



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. Tel: 67602461 website: www.chij-sisters.org

THE GENERAL CHAPTER

The General Chapter Event takes place every six years. It provides a special opportunity for the Institute to review its life and to renew the dynamism of its charism within the church. It draws up definite objectives so that the Institute may better accomplish its mission in the present day world.

It consists of:

- a year of preparation
- the Collegial Assembly which is a meeting of elected delegates representing the Institute in its unity and diversity. It elects the international leadership team

In the follow-up period, the Sisters throughout the Institute search for new ways of implementing the orientations of the Collegial Assembly suited to their culture and local conditions

The recent General Chapter took place in Rome in June 2025.



Participants at the chapter



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On behalf of the General Council, Sr Brigitte presented a global vision of our Institute, with its lights and shadows.

An initial look at our diminishing numbers (we are now 385) invited us to reflect biblically on 'the little remnant' and its trust in God who promises it a future. The Samaritan woman at the well, in her dialogue with Jesus, also continues to be our companion and helps us to keep our eyes on the One who gives us living water to share with the thirsty of today. We were then invited to become aware of the great diversity of Provinces, Vice Provinces and Districts in the countries where we are present. The challenges faced by ageing Provinces and those that are younger and growing, the challenges faced by communities present in a historically Christian context and those present in a Muslim or Buddhist context, etc. were discussed. The responses given over the last 6 years have had many positive aspects, but they also call for a lucid look at certain necessary developments.

In our many diversities, we can rejoice in the general growth of the consciousness that unites us: our Barré identity, that of our roots, of the specific mission that is ours and of the spirituality that nourishes it. It's a constantly evolving process, but one that can only retain its vitality if it remains faithful to the intuition that gave birth to it. This will require sisters to take the time and the necessary means to acquire sufficient knowledge of the texts of our origins and their context, with a view to a transmission that is both faithful and creative. This is essential if we are to discern together the calls to which God is inviting us to respond today. There are many of them: where and why should we set our priorities?

We have more officially opened our doors to lay people who wish to share our mission and our spirituality, and we have listened to their journeys, their wishes and their questions. Today, one of the tasks of the chapter will be to clarify and provide guidelines so that we can move forward united in our diversity, so that we can travel together, aware and happy about our different but complementary vocations.

In conclusion, St Brigitte invited us to be ready to welcome God's unexpectedness, which can exceed our expectations. With our frailties, our poor means, may we do all we can together not to bury in the ground the gift that has been entrusted to us to quench, however little, the thirsts of our world.

(from www.infantjesussisters.org)



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Since Saturday 14 June, the Infant Jesus Sisters have been holding their General Chapter in Rome, at the Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (De la Salle).

50 sisters from 4 continents with 3 lay people from 3 different continents representing the laity of the institute. The representative of the African continent was unavoidably absent. The opening ceremony was a highlight, marked by a moment of prayer in the chapel, followed by a procession where the participants invoked the Holy Spirit to guide them for the task ahead.

The opening address was given by Sr Brigitte, the Superior General calling the sisters to face our present realities which include : *wars, massive population migrations linked to poverty or global warming, terrorist attacks, pollution, human trafficking and natural disasters...* However, there are also many good men and women who refuse, resist, get involved and share... Hope is not lost!

The first few days gave the opportunity to the General Council to present the current situation of the Institute, between graces and challenges, and to invite the sisters present to reflect on the future.

(from www.infantjesussisters.org)



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The new Central Team



Sr Celina, Sr Beatrice, Sr Marina (Superior General) and Sr Kutty

Our Prayer of Thanksgiving and Trust in God

**Loving and gracious God,
we thank You for Your faithful presence through the years, from our beginnings in 1666 until this present moment. You have guided us with tender care, even through darkness and difficulty.**

In these uncertain and challenging times, we entrust the next six years into Your hands. Help us to read the signs of the times with hearts open to where you are leading us, and to respond with hearts rooted in trust and surrender.

We thank You for calling forth a new leadership team, Sr Marina, Sr Kitty, Sr Celina and Sr Beatrice. Bless them with wisdom, courage and humility as they lead us forward in faith and hope.



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**Lord, the world is thirsting, for meaning, for healing, for dignity, for love.
“If only we knew the gift of God.” – John 4:10. May we become that gift for others,
instruments of Your life-giving water, poured out with generosity, compassion and
deep love.**

**Bless our sisters, associates, lay partners, friends and all who are praying for and
with us in this prayer group, who are drawn to our charism, mission and IJ
spirituality.
Deepen our communion as we walk together, listening, discerning, and responding to
Your call to care for our common home and to be a sign of Your presence in the
world.**

**Continue, O Lord, to send labourers into Your vineyard. May our lives reflect the joy
of Your Gospel and our mission bear fruit that will last.**

**With humble hearts we say:
Lead us, Lord.
Strengthen us.
Use us for Your glory. Amen.**

THE COUNCIL OF THE INSTITUTE

A Council of the Institute is held approximately every two years - in the years when there is no General Chapter.

