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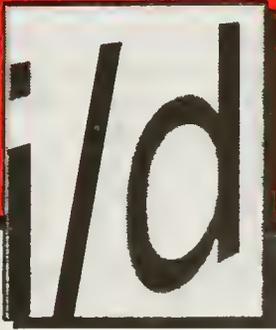
General Council

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THE ENLARGED GENERAL COUNCIL OF PITTSBURGH

Duquesne, 24 June - 07 July 2001

"Now is the time to live by faith" (Libermann)

In this edition of Information/Documentation, the General Council would like to share the fruits of the recent EGC with all the Congregation. From the diagnosis and suggestions that emerged we will highlight the concrete conclusions from the principal points on the agenda. But before getting down to the detail, we will start by reflecting on what can be discerned by reading between the lines of the interventions and discussions of this meeting.

Our mission tested by faith

It is possible that the title of the Superior General's report to the EGC, *"Testing our Missionary Vision against reality"* could be misleading, as if we were trying to say that the strength of our missionary inspiration could be weakened in the light of the difficulties of real life. But the truth is the exact opposite, as the preacher of the opening retreat put it so well: *"Man is not man until he reaches his breaking-point and still survives unbroken. In a similar way, faith is no longer faith until all grounds for belief have been swept away but faith still endures"* At the very heart of our mission we are exposed to the challenge of reality and faith.

At first glance, our mission does not appear on the programme of the EGC, apart from the introduction. But in fact, it was the constant point of reference for all that was said, from the interventions in the general assembly to the discussions in smaller groups. Like an underground stream that gives direction to our lives, that gives us our unity, it constantly reveals itself in our plans and discussions. Our mission today makes us face up to areas where we have to break with the past. Are missionary vocations going to dry up completely in our older Provinces? How can we share the Gospel with secularised societies

or a world full of tensions and conflicts? How can we impact on our surroundings to ensure greater justice, peace and respect for creation? How can we help to heal confreres who are the victims of traumatic violence or of their own fragility? How can we find the money to run our mission and to live a genuine solidarity amongst ourselves? Where will we find the spiritual energy to go as far as risking our lives in war zones (SRL 10)?

The context in which these questions are posed already contains the germ of a reply. At the start of the EGC we remembered our confreres who have suffered *"without breaking"* in Angola, Congo Kinshasa, Sierra Leone and Congo Brazzaville, showing what is possible *"for those who believe"*. It is significant that we can speak openly of *"insurmountable obstacles"* to the preaching of the Gospel, of the difficulties we have in living *"Cor Unum et Anima Una"*, of our own personal weaknesses. An awareness of our fragility does not weaken the strength of our commitment: it rather encourages us to search humbly together for new initiatives. The Spiritan Year will be *"the favourable time"* for putting new life into our faith.



Participants at the General Enlarged Council

The challenges of reality teach us to develop a *real* faith, freeing ourselves from all forms of pretence and self-delusion. They make us more aware of both the riches and the problems of others; they persuade us to put all our trust in the Lord and his Spirit. It is only when we are reduced to nothing that we can begin to develop this total trust. It gives us the patience to

move forward in collaboration with others. When we come up against a thousand difficulties, when we arrive at the limit of our own strength, it is then that we can begin to live with that true faith which is the source of new friendships and missionary generosity. At Pittsburgh, we felt something of the joy that our vocation can still bring us today.

FORMATION IN RELATION TO NEW ASPECTS OF MISSION

The Maynooth Chapter spoke a lot about our Spiritan mission in today's world and the new challenges that this imposes on us. Mission as proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom is at the heart of our Spiritan life and ministry (2 intr.). It is mission that defines our being as Spiritans. The Chapter noted that in recent times, a certain style of Spiritan approach to mission has emerged clearly: that more emphasis is placed on being close to people, on the quality of our life and presence among them, especially the poor. This new style of mission has enormous consequences for the initial training of our young people who will have to meet the challenges involved. It is essential that we assist them with the type of formation that would help them to cope with the demands of being a missionary in an increasingly complicated world. They should be helped to attain the necessary maturity and the capacity of bearing with the real hardships of today's world. Maynooth said that students should be given opportunities to have personal experience of the characteristics of missionary life today (2.25; 3.4). So, formators need to inculcate a missionary zeal to the students, helping them to be attentive to the various forms which poverty can take. The EGC at Duquesne, underlined that students must be assisted to have pastoral concern for the poor, be close to them, work with them, and listen to them. This is an essential part of our charism as Spiritans. In this the personal experience and witness of the formators are of primary importance.

