaluation of its implementation in the missionary project of each circumscription. Some priorities must be held in mind.

**Prophetic Mission:** Evaluation of the specificity of the Spiritan mission in each circumscription; to have in mind the emblematic character of the Amazon (JPIC). By 2012, the Spiritan mission in Bolivia must have a minimum of six confreres.

**Initial and On-going Formation:** Take on and support UCAL's formation program (Novitiate and II Cycle - Theology); finish the elaboration of the UCAL Formation Directory; prepare confreres to work in formation; guarantee that vocations promotion takes place; accompaniment of young Spiritans on mission appointment; promote and animate spiritual renovation and ongoing formation in the circumscriptions; organise the 2010 'Encontro' (which will take place when the General Council is finishing its visitation of

the Union's circumscriptions) as a new moment of Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America in the light of the Torre d'Aguilha 2004 and Aparecida 2007 challenges.

**Lay Spiritans:** Promotion in all our circumscriptions of the work with Lay Spiritans and their formation in the Spiritan charism and spirituality.

*Building a vision of Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America* as a constant element to be present during the General Council's visitation of the Latin American Union's circumscriptions in 2009.

*Building a vision of Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America*, considered as an important topic for the agenda of the UCAL meeting of Superiors in April 2009,( in Bolivia), with a view to the elaboration of concrete proposals for discussion at the 2010 'Encontro'.

The Latin American Union's Superiors in their meeting of 2009 have to elaborate a document with needs in the area of personnel, in each circumscription (experienced confreres and mission appointments) to be sought by 2012. This document, and the program of integration of confreres in mission appointment, have to be sent to the General Council.

Finances: How each circumscription sees its financial viability and how to strengthen solidarity within the circumscription and in the Union (e.g. Formation and Administration)?

### 2.3.2 Asia

There were some concerns that we have a number of groups that are very fragile both in personnel and finance and here we are talking about expansion in Asia. Some others though felt that at no point should we fold our hands from explor-

ing possibilities of mission in other areas because of personnel or finance.

At the end there was a consensus of support for the Provincial of France to explore movement into India.

### **2.3.3 Africa**

In Africa, there are many places that are demanding the presence of the Congregation such as Burundi, South Sudan, Botswana and Liberia. The EGC mandated the General Council to study these requests and take appropriate action. Discussion is already ongoing on some of these places and will continue in the next 4 years and the General Council will follow the procedures that have been used in the past that have worked for us in making appropriate decisions which will be as usual communicated to the Congregation at large.

### **2.3.4 Conclusion**

- It is the duty of the Congregation and within the spirit of our calling to expand to new commitments in Asia, Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world.
- The EGC opined that whatever expansion we are going to make should be gradual and careful because we need to support and consolidate our old and existing commitments.

We should always depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us because he is the protagonist of mission.

## 2.4 FINANCIAL MATTERS

### 2.4.1 Synthesis and Programme for the General Bursar for 2008-2012

The Enlarged General Chapter of 2008 was a good occasion to assess the implementation of the Torre d'Aguilha Chapter decisions concerning finances. All the relevant questions were dealt with. The EGC was positive about them and requested further reflection on them with a view to putting them into practice. To sum up, these were the matters presented for reflection:

- General Bursar's report;
- Results of the Inventory of Movable and Immovable Goods and consequences;
- A unified Spiritan vision regarding our relations with money (I/D on Poverty);
- Responses to the proposed text on Mission and Finance (TA 7.14);
- Pension Fund;
- International Missionary Benefit Society (referred to usually in its French acronym EMI *Entraide Missionnaire Internationale*).

Following on the reflections and views expressed at the EGC, the General Council has adopted the following orientations for the next four years.

#### 2.4.1.1 In the Short Term

##### *Pension Fund*

To extend to all circumscriptions which have no system of social security, participation in the Pension Fund already existing in the Congregation. To realise this, the Fund must

be developed and strengthened. To this end it has been decided to undertake an evaluation of the Fund every three years. At the present moment there is a reduction in the contributions received in relation to the monies paid out. To keep it balanced, the annual contributions need to be increased urgently from \$USD 60 to \$USD 80 in 2009 and then to \$USD 100 in 2010.

Regarding confreres from the 'South' who work in the 'North', the European Provincials decided in 2005 to pay an annual contribution of €2,000 for each one; these contributions form the Pension Fund and are managed by the General Bursar's office.

Furthermore, it is recommended that circumscriptions which are already benefiting annually from the Pension Fund, themselves create a fund in order to meet the future needs of their sick and elderly confreres.

### *EMI*

The International Missionary Benefit Society is a health insurance scheme. The EGC of 2008 proposed that this system be extended to all confreres whose countries of origin do not have such an organised scheme. The circumscriptions of Eastern Africa are already members of EMI. It is proposed that all confreres be enrolled in option 4 of this system, which covers treatment in local hospitals for an annual contribution of \$USD40-45.

## **2.4.1.2 In the Long Term**

### *Training of Bursars*

This training, decided at Torre d'Aguilha, is now taking place and it is hoped that all circumscriptions will benefit from it. The EGC of 2008 requested that there be a Directory

for Bursars. This is something that will be prepared to help Superiors and Bursars clarify the role of Bursars in managing in a transparent manner, the immovable goods of their circumscriptions.

### *Inventory*

The disappointing results of the inventory were presented at the EGC. The aim of this exercise, as requested by TA 7.3, was to share - in a spirit of solidarity befitting the Spiritan family - what was superfluous in a circumscription with the General Council, in order for it to help the poorest circumscriptions achieve financial autonomy. This inventory had to be the first step in creating a new financial organisation in the Congregation, inspired by evangelical values in solidarity with each other and the sharing of our resources. The process already begun in drawing up the inventory will continue until every circumscription has responded to the decisions of the previous General Chapter. In the meantime, the General Council will study the idea of setting up an Investment Aid Fund.

