

FOREWORD

Very dear Sisters,

It is with great joy that we reprint the volume of the circulars and personal letters of Mere Marie Denyse, the Superior General from the year 1953 to 1970. This period was one of the most challenging as well as significant times for the Church in general and religious life in particular, characterized by the blessings and challenges of the pre-and-post Second Vatican Council. This volume helps us be in touch with the heartbeat of the Congregation – questions, concerns, struggles, achievements, and dreams – during this important moment in our history.

Mere Marie Denyse had a zealous missionary spirit. She showed great openness to dialogue with new realities and to discern appropriate responses to their challenges. Her writings express the main concerns of the Congregation as well as her special interest in getting every sister involved in the process of discernment. It goes without saying that her circulars are filled with affection and closeness to each sister of the Congregation and great concern for the building up of the body-Congregation.

In what follows, I am happy to share with you the way I have personally appropriated the life of the Congregation and her leadership.

The period is coloured by a passion

- to rediscover our true identity and mission as Religious of the Assumption (what distinguishes Assumption from other Congregations?).
- to make inroads in inculturation, liberation theology and option for the poor
- to address the double movement of the Assumption: contemplation of God and openness to the world

- to be a missionary Congregation – realized by the many new foundations, especially on the continent of Africa (Rwanda, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Niger, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin) and the first community on the Indian subcontinent (Kerala). Not to mention the new communities in Europe, East Asia, and the Americas where our presence and mission were already established. In fact, the Congregation grew from 40 communities in 1953 to 136 communities in 1970.

Other important milestones include the following

- Establishing equality by abolishing the distinction and ranks – choir sisters and coadjutrix sisters – among the members of the Congregation.
- The fusion of the congregation – *Guardiennes Adoratrices de l’Eucharistie*, with us in 1967.
- Decentralization and structural changes from Vicariates to Provinces and from large communities to smaller communities.

I summarize some of the significant convictions repeated by Marie Denyse as follows:

- It is important to respond to the call to renewal and to strive for perfection by returning fervently to our roots and to the sources of holiness in the Gospel.
- The RA charism shines through joyful detachment, simplicity, interiority, a spirit of freedom and love, and a family spirit.
- Superiors are told “not to fall into authoritarianism” and sisters are advised “not to fall into infantilism”.
- “It is not the most active sister who is the most active in God’s work”.
- We should seek constantly to revitalize our traditions, our rules, customs so that all these meet the real expectations of today.
- We are called to authentic witness: “Can the people find a living, understanding and loving Jesus through our lives?” and “we need to present a more meaningful face of Jesus Christ today?”
- “Inner fidelity with great simplicity” is an important disposition for the sisters in these times of renewal and adaptation.

- The true spirit of the Assumption is characterised by an ardent faith, an unfailing hope and an ever-greater love for Jesus Christ, the church and souls (people).

Following the calls of Perfectae Caritatis, she articulated the following questions that shaped the reflections of the General Chapter of Aggiornamento in 1970:

1. Who are we by our origins and history?
2. What mission did we receive?
3. How can it be fulfilled in today's world and Church?

As our Congregation is evolving and we are in a process of constant renewal, the above-mentioned convictions and questions are still relevant and meaningful for our times.

I want to make mention of Sister Therese Maylis with much affection and gratitude for her great desire to bring out this book. It was her dream to publish these circulars and this book is the fruit of her hard work. I am sure that she rejoices with us from Heaven. We are also grateful to Sister Myriam Moscow who has given us a brief history of the period enabling us to situate the Congregation within its historical and ecclesial context. I also thank Sister Veronique Thiebaut for completing the work for publication in three languages of the Congregation.

May Mere Marie Denyse continue to inspire us, challenge us and enlighten us in our journey forward! As we read these circulars, it is my hope that we will be inspired to live the present more radically and be prepared to face the challenges of the future more creatively.

I wish you all a happy and enriching reading!

Sister Rekha M. Chennattu, RA

Superior General, Auteuil,

15 April 20

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the history of the Congregation, Mother Marie Denyse's Generalate was established after the long period of Mother Marie Joanna's government (1922-1953): three elections for twelve years, the last part having ended after six years with the resignation of the Superior General, then 80 years old.

Mother Marie Denyse (Denyse Blachère), born in 1905, entered the Novitiate in 1925, professed in 1927, had been a class teacher and professor in Lübeck, superior in Val Notre-Dame in 1939, during the Second World War, then superior in Lübeck and General Councilor in 1947. Elected Superior General for twelve years at 48 years of age at the 1953 General Chapter, she was re-elected in 1965 for a second six-year term, which ended at the 1970 *Aggiornamento* Chapter.

Throughout the history of the Congregation, the circulars of the Superiors General are like milestones marking the times, illuminating events with the spiritual light characteristic of each.

From Mother Marie Eugenie, Mother Marie Celestine, Mother Marie Catherine, the circulars dotted the Chronicles a hundred years ago. Personal essays on the occasion of celebrations, anniversaries, General Chapters or letters sent in their name by a sister of the Mother House, they have not been grouped by General Superior, but rather by year and as such, fill several lockers in the Archives. Those of Mother Marie Joanna or her time have been classified in the same way.

As for Mother Marie Denyse, before the General Chapter of 1970, which ended her second term of office in advance, a few circulars (about twenty in number) had been chosen - either by herself or her assistant - and printed by Sister Aimée on the machines of Auteuil: a simple booklet (in 13/20 format) of 98 pages was thus transmitted to the Communities under the title:

Circular Letters 1953-1970

of Mother Marie Denyse of the Blessed Sacrament

Superior General.

It is an interesting collection, but the content seemed minimal compared to the many circulars kept for this 17-year-old generalate. It was therefore necessary to get to work on this project again: check the content of the files (real, incomplete or non-existent classification), compare with the printed texts, rarely in their entirety, - and prepare an edition worthy of the name. A first task, begun by the archivist, proved to be awaiting a necessary methodical resumption. It was then the work of Sister Katrin Goris, generously lent to Auteuil by the Province of Northern Europe for several stays at the Archives. This work was helped by the careful entry and correction of Sister Marie Claude in her mission as Secretary of the Archives. The files prepared can be listed in this way:

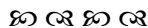
I. First term of office: 1953-1965

II. Second term of office: 1966-1969

III. Towards the General Chapter of 1970

Appendix. Various circulars (1953-1970) written by the General Assistants or other sisters.

A text, prepared by Sister Miriam Moscow, presents the historical panorama of these years of generalate. The layout of this collection is by Sister Catherine Sesboüé.



Through these circulars, it is possible to follow the great events of Mother Marie Denyse's generalate after her election to the 1953 Chapter. Chapter of 1959 in Auteuil, with the drafting of a new text of the Constitutions; Chapter of 1965 in Rome: re-election of Mother Marie Denyse; Vatican Council II; Chapter of 1970 in Auteuil, with a view to the drafting of a Rule of Life to replace the Constitutions.

In 1967, the announcement of the merger with the Soeurs Gardiennes de l'Eucharistie, made in 1968.

During the Mother Marie Denyse's Generalate, the Congregation was extended by several foundations, beginning with Rwanda (1954), marking the return of the Congregation to Africa after the break-up of

Cape Town in 1852. This foundation renewed the zeal of our first missionary sisters and the thought of Marie Eugenie who had written: "this land of Africa which will always be more dear to us than any other"... After Rwanda, the Assumption will spread to 12 new countries. These many foundations were made possible by the creation of smaller communities and the creation of IYAs (1961).

Finally, there was still hope for the outcome of the Process of Beatification of Mother Marie Eugénie (Decree of Heroic Virtues proclaimed on June 25, 1961).

While reading these circulars, it would be good to take up the book on the life of Mother Marie Denyse (1905-1985): For me, living is Christ, written in 1991 by Sister Hélène Marie.

Sœur Thérèse Maylis Montpellier

2018-2019

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

When Mother Marie Denyse is elected Superior General in August 1953, Pius XII had been Pope for 14 years. The Second World War has been over for eight years, but Europe is divided into two blocks.

1. Panorama of the history of the Church in the world

Western Europe is being painstakingly rebuilt and is experiencing various ecclesial moments. In Spain, in 1953, the Church signed the concordat with the Spanish State. Franco's government sought both to rely on and contain the authority of the Church, wanting to use it for national unification. To be Spanish is to be Catholic. Catholics, traumatized by the violence of the civil war, adhere to this religion. But, gradually, a new generation of priests is emerging, concerned about a more personal faith, and a laity conscious of its responsibilities.

In Italy, Christians are involved in politics and in all areas of social life through the Italian Catholic Action. The catastrophic situation of the national economy after the war years caused migration within and outside the country; it also made Marxism attractive. The decree of Pius XII (1949) promulgating excommunication against communist militants who were allegedly Catholics, largely targeted his own nation.

In France, part of the Church wants to be resolutely missionary. Already in 1943, Abbots Daniel and Godin had published La France, Pays de Mission? The book advocates the proclamation of the gospel to de-christianized environments by methods detached from a bourgeois culture. The movement of worker priests, called *Mission de France* and a new Congregation, *les Frères des Campagnes*, are all working on it. Despite the condemnation of "new theology" in the Encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950) and the silence of many Jesuit and Dominican theologians, the abundance of theological and pastoral research continues, as it has in Germany. There is the deepening of the Word of God, helped by the publication of the Jerusalem Bible in a single volume (1956), the rediscovery of the Fathers of the Church, liturgical and catechetical research. The ecumenical movement is gaining ground. Lay

apostolic movements are exploding. Most initiatives - of all kinds - do not come from the hierarchy, and are national rather than diocesan in scope.

Belgium is living a period rich in Christian associative life, in biblical and theological research, with a missionary contribution that is large in relation to its size. Catholic communities in England and Scandinavia enjoy freedom of action, but being very small, they are somewhat marginal.

The countries liberated from Nazi control by the Red Army (the eastern part of Germany, now the GDR, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania) have governments guided by Moscow. The three Baltic republics, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, were simply swallowed by the USSR. Yugoslavia is also a Marxist but chooses to be part of the non-aligned countries. Persecutions against the Catholic Church (and all those who oppose Marxist doctrines) are well underway, with harassment at work and school, deprivation of the sacraments, exile or even prison, or death for countless faithful and members of the clergy. Archbishop of Zagreb Alojzije Stepinac, Hungarian Primate Joseph Mindszenty, and Polish Primate Stefan Wyszyński are sentenced to prison despite their opposition to fascist regimes. In Bulgaria, Bishop Eugene Bossilkov, as well as three Augustinians of the Assumption, Pavel Djidjov, Kamen Vichev and Josaphat Shichkov, are sentenced to death and shot in November 1952, after a parody of a trial for having wanted to "prepare an imperialist war against the USSR, Bulgaria and the popular democracies". Stalin dies in 1953, but there is nothing to indicate *perestroika* and its future consequences. Communist regimes are in place from central Europe to the Pacific shores, and will spill over into America (Cuba, 1959) and Africa. In this context, it is not surprising that Pius XII is fiercely opposed to communism.

While armed conflicts have ceased in Europe since the armistice in 1945, this is not the case in Asia. Certainly, Japan, demilitarized and having lost all the territories it had occupied, is rebuilding itself economically and socially. Vietnam is at war with France, which is trying to regain its position of colonial power after the nationalist and communist movement

settled in the North between 1946 and 1954. Then, the war continued between the armies of the North and the South (the United States took over from the South around 1961) and it was only in 1975 that hostilities ceased with the victory of the communist forces. In Korea, between 1950 and 1953, a war broke out between the North, supported by the communist bloc, and the South, helped by the USA and the Philippine armed forces, and some other countries. The Philippines, which suffered greatly under Japanese occupation, has been independent since 1946. In this unique Asian country with a Christian majority (Manila was erected as a diocese in the 16th century), a plenary council was held in 1953 for a profound evangelization *ad intra and ad extra*. India, independent in 1947, has been a republic since 1950. It is experiencing peaks of violence, even war, linked to partition and population transfers with what becomes Pakistan. There are also unresolved territorial disputes with Pakistan and China. Catholic Christians are a small minority of the national population, but they are influential in the field of education.

Sub-Saharan Africa experienced a wave of decolonization at the same time, beginning with Ghana in 1957 and quickly followed by other countries (with the exception of countries colonized by Portugal). On this continent, the colonial powers have provided the countries with governmental and commercial infrastructures; the Church is at the origin of the creation of many schools and health centers. The results of the colonial era are therefore not only negative, but the populations aspire to their independence. According to the Church's thinking, these aspirations are valid. Thus, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith seeks to remove from the missions the colonial character that may offend local sensitivities. The encyclical *Fidei Donum* (1957) continues in the same direction. Pius XII began to call African priests to the episcopal charge, including Aloys Bigirumwami in Rwanda, Bernardin Gantin in Dahomey/Benin, and Laurean Rugambwa in Tanganyika. In 1960 Rugambwa becomes the first African cardinal.

Later, John XXIII and Paul VI intensify the establishment of an African episcopate. Many of these men, consecrated at a very young age, will be

able to accompany their people for a long time on the path of inculturation and national construction.

In Latin America, the beginnings of evangelization and the establishment of a hierarchy date back to the 16th century. At the political level, the 19th and 20th centuries were turbulent with juntas and dictatorships, sometimes anticlerical, sometimes allied with the Church. After the Second World War, episcopates were divided over how to respond to problems of social justice (sanctification through charity and submission, or the radical transformation of social structures). Already in 1951, Dom Helder Camera leaves his episcopal palace to live in a slum. The International Eucharistic Congress in Brazil in 1955 is followed by a General Conference of Bishops of Latin America, from which CELAM (Consejo Episcopal Latino-Americano) is born. The conference in Medellin (1965), where the dream of a Church of the poor is heard, opts for basic ecclesial communities as a pastoral priority. Theologians, including Gustavo Gutiérrez (Peru), Leonardo Boff (Brazil), and Juan Luis Segundo (Uruguay) develop a new theology (the theology of liberation) in harmony with the realities of their continent.

North America is experiencing a time of demographic and economic growth. Two fears hang over the entire population: that of communism and that of a nuclear war. Infinitely in the minority at the beginning of the United States, long considered as potentially "anti-American", by the middle of the 20th century, Catholics finally acquire the "freedom of the city", even if it is not until 1960 that a Catholic is elected president. The Church is mainly made up of the middle classes, not the ruling class. It is the neighborhood parishes, often ethnic, financially supported by the faithful, which are the homes of Catholic life. The 1950s and 1960s saw the birth and growth of the struggle for the civil rights of African-American citizens; gradually, Catholics become involved.

2. The Second Vatican Council

Upon the death of Pius XII in 1958, Angelo Roncalli, the Patriarch of Venice, is elected Pope and takes the name of John XXIII. Conscious of ecumenism through his years as a nuncio in Bulgaria, Turkey and

Greece, he announces in January 1959 the convening of an ecumenical council. He wants it to be a council of *aggiornamento*, of deepening the faith of the Church in order to present it in a way that meets the needs of our time. He initiates a consultation with bishops from all over the world, as well as with Catholic universities and the curia. He is creating a secretariat for Christian unity. In 1961, he publishes the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* which stresses the importance of social justice and economic balance between nations.

At the time of the convocation of the Second Vatican Council, two main currents are discernible in the Church. Some pastors are attentive to the need to adapt the way of announcing the faith to the realities of the modern world, they are open to ecumenical dialogue, favourable to a pastoral theology rooted in Holy Scripture. Others are concerned about the stability of the Church, eager to keep the deposit of faith intact, aware of the risks inherent in change. Among these, some, through their philosophical and theological training, risk confusing dogmatic formulation with Revelation itself.

The Council opens in Rome in October 1962 with nearly 2500 bishops and many theologians and experts, including a large number of French and Germans (several of whom had been condemned to silence by the Encyclical *Humani Generis* in 1950). There are also observers from Protestant churches and the Russian Orthodox Church. It is divided into four sessions (11/10 - 08/12 1962; 29/09 - 04/12 1963; 14/09 - 21/11 1964 and 14/09 - 08/12 1965).

Pope John XXIII dies in 1963, a few weeks after the publication of his last encyclical *Pacem in Terris* addressed to all men of good will. His successor, Archbishop of Milan Giovanni Battista Montini, is elected in June 1963 and names himself Paul VI. Paul expresses his firm intention to bring the Council to a conclusion and implement its decisions.

The Council produces sixteen documents: four constitutions (on Divine Revelation, The Church, the Liturgy, the Church in the Modern World), nine decrees (on bishops, priests, Eastern Catholic Churches, ecumenism, religious, the apostolate of the laity and the missionary activity of the Church, the media of social communication). There are

also three declarations, addressed to all men (on religious freedom, on the Catholic Church's relations with non-Christian religions and on Christian education). The reform of the liturgy and the declaration on religious freedom will provoke acrimonious debates during and after the Council.

Paul VI is the first pope of modern times to leave Italy. He makes nine great trips to Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In 1965, he addresses the UN General Assembly in New York. A year earlier, he had gone to the Holy Land where he had met Athenagoras, the Patriarch of Constantinople, which leads to a historic gesture of reconciliation. On the eve of the closing of the Council, the reciprocal lifting of the anathemas proclaimed at the rupture in 1054 is proclaimed simultaneously in Rome and Constantinople.

3. The post-conciliar period

In 1967, the Pope publishes *Populorum Progressio* in which he insists that "development is the new name for peace". The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* on birth control was published the following year. A stumbling block for many of the faithful in the West, it is better received in Third World countries. The events of May 1968¹, initially French and not necessarily ecclesiastical in scope, will have long-term consequences on the conception of authority, both in the Church and in all strata of life in society.

The new missal, known as Paul VI's, is promulgated in 1969. From Lent 1970 onwards, the Eucharist can be celebrated in the spoken language, with the increased participation of the faithful. The Word of God is central to this. A few months later, Marcel Lefebvre, former Archbishop of Dakar, former Superior General of the Spiritans, founds the fraternity

¹ The events of May 1968 are the most important French social movement of the twentieth century: student protests, enlarged to other groups, fights in the streets ... An iconic slogan of the revolt is: "It is forbidden to prohibit..."

of St. Pius X and opens a seminar in Ecône, Switzerland. Two early signs of the beginning of the decade...

Sœur Miriam Moscow

FIRST TERM: 1953-1965

One of the decisions of the 1953 General Chapter was the return of the Mother House to Auteuil, which had been left during the 1907 expulsions. The monastery having been destroyed in 1926, the sisters return to the *Petit Couvent* (17 rue de l'Assomption) which had been preserved as a ladies' residence, or Villa St Michel.

The creation of the Provinces, after the Vicariates in 1947, maintained the orientation towards this new form of government, dictated by the extension of the Congregation.

