

# ECHOES



*Rome*

*July 3–11 2009*

**SESSION FOR  
INTERNATIONAL**



**OF PARTICIPATION**

Twenty sisters belonging to different teams of participation gathered in Rome. They came from the four corners of the Earth at the invitation of the General Council for a meeting which took place between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> July 2009. The teams are as follows:



During the first three days of the Session, the teams worked in the assembly and in language groups. During the rest of the meeting each team worked on its own specific task.

July 4, morning

The meeting began at 09.00 with

## OPENING ADDRESS

MARGARET MULDOON

After greeting everyone and thanking them for having accepted to be members of the different teams, she reminded them that in fact they have:

*...accepted to participate with the General Council in the animation of the Institute, and that all participate in the one leadership for mission. This leadership will be lived in the diversity of different tasks; different but not separate, interdependent but not independent, influenced and guided by our common mission and vision.*

She then outlined the objective of the meeting:

*The overall purpose of this meeting is to facilitate a process that enables teams of participation to develop a common mind in order to address international animation needs in particular areas over the next four years.*

She invited them, during the coming meeting to reflect on our Corporate Commitment which sets down how we must live our mission and which presents us with a new world view that invites us to: *situate ourselves in a new way of relating to God, to humanity, to the earth, to all creation.*

*“The universe story is our common story and as we gradually enter into it, we hear the invitation to situate ourselves in a new way of relating. We recognise, even if somewhat dimly, that this new way has an impact on every aspect of our lives and must move us to action, if we are to be faithful to our story at this moment. We don’t know where this will lead us but our task is to be faithful to the process as we recognise it now. Therefore as we begin work in our teams we will do so from a shared awareness that we are in a new era of consciousness that calls us to review and revise our way of living our religious life. As teams participating in animation of the Institute, you have a responsibility and the awesome possibility of being agents of change. To be effective, any change that we promote needs to come from an inner transformation, so attachment to “loving seeking and desiring God Alone in all things” and attention to our personal journey is essential*

Our way of working was to be similar to a practice common among Native American peoples. It is called the Sundance Circle. When the people consider an issue or a theory, they place the object of their discussion or a symbol of the issue in the centre of a circle. Then they listen, as those sitting around, express how they see the question from their point of view.

*“...Inherent in this is the idea that we can only understand more clearly any question when we see it from different perspectives, from different places around the circle. Wherever we are, when we look at a question, we are aware that we project onto it our own personal story, culture, family, education, knowledge, our faith story and so on. So we see it from our particular perspective, and our “seeing” is never completely objective...If I listen with the conviction that I have all the answers then I will be blocked from hearing what others are saying. If I am locked into a particular cultural perspective, I’ll miss the wisdom that comes from other cultures. If I am closed to the new story of the Universe, I will be unable to enter into the new vision. Therefore listening together, sharing our different perspectives becomes so important if we are to move forward as one, while honouring our diversity*

Margaret invited the group to enter into the work with a contemplative attitude, leaving time for silence and prayer.

*“Fidelity to a silence that penetrates the heart and soul and enables us to connect to the whole of life with hearts filled with peace, wisdom and compassion for all that is”.*  
(*Radical Amazement: Judy Cannato*)



She ended her talk with the words of José Cristo García Paredes CMF from his book: “Walking on the Water without Sinking”.

*“Consecrated Life is living a unique opportunity in its history: like Peter it is called to walk on the waters. It cannot continue sitting in the boat, bored and without meaning. Jesus is calling consecrated life to come out and to walk on the waves”*



M<sup>a</sup> Carmen Vilardell then asked the group to become aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit ...to open our hearts to God’s love and strength which empowers us to collaborate in God’s creative action in the world. Eyes fixed on the globe that had been placed in the centre of the hall, the participants were invited to contemplate and give thanks for the love that our

Creator God pours out daily on us and on our world.

*Two guidelines for reflection were proposed:*

**⇒ Take some time to reflect on the gifts that I bring to the task that has been entrusted to me.**

**⇒ Name any concerns that I have as I begin the task entrusted to me.**

After some personal reflection, there was a sharing in language groups followed by sharing in the large assembly.

Various concerns were mentioned: ageing, lack of vocations, fragility among younger members, quality of accompaniment, living in different cultures, communication problems because of different languages spoken among us, present economic crisis, how we can face the unknown together and many more...