The main aim is to listen deeply to where the Spirit is calling the Institute at this time and to come to a consensus on a theme for the next General Chapter which will help all IJ sisters to move forward together.

The last Council of the Institute was held in Spain in 2023



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The Council of the Institute was convened to reflect on the life of the Provinces and the Institute as a whole. It is a consultative meeting where each person who has received the mission to serve in leadership roles come together to listen, share and discern where God is leading us as an Institute into the future in a changing world.

With the generosity of the Province of Spain, who hosted the meeting in Galapagar, Spain, from 17 April to 29 April 2023, the Sisters, together with Sister Brigitte, the General Superior, and her Councillors, Sisters Jane, Marina and Tarena, worked on the theme and topics for the General Chapter. The topics included: Leadership and Governance, Continental Links, Administration and Finance, and Journeying with lay people who wish to share our charism.

We revisited our original inspiration and deepened the call of our founder, Blessed Nicolas Barre, who was convinced even a few hours before his death that the Institute will be a small body in the Church. In his words, "I will say to the Holy Spirit that he must always animate it ...and Jesus must lead them."

Blessed Nicolas Barre continues to inspire us as we meet with challenges in our mission.

"The Institute of the Charitable Schools is like the Church. It will only advance when encountering persecution, troubles and opposition. And everything that seems to destroy it is precisely what will establish and strengthen it further. We must always abandon ourselves to God for this purpose and expect everything from him out of trust." (FM)

We were all enriched by our active participation with perspectives from Sisters coming from 14 countries.

As we prepare for our General Chapter in June 2025, we continue to listen, share and discern with the reflection shared at the Council of the Institute with Sisters in our respective provinces, and be united in prayer.

As we move forward, in God we trust.



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The last General Chapter was held in Rome in 2019.

We had delegates from Bolivia, Cameroon, Czech Republic, England/Ireland, France, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Myanmar, Peru, Singapore, Spain and Thailand.

General Chapter (15 June to 6 July 2019, Rome)

Communication 3 from the 2019 General Chapter 5 July 2019



The elections are over. Over three days we prayed and discerned. As the time went on it became more and more clear who the Lord was choosing to lead the Institute for the next six years. There were tears of joy and tears of humble acceptance; there were noisy congratulations and there was some 'bubbly' and a very large cake! But most of all there were prayers of gratitude and expressions of support! Let us introduce our new General Council:

Sr Brigitte Flourez (General Superior)



Brigitte was born into a farming community in the north of France; her close-knit family, now of four generations, meet regularly to celebrate and support one another. She likes cooking and gardening. As an IJS, Brigitte has lived all her Religious Life in small communities; she especially likes to be among the ordinary people, especially those on the margins. Brigitte studied Psychology, Theology and Catechetics; despite her workload as Provincial of the French province, she has continued to teach French to migrants and be involved in dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Brigitte is very familiar with the working of the General Council. She served on the team from 1983 and was our General Superior from 1989 – 1995. Brigitte believes that our main challenges in today's world are the following: migrants, care of the earth, a deep renewal of the Church and international harmony. One of her hopes could be summed up as: 'Que la sève de nos origines donne de nouveaux fruits' ('May the sap of our origins rise to nurture new fruits').



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Sr Felicia (Tarena) Bethuel (Councillor)



Felicia is Nigerian of the Bwatiye tribe in Adamawa state and is the third in a family of eight children. She had a happy and simple childhood in a small village. She loves singing, listening to music, and enjoys dancing with others to celebrate life. Felicia also enjoys crop and animal farming.

She is a trained teacher and loves being in the classroom. She made her first profession in 1994. Felicia has worked with the Pontifical Missionary Association of the Holy Childhood and also with the Catholic Women's Organisation at diocesan and province levels. She is currently the Vice-Province leader of the Infant Jesus Sisters in Nigeria and a member of the Conference of Major Superiors. Felicia regards the challenges in today's world as 'enormous and ugly'. They range from global warming to migration

of people - both legal and illegal, overwhelming violence, and confused and lost generations of young people who do not believe in God. Felicia is very conscious that 'the harvest is rich but the labourers are few' and her hope and prayer for the Institute is that we continue to grow and survive for many generations and are open to having a wider outreach for effective mission.