### *What kind of Financial Organisation?*

On the question of a new financial organisation proposed by TA 7.2, the General Bursar presented a reflection at the EGC on the financial organisation model in the neo-liberal context in which we are living and whose results have become visible in the present world financial crisis.

Setting up an economic structure of solidarity and responsibility is the way to find a solution to the financial problems of the Congregation.

The EGC reflections, reproduced below, help to show that, without entering into a highly regulated and quantified vision of our relations, we do need to live out the evangelical

counsel of poverty. Without this vision of things we will never achieve a true solidarity or evangelical sharing of our resources:

- There is a need for **transparency and accountability**. Donors must know what is done with the money they give.
- We must be **credible**, or we lose people's confidence. A lot of grants have been paid out for projects which have never been realised.
- Some confreres need to change their ideas concerning the common ownership of resources – they are not interested in this because of a complete lack of the sense of **belonging** to the Spiritan family. There is too much **individualism** and concern about patrimony and personal comfort. Superiors and Bursars need to be more strict in **eradicating unacceptable practices** in their communities. We need to feel that the **resources of the community belong to all** and they are there to help the Spiritan family grow.
- Some confreres spend a lot on **electronic gadgets**. Where does the vow of poverty or any idea of the 'common fund' come in?
- How is it that some confreres can take **very expensive holidays**?
- Newly-appointed Superiors inherit difficult situations and must bear the burden of the **bad financial management** of their predecessors.
- Many missionaries bring a lot of money and other resources to their missions and ask very little from the people. At this time we expect circumscriptions to be fi-

nancially autonomous, and the bishops do too. The people continue to be poor despite all the aid that has been given to them. Confreres who spend a lot of time looking for funds, neglect their pastoral responsibilities. Projects for financial autonomy must be moral and honest – we must be careful in the efforts we make to achieve this.

Whatever the financial structures of the Congregation may be, we must always remember they are carried out, not according to neo-liberal principles, but according to principles of financial solidarity based on the evangelical counsel of poverty.

### *Authority of the General Council*

Given the fact of our decentralised Congregation, the General Council has no authority to ‘force’ the idea of solidarity between circumscriptions or to dictate amounts to be donated. But the EGC 2008 felt that, for this solidarity to be realised, the General Council needs to have **greater powers of decision**. It is obvious that there are some rich circumscriptions and others which are poor. Solidarity therefore needs to be preserved at all levels of the Congregation. In any case, this is a matter which only a General Chapter can decide.

### 2.4.2 Examination of Anima Una no. 61 “Living the Vow of Poverty Today”

The 2004 General Chapter emphasised the difference between “poverty suffered” and “poverty chosen” (TA 1.1.4). As a follow-up to this the General Council was preparing an I/D entitled “Living the Vow of Poverty Today”. Several confreres from representative areas of the Congregation had been asked to contribute their ideas for this. The document proposes a reflection made up of four steps, each

one following the method “see, judge, act, evaluate”. The participants at the EGC looked at the draft of this document and gave some more ideas before its final publication.

- They emphasised the importance of this document in the animation of the Congregation; it will need to be studied step by step, and involve all the confreres.
- The concrete examples given in it are there to help us reflect on our own experience, and to move away from just theory to putting it into practice. This implies a real decision to give up individualism so as to be committed to greater sharing and solidarity.
- Some suggestions made in the group discussions to amend the contents of the document have been inserted into the text itself.
- According to the members of the EGC this document has come just at the right time in order to animate the year of Poullart des Places which will begin in October 2009.

### **2.4.3 Examination of a Document Proposed by the General Council Concerning “Mission and Finances (TA 7.14)”**

**The proposed text of this document was presented for discussion. It is intended to give some orientations concerning questions raised by the application of TA 7.14, 7.14.1 and 7.14.2.**

Reactions to this document at the EGC were mixed; if it causes more problems than it solves then it should be dropped – but the problems still remain and how can they be dealt with? Some participants thought that with a few amendments it could be sent out. The General Council finally decided to take note of what was expressed at the EGC and amend it accordingly before sending it out.

Generally speaking, the idea of the last General Chapter to intensify the dialogue between the north and the south regarding finances must be continued.

## III. BELONGING TO THE CONGREGATION

### 3.1 SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OF THE CONGREGATION

#### INTRODUCTION

**F**our years ago at Torre d’Aguilha, capitulants at the General Chapter saw the need for spiritual renewal of our Congregation. This recognition had been prepared by preceding General Chapters, the celebration of the Spiritan Year and, more proximately, by the pre-capitular document, “Authentically Living our Spiritan Charism Today”. The theme of the General Chapter “Faithful to the gift entrusted to us” (1Tim 6, 20) helped us focus on ourselves as agents of evangelisation and identify various tasks that needed attention. The indications were clear that we were at a critical point in our history as a Spiritan family. With the establishment of the Centre for Spiritan Studies at Duquesne after the General Chapter, the General Council saw it as the organ that would prepare specialists in Spiritan spirituality and studies, publish materials for Spiritan studies, promote research into our founders and history, design a systematic programme of Spiritan studies for our communities of formation, establish a comprehensive Spiritan resource library, etc. The Centre has already laid down solid foundations on which we continue to build as individual Spiritans and as a family. At Ariccia, four years after Torre d’Aguilha, delegates at the Enlarged General Council continued with the