*Some questions arose too:*

**⇒ How can we be more meaningful today with this new understanding that we now have?**

**⇒ How to promote interrelation in daily life?**

After sharing concerns and energies the participants expressed the desires that arose in them: to give life and to be committed to life; enthusiasm in accepting and implementing the decisions of the Chapter, desire to create something new, deepen the new cosmic vision, live as part of the whole, allow oneself to be energised in the living of communion; give life with trust and hope.

The assembly ended with a song of thanksgiving.



**Give thanks to the Lord for the Lord is good.  
Eternal is God's mercy!**

**July 4, afternoon**

Margaret introduced the afternoon's work. As well as the personal gifts that we bring to this task, she reminded us that our principal strength is **who we are as Holy Family**.

*The main objective of the meeting is:*

**TO DEVELOP A COMMON MIND IN THE SERVICE OF THE INSTITUTE**

In the afternoon, with Colleen's facilitation, we heard again the great story of the universe, the marvellous story of our origins and the origin of all that exists.

She reminded us that this great story is our story. We are part of all that exists. The attraction that exists among all beings at all levels is the love that binds us together.

The story, from the very first flaring forth, from the birth of galaxies, stars and planets including our own star, the sun; our planet earth, to the birth of life on this small planet, tells us that we all have a common origin. . The earth is made of stardust; we are made of stardust...everything on earth, all living beings - we all come from the same source. If only we could recognise our common origin, we could be a healing presence on earth respecting the dignity of every living being. The new forms of life that are constantly emerging remind us that life is creative, inventive, wise and beautiful.



The marvels of the universe are all around us; we are part of the evolution of the cosmos; we can feel the energy of love beating within us and we are overwhelmed with gratitude for this love.

*We were then invited to spend a moment in contemplation:*

*Imagine a garden... full of beautiful flowers...pick out a flower that appeals to you most...thank God for the beauty of this flower.*

*Imagine a desert...a part of the world where there is no colour, no living thing...what flowers are needed here? What contribution can we make so that flowers may grow in this place?*



In the story of the universe, with the appearance of the human species, the earth becomes conscious of itself. We are the earth come to consciousness. We are now awakening to something new – the sacredness of all that exists. This may be new for us but this was something that our forefathers and foremothers sensed instinctively.



In this industrialised, technological age, we human beings have become alienated from our homeland, disconnected from the earth and from ourselves. Now we are being called to return home; to connect again with creation, to become one with all that exists

In the 2008 General Chapter, the Holy Family began to awaken. We feel the call to develop an attitude of deep contemplation, to commit ourselves to a new kind of relationship with the whole of creation.

*The group was then asked to reflect on the following:*

⇒ What calls am I hearing?

⇒ What feelings do I sense within me?

⇒ What has struck me most?

## **SOME ECHOES FROM THE ASSEMBLY**

### **WONDER**

- At this love which leads us to be co-creators
- At this explosion of love for all beings for each one of us.
- At the idea that we are but part of a much greater whole

### **WE FEEL CALLED TO:**

- Contemplation, thanksgiving, to respond to the call to build communion.
- To continue to give life.
- To walk in harmony with the original plan of the universe
- To enter into the dynamic of this love; to continue hearing the words: “God saw that it was good”.
- To continue to listen to God’s creating word “In the beginning was the Word...the Word was God...through God all things were made

### **SOME OBSERVATIONS**

- Everything we have heard today is summed up in this word: “And God saw that everything was good”
- It is love that gives life and energy to the cosmos.
- The creative word is still being spoken in the Word made flesh. It becomes reality in the self-giving of Jesus in the Eucharist.

July 5, morning

***The aim of the day:*** To listen to the Word of God present among us, to focus on our Holy Family way of living the mission today, in the light of the calls that have come to us from the General Chapter.

With the Bible and a lighted candle before us, we entered a period of personal prayer. Then the Founder's dream was read and we were invited to reflect on the following question:

**As you think back on your experience of yesterday, what texts of the New Testament come to mind?**

After a brief moment of prayer and sharing, Ana Maria introduced the work of the day inviting the group to focus on our particular way of living the mission as it is presented in the Corporate Commitment and the document on the Vows.