RENEWAL OF RELATIONSHIPS IN FORMATION

Formation is first and foremost a divine activity. It is God who calls the individual candidates and moulds them like the potter. Thus the journey of formation is a journey of faith (GSF, 7). Formators are entrusted with the ministry of assisting the students to discern well their vocation. They accompany them on their formation journey after the example of Jesus with the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24, 13-16). This accompaniment allows

both the formators and the students to build close relationships of spiritual companionship. This relationship is based on mutual confidence, trust, transparency, freedom, and responsibility. In this way formators become like older brothers mentoring their young brothers. The EGC stressed that a balance should be sought between the necessary ultimate authority of the formators and the need for a human, family-like relationship with students.

Again the Maynooth Chapter said that our formation programmes should adopt more of an *apprentice* type of formation, which gives students the opportunity to learn by doing, i.e., by being exposed to the realities of missionary life today (2.25). The EGC believed that there is no one model which is exclusively adequate. Thus, it was suggested to complement the apprentice model with other models such as the "family" model of relationship adopted by the African Synod. This family model would allow each one to have a sense of belonging.

LENGTH OF FORMATION PROGRAMMES

As a congregation whose primary *raison d'être* is mission, the purpose of our formation is to prepare better agents for the ministry of evangelisation. All our formation programmes have to be in consonance with that goal. In recent years there is a tendency to add more and more years to our formation programmes. Partly, it is because of our collaboration with other institutes and partly because of a certain desire to acquire higher diplomas and degrees.



One of the discussion groups

The participants at the EGC observed that this tendency to prolong formation programmes unnecessarily should be avoided. A lot of our students are in their 30's by the time they finish their initial formation. It is not healthy to keep young adults for too long without proper responsibility. There was a proposal that we should put a time limit on the number of years one spends in initial formation. The EGC stressed that the quality of our formation does not depend primarily on the length of formation programmes but rather on the personal conviction and disposition to live a life of witness. It underlined the religious-missionary dimension of our formation, and questioned the tendency of a largely clerical formation. As a follow-up to this proposal, the General Council recommends that as far as possible the time spent for learning human sciences, (Philosophy) and Theology should not exceed 7 years.

In addition, the EGC recommended that vocations to the Brotherhood should be actively promoted because they are an essential component of our Spiritan family (I/D, No. 55 of April 98).

FORMATION FOR SPIRITAN SPIRITUALITY

Spiritan spirituality has been a point for discussion for some years now. Some would even wonder if there exists a Spiritan spirituality at all? Our spirituality is not something different from what we are and do. It derives from the charism of our founders and our experiences of the Holy Spirit in the course of the years. Thus, apart from our prayer life, EGC added that spiritual direction and accompaniment are essential elements in the life of confreres. The EGC said that students have to be introduced to the life of prayer and spiritual accompaniment so that they may progressively identify themselves with the Spiritan charism and spirituality. The EGC stressed the need for coherence and continuity in the approach to Spiritan spirituality throughout the various stages of Spiritan formation.