Sr Jane Sinprayoon (Councillor)



Jane was born and brought up in Bangkok, Thailand. She has spent most of her life as an IJS, teaching or in the management of schools. She has been in Province leadership a number of times and in the early nineties, Jane was co-ordinator of an inter-congregational formation centre. At the moment, she is community leader and director of an IJS school in Prakanong, Bangkok. When she has time, Jane loves to listen to soft music, go for a walk in the garden or read. Jane believes that in an ever-changing world, our main challenges are: migration, human trafficking, and ecological issues. She is happy with the positive advantages of modern technologies which are enabling much better communication locally and around the world. Jane's hopes and dreams for the Institute are that IJ Sisters may be able to find effective ways and means to

make our charism alive in today's world and that we will come to know the hope and joy that God dreams for us.



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. Tel: 67602461 website: www.chij-sisters.org

Sr Marina Motta (Councillor)

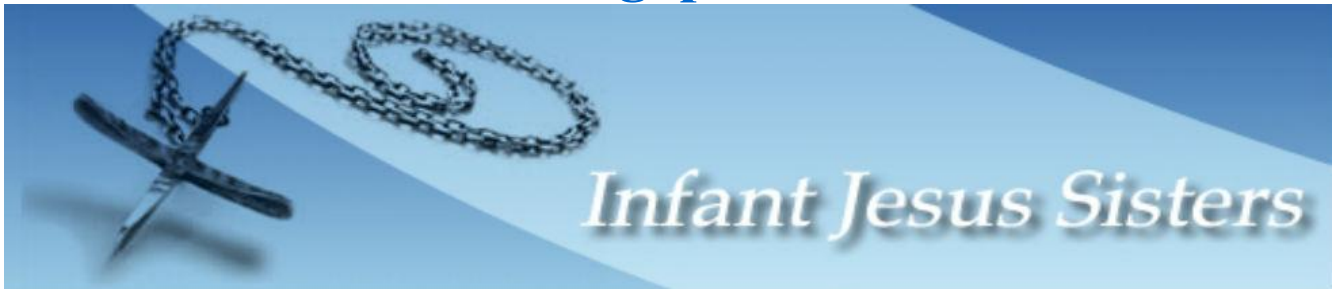


Marina was born into a deeply Christian Italian family near Milan and was the first of 5 children. Her hobbies include music, reading and walking in the mountains, She went to Milan University and then worked in a bank. She joined the IJS in 1979, having been drawn by our charism. Marina has worked with young people all of her Religious Life, especially those who are marginalised and at risk. She began in Milan, then Bergamo and later in Rome where she was a director of the school and also worked with Caritas in developing training projects for teachers and students. She has been provincial of the Italian province since 2015. Marina believes that in a changing world, marked by poverty, conflicts and meaninglessness, we are called to awaken hope. These painful realities can become the opportunity to return to

the essentials of the Gospel. Fr. Barré invites us to have a contemplative gaze and rediscover the presence of Jesus in our realities. He invites us to be women of hope and compassion and to re-create fraternity in our daily lives. Interculturality, interreligious dialogue, and care of the earth are some of the challenges that IJS face today. We are a small body in the Church, present on four different continents. Living in "union of heart, mind and mission" and collaborating with lay people, we can be bridge-builders working together towards universal fraternity.

Former General Council

The Institute owes a huge debt of gratitude to our 'retiring' general council who have served us so well over the past six years. They received a mandate from the last Chapter and worked tirelessly to ensure that every sister, community and country were enabled to live it out. They travelled to provinces to facilitate discernment and to offer support; they arranged international meetings; and they became very efficient in their use of modern technology which meant that they were 'available' at all times! We thank God for their great love and generosity and wish them many blessings as they discern where the Lord is now calling them – but first they need a good rest!



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Noreen, Marie, Maria and Kimiko

A word from Sr Marie

'It has been an honour and a privilege to serve the Institute as a General Council; we feel greatly enriched and blessed. What a joy to visit you in your countries and to meet those with whom you share your mission. We have been inspired by your wholehearted commitment to God's call throughout the Institute. A sincere 'thank you' to each one for your tremendous support and for your love and your prayer. You will always have a special place in our hearts; we thank God for you and ask Him to fill you with his hope and joy.'

And, finally, the delegates! The Chapter candle has been extinguished and many papers shredded! We now have a mandate for the next six years! It only covers four pages and it may be hard to believe the hours, days and late nights which were spent refining and refining it! Finally we identified the essential directions of the new paths the Lord is calling us to tread. Moving forward requires fidelity, courage and freedom but we are full of confidence because we know that our God journeys with us; we have each other and many other friends and lay companions. We'll leave the final word to Nicolas Barré:

Whatever happens, be always at peace and trust in God.' (Letter 61)



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Sisters at the Chapter in Rome

Communication 2

from the 2019 General Chapter - 28 June 2019

It is hard to believe that a week has gone and yet it seems like we have been here for a very long time. We had a whole day on our finances on Fri 14th June. Sr Alice (General Bursar) introduced Mr George Fitzsimmons (Financial Advisor). George explained things very clearly and with the use of really informative slides, so that by the end of the day we all understood the workings of a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and were more than reassured of the transparency, accountability and gospel stewardship in our finances. This demonstrated how the Institute has been faithful to the desire to have a Central Fund as expressed in the 2013 Chapter. It was wonderful to learn how the funds are being used to develop our missionary outreach so that the needs of the poorest of people are being met.