*Question for reflection:*



*What sparks or new lights have emerged for us as Holy Family, in this new way of situating ourselves in the world, with an attitude of service and self-giving?*

## ECHOES FROM THE ASSEMBLY

**The aim of the Assembly is to gather the wisdom of the group**

- This new awareness demands of us a change of mentality, a change in the way we relate to God, others and the earth.
- We are aware that communion includes everything; we believe in a God who is the origin of all and who gives energy to everything.
- I feel challenged to live service and self-giving with a contemplative attitude, with a listening attitude, seeing the cosmos in a more unified way. We form part of a sacred community of life that includes the whole cosmos. I feel called to listen to life present in the whole of creation.
- I feel called to listen to Jesus present in the world in which we live; listen to people, events...
- The Incarnation was present in a mysterious way from the very beginning: "Through the Word, all things were made". The Word became flesh at a specific moment in time, when the angel spoke to Mary: "You will call him Jesus". This personalisation of the Incarnation in Jesus gives us life and connects us to one another.
- We are called to abandon our individualism which goes against all that is family, relationships. We are called to work as a body and to do this we must die to individualism.



- I perceive a call to change the way we situate ourselves, the way we understand our identity. We are called to create new ways of relating, to use our resources in a different way.
- We are called to cultivate a contemplative attitude, to give importance to creative fidelity. This will help us to be open, to be free for the mission and to be bearers of life.



**FREE AFTERNOON FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND INTEGRATION OF ALL THAT WE HAVE EXPERIENCED.**



July 6, morning

## The part and the WHOLE – Parts of the whole

**The aim of the day:** To work towards a common understanding of the role of each team in the whole.

Kumudini and Marían animated and facilitated the day.

A sentence from Hildegarde of Bingen summed up the theme of the day:

“God has arranged everything in the universe in consideration of everything else.”



In a silent prayer, we deepened our awareness of ourselves as embodied people, listening to our breathing and being aware of each part of our bodies....

**Loving God, Creator of all, help us to be aware that you are with us and in us during this day. May we be open to you and may we come to a deeper understanding that, together, as teams of participation we are at the service of the whole, at the service of the mission of Jesus Christ, at the service of life. Amen.**

As we continued our reflection on the role of the teams in relation to the whole, we were introduced to the theories of the philosopher Ken Wilber. His theory states that all reality is made up of wholes and parts. As an individual I am a whole, complete in myself but at the same time I am a part – part of other wholes greater than myself. This inevitably means that all created beings are interconnected and interdependent on one another relying on each other to create the greater whole. None of us is complete without others. We are all connected to and dependent on life around us. Interconnection is a fundamental law of all reality that cannot be ignored or avoided.

Jesus reminds us that we are part of Him: *“I am the Vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will give much fruit ...fruit that will last”*.

Applying this theory to the teams of participation, we realise that as individuals we are whole and complete in ourselves; at the same time we are part of a whole, which is our team. Each team is part of the whole which makes up the teams of animation, which in their turn are part of the whole which is the Institute of the Holy Family and so on...

The specific role of each team was then presented and the following questions were offered to help participants in their personal reflection:

Share something of yourself: your relationships, apostolic experiences etc

- ✓ **What are your feelings about belonging to this team?**
- ✓ **Looking back on the experience of the past three days:**
  - **What feelings spring up in you? What might be useful for your team?**

As the morning's Session ended the participants' attention was drawn to three sentences from the Mass readings that were very relevant to the theme of the day's work:

*“Truly God was in this place and I did not know it” (Gen 28, 10-22)*

*“Your words are spirit and life” (Psalm 90)*

*“Courage daughter, your faith has saved you”*

In the afternoon the teams met together for dialogue and sharing.

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**July 7, morning**

### **Process of Corporate Reflection**

**Objective: Look at the role of our team in the light of the Corporate Commitment.**

This morning we heard the sad news of the death of Sister Ancilla James, former Provincial of Jaffna (2001-2007) we prayed for her, her family and all the Sisters from the Province who mourn her loss. May she rest in peace.

### *Some suggestions for prayer*

...We believe in faith that death is not the end...everything continues...life is constantly evolving...

In the beginning there was ...nothing.... God said: Let there be light and there was light.... God created the light on the fourth day to separate day from night...and God saw that it was good...let us open our eyes to the light around us...let us allow ourselves to be energised by the light that comes from God's creative love...

...We are all gift, we contribute our uniqueness, our gifts...Let us value ourselves...Let us give thanks for the trust that has been placed in us by calling us to be members of this team.

...We need to grow in awareness of who we are, our identity; we need to grow in our sense of responsibility as members. Who will guide us?