MINISTRY OF FORMATION

The ministry of formation has to be seen as part and parcel of our missionary work. Despite the repeated calls for choosing and training a sufficient number of formators since the Itaiçi Chapter, the problem is far from being solved. Maynooth said that the training of formators is a priority and must be one of the main preoccupations of all those in positions of responsibility (2.31). So, the EGC said that each circumscription with a formation programme should have a long-term policy and plans in regard to formation personnel; it should draw-up a list of confreres with the aptitude and qualities for being good formators and make arrangements to have them trained. Frequent improvisations should be avoided. The EGC recommended that each circumscription have at least one formator with in-depth training; other formators could perhaps avail of shorter courses. These confreres would

be people who are trained and experienced not only in academics, but also in the "art of accompaniment" and who would accompany the others in the skills of formation. The formators' personal experiences and life-witness are indispensable for giving tonality to the formation work. That is why there has to be a special care in identifying and selecting only those who are well motivated and who have a prior missionary experience. Formators should have some awareness and knowledge of the culture of the students with whom they are working.

An itinerant group of formators to train formators was suggested. The General Council would see this taking the form of a group of resource persons who can be invited individually to animate formators in their ongoing formation.

FIRST APPOINTMENTS

IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSION

First appointment is one of the most important moments for a young Spiritan and can have immense implications in the way he lives the rest of his life as a Spiritan. This is one of the reasons that the Rule of Life entrusts making first appointments to the Superior General and his Council. (SRL 158; 249.2.3). The General Council also uses first appointment to give effect to the missionary orientations of the whole Congregation as well as to assure interdependence and continuity of the works of the Congregation. (Maynooth 2.33-2.38).

The Enlarged General Council reaffirmed that first appointments must always be for the good of our mission and this should be inculcated into the young confreres in formation from early on in their formation. This is necessary because the kind of formation they get determines the way they will work in the field. The EGC insisted that there should be early exposure to mission and that the acquiring of advanced degrees should not be given more prominence during initial formation.

A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

Most confreres requesting first appointment explicitly emphasise the vital importance of community in their lives as Spiritans. This is consistent with our Rule of Life (SRL 27,28) and with our General Chapters (Spiritan Life 1980: 85,170,171 and Maynooth 4.3). The Enlarged General Council was convinced of the crucial necessity of this dimension, and therefore recommended that we should not run the risk of assigning a young confrere to an appointment where community life and support are inadequate, even when the "imperative necessities of ministry" are at stake. Community support implies that the newly arrived confrere will be guided, especially at the beginning, by a fellow Spiritan who is seriously interested in encouraging authentic communication and that the young confrere is given a sense of belonging in

the community and is not simply used to fill gaps. It implies sharing equally in the life and goods of the community.

ACQUIRING THE NECESSARY TOOLS FOR WORK

The early months of a new mission appointment should be devoted essentially to acquiring fluency in the local language of the place and becoming acquainted to some degree with local realities (Maynooth 3.3). Without knowledge of the language and culture of the place there are bound to be difficulties. It was therefore recommended at the EGC that a "Guide" be prepared by the General Council containing the details of all that is expected of the sending and receiving circumscriptions as well as of the confrere himself. This is to be given to all confreres going on first appointment. The General Council intends to follow up on this in the immediate future.

THE DURATION OF FIRST APPOINTMENT

In its discussion, the Enlarged General Council noted that there is a common misconception that a first appointment lasts for three years. If such were the case, the first appointment would then be regarded as a sort of practical training course in pastoral work, at the end of which confreres would again be available to their circumscriptions "of origin" for further appointments. Maynooth (3.3) clearly insists that first appointment is for an extended period of time. The first appointment is no different from other appointments and is intended to provide young Spiritans with an opportunity to give themselves fully to the mission which is entrusted to them. This goal requires a period of at least six years, and often many more, especially in cases where a particularly heavy investment is required to become familiar with the local cultural context.

OUR MATERIAL GOODS IN THE SERVICE OF MISSION

Interdependence and Solidarity

A difficult financial situation

The Enlarged General Council took stock of the difficult financial situation in which many confreres and the Congregation as a whole find themselves. This has been a constant worry for the General Council. Several delegates exposed the particular difficulties of their own circumscriptions – especially regarding formation and the daily life of the confreres. While expressing their gratitude for the help they are receiving from the rest of the Congregation, they explained the efforts they are making to find local sources of economic support.