Later that day, we had a formal sharing with Cardinal Braz de Aviz who is the Prefect for the Institute on Consecrated Life at the Vatican. He gave us an overview of numbers and reminded us of what

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Pope Francis has said about the urgent challenges in our world today and the need for religious who are Christ-centred, disciples of the Gospel and faithful to their charisms. We also had some interesting sharing about new forms of religious life and collaboration with the laity.

Saturday was a Free Day! We were like excited school children going off in the bus with our picnics! It began to rain but it was only joking! Sr. Marina had arranged an excellent guide and we began at the Colosseum, an ancient amphitheatre in Rome. From there we visited the Church of St. Clement and saw some truly amazing mosaics. Later, we walked up the Aventine Hill – one of the seven in Rome and visited a most interesting area for the early Christians particularly Aquila and his wife Priscilla and heard more about the beginnings of the house churches in the time of St. Paul. We visited the oldest Roman Basilica dedicated to St. Sabina which is said to have been built over one of these house churches. The Dominicans have a long association with this place; St. Thomas Aquinas lived here for some time. In the afternoon, some of us continued to visit places of interest until we ended up at the Vatican. We came back exhausted but happy and, according to 'Fitbit', had done over 22,000 steps which is about eight miles! Thank God for Italian ice-cream, cool churches and places to sit!



On Sunday, the work of the Chapter began, or rather continued, with the proposals received from our Provinces. We had time for personal reflection, small group sharing, working in pairs and plenaries. It was simply amazing to find so much consensus at the end of the day! Thank you for your prayers because we are all aware of the sure guidance of the Holy Spirit. Already we are beginning to turn our attention to the election of a new Superior General and Team and that process will begin to take centre stage on the afternoon of Friday 28th so pray even more so that we may clearly identify how the Lord is calling us.

We were joined by Sr. Genevieve-Maryvonne and Sr. Marie Lydia from the Sisters of Providence on Monday and had a formal session on the Nicolas Barré Federation. Sr. Brigitte Flourez IJS gave us a background to our common origins and on the many gatherings of both congregations in France since we established the Federation 50 years ago; this was followed by input from Sr. Noreen McGrath IJS and Sr. Benedicta IJS, about how we collaborate in Africa, i.e. in Cameroon, Nigeria and Central Africa. It was really inspiring to hear about how they have met, celebrated and reflected on the way forward together in mission. We also heard from Sr. Marie Lydia about the Brothers of Nicolas Barré in Madagascar and more recently in Central Africa – an emerging group of young men who also feel called to live our charism.

Already the Federation is making plans to celebrate 400 years since the birth of Nicolas Barré; initial planning has begun to have a great gathering in Amiens on May 9th, 2021. All who are inspired by Nicolas Barré and by our spirituality are welcome, so save the date!

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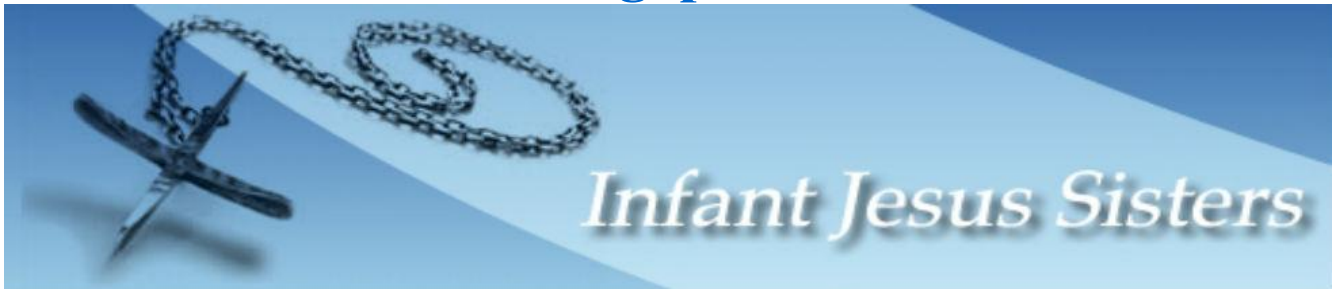
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Later, during a meal, some of us were excited to learn that the Sisters of Providence are still in Seaford, in the south of England. There are two Sisters, one from Wales and the other from Madagascar. We plan to be in contact, arrange a meeting and who knows what may come of it!