This period of prayer ended with a hymn to the Creator God.

## The Process of Corporate Reflection

This is a process that enables people to work together; that helps people capture the wisdom of the group through reflection and shared listening. Attention to the Spirit within and around us is essential for this quality of listening and relating.

*There are 7 steps in the process:*

- *Attention to our own personal truth, which reveals the image of God in our lives. This requires a time of personal reflection.*
- *Become identified with and own one's personal truth. Write it down.*
- *Share with the group what we have written down.*
- *Each group member listens and writes down what others share.*
- *A brief pause after each sharing to allow for clarifications.*
- *We share what we have heard the group say.*
- *We write down points that we have in common and differences.*

The result of the sharing then becomes the basis for the next stage of work.

This process has been described as a way of life based on the Gospel and on Holy Family values. This way of working helps members to become integrated into the group and into the teams of participation.

This process changes our way of making decisions, leading us to make decisions under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

It is a process that respects the uniqueness of the person and the differences between us. It always fosters communion. It integrates the three basic principles of the universe: subjectivity, diversity, and communion.

From this point onwards the groups began their work together as teams. In the days that followed each team worked at its own rhythm using the process of corporate reflection.

### Questions to guide the reflection:

⇒ *In the light of your reflection on the Corporate Commitment, what newness do you perceive for your team?*

⇒ *What are the consequences of this newness that you perceive?*

⇒ *What calls do you hear?*

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July 8, morning

**Objective of the day:** To be more aware of the reality of the Institute and the Family in relation to the role of the team of which we are members.

During the day the different teams reflected and shared on:

- **Their reality**
  - **The causes and background to this reality**
    - **The calls heard**





**Objective of the day: Formulate long and short-term team goals for the next 4 years.**

Each team was asked to formulate its vision

## **What is Vision?**

A vision defines what it is that the Institute desires to be in the future; it expresses the desires of the Institute; it should motivate, inspire, lead people to commitment, point out the direction the Institute should follow; communicate the most important values and mobilise energy.

*It should have certain characteristics. It should be:*

- ✓ Clear, simple and easy to interpret
- ✓ Ambitious and should inspire and challenge.
- ✓ Attractive and awaken energy.
- ✓ Shared, agreed on and supported.

*Points to be noted.*

- The best way of predicting the future is to invent it.
- To plan does not mean that one knows what decision to take tomorrow but rather what decision has to be taken to achieve what one desires tomorrow.
- Without a vision there is no future.
- If we plan by looking backwards, we are resigning ourselves to improving on the past
- Action without vision lacks meaning
- Vision without action is a dream
- Vision with action can change the world
- We can only advance with certainty if we have a good compass (vision)

A question to focus our reflection:

**⇒ What and how do we want to be within four years?**

Each team in various creative ways expressed the “vision”; they articulated their role; their long and short-term goals and they looked at what resources – human and material that they could count on to achieve their goals.



July 11, morning

The day began with a prayer of thanksgiving for the wonders of creation using the text from Baruch.

*Baruch 3, 29-36*

*Who has gone up to the heavens and taken Wisdom or brought her down from the clouds? Who has crossed the sea and found her, bearing her away rather than choice gold? None knows the way to her nor has any understood her paths. Yet God, who knows all things, knows her. God has probed her by God's knowledge. God who established the earth for all time and filled it with four footed beasts; God who dismisses the light and it departs, calls it and obeys God trembling, before whom the stars at their posts shine and rejoice. When God calls them, they answer: "Here we are!" shining with joy for their Maker. Such is our God, no other is to be compared to our God".*

Marian MURCIA facilitated the Session calling to mind once again the main purpose of this meeting of international teams of participation. She invited each team to share the fruits of their work during the last few days. As each team shared, the participants took notes, noting down anything that particularly struck them or anything that needed to be clarified or developed further. The sharing took different forms: dramatisations, use of symbols or slides.

*The following is a summary of the sharing that took place.*

#### Initial Formation Team

As members of the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles in UNFOLDING-LOVE in the Universe, we will promote communion through an Initial Formation Process which supports a dynamic self-giving and community presence for the mission of Christ in these times.

#### On-going Formation Team (Community/Team Martillac)

To offer to all a "family home" whose door opens into a spacious sacred garden, where there is a spring, the spring of the spirit of God Alone. Everyone will be able to quench their thirst at it, renew their energy, and share it with others.