Mother Marie Denyse's apostolic zeal was soon to be expressed in the multiplicity of missionary foundations, in the line of *Fidei donum* of Pius XII, foundations helped by the AMA (Missionary Auxiliaries of the Assumption), created in 1961.

The first foundation was that of Birambo, Rwanda, in 1954. Then came the establishment in new countries, especially in Africa, while the presence was strengthened in those where the Assumption was already present.

- In 1956, it was the return of the Novitiate to Auteuil after the Val stage and the war novitiates stage, in France and elsewhere.
- The 1959 Chapter, the first to be held at Auteuil since the expulsions, offered the sisters new Constitutions, largely the work of Mother Marie Denyse since 1953, a revision and updating of the previous ones, worked by Mother Marie Eugénie and Mother Thérèse Emmanuel and approved by Rome in 1888.

In 1961, the new chapel of Auteuil was built. Mother Marie Denyse prayed, wanted and thought of it as a “tent” planted in the park with paths traced back to Mother Marie-Eugénie's time.

FIRST CIRCULAR TO THE CONGREGATION
Mother Marie Denyse, after her election.

17 de agosto de 1953

Extracted instruction of the speech of the holy father, Pius xii, to the nuns, September 20, 1953

God Alone

Val Notre-Dame, 11 October 1953

Dear daughters,

As we pass through Le Val on this beautiful feast of the Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin, how can we not come to you for the first time after having lived this day so close to you? In trying to melt the maternal love that fills my heart into that of the Blessed Virgin, it seemed to me that I was obtaining for each of you the best graces and that each one received according to her needs, which would make her *truer daughter of the very sweet, very kind and very merciful Virgin Mary*.

Would I have thanked you a little bit like that for everything you have done for almost two months for your new Mother? I cannot tell you how much your countless letters, telegrams, pictures, spiritual bouquets, masses, etc., in August, on the occasion of the feast of Saint Dionysius, touched me. I literally feel supported by this spiritual gift of my daughters. I'm not exaggerating anything by writing this. I can tell you that on August 17², I was devastated, but devastated to the bottom, in a feeling of helplessness that you have to have experienced to believe in it. And then, on the 18th, as if nothing had happened, everything seemed very simple to me. Something had happened: your prayers rose to the Lord; and the Father, who knows the need of his child, quickly answered your calls. And because you do not stop praying, as your letters tell me every day, the yoke seems sweet to me and the burden light. And there remains in my heart a very great joy in the fact that the Lord has made

²Mother Marie Denyse was elected Superior General on August 17, 1953.

our Assumption so beautiful, so one, so Catholic, and that He will help us to make it more and more holy.

That is what I was looking forward to saying to you, my dear daughters, with the regret of not being able to answer a word to each of you. Your letters so confident are a first contact. What a joy it will be when the visits make this contact more intimate. You can imagine how much I look forward to getting to know you all. The distant houses will have, after Rome, the first visits, but some, closer, will be well on the way and Providence will arrange the rest. I know that you have all been united in heart and soul in the great days of the Chapter; that you rejoice in the decisions taken, since they are the line of the desires of the Holy Church. It is now up to us, each where obedience has placed us, to live our beautiful Assumption life to the full.

To help you do this, I will conclude by quoting a beautiful passage from the Holy Father's speech to the nuns at the audience on September 20, which was attended by several Mothers and Sisters: *The wish I have for you is that you intensify your inner life. Whatever your work, may your life be a reflection of this life from within, this life of Christ that you carry within you. May your heart be a little Bethlehem, and may the grace you carry within you, like the sea, with the warmth of love, be transformed into steam that rises in the clouds, and fall back on the earth in rain of grace on all your works. And that you never say: "That's enough" at the slightest desire of Our Lord on you.*

What a beautiful instruction, isn't it, my dear daughters? Let us keep it in the manner of the Blessed Virgin, living her motto to the full: "For me, to live is to magnify the Lord...". May she bless you for this, as I do with all my heart.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement, ra

P.S.: Mother Françoise Marguerite asks me to thank on her behalf all those who so kindly wrote to her during her nomination and celebration. She was very touched by it, and counts on your prayers that this union of the New World and the Old will bring about the fusion of *Nova and Vetera*.

LETTERS TO THE CONGREGATION

Marian year (1954): Invitation to the pilgrimage. Subject discussed in chapter : Do we have a spirituality? Become contemplative in action

God Alone

Rome,

5 December 1953

My dear daughters,

I was waiting to be in Rome to send you some directives about the Marian Year, and upon my arrival I received such a concrete letter from the Sacred Congregation of Religious that I communicate it to you in full.

You have already read and meditated on the Encyclical of the Holy Father which tells us what the Marian Year³ will be like. Above all, *an effort to conform our lives as much as possible to the examples of the Blessed Virgin... to express in our thoughts, words, actions, spiritual physiognomy and qualities.*

The spiritual physiognomy of the Blessed Virgin: a short prayer expresses it well, and could be commented on to the Children of Mary to concretize their Marian devotion:

**Virgin, impress upon me your holy purity,
Your contemplation and humility,
So that my whole being can keep its imprint,
And that we think of you, when I've passed through.**

Let us have a great desire to be, for all those who approach us, a reminder of the Blessed Virgin. This is a Marian apostolate that is within everyone's reach, and the concern to exercise it will make us live a profound intimacy with Mary.

³ Marian Year 1954

The Holy Father also asks us to mark the Marian Year with pilgrimages dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and especially to Lourdes. With what joy we obey, don't we? The most favourable dates seem to us to be from April 8 to 13, arriving in Lourdes on the morning of April 9 and leaving on the evening of April 13. There are not many people at that time, which will allow us to have space and organize, in addition to the pilgrimage ceremonies, some working sessions. All suggestions will be gratefully received, as well as a Marian study plan adapted to the different ages, from the 6th grade onwards. We must also invite our elders, of course, and encourage them to come in great numbers to this great Assumption gathering at the feet of the Immaculate Virgin.

Perhaps distant houses that cannot organize such a long journey could, on the same dates, go on pilgrimage to a nearby shrine so that we could all gather in one prayer.

I would also like, my dear daughters, to talk to you about a subject that was discussed at one of our Chapter meetings, and on which I have prayed a lot since then.

Do we have a spirituality?

We all answer: Yes, but when it comes to defining it, to specifying it, we are a little embarrassed. This may give rise to the impression of hesitation, lack of structure and imprecision, which young people in particular notice and from which they suffer after a few years of religious life.

We should not blame them, nor accuse them of not understanding the spirit of the Assumption. To the extent that a Congregation combines active and contemplative life, the problem arises. This is a problem that is difficult to solve in theory, much more so in practice.

I have often heard people blame the excessive apostolic work of one or the other of our houses, work that is seen as an obstacle to the realization of our vocation. Each time it left me thinking: I would have preferred guidelines to try to synthesize our two lives: contemplative and active.

At a time when we cannot escape a very intense apostolic life, is it not better, instead of complaining about it, to try to make this synthesis? Isn't

our spirituality there? Does not our Rule tend to form souls deeply enough united to God to remain *contemplative in action*?

Contemplative in action.

Doesn't that summarize, better than anything, our spirituality?

Our Lord constantly returns to this when He teaches Mother Teresa Emmanuel:

I ask you for the same dependence on me out of prayer as in prayer. Here it is to receive, there it is to act through me.

You must be everywhere in an attitude of adoration of the One who possesses you... You cannot think that my Humanity was less mine at any time. It was as much mine by walking along the day as in prayer.

O Lord, look at the active life I have, continually taken by everything.

It looks like the one I have in the Eucharist, constantly given, taken, possessed!

Verbum caro factum est... In me too he wants to dwell among the creatures... To be truly under his form; Jesus given, as he is given under the envelope of the Host.

Like Mary, I must carry Jesus into this house: to live Mary's common life; outside, going about all her duties, all her relationships, in the spirit of the Lord who filled her; inside full of God, collected, attentive, peaceful...

How beautiful all this is, and that other quotations could be made specifying our goal: to become contemplative in action. It is not a question of contemplative and active life, but of a single contemplative life.

This may seem utopian, but no, it is the theologically true, and Father Huby expresses it with striking force in his book: *Pauline and Johannine*

Mystics. I can't resist the desire to quote the sentence that ends the first part of the book:

The action animated by apostolic charity, far from degrading or exhausting contemplation, completes it by making it bear all its fruits. If contemplation is ecstasy, that is, coming out of oneself to unite with God, apostolic action is no less ecstasy: it too has come out of oneself to reach into the next God himself. And in the last years of his life, when he was nearing the end of his journey, was there still any reason to distinguish contemplation and action? Hadn't Christ unified everything in him: "Mihi vivere Christus est"⁴.

All the words carry: *The action animated by apostolic charity.* First effort: to animate our apostolic charity action, that is, to animate it with a love that is lived more than it is said. This implies a devotion stripped of all research, where all energies are offered in sacrifice to go, as at its normal end, until the total exhaustion of oneself. It also implies the effort to forget one's own tastes and desires, to indulge with indifference in what God's will will require.

Thus, animated by charity, the action *completes* contemplation, instead of *exhausting* it. That is the crux of the matter. If we have the impression that work exhausts our prayer life, it is because we give ourselves to this work without love. It is therefore less a question of suppressing work than of doing it in a completely different spirit, a spirit of seeking God to unite with Him.

This is no small matter! Saint Paul found *unity in the last years of his life*, and all the saints after him engaged in the struggle. We have to do it too, but if we know where we are going, the goal we are pursuing, there will be less time wasted.

⁴Huby Joseph, sj. *Mystiques Paulienne et Johannique*, DDB, 1946.

All this is very poorly said and very incompletely said, my dear daughters, but if these few ideas could start a community work, that I would be happy! Let yourself be tempted by this work! Do this by looking at Mary Immaculate: in Her, unity is perfect. May She lead us in her wake, in her ecstasy that led her to her Assumption.

I know that your prayers are with us in Rome. The Lord hears them in His own way, it is always the best He chooses for us. The audience will be after Christmas, and the blessing of the Holy Father will come to us as a pledge of divine blessings throughout the Congregation at the beginning of a new year.

I ask the Lord to make you participate in all the graces of this stay in Rome, my dear daughters, and I entrust you all to the Blessed Virgin, asking her to bless you.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement, ra
DS

Audience with the holy father of december 25, 1954:
Spirituality of action: Contemplation in action. Spiritual
exercises, Ignatian spirituality

God Alone

Auteuil

10 March 1954

My dear daughters,

How many letters had to leave Auteuil 56 years ago, bearing the date of March 10! It is not without emotion that I write it at the top of this page, after the recess when Our Mother Marie Joanna evoked dear memories for us.

Fifty-six years! It is both very close and very far away. Very close, because the face of Our Venerable Mother Foundress is not locked in the past, we do not reach it by immobilizing it in the past, but by living from its spirit and transmitting it. Now, we live by it, and after having received it from those who drew it directly from the source, we try to transmit it. Doesn't this continuity give the impression of living in an eternal present?

But March 10, 1898 is also very far away if we measure the steps taken, the persecutions, wars, revolutions, which marked so deeply this period. Fully committed to the tasks of the present moment, we must constantly return to the life and teachings of Our Venerable Mother, to recognize the attitude we must have towards the more serious problems to be solved. This is my prayer today for the Congregation. I asked that the Assumption, like the Holy Church, be constantly faithful to a twofold movement: a courageous march forward, in the service of the Church and souls, and a constant return to the teachings of Our Venerable Mother to find light on the problems encountered, and the strength to overcome the obstacles.

The last circular, my dear daughters, was a problem. Some of you worked hard on it and sent me some very interesting personal or community responses.

But what about the Holy Father's response so spontaneous, so clear, so vibrant? If I have been so late in telling you about it, it is precisely because I fear that, too clearly, it will confuse some who would take it too literally in their desire to find *their light and joy in all the precepts, all the advice and all the words of the one who is the head, heart and mouth of the Church.*

The Holy Father's word, in this wonderful audience of December 29, is not a precept, not even a piece of advice. It is the word of the Father who knows the Assumption more than anyone else and who loves it. I came out of that hearing so moved, it took me a long time to talk about it. The Holy Father was the sole purpose of this first trip to Rome, and I did not find the weeks of preparation for the audience hearing too long, where acts of faith followed acts of faith, in order to receive from the Lord himself the words of his Vicar.

I also felt so strongly your prayers: I was there having been sent by all of you and I represented all of you. So, I have to share with you what belongs to you as much as to me.

With regard to our works, the Holy Father told me not to fear multiplying the sources of radiance, *but that it should be solid*, each one taking its share of responsibility and doing everything possible to make itself capable of a better service: *We must train apostles... that your life be very apostolic.*

I told the Holy Father, who was very interested, about our project to establish a foundation in Congo-Belgium. But what to choose between a boarding school for Europeans and the real mission among the natives? Are we ready for this real mission? Without hesitation, the Holy Father answered me: *Go to the blacks before they are taken from us.* These are the dear future missionaries of NYUNDO⁵ sent by the Holy Father as

⁵Nyundo, Vicariat apostolique au Rwanda ; 1er érigé par Pie XII dont l'évêque est Mgr Bigirumwami.

Our Lord sent His Apostles *Ite and docete, Go and teach*. What trust this should give us in the spiritual success of our first house in Africa.

Finally, I told the Holy Father that I wanted to know what he, who knows us so well, who has read and reread the Instructions of Our Venerable Mother Foundress, thinks of our spirituality. And I asked the question: *Engaged in a very intense apostolic life, more intense than we would sometimes like, should we not put the emphasis on a spirituality of action in order to become contemplatives in action?* I had barely finished my sentence when the Holy Father cried out: *"But of course, that's it, that's the whole Ignatian spirituality. I have always wondered with amazement why you were not more Ignatian at the Assumption. When I went to the Corso, I never saw any Jesuits there; and yet you are an apostolic Congregation, so you must have a strong spirituality of action."*

I told the Holy Father that our houses in Spain and America were very Ignatian and that the house in Lübeck had discovered, in recent years, how the Exercises of Saint Ignatius had structured our Assumptionist spirituality. The Holy Father seemed happy with it and said to me: *The Exercises of Saint Ignatius, there is only that which touches the hearts to the very depths. Every year, for the Vatican retreat, I ask the Reverend Father General to give me a Jesuit Father who will preach the Exercises and nothing more. I regret so many retreats that are theology courses. You have to know theology, of course, but retreat is something else.*

And for a moment, the Holy Father, also relying on the Encyclical of Pius XI, told me about the Exercises and especially about the third degree of humility, often so little understood. He ended by saying: *Pray for me. I think a lot about Saint Celestine V, I would like to imitate him so much. At my age it's too heavy. And then I would like to prepare for death without having so much to govern. But is it my duty to leave at a time when the situation is so serious? If God wants me to die in a concentration camp, can I avoid it?*

A few weeks later, news began to circulate that the Holy Father was very sick. And since then, throughout the world, prayer has become intense around him. The stay in Rome almost ended without the audience. Will the words of the Holy Father that I am faithfully reporting to you be his spiritual testament for the Assumption to whom he has given testimonies of his paternal love for so many years? It is the secret of God. I see them

as an invitation to a life that is all the more contemplative because it will be more apostolic. *As Christians give themselves more totally to the service of the Kingdom, they discover that Christ's presence is closer, that their relationship with their Master is more personal and profound.* This sentence, found in the first issue of a new review of *Christus*⁶ spirituality, says well what our effort should be. The presence of the Lord will be closer if we seek Him in our work and in our prayer, if we strive to contemplate Him in souls, in our successes and failures.

I fear that some of them may be confused and feel obliged to take these words of the Holy Father to heart, I told you earlier. A great freedom of soul has always characterized the Assumption and I think it will always be so. But if the Assumption in all countries has found it normal to make a vigorous adaptation of certain points of the Rule to the needs of health, an adaptation of our old regulations to new pedagogical methods, why not think that circumstances have changed greatly, and that our spirituality also needs to adapt? It is not a question of cutting ourselves off from other very rich spiritualities, but since our hours of prayer are the same and our work much greater, to avoid imbalance, should we not deepen a spirituality of action?

You see that it is not a question of changing at all, as some thought, but of seeking what Our Venerable Mother Foundress would tell us today. It seems to me that fidelity is that. Let us ask her for each other, my dear daughters, passing our prayer through the faithful Virgin to whom I entrust all of you, asking her to bless you.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement
DS

⁶Christus n°1.

Foundation in the Apostolic Vicariate from Nyundo, in Birambo, Rwanda. Contemplative in action

God Alone

Auteuil

1st November 1954

My dear daughters,

Before leaving for Africa and for our dear Missions in the Philippines and Japan, I come to entrust this great journey to your prayers.

It is not without emotion that we will approach, in this immense black country, the small apostolic vicariate of Nyundo which, for some years now, it seems, *has been in a rush towards catechism lessons in preparation for baptism*. It is a true irresistible current of grace, a true breath of the Holy Spirit. In his last letter, Bishop Bigirumwami wrote:

Finally, I will soon have my daughters of joy and consolation; girls who will work tirelessly with the souls and works of the young vicariate of Nyundo! What a providence! It is one of the greatest graces and surprises of the Marian year. I have sent a circular letter to my 12 mission posts to announce your arrival, and I insist that everywhere we thank God.

I am sure that all of you, yesterday and today, asked Christ and Our Lady to love this little corner of the universe in a very special way and to rule in Birambo. And you will ask for the happy foundresses: Mother Jeanne Françoise, Sr Marie Geneviève, Sr Marie Ste Anne, Sr Marie Xavier and Sr Marie Anne *for the full gift of themselves in their highest and total generosity*. (Exhortation of the Holy Father, this morning)

I also transcribe to you this request of Our Lord to Mother Therese Emmanuel, so relevant between the feast of Christ the King and the

proclamation of the Universal Royalty of Mary⁷ and that we can each make our own:

You will give kingdoms to God; that is the purpose of your life. Am I in the Eucharist for something other than souls? To give them life? You will do this through prayer first, but a continuous and ardent prayer: I want you to unite yourself to my vast, deep prayer. Then through love, the ardent love of souls that will make you want their perfection. This love will push you to works in their favor; you will not fear, you will want to wear yourself out all for souls.

Is this not, once again, the call to a contemplative life in action? Continuous prayer, ardent love of souls, willingness to wear everything out for her!

Many of you, my dear daughters, either in Paris in July or during the visits that followed, asked me to summarize the conversations we had together, specifying or completing last year's circulars. I must admit that it is much easier for me to talk with you than to write on such subjects: your reactions, your questions, help me to clarify my thoughts and deepen them. But since you want a written document I will try, with the grace of God, to respond to your desires.