All agreed that we must continue to ensure that our life-style is simple and moderate, similar to the lives of the poor people whom we are sent to serve (SRL 71), and

The Enlarged General Council realised that there is an urgent need for human resources in some circumscriptions, especially in the area of formation. These circumscriptions tend to call back some of their confreres, who are now on their first appointment, at the earliest possible time. However, when young confreres leave on their first appointment with the clear understanding that they are only going for a short time, the very quality of their first apostolic commitment is at risk; this can have serious implications for their future life as missionaries.



Another discussion group

In the spirit of the Rule of Life and the Maynooth Chapter, the Enlarged General Council recommended that the General Council take action to dispel the misconception that first appointments are for three years. In particular it suggested an extension of the period of time in the Administrative Guide (4.2.2) which set the minimum period for a first appointment as three years during which a change of appointment would need the agreement of the General Council. The General Council has decided in the light of these discussions to extend this period from three to six years. Even after the minimum period of six years, the province "of origin" cannot call back the confrere on its own authority; this can only be done with the consent of the superior of the circumscription to which he has been appointed. (SRL 156; 159.2; Directory for Organisation No 65).

that amongst ourselves there will be no rich and no poor confreres (Maynooth 6, Introduction).

Good administration of what we have

Echoing what was said at Maynooth, the delegates stressed the importance of using the means we already have as efficiently as possible in the service of Mission. This is true at all levels, from the Generalate to individual communities. Management must be clear and precise and the different roles of bursar and superior respected. Councils of circumscriptions and communities, as well as advisory financial Councils, should listen to one another and keep each other informed. As the *Rule of Life* reminds us (SRL 72), we all share joint responsibility for material goods in their acquisition, their management and their utilisation for Mission.

The resources managed by the Generalate come from investments set up in the past and from the wonderful mutual help that is renewed each year by contributions to *Cor Unum*, by direct aid from one circumscription to another and by partnerships to support new missionary undertakings. We are seeking ways to increase the amounts at our disposal and to organise our solidarity more efficiently. We are also looking for completely new sources.



Working in a discussion group

Increasing our resources

The Enlarged General Council gave its approval to an initiative of the General Council to create a new fund destined for the general needs of our mission (cf. Maynooth 6.7 para 2), made up of money generated within the Congregation as well as from new sources outside. On the occasion of the Spiritan Year, the General Council will be asking all circumscriptions which can afford it for 5% of their reserves. They have also appointed an assistant General Bursar to organise fundraising in the northern continents.

The new fund is not a replacement for *Cor Unum*, which is aimed largely at formation needs; this will remain the normal channel for Spiritan solidarity in the area of formation. The Enlarged Council reaffirmed that, in accordance with the decisions of the Maynooth General Chapter, all circumscriptions must contribute to *Cor Unum* each year, even if the amount is only symbolic for some of them. It was also restated that *Cor Unum* contin-

ues to be the preferred vehicle for mutual help; direct aid between circumscriptions is legitimate as long as it does not diminish the amount available for distribution by the General Council through *Cor Unum*.

Alongside these efforts, it is essential that needy communities and circumscriptions which seek aid via *Cor Unum* should re-double their efforts to become self-supporting – contracts with the dioceses, pastoral or intellectual work which carries a salary, small industries, plantations, letting of property, collections, works that are subsidised etc. The E.G.C. stressed the need for every Spiritan to work for economic autonomy within the context of community life and in conformity with our Rule of Life. Moreover, direct aid (e.g. from a circumscription of origin to one of its confreres appointed elsewhere) must always be sent to the community or circumscription rather than to the individual confrere concerned.

Health insurance for all

The Enlarged Council was anxious that all confreres should be covered by health insurance. The General Council would like all circumscrip-

tions where such insurance is not universal to look into the matter and take the necessary steps to bring it about. They could look for a local solution or, if that is not feasible, seek out an international company. For those who so wish, the General Bursar's Office could come up with concrete suggestions for their consideration. In this area as well, individuals, communities and circumscriptions will be encouraged to help themselves as far as possible while appealing also to the wider solidarity of the Congregation.