We have some very special times of prayer and liturgy here. One of the most powerful is when we sit in silence at the beginning of our daily programme. Each Mass or Evening Prayer is prepared by a different Province and they have all been wonderfully creative and inspiring.

On Wednesday, Jun 26th, we went to the Vatican and met Pope Francis. This was again arranged by the Italian Province; indeed they started planning it at least a year ago. They had everything organised brilliantly. We left the house at 7 am in small groups and by 9.45 we were in our allotted places in St. Peter's Square. There were thousands of other pilgrims! It was like a Christian hajj! We felt very special indeed when we were officially welcomed, along with lots of other groups who were in Rome for Chapters or other events, and we made a big noise!! The sun beat down without mercy but it didn't seem to bother us too much! After the Pope's address and his apostolic blessing, which he also extended to our loved ones, we were hurriedly taken to the steps in front of St. Peter's and arranged in a group so that we could be introduced to Pope Francis. I don't know how he managed it but we felt that he was greeting each one of us personally; of course Sr. Marie got a special handshake! Later we were each gifted with a Rosary from Pope Francis; a beautiful memento of a very special day.

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Pope Francis with the IJS General Chapter Group - 26 June 2019

Update (24 June 2019)

Following on from yesterday's update, here are [more echoes](#) from Malaysia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Peru, Singapore, Spain and Thailand delivering their reports expressed in their striking posters.



Malaysia

Myanmar

Nigeria

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Peru

Singapore

Spain



Thailand



Capturing the presentations

Smart phones and cameras were busy as delegates made sure to get photos in order to be able to bring home something of the spirit of the 'Echoes' day.

All around the chapter room, the inspiring reports are received with attentive listening and a spirit of admiration at the stories they tell.

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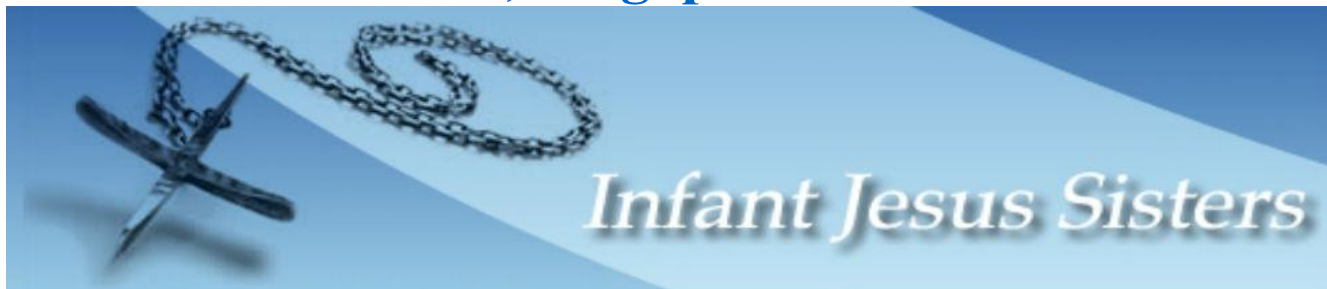
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Day 7 (21 June 2019)

was Finance Day. Alice introduced our Financial Adviser, George Fitzsimmons, to the Assembly. George succeeded in making what could have been off-putting and complicated to many, into a very interesting presentation.

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At 6pm, Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL), was introduced to the Assembly by Sr Marina. After giving a short overview on religious life, he invited questions. He later joined the group for supper.



Sr Marie with the Cardinal

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Day 6 (20 June 2019)

was filled with "Echoes from the Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Districts". Each country had prepared a poster in advance and gave a presentation - each of which was greatly appreciated. Having listened with great interest, delegates took time to study each poster

Bolivia



Cameroon



Czech Republic



England/Ireland



France



Italy



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Studying the posters



The day ended with Mass prepared by Cameroon.

Communication 1

from the 2019 General Chapter 20 June 2019

Greetings from Rome where we are now almost acclimatized to the hot sun, days without rain and the air con! It is a huge privilege to spend time with such a diverse group of people. We are multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-aged and international! But, we are something like the people at the first Pentecost because we can understand one another- most of the time! This is because we have a shared history, a shared chrism, many interpreters and great technology!

On the first evening of June 15th, we were officially welcomed by Sr. Marie; later we enjoyed a lovely concert of classical music performed by a very talented young people's group; this was followed by a most interesting talk on the beginnings of Christianity in Rome. This wonderful welcome was organised by Sr. Marina and Sisters from the Italian province; in fact they continue to look after us so that we want for nothing!