This morning at the profession ceremony of Sister Marie Saint Augustin, I was struck by these words:

Father, who heal human nature defiled by sin through your Word and lead it to experience here on earth the eternal goods reserved for future ages!

This is your destiny here on earth: to experience eternal goods. What are these eternal goods if not the clear sight of the ineffable beauties of God, of his love, to love him with all his strength and to know that he is

⁷Pius XII, Encyclical *Ad Cæli Reginam*, 11 October 1954.

loved? It is the day to think about it on this glorious feast of all Saints, and to let oneself be overwhelmed by nostalgia for these eternal goods.

This clear view of God who plunges the soul into contemplation has been sought at all times in the Holy Church. Some wanted to achieve this through pure contemplation and total separation from the world.

Others, by studying theology in order to be contemplatives and providers of the Truth: *Contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*⁸.

Others, through a life of praise, sing the eternal song here below.

Others, through an effort to discover God in all things, or rather a contemplation of all things, from the Trinitarian God in order to acquire a deep supernatural meaning, the presence of the Holy Trinity in all created things, in all actions, and to constantly contemplate this presence in order to be contemplative in action.

For us, the Sisters of the Assumption, it seems to me that it is this effort to discover God in all things that will help us the most *to experience eternal goods from here on earth and to have our conversation in heaven, from this life.*

Contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere implies the absence of any profane occupation: I contemplate God for a certain number of hours, and I give him to the others during the other hours. It's always God.

But in our lives, the most numerous hours of the day are used for secular activities: giving lessons, keeping dormitories, studies, recreation, cooking, cleaning, laundry, being constantly disturbed at the portage, etc. The danger of a divided life is there, all the more so since in these secular activities we must succeed: we must educate children well, educate them well, feed them well. From this comes a certain concern that distracts us, a certain impression that we are chasing two goals at a time and that we will not achieve either: the contemplative life seems to us to take time and harm the active life - hence the temptation to reduce the hours of prayer, to miss the Office in the choir - and the active life,

⁸ Contemplate and transmit to others what has been contemplated. .

giving distractions, harms the contemplative life, hence the temptation not to be totally devoted. I say well: danger, and I say well: temptation. The reality is quite different if we want it to be quite different.

The way? Strive to discover God in all things. The things created captivate us by themselves and we must overcome this to discover God. It is not a small matter, but God's work joins our work and He is the one who does the essential. See what Saint John of the Cross says:

If the soul seeks God, its beloved Lord seeks it even more, and if it sends its desires set ablaze with love, He sends it his divine inspirations by which it attracts it and makes it come to Him.

We work with God, and ultimately it is He who does the work and only asks us to support and follow His action in our souls. God must become like a climate, and all our activity must be carried out in that climate. This activity can be very intense, very demanding, very dispersing, it must be able to leave the unity of the soul and its freedom intact.

Why, at the end of the school year, do we often have the impression that we are emptied of God and that it is time to make the great retreat to fill ourselves again? I think it is because we have not yet reached the goal, we are not fully contemplative in the action.

Contemplative in action means: I fill myself with God by contemplating Him in the hours of prayer and I continue to fill myself with Him in action. Contemplation does not alternate with action but identifies with it.

Our Lord explains this to Mother Therese Emmanuel with wonderful words of precision and strength:

Above all, you must be contemplative: see the invisible things before the visible, Jesus before men, God before events. And you must remain at this height by acting and not descend from it because I want to be the whole of your life, the whole in rest and the whole in action...

Practice this contemplation, looking through my eyes at all things. Lend me your eyes and I'll put my eyes on it.

All the spirituality of contemplation in action is found in these few words. *Seeing things invisible before things visible*: it is the presence of the Holy Trinity in its creation. *Jesus before men*: this is the unity of the Mystical Body: a member of Christ, the Christ. *God before things and events*: it is the First Cause that acts as the second cause - the worship of God's rights.

In times of prayer, we sometimes manage to realize this view of God and his will through everything, then, alas, when we return to action. And yet Our Lord insists and specifies: *You must remain at this height by acting and not descend from it*. Clearly, contemplation does not alternate with action, it really identifies with it since both are seeking God, discovering God.

This will not happen alone, as Our Lord also says: *Practice this contemplation*, that is, come back often to the same effort, to the same practice, do not let go of the particular examination...

Ah! the particular examination which, with its precise orientation in the morning, its verification and its reorientation at the time of the examination itself, with the continuity of the supervision, requires a beautiful tenacity and a generous love, what a wonderful springboard on which our spiritual life would constantly rebound, if we were faithful to it!

Practice contemplating the Holy Trinity in every person encountered during the day, or contemplating God's will in all the unexpected events of the day. Or to contemplate the humiliated, despised Lord Jesus, on every occasion of humiliation and disrespect, etc. The scope is vast with particular points of examination that would help us to give priority to God in our lives without being torn apart by two lives to lead!

Another word of Our Lord to Mother Therese Emmanuel is worth quoting here because it gives Our Lady her full place in this spirituality of contemplation in action:

You must become like my Mother to be like Me... She competed with Me in self-giving. It is the ecstasy of love, always coming out of oneself for the universal gift.

Are we far from a spirituality that would consider action as an obstacle to contemplation?

And this other word that completes: *I call you to adore me like Mary, to take care of Me like her. She saw all my members in Me, she could not forget me for a single moment thinking of them.*

Is it not the case to shout to us with Saint John of the Cross: "*O souls created for such greatness, what do you do? What are you dealing with?*" For it is still he who affirms it, we are all called to these greatnesses: *God does not want to restrict the number of privileged souls, but he finds very few who want to undertake such a high and sublime work. Many souls have the desire to advance in the path of contemplation and ask God for this grace, but they flee the path of renunciation and total self-denial that leads to it, for the broader path of consolation. They even refuse to start entering and accept the small ordeals that everyone usually has to endure.*

We must begin by wanting to enter the path of renunciation and total self-denial, then move forward humbly, methodically even, taking our weakness in patience, but keeping our eyes fixed on the One who precedes us, the *One Model*, after whom we follow. The surest way to enter the path, to move forward, to reach the goal, is the one Christ has chosen: He has made himself obedient. And here we have the whole solution to the problem of religious obedience so discussed nowadays. Obedience is the basis of a spirituality of contemplation in action, and the *letter on the obedience* of Saint Ignatius, to which the chapter on obedience of our Rule really echoes, takes on its full meaning when meditated upon in this light. We're looking at someone present. But obedience makes God present, it is Our Lord who said it: *He who obeys my Father, it is he who loves me... The three Persons of the Holy Trinity will come into him and establish their dwelling there.*

Father de Caussade speaks of *the sacrament of the present moment when one is in obedience*, and Bishop Gay calls the Superior the *speaking Eucharist*. Any act of fidelity to obedience allows us to contemplate God who came there. Our rules given by the Superior at the beginning of each year take minute by minute, and we should every day take up the

resolution not to be a minute outside this deep presence of God that draws us to contemplation.

This is the reason for our religious obedience. It is not at all, as some say, a question of stifling our personality, our aspirations, our attractions, but on the contrary of realizing ourselves in a perpetual encounter with God. Of course, it is the death of one's own will, one's own mind, one's own self-esteem, but to achieve transformation into God. It is still Saint John of the Cross who says it: *We must have the soul, according to his will, totally transformed into the will of God so that there is no longer anything in it that is contrary to the divine will.* It is not only a question of the total conformity of our will to the divine will, but of transformation, and it seems to me that this is a bit like Saint Augustine: *Amor meus pondus meus*⁹. Is not transformation the movement of the loving soul towards the One it loves?

At this summit, occupations no longer appear pleasant or unpleasant, or at least this aspect is quickly covered by that of the divine will, and the faults of fragility that one commits and whose reproach one feels very quickly and very deeply, are regarded as indelicate of love towards God.

We are only made to love God. If we do not find full satisfaction in our intimate aspirations, it is because we do not love enough. Let us not be surprised, the path is long, at the beginning our strength is weak and it is not a question of putting on our shoulders too heavy burdens that will overwhelm us; when love is strong, it will want to give much, when it is perfect, it will want to give everything.

Saint Augustine, *in the Soliloquies*, explains so well that if the setting of a ring is made on the measure of a precious stone, no other stone can perfectly fill the void. The setting of our soul is made for God alone, and obedience gives it its place by making us renounce everything that is not Him. Once you understand that, it doesn't matter if you're sent to this house or that other house, if you're assigned to that job or that other job, with that sister or that other! Everything becomes for the soul: God and

⁹My weight is my love!

his will. And we come to the beautiful definition of love given by Saint John of the Cross: *To love is to work at stripping oneself, at detaching oneself for God from everything that is not God.*

There would be much more to say about all this, my dear daughters, especially about God's priority in our lives to where it must go for us to be souls supernaturally seized of God, of his great purposes, of his will with which ours do not exist, of his glory, of his service. The Blessed Virgin has lived this minute by minute; may She make you live it with joy and enthusiasm, or in drought and human disgust, no matter what; but may She make you live it.

I ask her with all my soul and count on the help of your prayers to be attentive to give God, like Her, ever more first place.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement r.a.

4 March 1876 :

- *O Lord, why do you want the Assumption?*
- *For my glory. It is a mystery of glory and the work that bears this name must spread my glory: the knowledge of Me in the world, as an effect of splendor.*
- *What means do you give to make this happen?*
- *My own enlightenment, as the sun is the cause of light. And the Assumption is the woman clothed in the sun and shining with its light. O my child, surrender yourself to my designs for this work....*

15 March 1876 :

- *What glory will she give you, Lord?*
- *The glory of being known in the Truth; I owe you, to your fidelity and love, the existence of this work which will glorify me in a particular way.*

21 December 1876 :

- *You belong to me, you will belong to me and He let us see that the concern, the care to please him, was the way to belong to him at all times. "Be faithful, on your fidelity much is dependent, very much for the communication of grace..."*

18 January 1868 :

- *A soul is a kingdom and a religious soul is a splendid kingdom of God. He lives and reigns and governs until a movement, God is loved, known, served, obeyed, followed in his slightest will; everything is ordained to Him. Be this kingdom of peace to me. "Pax in virtute tua et abundantia in*

turribus tuis¹⁰.”

20 January 1868 :

- *O Lord, give us the holiness that is appropriate for your house, where shall we take it?*
- *In Me. I am an open fountain: Fons patens. Truth, justice, joy and peace flow from me as from their unending, inexhaustible source. It is from my fullness that you will receive the abundant grace that must sanctify you; like a vase I have taken you and prepared you to contain it.*
- *O Lord, what will be the word of our dear Assumption?*
- *A word of joy and divine joy: "Pro consortibus tuis unxit te Deus, Deus tuus, oleo lætitiæ¹¹". Whoever sees God has joy, and if you want to be true Assumptionists, you must, like my Mother, contemplate God in this mystery, lifting you up above all things on earth, deserting them like nothing to enter into the joy of the Lord. My joy is in everything that pleases my Father, in everything that matters in eternity, in saved souls, and in God praised, glorified, served, obeyed. O my daughter, may your Congregation give me this joy and may it put her own joy into it. This is how it will fulfill its eternal destinies, my purposes and its mission. I took it for Me, I created it for Me, it must do my works as my right with which I execute what I want.*
- *Dear Jesus, what do you want from us?*
- *Divine joy, joy in the things of God.*
- *Walk in the light of my face that shines upon you and console me and give me, for the life I give you, a thousand services and all your love. I have enough to use them all.*
- *O Lord, yes, we will do it! A thousand and a thousand times yes!*

¹⁰Peace in your strength and abundance in your walls. Ps 121.

¹¹For your people, God, your God, has anointed you with an oil of joy. Ps 44.

- *You start doing it a lot. Spend your tenderness on me, your Husband and the Husband of your Institute.*

27 January 1863 :

- *The Blessed Sacrament is a powerful lever for action. I want to be exposed among you as a source of life, where you will find the strength to act on souls, carrying my action to them. And you will bring them there so that I can change them, feed them, enlighten them, lift them up and fill them with my life.*

17 April 1866 :

- *Yes, I want the union of the two lives: apostolic life and a life of adoration. They are in me.*
- *I call you to be united with my Mother in the apostolic life.*
- *I have to put you to all uses, and it is through my Mother that I will do it. She will be the hand by which I will take you.*

1867 :

- *Think of yourself in nothing, but of Me; and depart from Me, come back in Me and remain in Me: this is to be a true Assumption.*

To the coadjutor sisters

Auteuil

1st November 1954

My dear daughters,

In a few weeks' time, the decisions of the General Chapter concerning you will be realized and this is a great joy for the whole Congregation.

These decisions were taken in order to respond to the directives of the Holy Church and the spiritual and social requirements of our time. They were desired by some of you, but they rather surprised all those who, for years, have deeply loved their lives as lay sisters as Our Venerable Mother Foundress instituted them, *considering themselves happy to be called to services that Our Lady has practiced so often herself and that so many great saints have preferred to any other, and applying themselves with all their strength to acquire the humility that, so much recommended to all, must be especially the virtue of the lay sisters.*

I would like to try, by answering the questions that have been put to me by several of you, to help you all to go beyond what is purely external in the decisions taken, to enter into the spirit that has dictated these decisions.

Why the name Sister Coadjutor?

Because it responds more to who you are in the Congregation. Saint Paul says we are *adjutores Dei*. There is no French word that translates exactly this beautiful Latin word. He means that *we are God's helpers, God's collaborators in his work of redeeming the world.*

According to our vocation, God asks us to help him through this or that work, and he wanted the work of the Assumption to be the Christian education of youth. To work for the Christian education of young people, it is necessary to study. We are *adjutores Dei*, at the Assumption, through our intellectual work and boarding schools.

But could these residential schools exist, would we have time to study, if

no one took care of the material work of the house? No, of course not. For the Assumption to fulfill its vocation to work for the Christian education of youth, alongside the *adjutores Dei*, we need the *coadjutores Dei*, and that is what you are. To better understand this word, bring it closer to the word: Co-redemptrix. The Blessed Virgin is a co-redemptrix, which means redemptive with the Redeemer. You are co-adjutors, that means collaborators of God with the collaborators of God. - You see how beautiful your name is and how well it expresses the unity of our great religious family. There is no great or small, important or unimportant work: there is the work of God in which we collaborate, each in our own place, trying to ensure that it is not a distant collaboration but a union such that in action, between choir sisters and coadjutor sisters, and between choir sisters, coadjutor sisters and God, we are one.

This requires a great forgetfulness of self in order to disappear in Christ. It is not a question of serving oneself, of making oneself loved, but of serving God as Christ. To be true *adjutores Dei* and *coadjutores Dei*, one must strive to realize the word of Saint Paul: *Not estis vestri - You are not yours*. No, you are no longer yours, you are God's in Christ. And the more perfect this gift is, the more joyful you will be, the more redemptive your work and the more perfect your union will be.

That seems to me to be what your name as coadjutor sisters means. You see that you can meditate on it for a long time, it contains your ideal.

Why replace the black habit with the purple suit?

Because the people of the world judge a lot from the outside and are surprised to see such a marked difference in the same Congregation. This beautiful unity made up of our same vows, our same work for God, they do not see it because it is a spiritual reality, therefore invisible. The same clothes will help them understand. - But you, you will try not to stop at the outside sign. You will first remember that Father Combalot thought he heard, at Sainte Anne d'Auray, a voice asking him to found a Congregation whose nuns would have a purple habit as a sign of penance. You will therefore take advantage of the change of habit to

renew yourself in the spirit of penance according to our Constitutions: *they will practice it by applying themselves to self-denial of their judgment and will, to overcome their passions, to moderate their readiness, to cut off words and even unnecessary thoughts, to do with equality of mood the things that cost them, to refuse themselves the satisfactions that they can deprive themselves of without inconvenience.*

Then you and we, going beyond the external resemblance that the same habit will give us, will renew ourselves in the desire *to model ourselves on Jesus Christ and to acquire among ourselves as much resemblance as we will each have to our divine Model.* It will be like a renewal of charity throughout the Congregation, and the most beautiful offering we can make in the manger on this Christmas holiday of 1954, which will be historic for the Assumption. - During my visits or by letter, some of you, especially the Jubilarians I believe, have asked for the grace to keep the black habit they have worn for so many years, and that some of you have even received from the hands of Our Venerable Mother Foundress. This request is very legitimate and I would be happy to grant this permission to those who so desire, especially if age or infirmity no longer allows them to have a stall in the chapel and to lead a regular life. Discuss with your Superior what to do.

Why replace the Prime and Complement Pater by the prayers of the Breviary?

Because we are in an era of liturgical renewal and the prayer of the Church is becoming more and more the prayer of the Christian people. By the Pater, you were already united with our recitation of the Office, but Prime and Compline will soon be one of *the most precious foods of your spiritual life.* Your prayer will expand to the dimensions of the world, for you will better understand that, representing the Church, praying in the name of the Church and for all the intentions of the Church, your personality must disappear. In this official morning and evening prayer, you will praise and bless the Holy Trinity in the name of the whole earth, thank her for her blessings, ask forgiveness for sinners.

This will not prevent you from adding your personal intentions to the

world's intentions. Thus you can say Prime with the desire to sanctify your day, to accept well this planned difficulty, to practice this virtue in this circumstance, etc... Likewise, you can say Compline by asking for the grace of a good death, by praying for the many souls who will die in the night and from whom you can obtain, through your fervent prayer, the grace of a good death, etc. But you will pray for these personal intentions with a Church soul, reminding yourself that you are officially charged with presenting to the Holy Trinity the morning and evening prayers of the whole world.

On this point as on the previous one, if some prefer not to change and continue the recitation of the Pater, they can, but it is better to do so only after having sought with your Superior what will be the best.

I end this long letter with such a nice passage from the closing sermon of the retreat given at Auteuil. After having spoken a lot about the love that must inspire all the charity services of your days, the Father said: *If the Superior is the head of your community, the coadjutor sisters are its heart through the charity they practice. The choir sisters thus always have two hearts waiting for them, Our Lord in the Tabernacle, and the coadjutor sisters. If your work is hard, come to Our Lord at the Tabernacle so that He can teach you to love, and He will tell you: "My child, we are both here to serve, we have received the best part."*

Know how to appreciate this better part, my dear daughters, and may your radiant joy be a continuous witness, to all, of the fidelity of the Lord to give a hundredfold from here on earth to the souls who have left everything to follow him.

Your mother in Our Lord.

Sœur Marie Denyse

1st Journey to Rwanda

God alone!