### Administration of Goods Team

Open to the mystery of the sacred that permeates all of life, we wish to live interdependence in relation to created goods in order to promote life and grow in communion.

### **Information/Communication Team**

The Holy Family Information/Communication Team, aware of the harmony existing between the new cosmic vision and our charism of communion:

- Will be a source of life and communion.
- Will facilitate the circulation of energy which connects us to one another, to the cosmic family, to God Trinity, source of love and communion.
- Will give impetus to our Family moving our Family towards a new vision of the world, a new way of relating at all levels.
- Will be an effective form of evangelisation and of making our gift known.
- Will be open to the richness of our multicultural world and will transmit respect and affection for every culture
- Will be attentive to the signs of the times, will listen and discern the calls that the world directs to us in particular those that come from the poor and excluded ones in our society.
- Will support and spread news of actions aimed at promoting change of situations and structures.
- Will adopt a non-violent form of saying the truth, thus helping to heal the wounds caused by division and exclusion.

After sharing, some time was dedicated to dialogue in the assembly. Clarifications were made and Sisters expressed their thoughts and feelings as the session came to an end.

## CLOSING ADDRESS

## MARGARET MULDOON

*Today we come to the end of our meeting and we begin a new journey of animation/formation in the Institute. We have come from different cultures, places and experiences. Attentive to life, united in the same mission, inspired by our Corporate Commitment, together we have been able to draw up these inspiring visions and animation plans in response to the calls from the General Chapter.*

*Each one of you has come here as an individual person with a particular experience of reality; now a new network of relationships has been created among you; you are interconnected teams, open to the whole Institute in the diversity of your task. With great responsibility and creativity, you have drawn up a plan of formation/animation which will lead us forward with greater security along the path of “a change of mentality, so as to understand, feel and situate ourselves in a new way of relating to God, to humanity, to the earth and to all creation” (Corporate Commitment)*

Margaret acknowledged the importance and the quality of the work that has been done. She continued her talk referring to our spirituality and mission.

*“One of the images of God that inspires our spirituality and mission and which has been a constant for us is that of a Trinitarian God. In the past few years we have focused on the Trinitarian theology of creation. Everything that exists is born of the divine communion and finds its completion in that communion. ”*

Quoting Denis Edwards in his book: “Ecology at the heart of Faith” she said:

*The diversity of creation and the diversity of life on earth can be considered as a sacrament, as the expression and representation of the abundance and energy of divine communion. The Trinitarian idea of God, a God who is relational, forms the basis for a vision of the fundamental reality of the universe as relational.*

*We have been created in the image of the Trinitarian God, a God who is relational. We are called to live as members of the Holy Family, invited to love, seek and desire only God Alone in all things as did the Holy Family of Nazareth, “the gentle image of the Trinity”; to seek unity in diversity and to grow in our awareness that “communion includes not only our brothers and sisters in humanity, but the whole family of the cosmos. Together we form a sacred community of life whose source is our God-Trinity who is love-communion.” (Corporate Commitment)*

*This call, which has its roots in our charism, encourages us to respect diversity and communion and it is in harmony with the three fundamental principles that govern the life of the cosmos. So when we enter deeply into our spirituality and mission, we find a huge source of energy, which stimulates us to live interdependence and interrelation with everything that exists, and with an active faith.*

*As I journey with the Institute to promote the particular vision of each team - visions which have come from our Corporate Commitment – I realise that one can study, deepen and live our spirituality from this new vision and experience of the Institute and that our God will do something new in and through us.*

*Let us remember that we cannot change the structures of our Institute, of formation, of the administration of goods, of communication, unless we are prepared to analyse the structures of our own way of thinking, believing, acting and the motivations of our own hearts. Let us remember, that any change that we wish to promote, if it is to be effective, has to come from within ourselves, from our own internal transformation and therefore our own personal journey to the new vision is essential.*

*Each one of us has the possibility of relating to the Mystery from whence we have come, the Mystery that continues to enfold us and that leads us to a place of admiration and gratitude that fills our hearts and minds beyond anything that we can understand at this moment. We are launched on an adventure and we undertake it together, trusting in the Spirit who permeates all of life.*

Margaret then thanked all the personnel of the house who worked so hard to make sure that all went smoothly. .

***A final missioning ritual marked the end of the Session.***







**Martillac Team**

**Administration of Goods Team**



**Initial Formation Team**

**Information/Communication Team**