On Sunday, feast of the Holy Trinity, we began with Mass during which Klara (Czech Republic) performed a very moving and prayer-filled dance, symbolising the total giving of ourselves to God and to the Chapter process. After Mass, we were led to the Chapter Room, following the Chapter candle and singing: 'Lead me, guide me on your way.' We gathered there and each one was called forth to sign a beautiful poster containing the Chapter logo; this was to demonstrate our commitment as delegates. It was a very moving and solemn opening liturgy.

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In her address, Sr. Marie reminded us that this Chapter is a faith event and she urged us all to be 'creatively present, lovingly engaged and courageously active' during the process. Marie made a few references to our bearing witness to the gift of compassion and the importance of remembering our stories which tell of how we live that compassion; we follow in the footsteps of Nicolas Barré and many Sisters and other companions down through the years who have shown us how to make the witness to compassion a reality in our lives.



We had two days on discernment; this was to help us understand how to live out our faith by seeking God in all things and preparing us for the work of the chapter. Much prayer and discernment has already gone on in our Provinces and we as delegates know that we have to listen to the call of God and search for the new path which he is calling us to find in our journey as an Institute. Our facilitators reminded us that God has an image and a hope of what we are becoming and that we should not let God dream alone.



L-R Micheline Srs Noreen Marie Kimiko and Maria

We had a very comprehensive report from the General council covering the main aspects of their work in the Institute during the last six years, following the Chapter in Locquirec, France, when we were invited to 'choose life and to be like clay in the potter's hands.' It was amazing to hear the detail of how this mandate has been fulfilled; clearly it would not have happened without the tremendous work done by the General Council. It has given us much hope and enthusiasm to trust that the Spirit will continue to lead us if we remain faithful to his promptings. We also had the opportunity to look at some critical statistics of the number of Sisters, age distribution, etc, since 2013. Some of us saw fragility and diminishing numbers while others rejoiced in our many gifts and in the signs of new life. It is indeed a time to have faith and to trust the plans that God has in mind for us. We have had reports from our Provinces in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe describing what headlines are being made in our countries, how we have responded to the Chapter mandate (2013) and our hopes and dreams for the future.

We all felt very encouraged to hear stories of hope, of vitality, of new shoots in ministry; of growth in our collaboration with the laity, and of our deepening awareness to care for planet earth. We will



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continue to hold in our hearts the many situations of violence, of conflict, of displacement of peoples which were also described. It is humbling to know that our communities are ready to respond to God's call no matter how daunting the challenges and how few the labourers!

Thank you for your loving support, particularly for your prayer that we will remain open to the Holy Spirit and see, understand and courageously set out on the path we are being called to travel.

*EACH PROVINCE, VICE-
PROVINCE AND DISTRICT
PREPARES THE DAILY
LITURGY OR PRAYER*

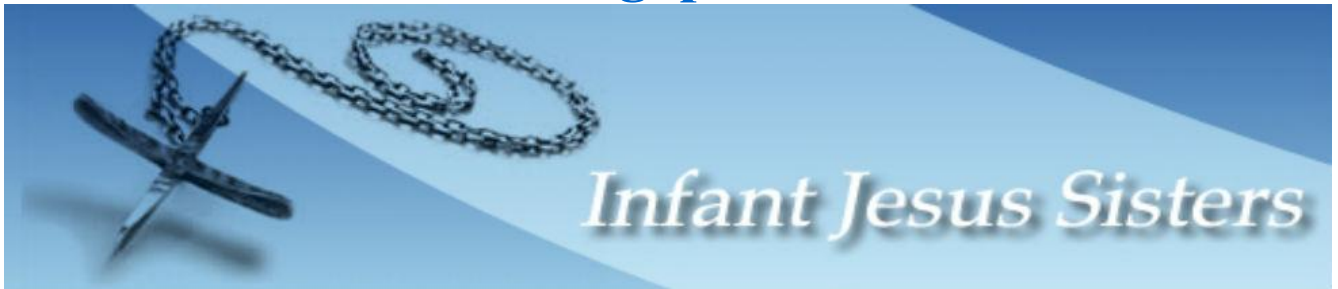


Update on 19 June

Sr Marie presenting the General Council's Report for 2013-2019 to the General Chapter. This was followed by a time of personal reflection.