Kabgayi

24 November 1954

My dearest daughters,

The first circular giving you news of the Assumption in Africa is not yet dated from our country, where we thought it would be the 21st or 22nd! We did not know that our Bishop Msgr. Bigirumwami¹² wanted to show us his mission posts and the main centres of Rwanda by taking us to Birambo. We're only halfway there! It is very sweet for us to think that the Blessed Virgin inspired all this in order to mark the stages of the journey: our first Mass in Rwanda was that of the 21st, and our first Mass in Birambo will be that of the 27th; and this, without any foresight on our part since it should have been otherwise.

There is so much to say about these eight days! You will have known by letters from Val or Philadelphia that the first day of the trip was very hectic. Despite the wind blowing in a storm, our plane left Rome on the 17th at the scheduled time: a lot of clouds but everything was fine. Over the Ionian Sea, as we almost touched Greece, a strong storm broke out. The hail was falling hard on the plane, a lightning bolt caused a strong detonation in an engine, the antenna was cut off and we were shaken to our hearts' content. The thought of the prayers that accompanied our journey from all the houses gave us hope that everything would end well and keep us in peace, but without preventing us from preparing for death! After a long struggle, the plane descended and flew for a long time, almost grazing the sea. What did it want? The crew and the flight attendant didn't say a word. We are finally told that we are returning to Naples, a return that was not without difficulty due to the thick clouds and the risk of running out of fuel. It was only after landing that we

¹²Msgr Bigirumwami, Aloïs

learned of the attempted descents to Malta and then Brindisi, but due to bad weather, the landing could not be made. We were in Naples around 2 a.m., and because of the repairs to our plane, we didn't leave until the next morning.

On the 18th, very good and beautiful trip. The arrival in Athens with the intense blue sky, the very rugged coast, the many islands, is a delight for the eyes. Around 6 am, we were in Cairo, the first African stopover. Thanks to a White Father who travelled with us and the Belgian Company Sobelair who still has an altar case on the plane, we had mass every morning in a hotel lounge at 4:30 am or 5:00 am depending on the departure time, which is always early.

The morning in Cairo was spent travelling through the city to the famous pyramids. We saw them gradually free themselves from the fog: a beautiful sight. View of the Sphinx, visit of an ancient temple, then departure towards the Egyptian Museum after having been attacked by camel drivers who, for a few piasters, have a picture taken of the tourists on camels! We resisted the assault!

In the museum, a real and interesting history course with a very good native guide. We have seen above all, the time to allow no more, what related to Ramses II and Tutankhamun. Countless wonders of incredible richness: thrones, beds, jewelry, a solid gold sarcophagus weighing 110 kilos! etc.

Excellent trip from the 19th, with a very breathtaking view of the desert, nothing but the desert, except on the banks of the Nile which we flew over from time to time. As far as the eye can see, for hours and hours, we never tire of looking at this desert. It is a little like the sea; and every evening, some beautiful sunset illuminates it. This desert lasted almost all day on the 20th and gave way, almost without transition, to the magnificent landscape of immense mountains, lakes and volcanoes. The White Father pointed out to us in passing everything he knew, including Nyundo.

In Bukavu, where we had been waiting for 24 hours, just 10 minutes to switch from one plane to another that took us to Goma: the only way to

catch up on the day's delay and be in Nyundo for the next day's mass. Father Naveau, sent by the Bishop, had already taken our tickets. Painfully unable to stay more than few minutes with Éliane de Prêt, sister of Sister M. Cécile, and her brother who, as well as Mr. Claire Cattoir, were both so kind. Around 5:00 a. m., we were in Goma. The Monsignor was there with several of his priests and we were very moved when we received his blessing. Departure in several cars to Nyundo, with a stop at the A.L.M. shelter. Everywhere it is the most fraternal welcome, all the Christians form a large family and very quickly, we have the impression to know each other since the beginning.

In Nyundo, it is the White Sisters who receive us, then the Mission, to the sound of the drums of the country and the cries of joy of the children. The Bishop honours us with all honours, introduces us to all his priests and missionaries, we feel so happy! Among the White Sisters where we live, contact with the Community of Indigenous Sisters. It is a Congregation that now has its Superior General. There are about 220 of them and they are very involved in schools, clinics, in the various mission positions. Almost all of them speak French.

On the 21st, Pontifical Mass at the Mission Church, very well sung by the students of the Minor Seminary alternating with the crowd. How beautiful is the unity of the Church! We are so much one soul with this crowd of Christians that we forget the difference of race and feel completely at home everywhere! We are struck by the simplicity of everyone, by their welcome, by their smile. After Mass, a presentation by school children and dancers from across the country. I give up describing, it would be too long. We were very touched by everything they did for us. In the evening, at the vigil, a new presentation was given by the minor seminary.

On the morning of the 22nd, visit of the Mission. Each Mission post - there are 12 in the Vicariate of Nyundo - includes the church, schools, workers, dispensary, carpentry and weaving workshops, etc. Some of them also have the minor seminary and all of them also have the adult catechism. All this works continuously from morning to night, and as the groups follow one another or replace one another, it is a real crowd that

rushes all day long around the missions.

Then, departure for Birambo in two cars, one driven by the Bishop himself, and the other by a native brother. In order to get to know us better, we first went to Ruhengeri - visit the hospital and the works - then to Muramba where we spent the night at the normal school run by Auxilium, our neighbours in Lourdes. There too, visit of the works, session, singing, dancing, etc. - Today, 24 of us are in Kabgayi, with the White Sisters and in the Vicariate of the second bishop of Rwanda, a Savoyard, Mgr Déprimoz¹³. This mission post is very important. The White Fathers organized a model printing house, a large carpentry shop that supplies all the other stations with furniture and school furniture. The Sisters have a large hospital, a maternity ward, schools, workers. We have also just seen Mr. Claes, the Governor of Rwanda, and the Bishop absolutely wants to take us to the Queen Mother who lives not far from here. He is for us an unparalleled paternal kindness and calls the Assumption his Congregation since in Africa we are only at his home. What this letter cannot give back is the many kindnesses and delicacies that surround us everywhere and of which we are really embarrassed.

To get an idea of it, we must see the manifestations of faith of all Christians. As soon as they recognize Monsignor's car on the road, they are all on their knees to have his blessing. And as soon as the Bishop stops, the crowd surrounds him. Catechumens walk for hours to come to catechism and services. The Legion of Mary and the Eucharistic Crusade do a lot of good in the missions. But what is painfully lacking is the religious and priestly framework to surround Christians: everywhere students are denied access to small Seminaries due to the lack of priests or local people. As soon as we arrive somewhere, the crowd gathers and surrounds us: there are people coming out from everywhere, because there are huts everywhere, hidden in the banana plantations. If there were

¹³ Msgr Deprimoz Laurent-François (1884-1962) ordained Msgr Bigirumwami, Vicar Apostolic of Rwanda (1945-1952), Vicar Apostolic of Kabgayi (1952-1955).

enough mission posts, we would have all the inhabitants of Rwanda, they are fundamentally religious and so eager to learn. We must pray, pray without tiring the Master of the harvest.

I will stop here with this first news, dear daughters. Thank you all for your prayers, we are counting on them very much. The dear Missionaries join me in telling you how close we feel to you, and how good it is for us to be so followed by all of you. You know how much mother I am to you in Our Lord.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement r.a

Change of Superiors. Two new fields of apostolate: Bondy and Canisy

To the Superiors

Auteuil

30 June 1955

+

My dearest Mother,

The last meeting of the General Council is coming to an end, and before leaving for Brazil I would like to inform you of the decisions taken.

First of all, the changes of Superiors:

Mother Maria Andréa is Superior of Auteuil

Mother Jeanne Stanislas of Montpellier

Mother Dominique of Bordeaux

Mother Marie Robert of Lübeck

Mother Catherine Emmanuel of Canisy

Mother Anne Germaine of Bondy

Mother Marie Christine of Val

Mother Anne Madeleine of Copenhagen

Mother Ignacia Eugenia of Mira-Cruz

Mother Francisca de Paula of San Salvador

Mother Magdalena Eugenia of Managua

Mother Isabel is in charge of the pedagogy of Leuven

Mother Marie Lucienne goes to Cannes as Assistant and Mistress of the Boarding School

Mother Luisa Maria is Novice Mistress in Rome

Mother Marie Bernard remains in Auteuil to work in the archives.

This long list represents many sacrifices and it is the day, tomorrow, to plunge them into the most precious Blood of Our Lord so that they may

function as a complement to Redemption. You can only imagine that I will do it from the bottom of my heart, thinking also of this beautiful word of our venerable Mother Foundress: *Obedience has us, but it is love that puts us at the service of God.*

May all these sacrifices made with love renew and purify our service to God.

In the list above, two names should surprise you: Bondy, Canisy. Two new fields of apostolate that Providence gives us instead of Rennes. I say: give us, since both houses are offered to us by families who wish to evangelize their small country.

Bondy, in the inner suburbs of Paris, will have an influence on a population of nearly 100,000 people. School, patronage, catechism, dispensary, will be the means of influence at our disposal. A large wooded park surrounding the house will make the days of retreat and recollection of the Catholic Action groups very relaxing.

Canisy, in the diocese of Monsignor Guyot, near Saint-Lô, will be a rural apostolate centre; at the same time as a retirement home for former teachers of free education. Here too, catechism, patronage, dispensary, household teaching sessions will occupy the founders.

Alongside our great boarding schools, we hope that these two works will respond to the current desires of the Holy Church, and to the attraction of a few souls who desire total gift, attached to the spirit of the Assumption, but who are hesitant in the face of a teaching vocation.

Auteuil will also take on its true face in October: the 11th and 10th grade kindergarten classes will find their place in the ladies' lounges, without forcing us to send away those who, for years, have been enjoying the charms of Villa Saint-Michel. We will move forward year after year, as the place is built.

The General Council will finally be able to meet, after two years of waiting. The "boat", freed, became a "big fence". The Juniorate will form the community of the Mother House, allowing adoration and Office to the choir in a chapel that we will renovate in order to make it liturgical, as Our Venerable Mother Foundress would surely want it if she were to arrange it now. The little convent will therefore be reborn a hundred

years after the foundation of Auteuil and fifty years after the evictions! Two half centuries during which, in joy or on the cross, God kept our Assumption.

After a few good weeks of meetings, the Council splits one last time. As I leave for São Paulo on the 3rd. Mother Françoise Marguerite, Our Mother Marie Joanna and Mother Marie Bernard leave on the 5th for Val Notre-Dame. There, Mother Marie Andrea will join them after August 15. It is therefore to Mother Françoise Marguerite that you will ask during these two months, the permissions that do not depend on the Provincial Superior.

Here is the itinerary of these two months:

- São Paulo: July 4 to 8 Pedagogical session for religious teachers, a program similar to that of the Class Mistresses last year.
- July 8 to 18 Retreat
- 18 to 22 July Rio de Janeiro: Congress
- 22 to 28 July Quick visit to the three foundations
- July 30 to August 2 Session in Managua
- August 2-6 Session in San Salvador
- Until September 4 Visit to Central American Houses
- September 5 Departure from Mexico City
- September 6 Return to Paris

I recommend travel, sessions, retreats, to your prayers and those of your daughters, my dear Mothers. You know that I bring to Our Lord who will be triumphantly celebrated in Rio all your intentions and praise.

Especially those of the Buenos Aires community, which is doing well, as a cable told us the day after the difficult days, but which will probably not be able to leave the town.

I am all yours in Our Lord.

Mère Marie Denyse du Saint Sacrement. D.S.

Keep our monastic spirit and our austerity. Half closure:
going out and visiting families – 30 days retreat

To the Superiors

God Alone

Auteuil, 17 October 1955

My dearest Mother,

The first two weeks of October bring me every year a renewed strength and joy through so many letters that tell me of masses, days of adoration and fervour offered in honor of Saint Dionysius. How can I not indulge in the thought that *Per Ipsum, cum Ipso and in Ipso*, at this time of the year when the inflows are made into many of our houses, the offering of our service and good will gives God honour and glory? At the Mass of the 9th where the Lord wanted all the Provinces of America and the Philippines to be represented thanks to the passing sisters, I tried to group the lives of all my daughters in a single offering and to ask God, according to the pretty prayer of Bossuet: *That it no longer appear anything of what they are as it no longer seems anything from water mixed in wine, but that He alone appear in all their works.*

This prayer springs spontaneously from my soul now that I know all my daughters and all the houses of the Congregation, including the most recent foundations! I am not telling you anything about the last trips, the particular circulars have told you about it, but what will never be expressed with enough gratitude to God is the spirit of faith of the Congregation and the ardent desire to respond to what the Holy Church expects from us in all latitudes, adapting us to the needs of our time while remaining inviolably faithful to our spirit.

This concern for adaptation requires constant research and also a lucid review.

In making this revision, at a meeting of the General Council, it seemed to us that we were losing some of our monastic spirit and austerity through too frequent outings.

The General Chapter¹⁴ decided that the sisters can go out more than in the past for an apostolic good: accompanying children on walks, pilgrimages, conferences, etc. But it must be for a better apostolate and not for our satisfaction. However, it happens quite often that five or six sisters accompany children on study trips, excursions, pilgrimages, when one or two would be enough. This is not wrong in itself, but it is not the spirit of our Rule. We can change the letter of the Rule to adapt to current apostolic needs, but we must not change the spirit.

In order to become more aware of the seriousness of our half-closing, we thought it would be a good idea to decide this:

For outings in the city where the House is located, permission should be sought from the Provincial Superior, to whom the opportunities for planned outings can be exposed at the beginning of the year. For any travel outside the city where the House is located, it is necessary to ask the Superior General or her replacement. Poverty will gain as much as the spirit of enclosure, because many non-essential trips could not have been paid for by the poor.

Another point that is too broad is that of visits to families. The General Chapter decided that we can go and see our father and mother in danger of death. We can, but it is not necessary, especially if it requires a long journey. The decision can be left to the generosity of each Sister and taken according to the spiritual good that may or may not result from the visit.

However, we receive many letters asking for travel for parents not in danger of death, or for brothers, sisters, nieces. These permissions should not be requested from us. Our Venerable Mother Founder wanted for us an austerity and detachment that we must strive to jealously preserve. We know, when we enter the Assumption, that we will never return to our families. We must bring our families into our sacrifice by first entering it ourselves thoroughly, *not looking at what it costs, but at what it is worth.*

I am sure, my dear Mother, that you will not have any difficulty in bringing

¹⁴General Chapter of 1953.

your daughters into this line, because the sacrifices requested are nothing compared to the graces of interior life that they will attract.

I was speaking earlier about the constant search to which the concern for adaptation obliges us, and this leads me to respond to the desire expressed several times by some Superiors and Sisters, especially in Spain and France: the desire to make the retreat of the Thirty Days once. The long and beautiful article in the review of Religious Communities on the Thirty Days has made your requests come true, and what about the letter of Our Holy Father the Pope to the Most Reverend Father General of the Society of Jesus! In this year of the Great Ignatian Jubilee, it seems to me that this grace cannot be denied to those who desire it. So here's what we thought.

To organize here, in Auteuil, from March 5 to April 6, a thirty-day retreat for the Superiors who desire it, especially for the youngest. It is quite normal that those who have another spiritual orientation do not come.

Spain and the countries of Spanish spirituality formed by the Exercises can also organize, during the summer holidays, one or more thirty-day retreats. Each Superior will submit to the Provincial Superior the wishes of her daughters. If the number of sisters is too small, the Provincial Superior can group the retreatants in the house that seems most suitable to her. The other countries will have their turn in 1957.

And now let us pray that these retreats will be a spiritual deepening for the whole Congregation. With the permission of the Council, I will start the fire for the thirty-day retreat and begin my retreat from November 20 to December 20. I know, my dear Mother, that I can count on your prayers and those of your daughters, and I count on them very much. A grace like this one you only get once in your life, you have to try to get to the bottom of it.

I am not telling you anything about Auteuil because Mother Marie Andrea will soon send a circular. It is such a great joy to have taken over the Office from the choir and the daily adoration!

You know, my dear Mother, my deep affection in Our Lord.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement r.a.



Stay in Rome. Audience with Pius XII and meeting at the Sacred Congregation. Keep your rules and the Spirit of the Assumption. Trips to Africa: Birambo, 1st secondary boarding school in Rwanda, and Moshi. Changes of Superiors

To the Superiors

God Alone

Auteuil

17 August 1957

My dear Mother,

Before leaving for a distant journey, I would like to thank you all for the good letters received for the Assumption. The circulars will tell you what this day of the 15th was like in Lübeck, around Our Venerable Mother Foundress. So many countries represented made it easy to unite hearts and souls in the same prayer of offering to all the divine desires, following our Queen.

These divine desires have brought many sacrifices these days. You may already know them, but to avoid inaccuracies you will find the list of changes in Superiors at the end of this circular.

Now I go back to my last stay in Rome, so full of grace and light. First the audience with the Holy Father. It was late in the morning, at 11:30 am, and I was informed that at 12:00 pm the Holy Father would go up to his room to bless the pilgrims on the square; so, we had to tighten the questions to say it all in twenty minutes.

From the entrance, joy to see the Holy Father so well, so smiling, so welcoming after a busy morning. And at the first stroke of noon what an emotion it is to hear him say: *I will go up and bless the crowd, but stay there, I will come back, I still want to talk with you.* And a few moments later, the Holy Father returned, so good, so profoundly the Father of the Assumption, taking an interest in all our works, in all our research.

To my question: *Most Holy Father, we are sometimes advised to ask for*

solemn vows, what should we do? The Holy Father answered without hesitation: *Why? The Congregations that had them before can ask for them, but the Assumption, no, you are fine like that.*

About the social works of our missions, the Holy Father said: *Keep everywhere your Rules and the spirit of the Assumption.*

And when we learned that we had about 200 novices and postulants, our first Japanese and African vocations and many who were waiting in Africa for permission to enter, the Holy Father said: *How happy I am! We are always told what is wrong, I am always told that there are no vocations, and you tell me that in the Assumption they increase! It is a blessing from God.*

I expressed to the Holy Father our gratitude for the encyclical *Fidei donum*¹⁵, our desire to respond, to our small measure, to his call. The Holy Father was comforted and I was even more so when, the day after the audience, Bishop dell'Acqua told me: *You gave joy to the Holy Father by telling him about your Missions and vocations; he told me this several times in the afternoon.*

This instruction of the Holy Father: *Keep your Rules everywhere and the spirit of the Assumption was repeated to me* in Propaganda by Bishop Sigismondi: *In your Missions, remain what you are, resist us if necessary, because sometimes, bishops and priests, we are tempted to give more importance to the apostolate than to prayer.*

To the Sacred Congregation of Religious, even insistence of Cardinal Valerio Valeri and Bishop Larraona, on the value of our contemplative life, on the spirit of austerity of the Congregation to be jealously guarded. This led me to clarify the Church's thinking on the half enclosure: *In the 1953 chapter, we were told that the Church was asking for an extension of the enclosure rules to adapt our apostolate to the needs of the times and for charity for our families. Since then, our new Constitutions have stated that we can go and see our seriously ill Parents. - This is not the spirit of the Church,"* replied the Cardinal and

¹⁵Encyclical *Fidei donum* – April 1957.