Everything in the service of Mission

The mind of the E.G.C. could be summarised as follows: the material resources at our disposal are not sufficient to cover our needs; we must use what we have as efficiently and economically as possible; we must continue to look for means of self-help while developing our excellent tradition of mutual solidarity. In this way, living out our religious poverty, we will be better able to accomplish the missionary task that the Lord has given us.

THE SPIRITAN YEAR

1. A Unique Opportunity

The Spiritan family will shortly celebrate three very significant moments in its history: 2nd February, 2002, the 150th anniversary of the death of Francis Libermann; 12th April, 2002, the second centenary of his birth in Saverne; 27th May, 2003, the third centenary of the

founding of the Congregation. To mark these important anniversaries the 1998 General Chapter decided that a Spiritan Year be celebrated throughout the Congregation, beginning on 2nd February 2002 and ending on Pentecost Sunday 2003. The aim of the Spiritan Year is twofold: *to encourage a renewal of the Congregation and to make our Spiritan missionary spirituality better known*¹.

The participants at the EGC endorsed the conviction of the General Council that the forthcoming occasion of the celebration of our anniversaries offers us a unique opportunity for spiritual renewal in the Congregation at a time of a new departure in our missionary history. The principal challenge of the Spiritan Year, in our common view, is to rediscover our spiritual inspiration - the intuitions and charism of our founders - with a view to actualising it in our day, to "responding creatively to the needs of evangelisation of our times"². This has sometimes been referred to as "refounding" a religious Congregation and the spirit of this movement is well captured in the cover picture on the documents of the Maynooth Chapter: a boat modeled on a similar vessel constructed many centuries previously, setting out on a similar goal - a pilgrimage for Christ - but in a different era, in different waters, with a different wind and a different crew.



Delegates showing their approval

2. Need for Renewal and Conversion

The Superior General in his report to the EGC, while acknowledging the many positive developments in the Congregation of recent years, stressed the need for renewal and conversion. A number of the orientations that emerged both in the responses to the preparatory questionnaire and during the discussions in Pittsburgh emphasised this conviction:

- *A new style of mission* (presence, proximity, solidarity with the poor....) requires a new spirituality/inspiration. This is evident from the very terms used to describe mission in the text of Maynooth: *pilgrimage, contemplation, and discovery of the action of the Spirit*³. It is also clear from the context of contemporary mission: the lack of a supportive faith environment in many of the older circumscriptions, violence and conflict in several countries where our confreres live and work.
- *International living* was acknowledged by Maynooth, and confirmed by the experiences shared at the EGC, as presenting particular challenges and difficulties⁴.

Living in international communities from the point of view of witness is a test of the authenticity of the mission we preach to others⁵: respect for the profound dignity of every human person and the fundamental equality of all, openness to other cultures in respect and love. This requires the ability to transcend human limitations and to see each other with the eyes of the Spirit.

- *Vocations*: there is a growing realization in the Congregation that, in so far as vocations are concerned, perhaps the single most important consideration is the authenticity of our lifestyle and witness⁶.
- *Formation*: it was acknowledged that the quality of formation depends to a very significant extent on the quality of life of the formators themselves. Formators should embody the charism of the Congregation and should be role models who can truly inspire the students they seek to form.

- *Finance*: we need to rediscover a simple lifestyle⁷; perhaps too much money rather than too little has contributed to a growing individualism in the Congregation and an emphasis on self-fulfillment. There is a need on the part of all of us for a change of mentality, a need to learn how to live simply again if we are to be really close to the poor whom we are called to serve⁸. A call for the sharing of resources in a badly divided world must be accompanied by a similar sharing within the Congregation itself between those who have and those who do not have.