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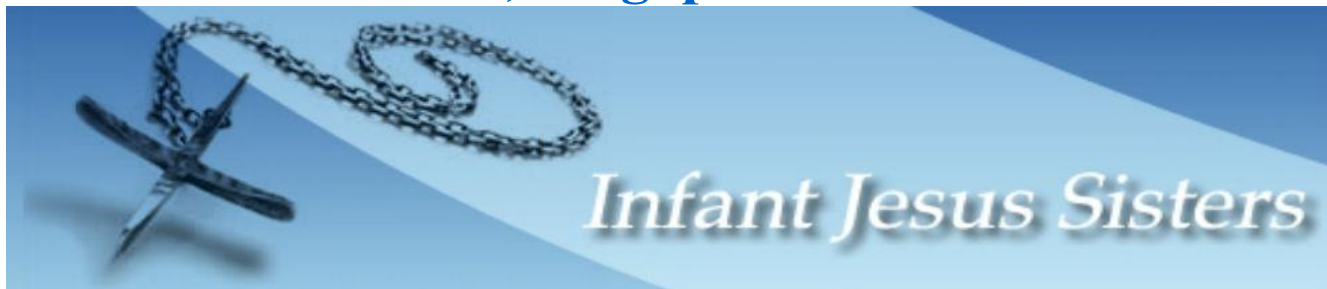
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Sr Rosemary updated the delegates on the importance of the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.



Meeting between meetings – taking a break from Chapter work



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Welcome at the General Chapter

Sr Marina Motta on behalf of the Italian Province welcomed the Delegates



Young musicians who performed for the delegates



Sr Kikuko carrying the Chapter Candle to the Opening Mass



Sr Honorine carrying the candle to the Chapter Room

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Each delegate signed her commitment to the work of the Chapter on the Logo poster



Sr Klara expressed the IJ Srs' Commitment in liturgical dance

Sr Marie Pitcher, the Superior General, gave the opening address after the Opening Mass and Commitment Ceremony



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Opening Address 16 June 2019

A very warm welcome to you all to this beautiful city of Rome, the eternal city, Italy's global and cosmopolitan capital encompassing nearly 3,000 years of art, architecture and culture.

The General Chapter 2019 has begun with our Opening Mass and the commitment of each one of the participants. It takes place every six years and is a very significant event in the life of the Institute.

We are gathered here as an international and intercultural group, coming from four continents and representing many different backgrounds and experiences, but with a shared charism and history. This is a truly remarkable gathering, supported by the prayer of the whole Institute and our many friends and colleagues. Each one here has a unique and vital contribution to make. So, let us celebrate who we are and enter into the work of the General Chapter by being creatively present, lovingly engaged and courageously active.

The Book of the Institute (no. 96) makes it very clear that the main purpose of a General Chapter is to be an instrument of renewal for the Institute and an opportunity to reflect on and articulate the charism in fresh and compelling ways:

"The General Chapter is a collegial assembly which represents the Institute in its unity and diversity. It provides a special opportunity for conversion when, under the action of the Holy Spirit, the whole Institute reviews its life and renews the dynamism of its charism within the Church, while at the same time seeking to preserve its spiritual heritage. It draws up definite objectives so that the Institute may better accomplish its mission in the present day world."

The Chapter is a 'faith-event', which means that faith permeates all that happens from the first day of preparation to the end of the Chapter. This faith is exercised through discernment. The discernment process requires a spirit of inner freedom in each one of us and a high level of trust in one another. Each person is invited to be attentive to what is happening within herself and to trust that God will speak to her through others also.

This time in the life of the Institute is God's time for us. It is the space where all that has gone before us reaches its peak, and all that is in front of us begins to reveal its possibilities. Through our faith we also know that it is the time to recognise God's incarnate Word with us, the Spirit breathing in and through us.

Pope Francis gave a talk recently where he said that the future has a name, and the name of the future is Hope! We are called to hope in the vision of God for the future. We are religious women called to communion, consecrated women called to the discipleship of Jesus, to be sacraments of the presence of God in our world. We hope with the prophet Jeremiah, "Yes, I know the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for peace not for disaster, to give you a future and a



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hope"(Jer.29:11). This vision of hope for the challenges and suffering of the present to become a future filled with life requires that we enter deeply into the mystery of our consecrated lives. We will journey to the promise of hope by remaining steadfast in our faith and in our identity as women religious and as Infant Jesus sisters.

Our vision of hope is embedded deep in the heart of our charism. We are a people with a vision, a vision of the love and compassion of God for all creation. As Infant Jesus sisters in our provinces, vice-provinces and districts, whether we are young or old, many or few, we are witnesses to compassion. Our prophetic vision is in our hearts, hands, and feet. The places we walk, the people we encounter and the way we accompany them, and how we pray, tell the story of compassion as we follow Jesus.

The choice of theme for the Chapter, '*Listen! I am sending you on a new path*' is the result of a process of reflection, sharing and collaboration that involved the whole Institute. It was finalised at the Council of the Institute last year in Kuala Lumpur. It is the fruit of an attentive look at today's world with its needs and calls. What is important is the call of God to *Listen!* to the voice of the Spirit at all times - before, during and after every decision and every action we take. This is what discernment is all about. There are many choices to be made in our lives and we need discerning hearts.