Bishop Larraona, "*and every time we are asked, we answer: Tighten, tighten, tighten. Sometimes we have had to give permissions to Congregations that no longer want the same austerity. But these permissions are concessions to human weakness. The Assumption must not ask for concessions.* And Bishop Larraona explained to us that our enclosure must adapt to the apostolic needs of each house, but that we must never go out for our satisfaction or for a reason that is not apostolic.

I believe that despite the circular sent two years ago, a great effort must be made everywhere on this point, and we will do so, will we from now on, with the desire to keep, without diminishing it, the treasure that Our Venerable Mother Foundress has bequeathed to us.

It remains for me, my dear Mother, to entrust the next trips to Africa to your prayers and those of your daughters. We leave in two convoys, one day apart, because unfortunately it was not possible to reach them. Mother M. Veronica, Sr Martha M., Sr Agnes M., Sr Paula M. and Sr M. Rosio go directly to Moshi, while Sr M. Ghislaine, Sr M. Andrée and I go to Usumbura. You will like to have our itinerary:

- Monday 26 August departure from Rome 8.20 p.m.
- Tuesday, August 27th
 - arrival in Kano (Nigeria) 4:35 am
 - arrival in Leopoldville 10:10 a.m.
- Wednesday, August 28th
 - departure from Leopoldville 6 am
 - arrival in Stanleyville 11:45 am
 - departure from Stanleyville 11:45 am
 - arrival in Usumbura 3 pm

There, joy of a first meeting, I think, with Sr. M. Xavier, and departure on the road to Birambo.

After the visit of our dear Mission, departure for Kiseniy where, on September 18, Rwanda's first secondary boarding school will open, with the children that Birambo had been hosting for two years. It was

Providence that diverted our plans and placed our second missionary foundation in a rather important centre, from which the apostolic influence would be more widespread.

- On September 19 at 2 p.m., departure for Moshi, where the founders will surely have already done a good job.
- On September 29, 7 p.m., departure from Nairobi to Paris, I think, the next evening.

You know how slow the postal service is in Africa! You don't have to write to me in Birambo, but you can reach me in Kiseniy where letters arrive in five or six days thanks to the vicinity of the airport. In this case, send them to the care of *Bishop Bigirumwami - Apostolic Vicariate of Nyundo, by Kiseniy*. Nyundo is only a few kilometers from Kiseniy. To Tanganiyka also the mail is fast but... I don't know our address yet! Kensington's next flyer will probably give it to you.

Upon my return to Auteuil in October, I will discuss with the General Council how to prepare from afar with all of you for the 1959 Chapter. This Chapter will be very important since it will definitively regulate our Constitutions, the Directory and the Customary. It needs to be prepared at length through prayer, but also through the work of each person.

To God, my dear Mother. I am all yours in Our Lord.

Changes of Superiors

- England
 - M. Elisabeth de la S.T., Superior of Richmond
 - M.M. Tarcisius, Mistress of Novices
 - M.M. H  l  ne, Superior of Ramsgate
 - M. Fran  oise Ir  ne, Superior of Sidmouth
 - M.M. Veronica, Superior of Moshi (Tanganiyka)
- Denmark
 - M. Madeleine Eug  nie returns to help M. Anne Madeleine
- Spain

- M. Josefa Ignacia, Superior of Santa Isabel
M.M. Caritina, Superior of Mira Cruz
M. Begoña Eugenia, Superior of Barcelona
M. Blanca Ines, Superior of Gijón
M.M. Nieves, Superior of Valladolid
M. Blanca del St S., Superior of Malaga
M. Clara M., Sidmouth Assistant
M.M. Leonor, Mistress of Studies of Santa Isabel
M.M. Mercy goes to Santa Isabel
- France
M. Thérèse Mte, Superior at Forges
M. M. Baptiste, Assistant at Lourdes
M. Geneviève Emmanuel, Superior at Cannes
M.M. Lucienne, Superior at St Dizier
 - Italy
M. Rosa Eugenia, (Provincial) appointed Superior of the Quadraro
M. Rose de Ste Marie, Assistant of the Italian Novitiate
 - United States
M.M. Guadalupe, Superior of Philadelphia

During this month, contact M. Françoise Marguerite if you have any permissions to ask for. The General Council is to be located at Auteuil.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement r.a

TOWARDS THE 1959 GENERAL CHAPTER

Chapter matters: Constitutions and revision of the Directory and Customary. Delegates following the organization of the Congregation in the Provinces. In August 1958, meeting in Auteuil, August 1958 of all the Superiors who will not be delegate in the General Chapter.

God alone!

+

Auteuil,

13 November 1957

My dearest Mother,

The dates of our future meetings are approved by Rome; we can therefore specify our plans and already start working towards the next General Chapter to be held in Auteuil in March 1959.

The circular announcing the General Chapter will be sent to you in May 1958. As soon as it is received, each House will gather the Local Chapter in charge of electing the delegates to the Provincial Chapter.

The Provincial Chapters, responsible for electing delegates to the General Chapter, will be held the first week of June. The indications concerning the Local Chapter and the Provincial Chapter will be sent in due course.

From the first days of June, we will therefore know the names of the delegates to the General Chapter. You know that, as a result of the organization of the Congregation into Provinces, there will not be many delegates: two per Province, one per Vice-Province.

As this Chapter matter is particularly important, since it must definitively fix the text of the Constitutions and work on the revision of the Directory and the Customary, it seems necessary to us to know more broadly the

thinking of the Congregation on many points.

We have therefore decided, with the approval of Rome, to convene in Auteuil in August 1958, all the Superiors who will not be delegated to the General Chapter. Of course, there will be no question of some kind of unofficial chapter preceding the official chapter; this meeting will have no authority and will not decide anything. It will be an exchange of views, a joint work, a research, a more in-depth study of our Rules, our spirit, the laws and directives of the Holy Church.

It would be good to start this work now:

1. By rereading the Canon law in depth with the commentary given by Father Creusen in his book "Religieux et Religieuses"¹⁶.
2. By noting, chapter by chapter, in our Rules and Directory, what seems to need to be changed, clarified or added. According to the thinking of the Church, Constitutions and Directory must be the same for all countries, while the Customary, specifying the details, adapts to the needs of each Province.

To respond to the desire of many Superiors, these working days will be preceded by a 10-day retreat. I would like to know as soon as possible if you want a classic retreat with three sermons a day, or a retreat of prayer and silence, as Father Goussault gives them, with one instruction a day.

Let us entrust these projects to the Immaculate Virgin, my dear Mother, and may this work, undertaken at the dawn of the Marian Year, *help us to better realize the primary goal of imitating the Blessed Virgin in her love for Our Lord.*

You know how much I am yours in Him.

Mère Marie Denyse

¹⁶P. Joseph Creusen, sj (1880-1960), founder in 1925 of the Revue des Communautés Religieuses.

Religious according to ecclesiastical law, 6th edition 1950.

Letter of convocation of General Chapter 1959. New mode
of election of delegates

God alone!

Auteuil

15 March 1958

My dear daughters,

The last two circulars were already talking to you about the General Chapter to be held in Auteuil next March. You all prepare it by prayer, by studying our Rules, and by seeking the Church's current thinking about our Congregation.

I therefore invite you to this very important Chapter which will proceed to the election of the General Councilors and the drafting of the Constitutions, the Directory and the Customary.

For the first time, the delegates' choices will be made according to the Rules of Canon Law for Congregations divided into Provinces. The Local Chapter of each House will elect the delegate to the Provincial Chapter, and the Provincial Chapter will elect the delegates to the General Chapter, as explained in the attached sheets.

For all these important elections, I give you the advice given by Our Venerable Mother Foundress in the letter of Convocation of the 1864 General Chapter:

Choose the delegate who will represent you at the Chapter in such a way that she is the most perfect expression of your desire for the good and your zeal for the Congregation. All the choices of a Chapter must always be made with the purest intention, with no other view than to give its vote to the person whom one believes in conscience to be most capable of bringing supernatural wisdom to the functions entrusted to her. This conscientious purity of intention is important not only in the present but also in

the future; God's blessing is attached to it, and the Institutes thrive only to the extent that the principal acts of their existence are, in the eyes of God, pure of all human consideration, and rightly performed for the sole reason of his greatest service and glory.

May each of you, my dear daughters, therefore become aware of your responsibility before God and before the Congregation. It is not only permitted, but advised and recommended to consult and inform each other on the choices to be made, while ensuring that full freedom of conscience is maintained. I am quoting from a letter from Mother Marie Célestine on this subject, which I believe is very important:

We must always be careful not to influence people's consciences. If your heart ever had to silence your conscience you would be in the wrong and unworthy to be chosen. Your heart must always remain silent before your conscience, and in a matter such as that of election, after having heard everything, meditated before God, each one must under penalty of making a true fault before God, act only according to her conscience.

If there is nothing to prevent it, local Chapters may be held during Easter week; grouped Houses will ensure that faraway houses have time to send in votes. You have in the Directory the model of the minutes which must be drawn up, signed and brought to the Provincial Chapter.

Delegates to the General Chapter can receive the desires and suggestions of the Houses of the Province. They are entitled, from the time of their election until the date of the General Chapter, to receive closed letters that will always be sent to them for this sole purpose of the good of the Congregation.

Let us prepare this Chapter, my dear daughters, with an instinctive prayer. Let us entrust all our work in advance to the Immaculate Virgin who will help us to follow her advice: *Do whatever He tells you*, through the Holy Church and especially the Holy Father's Speeches so luminous and so strong that they will help us to keep our Congregation in the spirit of Our Venerable Founding Mother.

I commend myself especially to your prayers, my dear daughters, at this time when I am preparing a redesign of the Chapters of Our Venerable Mother Foundress, so that others may also benefit from her teaching and I reiterate to you my motherly affection in Our Lord.

Mère Marie Denyse
Superior General

A circular of 13 November 1957 specified the draft of the next General Chapter in March 1959, and that of a meeting in August 1958 of all the Superiors who will not be delegate to the General Chapter. Until then, all the Superiors had participated in the General Chapter.

On March 21, 1958, another circular talked about empowerment houses of France and sisters who are licensed. The true devotion to the Holy Virgin. Impregnate our teaching with supernatural spirit.

God alone

Auteuil

12 May 1958¹⁷

My dear daughters,

This is the right time to respond to the desire expressed by many of you and to join you all in a circular.

A favourable moment because it is the month of Mary of a year dedicated to Mary. Our gaze is on her with more faith, trust and love, and I think that her maternal gaze, responding to ours, makes us an open and teachable child's soul.

A favourable moment, because I have just returned from Rome, and the Church's thought on religious life and on our Congregation has been expressed to me with such authority and clarity that I look forward to sharing these lights with you.

Finally, this is a favourable moment because the next meeting of the Provincial Chapters preparing the General Chapter attracts a more abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Congregation.

¹⁷Year 1958: Centenary of the apparitions of Lourdes.

Almost all the houses, letters and circulars echo fervent and generous initiatives in honour of Our Lady. In meditating on Lourdes' message, in explaining it to our children, let us not forget what Father Laurentin expresses so well in his little book Le sens de Lourdes: “Bernadette was not content to deliver a message; her whole life became a reflection of Mary by her taste for the hidden life, the place of the fiat in her prayer, her acute feeling of being humble servant of the Lord.”

A beautiful text by Mother Therese Emmanuel presenting the Blessed Virgin, a reflection of Our Lord, gives the same tone:

It was shown to me that the Blessed Virgin is an entry to reach her divine Son. Having passed through Jesus, we find in her the Incarnate Word and all its mysteries. I understood that this was a perfect model of our active life: dependence and humility. I saw Mary taking part in Jesus' mission by a perfect adherence to his work, yet hidden behind Him like a shadow. No appropriation, no personality, nothing to attract her. She does not manifest her high privileges as Mother of God in anything; she is there only to lead to her Son. What is her only word, her only advice at the wedding in Cana? “Do whatever he tells you. »

She's not looking for her glory in anything.

A perfect model of our active life: to depend in everything on Jesus Christ, to be only his instrument to do his work.

They are indeed the same inner attitudes: hidden and hidden life like a shadow, fiat and dependence, - perfect adherence, humble servant, and no appropriation, - instrument to do his work.

Let us ask ourselves if our effort of Marian apostolate is animated, enlivened, by an effort of imitation of the Blessed Virgin in her predilection attitudes? Are we not content to admire them from afar...

Our Venerable Mother Foundress, in a beautiful chapter of 1876¹⁸, tells us:

Since we rejoice so much in the goodness of the Blessed Virgin, in her mercy, in her gentleness, in her kindness, in her humility, in her indulgence, in her union with God, in her obedience, would it not be a contradiction not to seek to put something of her virtues in us, so that circumstances may bring out from us answers of submission, humility, faith that resemble her own and especially a silence that resembles hers? May our admiration of the Blessed Virgin end in a generous effort of imitation.

For this reason, my dear daughters, let us try to welcome the message of Our Lady of Lourdes with a child's soul that knows that it needs to be taught. This message is said to be a return to the sources of holiness, to holiness stripped of its accessory and reduced to its essence, as presented to us in the Gospel.

These few words describe the message of our heavenly Mother, I can only repeat it to you if I want to summarize the message received in Rome from our Mother the Holy Church:

Maria et Ecclesia, una Mater et plures¹⁹. That it is true, that this unity is beautiful, and that Our Venerable Founding Mother has filled us by making us so strong daughters of the Church, *finding our light and joy in the precepts, all the counsels and words of the One who is the head, heart and mouth of the Church.*

What does the Holy Father ask of us?

That we remain faithful to the requirements of our vocation as Assumptionists. Referring to his exhortation of February 11, the Holy Father told me how much we must strive to determine clearly what distinguishes the Assumption from other Congregations according to the

¹⁸Trust and devotion to the Blessed Virgin, Chapter Instruction, September 24, 1876, Vol. II.

¹⁹Mary and the Church, a Mother and many more...

thought of our venerable Founding Mother, in order to be always ready, of course, to accomplish the most difficult tasks and most adapted to the current needs of the Church, but according to the particular purpose that the Holy See has assigned to the Assumption and without calling into question the essential and unchanging values.

And the Holy Father told me of his concern about the infiltration of the spirit of the world into religious life. And as I told him our joy and our gratitude for the strong expressions of his speech of February 11: *We must, we must... poverty, obedience, penance, that is religious life.*

The other concern of the Holy Father is the overload of official curricula: *they no longer leave time to study the Truth. This aggravates our obligation to impregnate our teaching with the supernatural and to bring the teaching of human knowledge back to Our Lord Jesus Christ.* The profane sciences must be servants of the one science, that of God; we must integrate our knowledge into our theology, hence the absolute necessity to raise our religious science to the level of our profane science, otherwise we will make materialized and secularized minds.

All this is so strongly, is it not, in the spirit of Our Venerable Mother Foundress *who wants us so much penetrated by the Truth that our thoughts are directed much more by the views of faith than by the views of nature and that, little by little, the invisible prevails over the visible. And again: You cannot know too much about all that is Revelation, all that makes God and the attributes of God more known... in a word, all that is related to the truths taught by the Catholic Church... The more your soul is altered by this order of knowledge, the more you will desire to learn about the doctrine of the saints and know what the Church approves, the more you will be Religious of the Assumption. Part of the ardor of your faith, the ardor of your worship, is to love this order of truth*²⁰.

I asked the Holy Father that his blessing, which I received for each of

²⁰Chapter Instructions - Spirit of the Assumption III - Faith, Love of Truth, March 3, 1878, Vol. III.

you, my dear daughters, may allow each to obtain the grace of great fidelity to our spirit.

The Holy Father's fear of seeing the spirit of the world enter our convents, may I say that it becomes, among those who follow the life of our congregations more closely, an acute feeling that it is time to react? I think so, yes. A prominent religious who works near the Sacred Congregation of Religious told me: *It is not only about medication for religious life, but about reform. We have not been able to resist the invasion of materialism, technology, comfort, commodities, sensual joys.*

What do you think, my dear daughters, as you read these lines? I would like to be with each of you and hear your thoughts. I wouldn't be surprised if some of them cried out: *A reform? It's not for us...* Of course, there is reform and reformation. By the grace of God, I also believe that we are not in the full sense of the word, *a relaxed Congregation*. However, I have outlined cases that are ours concerning enclosure, poverty, obedience, relationships with family and friends, vacation rest, resorts... and there is no doubt about it: the spirit of the world has entered our midst.

You will understand it better, perhaps, when you have in your hands, without delay if God gives me the grace, the work I have been able to undertake on the teachings of our venerable Mother Foundress²¹. Ah! If we lived them! So no, we wouldn't need reform!

It also constantly brings us back to the *sources of holiness and holiness in its essence*.

And see what Our Lord, in the first years of his foundation, inspired in Mother Therese Emmanuel:

Jesus made me understand that human reason and its judgments must be left there, that I must base myself on faith and suffer all persecution; that the world must find in me as much to say as in Him, in all circumstances.

²¹Spiritual Exercises - Eight-day retreat - Mother Marie Eugenie of Jesus.

A little thought came to me that if I had the spirit of Christ so much, I would not have the spirit of the world at all, that I would be too little of this world to raise children, that this way of judging would not go to parents, even the most Christian ones; that if I inspire this way of being to novices or do so with the children entrusted to me, people will end up believing that we have exaggerated ideas.

Jesus Christ answered me that He had said: My spirit is not that of the world. He made me see that his ideas are the one and only truth, that our goal is to Christianize the intelligence of children, that we should not fear the conflict between the ideas of the world and his own; that he has defeated the world; that the world has always hated him and will hate his disciples because they are His, but it must be: nature and human interests will necessarily rise against Him; not to fear, not to believe that in order to be friends of men, there is a compromise with the simple and severe truth; that the more we are of Him, the less the world will love us, it is what is of Him that he hates in us. I see that it takes courage to train Christian women, because Christian principles will later lead them to sacrifices that the world disapproves of. But Jesus told me that it was necessary to be crucified in natural wisdom by faith, crucified of mind, heart and body²².

Such lines need no comment, do they my dear daughters? They are the echo of what each of us hears, they respond to our desires for holiness and apostolate, they chart the path that leads us there.

During the novena of Pentecost, let us ask the Holy Spirit to burn us with the fire of his love and to unite us all more and more for the glory of God.