3. Success of the Spiritan Year

The purpose of the forthcoming Spiritan Year is not so much to recall a glorious past as to prepare ourselves to face the future with a renewed inspiration after the mind of the deepest intuitions of our founders. In our many-faceted preparations for the celebration of this year it is vital, therefore, that we do not lose sight of its primary aim: the renewal of the Congregation to which we have dedicated our lives. In the final analysis, the success of the Spiritan Year will not be measured by the quality or quantity of the celebrations but by the degree to which this renewal has become a reality.

4. Spiritan Historical Pilgrimage

Maynooth requested that a feasibility study be undertaken by the Province of France, in conjunction with the Generalate, into the possibility of a Spiritan Historical Pilgrimage in the steps of our founders, which would be open to the friends and benefactors of the Spiritan family, and adapted to the linguistic needs of the different groups⁹. The results of this study were presented at the

EGC and there was general support for the proposal of the Province of France, namely a seven-day pilgrimage for 150 participants, visiting principally Saverne, Pinterville, Amiens and Rennes in three separate language groups, with a time together at Chevilly at the beginning and at the end.

In view of the favourable opinion expressed at the EGC, we have formally decided to proceed with the organisation of the pilgrimage; the timing will coincide with the original date of the founding of the Congregation, namely, 27th May 2003. We see it as an important event to mark the Spiritan Year, symbolic of the missionary pilgrimage of the entire Congregation in fidelity to the spirit and intuitions of our founders, offering the possibility of spiritual renewal to those who participate and through them to the various circumscriptions they represent. The General Council endorses the view expressed at Duquesne that participation be organised on a representative basis, the participants being designated by the sending circumscriptions, possibly on a regional basis. In order to minimise the financial difficulties that participation might pose for some circumscriptions, it is suggested that the expenses be shared by all circumscriptions on the basis of *perequation*, as is the current practice for General Chapters and other such meetings. We appreciate that the organisation of the pilgrimage will entail a considerable investment in time and energy for the Province of France and we express our sincere gratitude to them for accepting this service for the entire Congregation.

5. Publications

In accordance with the directive of the two previous General Chapters¹⁰ a number of Spiritan publications have been undertaken with our anniversaries in mind. A pictorial Spiritan Album covering 300 years of Spiritan history has been produced in three languages and is an excellent resource for the forthcoming Spiritan Year. A Diary for the Congregation is nearing completion and will be circulated to all confreres in time for the celebration of our anniversaries; it indicates events of historical significance for each day of the year and includes a short inspirational text taken from the writings of various Spiritans over the years. A critical biography of Francis Libermann has been commissioned and, although the two confreres who accepted to co-author this production have unusually busy schedules, we are still hopeful that it will appear in print during the Spiritan Year. In addition, a thesaurus of some 55 texts relevant to the personality and work of Francis Libermann has also been compiled. In accordance with the views expressed at the EGC, it is intended to produce a more complete Spiritan anthology in due course, which will include extracts from the writings of Claude Poullart des Places and other signifi-

cant figures in our history and be presented in thematic form or with a thematic index. In the meantime, a copy of the texts compiled to date will be circulated to all houses of formation as useful resource material.

6. Material Resources

Many circumscriptions and Regions are well-advanced in their preparations for celebration of our forthcoming anniversaries. Programmes, retreats, seminars, local pilgrimages, promotional literature etc. have been planned and prepared with an emphasis on collaboration with the local Church and on the inclusion of all: the old and the young, confreres who are ill, our families, associates and friends. Some of the material resources produced at the local level will have an interest for the wider Congregation and all circumscriptions have been requested to make these available to the History and Anniversaries office at the Generalate for distribution to those who might wish to use this material. Of particular interest will be a set of 3 CD-Roms currently being prepared in the Region of Europe with information and photographs of historical sites associated with our origins and with material for animating pilgrimages, prayer-groups etc. Copies of these will be sent to all circumscriptions. In addition, at the suggestion of the EGC, a booklet comprising liturgical suggestions and texts for the celebration of the principal Spiritan feastdays is being prepared for distribution to all circumscriptions.