We have inherited a great tradition from Nicolas Barré, Mother Mathilde, our first sisters, our first missionaries, and all of those Infant Jesus sisters who have gone before us, many of whom we have known personally, whom we have loved and who have inspired us. We can all remember those sisters who have been an influence either on our vocation as IJs or at special moments in our lives. We thank God for them all. Let us hold them in our hearts and know that they are with us as we journey and search for the *new path* on which God wants to send us at this time in our history.

The quest for the future must begin by remembering. To understand the future we need to take time to remember. We need to enter into the mystery of our memory, even though it is sometimes selective, sometimes painful, and sometimes hidden. We need to tell and retell the stories that made us: our pioneer stories, our founding stories, our stories of renewal and conflict; we will find the seeds of our hope there.

We tell stories to know who we are! Can we be brave enough to retell our stories of compassion and courage? When we trust in our own stories, in our voices as women, when we stand in our faith with the gift of hope, we will join all those quiet women and men who are gently, simply, lovingly restoring creation, restoring peace and restoring human dignity.

We need the gift of compassion found in the stories that have inspired our courage as consecrated women over the centuries. These stories began long ago with Jesus and the women he encountered. Women who teach us to treat women like Jesus did, respectfully and lovingly. Women who teach us to take counsel, like Jesus did from Mary, his mother, who advised him at the wedding



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in Cana. Women who teach us to find wisdom in women, like the Samaritan woman at the well, and to accept the challenges of the Syrophoenician woman, just as Jesus did. Women who call us to notice suffering like Jesus did when the woman with the haemorrhage touched him. As women of hope and compassion, let us embrace the call to love, trust, and challenge the women and men who journey with us.

As we live this time together at the General Chapter, the times of prayer, the silence and the discernment process will call us to an inner exploration of what the Spirit is awakening in us. Let us look to the past with gratitude and let us live the present moment with passion so that we can move forward with hope.

May we have a very fruitful General Chapter and may it bring abundant life to each one of us and to all our sisters and lay friends who are with us on this new and exciting journey.



Sr Micheline Trembray CSC, our facilitator, introducing Srs Rita and Marguerita FCJ Srs, who are leading the delegates in a 2-day discernment workshop.



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Chapter delegates taking part in the Discernment Workshop.

Our Thrust and direction



Our Institute has its origin in the heart of God who so loved the world and desired it to have “life in all its fullness “ John 3:15, BI 3

In order to have “life in all its fullness”, we hear God asking us to accept fragility and vulnerability as a gift which unites us to Him and to the way He became visible in the world as a vulnerable human being.

Through this gift, God continues to invite us to become with him, co-creators with all people of goodwill in the world today.

In our relationships we are constantly moulded and reshaped by each other “as clay in the potter’s hands”. (Acts of the Chapter 2013)



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In the quality of our relationships which allows each one to grow:

- when we can welcome and respect those who are different
- when we are ready to listen deeply and be transformed in our dialogue with the other (inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue)
- when we recognise that each person has something to give and something to receive especially those the world looks down on
- when we open our doors to pray and reflect with others
- when we become peacemakers especially in situations where there is conflict, fear and lack of trust.

In the call to live internationality:

- when we network in collaboration with sisters, lay partners and other organisations, co-creators of a common future BI 7
- when we are enriched by our different cultures BI 11b
- when we share our human and temporal resources
- when we embrace diversity and build bridges of unity
- when we strengthen the relationships and communication between provinces of the same continent and between continents of the institute
- when we work together for shared Formation programmes at all levels
- when we make the effort to learn another language, giving priority to English

In the call to live co-responsibility:

- when we discern and welcome new forms of belonging
- when we allow our structures to evolve and give more life
- when we promote greater participation at all levels (delegation / subsidiarity / interdependence)
- when we live more sustainably with one another and all of creation

Go forth with renewed faith and hope:

"I am with you always."

Matthew 28: 20



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IJ Sisters' Vision Statement

As members of the Infant Jesus community,
we belong to the people of God.
God calls us to live according to the spirit of the Gospel.
Touched by this call we reach out
to those whose dignity has been damaged.

Following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ
we seek to be present to people,
respecting the dignity of all being
and the identity of each and every one.

We seek to advance the human and spiritual
development of all,
creating and enabling environment to discern God's will.

We network with others to promote
a more just and peaceful world
and search for ways to respond to global challenges,
with special attention to those in greatest need.

Our sense of belonging is expressed in
our spirituality and sharing of faith,
the inter-relatedness of being,
and the support we offer one another.

Relying on the strength of God's Spirit,
we seek to live in simplicity and availability,
freedom and courage,
with trust and joy in God
who loves each and every one unconditionally.