You know me all yours in Him.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement r.a.

²²M. Thérèse Emmanuel, August 1845.

Preparation for the General Chapter 1959

Confidential

Reserved for Capitulants

Auteuil,

19 January 1959

My dearest Mother,

In two months' time, all the Capitulants will be gathered at the Mother House, preparing for the retreat that will open on March 20, led by Fr. Goussault, and the great and beautiful work that will follow.

After receiving the first circular telling you about the Chapter, you began, I think, the work of revising the Constitutions and the Directory, in order to retouch or make definitive the corrections made in 1953. Today, after talking to the Mothers of the Council, I would like to point out some important points on which I would like to have your opinion towards the end of February.

I – The provinces

- a) Do you think the division as it was made is good?
- b) Do you have any wishes or suggestions to express on the power of the Provincial and its government?
- c) Would you like each Province to take charge of one of our Missions?

II – THE COADJUTOR SISTERS

The question arises very differently depending on the social evolution of the country. A great step forward has been made since the last Chapter: What do you think? In the current social situation of each country, what would Our Venerable Mother Foundress do?

- a) A single rank, with the same religious formation given to all, therefore not accepting young girls who are not prepared to receive this formation?
- b) A single rank, but with training adapted to the preparation and skills of young girls who wish to join us?
- c) The two ranks as they have existed since the last Chapter?
- d) What do you think of this idea: to make the second rank our contemplatives, supporting our apostolic life with their life of silence, prayer and work?

III – THE HALF-CLOSURE

How do you conceive it for your Province and all its works?

- a) Strict in the sense of the last circulars?
- b) Broader according to the needs of the works?

IV – THE PROVINCIAL HOUSE

How do you see the relationship between the Provincial, and the Superior and her house? Is there a conflict or risk of conflict between the two authorities?

V – What do these words of the Holy Father Pius XII suggest for the Congregation:

- a) *The founders of religious orders conceived their work, then new, to respond to needs that were born in the Church and that did not suffer any delay. It was at their time that they adapted their work. If you want to follow the example of your Founders, do as they did (December 8, 1950).*
- b) *It may be that certain customs which corresponded to past conditions but now only hinder the educational work may have to be adapted to new circumstances*
- c) *(15 September 1951).*
- d) *In this vocation crisis, make sure that the customs, lifestyle or asceticism of your religious families are not a barrier or a cause of failure. In those things that are not essential, adapt as much*

as reason and well-ordered charity advise you.

These, my dear Mother, are some important questions on which you will like to pray and reflect. You can consult the other capitulants orally or by letter, but apart from them, I ask you not to tell anyone about this circular, keeping the secret about the Chapter that engages in conscience.

We must strive to think for ourselves about our Congregation, its spirit, its works, according to the teachings of O.V. Mother Foundress. And we must rely on the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit to make us take decisions in accordance with the purpose of our Congregation, while responding to current directives and the new needs of the Holy Church.

During the Chapter, we hope to have, at least for a few days, the T.R.P. Larraona. He will guide our work better than anyone else, both in the sense of our Congregation, which he knows well, and in the sense of the Church.

You are all expected in Auteuil on March 18 (before, if you want, but not after). The Chapter will open on Easter Monday and will be over, I think, around April 12 or 15.

The Provincial Mothers will kindly ask their Houses to have Masses celebrated for the intentions of the Chapter, so that, by the grace of God, we may willingly leave our own feelings... so that we may all judge the same and have the same wills, because we will judge like Jesus Christ and only want what He wants.

In Him I am your mother,

*Sr Marie Denyse du St Sacrement
Sup. Gen.*

Promulgation of decisions of the General Chapter of April 1959

Auteuil

30 April 1959

This Chapter was of particular importance since it was a question of reviewing, completing and clarifying the text of the Constitutions and the Directory.

The text of the Constitutions seems to have been finalized, but we must wait for Rome's approval before promulgating it. Some new chapters, borrowed from the teachings of Our Lady Mother Foundress and Mother Therese Emmanuel, will help us to better penetrate the spirit of the Congregation and to better realize the purpose for which it was founded.

These new chapters are entitled:

- Juniorate and Scholasticate.
- Studies and a spirit to contribute.
- Manual work and the spirit to bring to it.
- Prayer and spiritual reading.
- Adoration and the Blessed Sacrament.
- The work of education and teaching.
- Missions.
- The obligation to strive for perfection.

The Directory takes up all the chapters of the Constitutions and develops them further. It specifies the points of detail which, by maintaining the unity of interpretation, should help us to enter more faithfully into the spirit and letter of the Rule. Constitutions and the Directory form a whole that we can never meditate enough: this is perfection for us.

The General Chapter gave full power to the Council to complete the drafting of the Directory.

In the work of revising the Constitutions, four questions needed to be addressed in depth:

1. That of vocations and religious formation.
2. That of the distinction of ranks in the Congregation.
3. The one of poverty.
4. That of the enclosure according to our apostolic and missionary works.

Here are the decisions taken by the Chapter.

I. VOCATIONS AND RELIGIOUS FORMATION.

The Most Reverend Father Larraona reminded us of the Church's position in the face of young vocations to be supported and preserved through the foundation of Apostolic Schools. Children can be received from the age of eleven or twelve; if the training is well conducted, a sense of responsibility and personality development can be acquired despite little contact with the life of the world.

Let each Province, each House look for what it can do on this point. *A community that fails to ensure succession is a community that does not fulfill God's plan for it*, Cardinal Feltrin said.

Couldn't emerging vocations be identified and grouped?

Could not each Province have a House that would bring them together and ensure, according to the aptitudes of each, their spiritual and intellectual development? Is there not a current to be created here as it was created for small seminars?

Of course vocation is a gift from God, but Providence normally uses us not only to support vocations, but also to sow a desire for perfect life where we have found a favourable ground. *A young and successful vocation is a treasure*," said the Reverend Father Larraona.

Having always proclaimed that spiritual maturity precedes social maturity by one year, the Church allows entry into the postulate at fifteen years of age. On the other hand, she recommends great caution with regard to late vocations which hardly take the spirit of the Congregation.

Young and old, vocations need a long and adapted formation. To ensure

this formation, the Chapter took the following decisions:

The Postulancy will be unique and will last one year, so that the Mistress can know the dispositions and aptitudes of the postulant before admission to the Novitiate. However, it may be reduced by six months by the Provincial Superior if the postulant has been in contact with the Congregation for a long time before entering and extended by six months if not.

The Novitiate is maintained as it was: a year of intense formation for all and, for the Co-adjutor Sisters, a second year during which they can have direct contact with the community.

The Chapter ratified the indult extending the period of temporary vows to five years. These vows will be made in two stages: for two years, then for three years. A sixth year may be granted.

We joyfully return to the old formula of vows with a slight modification: *"In the presence of the Most Holy and Most Adorable Trinity, I,... called in religion Sr..... vow to my God whom I adore here present in this Host and promise to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, to our Father Saint Augustine, and to you, my Most Reverend Mother, to live in poverty...."*. The renewal for three years will be done without ceremony, at the Community Mass.

After the Novitiate, all the Choir Sisters and Co-adjutors will spend two years in the juniorate. This new stage is intended to help each one to realize the synthesis of her inner life and activity in the Congregation: Prayer, intellectual work, manual work, must be united in our lives under the same name: God's will.

The religious formation begun in the Novitiate will therefore continue in the Juniorate through a more in-depth study of the Constitutions and the Directory; through a dogmatic and scriptural formation aimed at giving an ecclesial spirituality so recommended by O.V. Mother Foundress and which excludes any sentimentalism; through an enlightened knowledge of the Congregation, its providential place in the Church, the characteristic traits that are its own wealth. To have a sense of the Church and her Congregation is to understand the responsibility of this

double belonging and to be determined to do not one's personal work, according to one's own views, but the great work that the Church expects from us.

After the Juniorate, the Choir Sisters will have a three-year Scholasticate in order to acquire a serious intellectual formation and the necessary diplomas. However, more than graduation, the goal will be to acquire a discipline of thought. To unite in Christ the most diverse and extensive sciences is the characteristic note of our spirit, the meaning that O.V. Mother Foundress wanted to give to our vocation as teachers. A good introduction to Thomistic Philosophy will precede university or other studies in order to learn to distinguish truth from false appearances, to reflect personally, to clarify one's thinking and to express it clearly. Pedagogical, theoretical and practical training will go hand in hand with studies.

These long years of training take away the *raison d'être* of the "3rd Year" as it had been envisaged. However, the General Chapter decided to maintain it, because family spirit is a good that is dear to us all and needs an "*interprovincial meeting*" to be maintained. The '3rd Year' will be this meeting. Ten or fifteen years after the perpetual vows, all the Sisters will come to spend six months at the Mother House in order to renew their spiritual strength in prayer, silence and fraternal union.

To give time to the young sisters who are coming, the "3rd Year" was reduced, from 1960 to 1963, to three months' holidays. From January 1963, it will operate at full capacity twice a year.

Let us rejoice with the young sisters in the decisions made that will benefit them and let us not complain about what we have not had. The Assumption has not had a Juniorate, Scholasticate or "3rd Year" for more than a century, but God's grace is not short of resources. Let us simply be faithful to what we have received and the work of the Assumption will be done.

II. THE DISTINCTION OF RANKS IN THE CONGREGATION.

The second chapter of the Constitutions will be entitled: "*Members of the Institute.*" It speaks so well of the desire for unity in which the General Chapter has prayed and reflected on this question that it is best to quote the text itself.

The Religious of the Assumption form a family animated by the same attraction for contemplation and apostolate, under the same form of monastic life.

But according to the aptitudes, as soon as the Postulancy ends, some of them, called to be Choir Sisters, carry out the Choral Office and prepare themselves for the work of education and teaching. Their contemplative life, enlightened by religious studies, becomes the principle of an active life of faith and zeal. They imitate in particular the apostolic life of Our Lord, convinced that the animated action of charity, far from weakening contemplation, activates it and makes it bear all its fruits. By surrendering themselves totally to the service of the Kingdom, they discover the presence of Christ through their neighbour, and their union with God becomes more personal and profound.

The others, in the rank of Co-adjutor Sisters, strive to imitate Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin in Nazareth and to live "hidden with Christ in God". Their contemplative life prepares, sustains and enriches the apostolate of the Congregation. They are formed in various offices of the House and through prayer, sacrifice, silent work animated by a great zeal for the salvation of souls, they follow the example of the Savior who came, not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for a multitude.

It is therefore at the end of the Postulancy that each one will be directed for the best service of God and souls, towards the rank of Choir Sister or Co-adjutor Sister.

Let us not let the spirit of the world call this division when the same attraction of contemplation and apostolate unites us and when we are all

daughters of the same Congregation. Rather, let us say with Saint Paul that we are one Body in which we are not all the eye, or the hand, or the foot, but in which each member is absolutely necessary for the good of the whole.

To further strengthen this union and respond to the expressed desires, the Co-adjutor Sisters will have the same time of prayer as the Choir Sisters and will say with them all the Divine Office except Matins. Those who are currently professed and who would find the Office to be too heavy, to which they have not been initiated, may, after agreement with their Superior, keep the Pater. The same can be true for those who are sometimes prevented from being in the choir by the necessary work.

III. Poverty

overty is the wall of religious life', we read in the Directory. Without it, everything falls apart. The letters and teachings of O.V. Mother Foundress say how much she wanted her poor and detached daughters. The draft Rules and the final text she left us prove that she wanted to go beyond the obligations of the simple vow of poverty and put us in the spirit of the solemn vow. Although keeping, in fact, the capacity to possess and acquire, the spirit of the Rule nevertheless asks us for the moral abdication of property: we must "*possess as not possessing*", which O.V. Mother Foundress expressed as follows: "*Renouncing individually all property before God..... while complying with the laws of the land. [.....]*"

The Chapter wanted to specify these details, to see their spiritual and evangelical meaning, to place them in the line of our vocation: the perfection of charity. We need material goods, it is our human condition but we must put everything in common and detach our hearts from these goods. "*The vow empties the hands, virtue empties the heart,*" said the Most Reverend Father Larraona. It is through simple, daily and commonplace gestures of renunciation and self-denial that we empty our hearts and hands and thus, through poverty, we enter into the mystery of Redemption.

In addition to the daily gestures formulated in the text of the Constitutions, there are some directives from the Church:

1) A Superior in her house, a sister in her office, must never act as owners but as tenants: she must be accountable for her management. It is an attitude of poverty that recognizes that we administer the Lord's goods.

The "*Inventories*" required by Canon Law then take on their full meaning. Since religious property is not the property of superiors or of all religious sisters taken together, but the property of the Congregation, and therefore of the Church, superiors must deposit at the Mother House the inventory of these properties and report each year what has been added or deleted (Information will be given on how to establish the inventory and when it will be sent).

2) Another attitude of poverty is the permissions to be asked of the Major Superiors for expenses exceeding a certain amount and the obligation on the part of the Superiors, General, Provincial and Local, to submit for the approval of their respective Council the alms and expenses that they feel they must make (The maximum amounts decided by the General Chapter will soon be communicated).

At the 1900 General Chapter, M. M. Célestine admitted that poverty was one of the issues that troubled her the most. *With permission, she said, we are expanding a lot and going too far. It is not because a House is well-off that we can have more things, it is the need that is the Rule. Don't say: "We must be poor because we have debts. No. We must be poor because we have taken a vow of poverty and we must be as poor if we have no debts as if we have debts. For each Sister in particular the vow is the reason for her poverty and for a House, even if the bursar is rich, we must safeguard poverty with as much care as if we were in need.*

Because we are poor, O.V. Mother Foundress asks that *each sister does not have a certain number of objects of her own that would become like a privilege that she would bring from one house to another and that would form a true property.*

Because we are poor, Mother Therese Emmanuel does not allow a sister

to offer the Superior, on her feast day, in her personal name, a valuable gift or a sum of money from an outside work.

Because we are poor, and we must put everything in common, any gift received in any capacity must be brought to the Superior and any money paid into the common fund, on condition that we reserve for the works what has been given for that purpose. The special funds for works and jobs should be in the treasury or in the hands of a Sister designated by the Superior to whom it would be easy to have recourse and not in the hands of the Sisters responsible for these works.

Through these points of detail, we feel that a problem remains to be solved. How can we live in fact poor and liberated without fleeing the demands of life and those of our apostolate?

Our Lord answers us: "*If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be in the light*". The problem is inside. The light springs from the depth of our love. Poverty is an attitude of the soul that can only be explained by Christ. It is an answer to a call: "*Come, follow me*". To want to understand poverty, and even more to want to practice it, without passionately loving the poor Christ, is impossible. May our gaze on Christ be a gaze of love that necessarily imitates.

IV. The enclosure

It must aim to safeguard both our form of monastic life and the need for works. In all the houses, the part reserved for the community: cells, dormitories, refectory, community room, must be separated as much as possible from the part reserved for the works and keep the stamp of great Carmelite poverty wanted by Our Mother Foundress. This must be borne in mind in new construction and in the adaptation of existing houses. [...]

V. Other matters

1. Try to replace the recitation of the Office by the psalmody, which makes prayer more monastic, more raised. The 'ground' seems to be indicated if it can be held; the note is kept discreetly

- to the mediators and supports the psalmody.
2. Try to bring, in agreement with the chaplains, the most communal participation possible in the Mass, as permitted by the last Roman Constitution on Liturgy.
 3. Comply with the Roman Breviary for the recitation of graces after meals, which causes the verses to be recited in the chapel after the *Miserere* of midday and the *Laudate* in the evening.

[follow 22 miscellaneous questions.]

SECOND PERIOD

LETTERS TO THE CONGREGATION

What is the ideal type of the Nun of the Assumption of the 20th century? Joyful detachment that is required the Spirit of the Assumption let's look at the concrete reality of our lives: Superiors, changes. Invitation to unity in this month of preparation for the Ecumenical Council.

God alone

Auteuil

22 August 1959

Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

My dear daughters,

Your letters are asking for a circular! It seemed to me that the one bearing the decisions of the General Chapter contained food for thought for a long time, and I would like to remind you of an annotation well known to all: It is not the abundance of knowledge that satisfies the soul, but to feel and taste things inwardly²³.

Nevertheless, I answer your call, and all the more willingly because it allows me, as well as Mother Josefa Ignacia who associates herself with me, to thank all those Mothers and Sisters who have been able to express their attachment to the Congregation so well after the Chapter and on the occasion of the holidays. May each one know that she is well present at our prayer with all the intentions entrusted to her. Thank you for your wishes, and thank you for your offerings for our missions which have often accompanied them: they come to feed a crate that the two foundations of Côte d'Ivoire and the construction of Sumoto quickly

²³St Ignatius, Spiritual Exercises, Annotation n°2.

empty.

Letters from all continents already bring us the echoes of the feast of the 15th where the Blessed Virgin, once again, called us *to go up with her to a heavenly life and to place our thoughts and affections in heaven.* (O.V.M.F.)

Here, during the vigil, a question was asked: *What is the ideal type of the Religious of the Assumption of the 20th century?*

What would you have said? It seems to me that we have nothing to invent because Our Venerable Mother Foundress received from the Holy Spirit, and transmitted to us, this ancient and ever new treasure that meets all the expectations of the Church today.

Is not the ideal type of the Religious of the Assumption the result of all our minds? Here is what Our Venerable Mother Foundress says: *The whole spirit of the Assumption leads to a joyful **detachment** from earthly things, to the readiness to rise above sorrows and difficulties without stopping at complaints, without wasting time... **Adoring ALL** the rights of God, we go ahead of all his wills with perfect confidence in Him²⁴.*

Do you not find, in these few lines, a luminous response to the spiritual needs of our time? The joyful detachment bears witness of hope in the face of pervasive materialism.

- The willingness to rise without complaint above sorrows and difficulties goes against the wave of pessimism and expresses our faith in the effectiveness of the Redemption that continues in each of our lives.
- Finally, the worship of God's rights and the choice of his wills solve the problem of obedience and bear the great witness of love that the Lord expects from his own: *He who does the will of my Father is the one who loves me.*

And Our Venerable Mother Founder specifies by saying:

²⁴Chapter Instructions, Spirit of the Assumption XI - Joyful Detachment from Terrestrial Things, Vol. III, May 19, 1878.

Everything turns to the good of those who love God; hear him well, everything; there is nothing except: the faults when one repents of them; the difficulties when one accepts them; the sorrows when one acquires patience; the enemies, the demon, the trials, the temptations, the health, the powerlessness, the situations in which one finds oneself, the sorrows of prayer, the lights when one has them... Everything turns to the good of those who love God.