A time of prayer

7. With the power of the Spirit

Following suggestions put forward at the EGC, we have sought to capture the spirit and the challenge of the Spiritan Year in a logo¹¹ combined with the following theme/slogan: *With the power of the Spirit*. At a time of a new departure in our history as a missionary religious congregation, of a renewed call to leave the security of the past behind and reach out to new missionary frontiers in the spirit of our founders, we embark on the journey in a spirit of confidence and hope with the certitude that the Spirit goes before us and accompanies us on our way. The celebration of our past will help us to rediscover that our beginnings were very humble indeed, both in the

Congregation of the Holy Spirit and in that of the Holy Heart of Mary, but that with limited resources much is possible if it is inspired by a listening heart that is open to the voice and the power of the Spirit. We will discover that at many points in our history the Holy Spirit, who, after all is the protagonist of mission, accomplished wonders through human weakness with men and women who were open to his action.

¹ cf. Maynooth 8.1.

² SRL 2.

³ Maynooth 2.3 Introduction.

⁴ Maynooth 4.6 Introduction.

⁵ SRL 24.

⁶ "The witness of life has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching." [Evangelii Nuntiandi, 76].

⁷ Maynooth 6.1 Introduction.

⁸ SRL 24.1.

⁹ Maynooth 8.7.

¹⁰ Itaici 41; Maynooth 8.4.

¹¹ The logo was designed by a young Portuguese confrere, Victor Narciso Martins da Silva.



With the power of the Spirit
Dans la force de l'Esprit
Na força do Espírito

Other questions that arose at Pittsburgh

International and intercultural community life

This was not on the agenda of the Enlarged Council but it emerged as a major concern in the exchanges between participants. It returned in several debates, especially those concerning formation, community life, interdependence and solidarity in matters of personnel and finance. The General Council realises the importance of this question for our mission today and it intends to publish an *I/D* in the coming months on the subject.

Integrity in relationships and ministry

One area of special concern that emerged during the final days of the EGC discussions was that of inappropriate sexual conduct on the part of a small number of confreres. This has given rise to deep hurt and suffering for the victims of such behaviour in the first instance, but also within the Church and within the Congregation. It has likewise made special demands on leadership in that superiors sometimes do not feel adequately equipped to deal with such situations, particularly in the complexity of intercultural settings. It was pointed out that as the legal situation varies from one country to another, it is difficult to have an overall policy for the Congregation in this area. Procedures, especially for situations where minors are involved, are normally worked out at the level of the local Episcopal Conference or the Conference of Religious Superiors; is it essential that every circumscription has such procedures and adheres to them should a particular case arise. There was general agreement, however, that the General Council should circulate to all confreres some guidelines on the question of integrity in relationships and ministry, by way of a pastoral reflection. The Council intends to take up this

recommendation in consultation with a number of people who have experience in this field both within and outside the Congregation.

Frequency of General Chapters

At present, General Chapters take place every six years and this in turn means that the mandate of the Superior General and his Council lasts for the same period of time (SRL 213). Such a frequency of Chapters (and Enlarged General Councils) is expensive and not necessarily needed. Moreover, a mandate of six years is rather too short to permit an unhurried visit to all the circumscriptions by the General Council, and, on the other hand, twelve years is too long for those who are asked to serve for two terms. The EGC gave wide support to a suggestion that the period be extended to eight or nine years. The Superior General and his Council would have a mandate of the same length but non-renewable. The proposal will be submitted to the next General Chapter for a decision.

Date and place of the next General Chapter

A majority of the Enlarged Council felt that the Chapter should take place between mid-June and mid-July, 2004. The following criteria were considered to be the most important for choosing the location: the cost, the symbolic value of the place, accessibility (visas and journeys) and a sufficient capacity for receiving a large number of confreres. In the light of this advice and of concrete suggestions made by the assembly, the General Council has started a preliminary feasibility study with 5 circumscriptions (Portugal, France, EAP, Kenya and Nigeria).