Stop, my dear daughters, at the very complete enumeration of what is enclosed in this *whole*. Weigh each term and measure your faith, your hope, your love. Do you think everything turns out for the good of those who love God?

If you believe in it, hear Our Venerable Mother Foundress draw the conclusion:

Approaching things in this way, you understand with what joyful clarity, strength, confidence, freedom of spirit, simplicity, righteousness, absence of useless things and words, you go through everything...

All these qualifiers describe well, it seems to me, the ideal type of the Religious of the Assumption, the one who tends, following Our Lady, to find the original purity in order *to see all things in God and God in all things*.

After the ideal, let us look at the concrete reality of our lives. Doesn't a certain spiritual pessimist prevent us from believing in the omnipotence of grace in souls, regardless of the environment, human value, psychological data?

Do we always have the courage to tell the truth to souls to try to put them in the light and because we believe in the possible victory of grace in them, or do we take our side, for ourselves and for others, of a certain mediocrity?

Do we not often appreciate others on the basis of human gifts, services rendered, more than on the basis of supernatural value?

What about complaints about obedience decisions, events? What about the multiple searches for human consolation?

Let us ask ourselves these questions about everything that concerns religious life and community life, and everything that concerns our works.

In some countries and in some houses, it is said, considering this normal, that a Superior who has not completed university studies cannot have prestige or influence in her community? Isn't the same judgment made about the class teachers? What a great joy it was to hear a priest tell me during a visit to a suburban house about the help he found in a sister, the good she did for the children. I taught this priest that she was a coadjutor sister: *Ah*, he told me, *she does good because she is pious and humble!*

In the changes of superiors, in the changes of houses, what witness of faith do we bear?

Let us first stop at the changes of Superiors and reflect on what Mother Therese Emmanuel said in 1885:

I liked much better the first spirit of our Assumption where the charges were regarded as a cross and the only last place sought; it seems to me that this is the true supernatural spirit, the one that should be resurrected; then we would no longer call "victims" those from whom we take an office or a job.

In her current directives, the Holy Church often warns against the natural spirit that Mother Therese Emmanuel denounced, and she insists a lot on the idea of service which alone must guide in the distribution of charges. As we try to be faithful to *this first spirit of our Assumption* and obey the Church's directives, has not the entourage of those from whom an office or employment has been taken not spoken the word victim more than once? Have we not commented on certain decisions with priests, religious and even secular persons, giving the impression that, in our country, superiority is regarded as an honour and that losing it is a disgrace?

You think, dear daughters, that I would not ask these questions if I had not had much evidence of their opportunity. What good lost opportunities to live our spirit of joyful detachment from all human or earthly views, and to carry souls to higher ground!

Our Venerable Mother Foundress often returns, in her Instructions, to the spirit of faith to be brought about in the changes of Superiors:

There are imperfections, she says, when obedience is not determined by faith, but by the qualities of the person or by the approval given to her way of doing things... You will have superiors whom you will find in one way, in another: common sense tells us that not everyone can be the same, we do not use the same means, we do not have the same character. Some are firmer and have more authority; others are softer and inspire more trust... Let each Superior go about governing as she sees fit, and try inwardly to approve rather than contradict... Say: "I cannot get used to it, it is no longer the same way, etc... is perfectly unreasonable and not religious, because it is not acting according to supernatural views, according to faith.

Does it not seem to you, my dear daughters, that a certain confusion may result from the fight against infantilism? They are not uncommon those who boast of being adults because they judge and criticize their Congregation and their Superiors! To this conception of the adult, I confess that I prefer the conclusion given by Father Rahner, S.J., to his beautiful article on *Spirit and Church*:

Unconditional and silent service does not exclude the possibility of loyal criticism... but even if criticism can be good, serving in silence is even greater...

Notice the word *loyal*, that is, direct, to whom it belongs. Nothing is more contrary to the spirit of the Assumption than these secret criticisms from behind. I am too often echoed by priests, friends of our houses, and I am sometimes saddened to see how much the reality of the facts has been distorted. Is it any wonder then that so many religious and priest friends send us so few vocations and even direct our children to other Congregations who confide in them?

What about our spirit of faith when changing houses? Besides the simple and total obedience of many, the reluctance, the protests, the sad letters that must be read, in which a series of human motives are put forward:

family, health, climate, country, works, etc. *The children here are badly brought up... those of this country are asleep... or lazy... or liars... I was so necessary at my old house... my departure was a blow of a club for my Superior... (If we knew with what insistence some departures are requested by the Superiors!) I have always been in the South and they send me to the North.... etc.. etc....* The number of citations could be multiplied!

And so many criticisms about the changes! *Do the Superiors realize this? Do they take information?..... We send such a sister there, she is not at all suited for this big house... Such a year, when we learned of the change of Sister X, the whole community protested: her health would not last! And the following year she was repatriated... etc...*

Should we say how much information, counter-information, reflection, election and especially prayer surround each change? Should we say that often only Major Superiors know the root causes that motivate certain changes, and that their sometimes painful secret should be respected?

Yes, I think it must be said because these criticisms are more the fruit of lightness than malice, but they weaken souls and *are not the joyful detachment of the Assumption, nor the effort to make the most of all that happens for the service of God and for his glory*, as Our venerable Mother Foundress asks.

Since the central theme of our reflections and prayers, in these months of preparation for the Ecumenical Council²⁵, is UNITY, what about a great effort of unity undertaken by all of us, within this small portion of the Church that is the Congregation, to help the return of our separated brothers?

Are we not called to this by our Rule which asks us for *a perfect unity of spirit and which invites us to voluntarily leave our own feelings to be ONE in all things and to procure the glory of God through this unity?*

²⁵Announcement of the Council by John XXIII: 25/10/1959. Beginning of the Council: 11/10/1962.

By a beautiful instruction on Our Lady on the day of the Assumption, we were told that our belonging to the Church was the measure of our apostolic radiance. That if we knew that we were more sent by the Church, we would be an oblation power and we would be contagious, leading to more perfection for all those who see us living. For this, like the Blessed Virgin, to disappear, to know that it is not our little person who does the work, but our quality as a child of the Church, let us say a child of the Assumption, who shines. And the Father concluded: *"This is the whole solution to the problem of obedience: it is a conspiracy in the good that obedience..."*

How far we are from our little human views. Let us let ourselves be carried to these heights! Wouldn't this be the way? *Like the Blessed Virgin, to live leaning on Jesus Christ, not only by imitation and likeness, but by living and loving union in the Holy Spirit, lending our being docilely and lovingly to Jesus who continues, in his Mystical Body, to return to his Father.*

May each house seek to make an effort against all that is petty, withdrawn and separating, so that each in the joyful gift of service to the Father may be *all open, all light, penetrating with light all that it touches.*

You know, my dear daughters, all my motherly affection in Our Lord.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement
DS

Letter from our Mother General, on her travel in Africa

Towards Dakar, 6pm

14 November 1959

Before the Dakar stopover, I would like to try to entrust this letter to passengers going to Paris, so you would get it faster.

What a joy, your big envelope! It joined me in Duékoué²⁶ on the 11th, in the middle of the great celebration of all, because the schools in the country were marching to the song of the Marseillaise (I have never heard it sing so much!! Three days of rehearsal! As it is the national anthem of Côte d'Ivoire, they put all their hearts into it!)

Thank you again for all the prayers. Thanks to the kindness of the Bishop²⁷ who wanted to accompany me to Abidjan, I was able to leave Daloa only this morning, after having had Bishop's Mass at 5 a.m. The plane is an hour and a half late, which will take us to Dakar tonight around 10:00 p. m. The Father of the Holy Spirit, brother of Sister Françoise Emmanuel, promised me on the way that he would be there and lead me to a convent... He was there with an elder from Montpellier and two elders from Lyon; despite the late hour, they guided me, and this morning, we had mass at 6:30 am at the cathedral.

What can I say about our two houses in a few words? I only have to give thanks to the Lord, for it must be He who leads everything, so that everything may be so good. In the two small communities, it is a regular life perfectly led, at the same time as a fully missionary life. The Superior of Duékoué, when she took me back to Daloa, told me: *The mission has been transformed since they arrived. We feel them all given to the mission, to the whole mission and not only to their work and this is admired by the whole diocese.* I may have realized a little bit that this is true. In addition to school, there are adult catechisms, catechisms for

²⁶Duékoué, Ivory Coast - founded in 1958.

²⁷Mgr Bernard Agré

children in secular schools, dispensary hours, meetings of school monitors, singing rehearsals... well, everything you can imagine! But all these groups come to us, to the mission, which transforms the small convent into a large family house. The small group of residents is nice as much as possible, especially the little ones of 6, 7 and 8 years old, 15 children in all. The school is full of children in these 4 classes. Mother Jeanne Catherine and Sister Denyse each have a class, with 6 hours of lessons per day. Sister Francesca and Sister Paz are the class teachers of the other two, and help the African instructors who give the lessons. They are also in charge of the small boarding school. Sister Francesca is doing wonders with her team of 25 altar boys. Two left in October for the minor seminary, two hope to go there next October. Some of the 25 are still only catechumens.

And Brother Bertin, whom you all know, is admired by all at the seminary. Monsignor, who has all the delicacies, was kind enough to take me through there this morning. I was so happy to see the Brother again and to hear the Father Director say that he is a model of piety and charity for all seminarians and gives these 130 little seminarians a glimpse of what their ascent to the priesthood should be like. And what courage to start studying, at over 40 years of age, starting almost from scratch! He has a class that corresponds to our 8th division, but that is fine and we have great hope for the future. This Brother was in Duékoué as an instructor and catechist, our sisters gave him the first Latin lessons.

So many stories, each more touching than the next, I could tell you!..... We must already think about building a second school building in Duékoué, because the 4 classes are full! We have made on paper a total plan that the Bishop has approved, and each year we will realize it a little more.

And in Daloa too, it is necessary to continue the construction, because Jacqueline's class (AMA) will work very well, and therefore will not be able to serve for the 5th next year. She is a treasure, this Jacqueline, everyone who sees her, Monsignor, Fathers, Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles, ask me to make them have many like her! She is at the height

of happiness, gives herself without counting, teaches reading and catechism to young catechumens, cares for the babies of the gardener's little household, prepares a little Muslim girl and a little pagan girl in the 6th grade for baptism... and in addition, has 4 days a week her secretarial course! Mother and sisters surround her a lot, she feels good as a family. Does the young nurse, Miss Congar, still plan to come for her missionary training in December? The Bishop would like it so much for the dispensary of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles, on the site of our mission, which has not been functioning for 2 years, due to the lack of a nurse! There are plans to build a small pavilion near us for young lay missionaries and our little elders who would like to help. The Bishop can't believe it, he says it's too good to be true!..... Let us tell our philosophers very loudly that life there is wonderful! Jacqueline told me last night: *I'll probably stay more than two years, there's too much work to do.*

Mother Françoise Isabelle and Sister Cécile Thérèse shared the lessons in the 6th grade. Sister Therese Elisabeth catches about thirty children from the neighbouring villages who come to Daloa's schools, takes care of the interns, the market, etc. Sister Agnès Emmanuel is the sacristan of a pretty little temporary chapel, gives lessons in work and drawing. The children made a very successful campfire: country dances, mime fable, Abraham's life, etc. And last night, the Bishop came to solemnly bless the classes. Before, he said a word, explaining the prayers of the Ritual: *The Church prays for the children who will be taught in these classes. Understand that through what you learn, we want above all to teach you to live as children of God. The Church asks for prayers for those who will teach in these classes. I ask you not only to receive the science that the nuns will give you, but above all, to watch them live, to watch them pray, to watch them give themselves, to watch them love. I also ask you to think of all the students in all the houses of the Assumption. The Assumption is a big family, all the students of the Assumption know that a 6th grade class is open in Daloa, that they have friends in you; they think of you, they pray for you; pray also for them tonight, so that many may hear the call of God and come to help you make your country*

Christian... This is the summary, it was touching, the children were really taken.

Dear Mother and dear daughters, may these few news tell you how much joy I have in sharing everything with you in short, waiting for the details on the way back...

Great union in Our Lord.

Mère Marie Denyse r.a.

P.S. : Mother Sacramento sends a telegram saying that Our Mother arrived in Madrid very well.

New Constitutions - Continuation of the General Chapter
(31 march-10 april 1959). The Divine Office on the way to
the Beatification of M.M.E.

God alone!

Auteuil

21 December 1959

My dear daughters,

As soon as I return to Auteuil, I wish to share with you the two great joys of these days: Father Antonelli has finished his work on O.V. Mother Foundress, and our Constitutions are signed by H.E. Cardinal Larraona (December 8). It is with a heart full of gratitude, isn't it, that we will relive on this Christmas night the anniversary of the first consecration of Our Mother Foundress, and that we will renew our vows *according to our Constitutions* enriched with everything that the Holy Church and Our Mother desire for us.

The elevation to the Cardinalate of the Reverend Father Larraona seems to have been the providential event that hastened the approval of our Constitutions. Those who were in charge of examining them thought that we would like to have the decree signed by the new Cardinal before he left the S.C. des Religieux.

What an emotion to see that the Holy Church has kindly allowed us to insert in our Rules so many beautiful chapters drawn from the teachings of Our Venerable Mother Foundress! Always concerned about the greater fervour of religious Institutes, the Holy Church has even granted us more than we asked for. You will see, when you have the text in your hands, that our perpetual vows bring us into the spirit of the solemn vow of poverty, as Our Venerable Mother Foundress had desired, with total stripping. You will also see that in the chapter on the Divine Office, the Holy Church has added: *that the Divine Office, which is the public prayer of the Church and which we recite in her name, is the first and*

principal devotion of the sisters. So here we are officially mandated by the Church to pray in her name, while until now our Office has been a private prayer. It is therefore the voice of the Total Christ that we will raise to God, of *Christ who suffers and struggles in his members and who praises the Father.* Our Office, which has become a public prayer, must always be said in the chapel, not by each religious, our apostolic life would not allow us to do so, but by each house with twelve religious sisters. It is especially during holidays, when communities are shared, that this must be ensured.

We will immediately have our Constitutions printed in the languages of the various countries where the Congregation is established. Many of you, although not French, have expressed a desire to have the text in French. The Superiors of each house should send me as soon as possible the names of those of their daughters who choose French so that we know what additional number to ask for. This is especially true for sisters who have had their formative years at Val or Auteuil, as the younger ones will benefit from meditating on the Rule in their own language.

May our fervour to live our holy Rules hasten the beatification of Our Venerable Mother Foundress. H.E. Cardinal Cicognani follows the progress of the work with a paternal interest. It gives us hope for the *Preparatory Session* for Easter. Father Antonelli, who has applied himself in his work to demonstrate the holiness of Our Venerable Mother, has just been appointed *Promoter of the Faith*. He will not deny, as a devil's advocate, the work he has just completed! So we are hopeful. After the Preparation comes the examination of miracles. You know how cautious the Holy Church is before recognizing a miracle. The testimonies of doctors must be seriously established, and it is because not all of them agree or because they are not sufficiently affirmative that many of the cases presented have been rejected. It is time to do violence in heaven, to distribute relics, to pray with faith, humility and perseverance in order to obtain without delay the miracle or miracles so desired.

I do not want to finish this circular, my dear daughters, without thanking you for the letters received during these two months of travel. They bring me the echo sometimes joyful, sometimes a little painful, but always full of hope, of your apostolic labours. *Do not forget that the harvest of souls is paid for with sweat and blood*, said Cardinal Lavigerie. Let us approach with confidence the divine Child who comes to us to be our Redeemer, and let us lend our lives to Him docilely and lovingly so that He may continue the Redemption in us. May it be our Christmas joy, which I wish you all as fully as possible.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement
DS

New breviaries and questionnaire on sisters and houses

God alone!

To the Superiors

Auteuil

16 December 1960

+

My dearest Mother,

The first answers from Rome about the Office have just arrived and I am sending them to you.

COMPLINE becomes a *prayer of the liturgical evening*. So, we will say Matins after obedience. Five minutes before the end, three blows will be sounded to warn the Co-adjutor Sisters, and the Community will therefore be full for the following exercises:

- preparation of the Oraison = 10 minutes
- Compline, with the examination of conscience on one's knees before the Confiteor (a few minutes)
- Of depth.

For the movements: to rise to the Gloria Patri and the responses, we will continue to do so until further notice.

For all the rest: Antiphons doubled at any Office etc..... we will comply with the directives of the Church.

The new breviaries will not appear for two or three months. We think it would be a good idea to decide that we will all have the same ones: the most ordinary edition. Various prices have been sent, they are quite varied. Do you not think that it would be poorer to have all the orders placed by the Mother House, which will see with the Provincial Superiors which country gives the best edition? A real liturgical renewal

is planned after the Council. It is therefore advisable to use the current breviaries for a few years. Here in Auteuil, we would be grateful to the Mothers who have series of great breviaries if they could send them to the Novitiate. The temporal has not changed, and that is what is most important.

And now, my dear Mother, I would like to ask you for an important and meticulous work, which is necessary for us to establish some statistics. A similar work was requested three years ago, but it was done with many mistakes; that is why I insist on the meticulous care to be taken. Please send it all directly to me, without going through the provincial houses so as not to delay, by January 15.

1. Full name with mystery (including that of the Superior and the Sisters in clinic or nursing home or exclaustated) of all the Sisters in the community on December 31, 1960.
2. Date of birth, entry into the postulancy, 1st vows and grand vows of each one (it is there that we must check and have each Sister check, especially if the dates are typed because a typing error is quickly made).
3. Official diplomas of each Sister, with date of graduation.
4. Are there any Sisters: a) temporary vows, b) perpetual vows, who were in the community in 1960 and left the Congregation? Name them.
5. Names of the Sisters exclaustated with indulgence during the year 1960, and names of those who have been exclaustated for a long time, with date of exclaustation and place where they are located.
6. Very important. The exact number of children in each division of the residential school, starting with the smallest, and putting the official age corresponding to each division.
7. [follows an example in detail]

Do the same work for primary schools, apostolic schools or other works related to your home: Additional studies, workshops, professional courses, etc. Be sure to indicate the name of the special course and the number of students, and give each time the name of the Sister who works with these children, as well as, approximately, the number of hours she spends there.

Communities that are on holiday on 31 December will give answers for the last month of the completed school year.

I am counting on you, my dear Mother, to do this work with great care and send it to me before January 15. It will exempt you from the annual report for Rome, since everything is included in the above questions.

After fifteen months of almost uninterrupted journeys, and for which I thank God for the joys and consolations that have not been lacking, I am happy to stay a little longer at the Mother House to finish the work begun on the chapters of Our Venerable Mother Foundress. Let us ask God that this may be used for his glorification, and let us pray humbly and with faith to obtain the miracles that will allow the beatification if desired.

The Christmas celebration is just around the corner. How fascinating the Advent liturgy is in front of the poor world that needs a Savior so much! Let us call Him with the Church and offer ourselves, by renewing our vows, to enter with Christ into the redemptive mystery by completing what is lacking in his passion.

May it be this gift of our lives for the glory of the Father and the expansion of the Church that unites us, my dear Mother, on this Christmas night. You know my motherly affection in Our Lord.

*Sr Marie Denyse du St Sacrement
Sup. Gen.*

Project of visits in Africa and South America

To the Superiors

Auteuil

11 March 1961

My dearest Mother,

Unforeseen circumstances change the travel plans a little bit, and before leaving Auteuil for three and a half months, I come to recommend to your prayers the many visits to the Houses of Africa and South America.

I was supposed to go to Rwanda and Tanganyika in September. But, I don't know how, obviously by permission of the Good Lord who watches over his children, my visit for Easter was announced in Birambo. I wrote to rectify, and the letters received afterwards expressed such a disappointment that my heart could not resist. Our valiant missionaries deserve a change of itinerary to bring them, in these difficult days, the grace of regular visits.

And then, the great joy for them is that I am not going alone. Our first Rwandan sisters have completed their Juniorate, and you can guess if their desire is great to *announce the Kingdom of God*. Sister Marie wa Kalvaryio²⁸, Sister Yohanni Therese, Sister Marie Ludovika and Sister Marie Anyiesi are returning to Rwanda, while Sister Marie Stefani and Sister Terezia w'umwana Yezu will go to Côte d'Ivoire. Birambo has been founded barely six years ago, and our first mission in Africa has already given 14 professed, 13 novices, 9 postulants. It is the mustard seed that becomes a large tree. It is not surprising in these conditions to see the trial pass; it is necessary for any spiritual growth.

It is on Holy Wednesday, March 29, that we leave. Arriving in Usumbura at 7am the next day, we hope to be in Birambo for the Holy Thursday

²⁸Marie Emmanuel.

Mass.

Then, visit of Mandaka. Here too, God visibly blesses the work since three postulants are in Richmond and five are preparing to join them.

After Mandaka, long crossing of Africa to arrive in Abidjan. A quick visit of the three houses before going to Togo where a new Bishop²⁹, a friend of the Assumption, would like to see us in his Vicariate where everything is to be done.

And the tour of Africa will be over. From Dakar I will leave for Buenos Aires where I will arrive on May 20, then Brazil, and return to Auteuil on July 13.

During this long absence, Mother Josefa Ignacia will hold the Council and respond to cases that exceed the powers of the Provincial Mothers. If you want to reach me, avoid writing to the Bush Houses, the letters take too long to arrive; but they arrive quickly in Mandaka and Daloa. And also, in America, of course.

So it is already a wish of good and holy Easter holidays that I am sending to you, my dear Mother, and to your daughters. Let's live the GREAT WEEK deeply. Let us ask each other for the grace to better understand God's love by choosing the Cross as a means of saving us. We will also better understand, then, that our action, if it is spiritual, must not have any other triumph than that of the cross. But it's a triumph, you have to live it with joy and pride.

I remain very united with you, my dear Mother, and I am counting very much on the prayers of all my daughters.

Itinerary on the back....

²⁹Bishop of Togo : Mgr Joseph-Paul Strebler.

Itinerary

Departure from Paris: 29 March at 9 am = Usumbura: 30 March at 7 am
- in Birambo from March 30 to April 11

Departure from Usumbura: 12 April at 14:00 = Nairobi: 12 April at 19:00

- in Moshi from 13 to 20 April.

Departure from Nairobi: April 20 at 8 a.m. = Leopoldville at 5 p.m.

- Congo River crossing in Brazzaville

Departure on April 22nd at 10 am = arrival in Abidjan at 6:30 pm

- Visits to Daloa, Duékoué, Danané.

Departure from Abidjan: 13 May at 3 p.m. = Ouagadougou at 5 p.m.

- Visit to Dapango at Mgr Hanrion's and Kandé.

Departure from Ouagadougou: May 18 at 9 am = Dakar at 8 pm

Departure from Dakar: May 20 at 5 am = Buenos Aires: May 20 at 3 pm

Departure from Buenos Aires: May 30 at 11 am = Rio: May 30 at 5 pm

- Visits to Rio, Belo Horizonte, Goiânia, Itapaci,

and arrive in São Paulo around July 1st.

- Visit to São Paulo - meeting of the Superiors.

Departure from São Paulo: July 12 at 8 p.m. = Paris: July 13 at 5 p.m.



A great journey to Rwanda³⁰. News from our Mother General...!

29 March 1961

7:00.

So much has happened since this morning that I can hardly believe that we are together at 8:30 am, around the chapel! I feel your prayers strongly, because they provided me a beginning of a journey as I love them; I am so grateful to the Lord for giving it to me. I was standing next to a young Arab, who, as soon as I took my breviary for the prayers of the *Itinerary*, was bending over to try to read. When I was finished, he said to me: *Do you know Arabic? - No, you French? - No - Italian? - No - Algerian? - No, Tunisian.* And our monosyllabic conversation could not go much further. Two rows in front of us were two other young Tunisians. My neighbour went to them and brought me his comrade: *He, French, speaks.* We exchanged a few words - he left, then came back: *Can I come close to you, you can tell me what the Christian religion is, we are Muslims.* And throughout the journey we talked about Christ. He often interrupted me to object by referring to the Koran: *No, Christ is not God, God has no Son, Christ is a prophet sent by God, and Mohammed came after Him, the one sent by God, to reform religion on God's behalf. Then why do you refuse to believe in Muhammad?* When I told him about Christ's Resurrection, and therefore about his divinity: *No, the Koran says that Jesus did not rise, it was another one we saw.* And then he asks: *What evidence can you give of God's existence? Yes, we too say that, but is it enough since so many people do not believe in God.* I told him about Pascal's bet. He is in second class, he studied Pascal³¹. *Then,*

³⁰See the itinerary of this journey, book by Mother Hélène M. p. 72-73.

³¹Pascal's bet: either God is or God is not. God is a good bet, it is better to believe in Him.

why the celibacy of priests and nuns? Finally, everything was over, and he was so curious, so deep in his reactions. I told him: I will pray for you and he immediately answered me: *I will pray for you too - do you want to give me your address? I would like to write to you if you allow me. Would you also like me to give you my address?* Just long enough to exchange addresses and we arrived in Rome. He and his comrade gladly accepted a medal from the Blessed Virgin. I just had time to tell him a word about Lourdes that he had never heard of. Pray for this young man. He seems so eager for the truth.

At the airport, Mother Marie des Neiges, Mother Madeleine Emmanuel, Sister Rosa Eugenia, Sister Clara Lucilla, Sister Marie Saveria, our five young sisters³² and the faithful Arsinée, Bordighera's elder who is always there to take care of tickets and everything. Lunch at the airport restaurant with Alitalia passengers who continued the trip. The Mothers had their picnics and came with me, then a small private conversation with each of them, and the three hours went by quickly. It was very good. How many things have been said about the impression of the Church produced by our African sisters! So many people came to speak with them in the streets of Rome! They were at the ceremony of the Palms of St. Peter, visited the basilicas, the catacombs of St. Priscilla, the Holy Cross of Jerusalem, etc... and they are delighted with everything. And now we've been flying over Africa for two hours, in wonderful weather after a sunset like you only see in Africa, it's the sky full of stars. We will be in Kano, Nigeria, around 11:00 p.m. Several young households are on the plane, which is a good sign of the peace expected. It is said in Leuven that Bishop Bernard has been very ill, but that we now hope to save him. Father Joseph, Birambo's great friend, was appointed Monsignor as Apostolic Prothonotary. And that's the story of

³²Five young sisters: Sr Languida, 1st vows 30.09.1958 in Lübeck - Sr Maria wa Kalvario (Sr Marie Emmanuel), 1st vows 19.09.1959 in Auteuil - Sr Yohani Thérèse 1st vows 11.02.1960 in Auteuil - Sr Ludovika, 1st vows 11.02.1960 in Auteuil, perpetual vows in Togo - Sr Maria Dativa, 1st wishes 11.02.1960 in Auteuil.

our day. I hope to put the letter in the post tomorrow morning in Usumbura, so you won't have to wait too long for the news.

That I will be united with all of you during this day tomorrow! We will find ourselves well by asking for an increase in love for the world in response to the ever-present love of our Savior. May all men become His, and let us strive to be more and more so through our fidelity.

Over Lake Victoria,

Wednesday, April 12[1961], at 6 p.m.

Now, I'm going through the events again in order to give you as many details as possible, since arriving in Usumbura 12 days ago. Sister Dominiko Savio had the joy of finding at the airport her sister, two little nieces, her brother-in-law. She was able to talk to them for quite some time because we had to look for lost suitcases!!!!!!..... Unable to find anything, we ended up leaving, in a van large enough to contain us all. But it's only a ten-minute drive and... two tires explode! We're broken down! We stop a car, and Sister Françoise Élisabeth goes with the driver in search of tires. She learns that there are no more in Usumbura! But Providence watches, and a gentleman who witnesses ~~his embarrassment~~ approaches: *I have a reserve of four tires, I can give you two. He even gave up three of them to cover the needs of the road*, but all this lasted until noon, which allowed us to spend a good two hours this morning on Holy Thursday in the chapel of the White Sisters. But it was necessary to give up the 5 a.m. Mass in Birambo, and to run away very quickly to reach Astrida³³'s mass. We arrived at the *Gloria*. Very beautiful mass for three priests with a crowd of assistants. At the exit we greet Mgr Deprimoz, the former Bishop of Kabgaye, and Father Kagame, then the whole Benebikira Community, many of whom knew our young sisters, and many young girls who never tired of looking and surrounding and questioning. It was night when we took the road again, going barely 20

³³Astrida : Butare.

km/h because it had rained and the road was bad. Around 9am we were in Birambo. Impossible to describe the welcome of the sisters, the 6th interns, the prepostulants - And even Bishop Louis Gasore is there with Father Curé.

The next two days were spent as much as possible in silence and in retreat with the beautiful ceremonies at the Mission Church. On Easter Day, an open-air high mass in our house, the altar erected under the *barza*. There is a crowd, and four priests distributed communion. Once the mass is over, the Padre Gaspard turns around and tells everyone to come forward as much as possible because he has a lot of important things to say. And he announces the return of the five sisters, amidst applause. He asks them to go up the steps of the altar so that everyone can see them. The joy of all was manifested in all ways. Then you can guess that they were surrounded! Sister Anyesi, from Birambo, was called by everyone and passed from arm to arm! Her whole hill was there! And we announced that the following Sunday there would be homecoming activities! That was really touching. All the groups wanted to demonstrate: schools, instructors, catechumens, Christians. Each group came to say their joy and sing something. Football game of the young and then the old who made people laugh to tears. And then at the end these little old people come forward. *We want to thank you for bringing our children back to us. We are proud to see them as religious of the Assumption. They had been gone for so long, we were afraid they would be dead, and now here they are with us... we want a lot more!!!! etc., etc., etc.* And all this said or sung in the middle of dances! It was really unique, a real family celebration of the whole mission.

I'm resuming Easter week: happy day on Monday. The next day, as I was about to continue the visit, the Superior of the White Fathers of Kabgaye came to pick us up from Bishop Perraudin to go to Kabuye. I am leaving with Mother Marie Ghislaine. Stop in Kabgaye; long visit with the Monsignor, good as possible. He wants to come with us tomorrow, and advises us when we pass through Kigali to go see the Prime Minister. We sleep at the White Sisters' house, and the next morning on the way to Kigali. The Bishop is driving. On the way, we meet Father Greindl who

drives his mother by jeep all over the country! Long stop on the road, while the rain begins! It was in the rain that we visited the future foundation of Kabuye, with the good Mr. Karchresi and all his children. The school has 340 students, boys and girls, we think that when we arrive the girls will flock, and we will need a school for them. Two very poor little houses will be the convent. It is possible to enlarge the work since 5 hectares are given to us. We have lunch at the Bernardines' house in Kigali, then visit Mr. Gregoire Kaybanda, the Minister. He is a great Christian and his desires on teaching are in line with the thought of Our Venerable Mother Foundress. He would like to give us the direction of a Higher Teacher Training College that would prepare good teachers for the first cycle of secondary school. There is nothing of the kind in the country, which means that any education beyond the Primary level must be taken abroad. He will try to develop a project and program, and he will talk to us about it again. We really want to help as much as we can this small country that is coming at such an important time in its history, and that wants to build itself very Christian. The members of the new Government are all convinced Christians, but unfortunately it is not a Government of national unity since it is formed by a single party, hence many dissatisfied. We cannot predict the future; for the moment everything is calm and we can hope. I don't know what else to say about the political situation, because we have as many opinions as we talk to different people. [...]

We only returned to Birambo on Thursday morning, and the last few days passed quickly. Bishop Bigirumwami came on Sunday evening, very good. He hoped for another foundation in his diocese in 1962. As for the political situation, he would like a referendum that would say whether or not the whole country wants the Mwani or the Republic. Our sisters are very religious in this confusion of ideas, and tell everyone that we must pray and love each other.

On our way to Kigali with Bishop Perraudin, we passed in front of the dispensary of Sister Marie Florence's brother Pierre. You can guess his joy and ours! He brought us his wife, his children all so kind and we gave him Sister Marie Florence's letter in person!

Dear Mother, here is a long letter. I am counting on you to spread this news everywhere, because I don't think I have time to do so. Especially to Mother Agnes Catherine! She can be proud of her Birambo daughters who do so much good! The parish priest of a neighbouring mission, Mange, came to say, with figures to back it up, how much the Christianity of Birambo had soared since the arrival of the Assumption, and that we must quickly spread it out at home! A word from Myriam who is very kind and speaks excellent French, and from Émilienne who is admired by everyone for her piety, her dedication to everything and everyone and her sympathy with everyone. She is a true missionary who goes so far as to have a large wisdom tooth pulled out without a painkilling shot by the nurse of the dispensary *because the Africans support her and she wants to live like them.*

We're so shaken that I don't really know how I write. But I think we will soon arrive. I'll add a word at the airport.

Nairobi, very good arrival, Mother Marthe is here; we are going to sleep in a convent and tomorrow after Mass we will take the road to Mandaka.

Great affection... and great union of prayer.

Mère Marie Denyse du Saint Sacrement

Travel to East Africa

God alone

... on the flight to Leopoldville,

20 April 1961

My dear Mother,

take up the story of the news since arriving in Nairobi. The next morning at 9:00 a. m. we were on the road, and what a show! The rains don't come, so on the side of the road you only see corpses of zebras, bison, ostriches, giraffes, gazelles and all the animals of the savannah who died of hunger! Birds of prey are doing their job of sanitation, but not as quickly as they should! And in the vicinity of the Maasai camps, it is unbreathable because the bodies of cows are piled up by the tens and tens. Seeing these ravages of drought, one's heart is tightened because in many regions it is humans who die of hunger, while other humans, in abundance, waste their possessions. We had this show for 6 hours on the road, up to the Tanganyika border. Sometimes with the encounter of live animals of all species, which was less gruesome.

In Moshi, the Mission Fathers told us that the way to Mandaka was impassable because of the rains the day before; they had to abandon their stuck car! Then Father Superior got behind the wheel and made us take a long mountain road. We arrived home just as night fell. The 4 sisters and 200 residents of the Middle School, the Formators and the teachers were there, everyone so vibrant and kind. In three and a half years, what a great job has been done by such a small community! Everything is truly Assumption, in joy, simplicity and a great family spirit. Eight indigenous sisters help a lot with the culture and work of the house and with catechism in Swahili. They have a small convent next to ours. But this confuses the children a lot; they do not want to believe that the African sisters who enter the Assumption are really like us. When I went to school, they asked all kinds of questions about it, so I regretted not

starting the trip with Mandaka! If I had come with our five Rwandan sisters, they would have been convinced! Fortunately I had some pictures, and you had to see children and students looking at them with wonder! When I asked: Why do you find it so hard to believe that we are one religious family and that we love each other like real sisters? All answered: Because we've never seen this before! How sad, isn't it?

Monsignor, the one who visited Auteuil last year, came for a long visit. He also said that, in the whole region, he hears that the Assumption responds to everything that the African soul expects and gives what no one has given before. He would like us to take over the direction of the Secondary College that the Government will build near Moshi!.... That makes another foundation in prospect! I have seen the so good family of Sister Ignatius and Sister Sofia Elisabeth, the postulants of Mandaka; unfortunately, not the family of Sister Suzana who lives too far away.

... and full of fresh Abidjan,

22 April 1961

Have a good trip, despite the big clouds shaking a little. That the atmosphere was heavy in Leopoldville! with the peacekeepers you meet everywhere, and the city is dead. I went to St. Anne's, the closest church to Sabena; at the 6:30 Mass, there were five people; at the 7:00 Mass, I was alone. Boarding for Brazzaville was very close to the church. Seen 2 religious of Providence, refugees from Kasai, where the Bishop made all the religious leave and remains alone with 5 volunteers Fathers of the Holy Spirit. Also seen 2 sisters of the Charity of Ghent, forced to abandon a leper colony. Several Belgians with whom I spoke during the trip are in the greatest discouragement and bitterness: *Our country has abandoned us. Six months before the unrest in Leopoldville, the King knew everything and sold all the shares he had in Congo, and we were left alone...* That is the tone of the French in Algeria; they blame their country, their leaders, but they do not blame themselves. However, at the

Usumbura³⁴ stopover, the pilots of our plane, 4 Belgians and 2 Africans, were at the table near mine. Throughout the lunch hour, the Belgian pilots spoke to each other without speaking to the African pilots. It's only a detail, but it says that human contact is not established.

In Brazzaville, very kind of Air France who made me drive with the Sisters of Saint Joseph de Cluny, very welcoming and very good (they have in their chapel a statue of Saint Joseph similar to the one of my dreams, the silent one, the contemplative of the mystery...). This morning Air France came to pick me up; big gala at the airport, because the Vice President is travelling in our plane! A military detachment is there, with music, in full dress, superb red cape and white gold embroidered pants! (I stop, because it's shaking well, and I'll finish when I get to Abidjan).

... **Abidjan**: Such a kind welcome by the brother and sister-in-law of Sister Anne of the Blessed Virgin. No one from home; Mother Françoise Isabelle asked Annick to tell me to take the plane to Daloa. Since there are not any tomorrow, it's another day of waiting; you shouldn't be in a hurry in Africa! Two former Bordeauxers, very nice, were also at the airport. We stayed there for almost an hour, while Annick was checking to see if she had a seat on Monday's plane. They both accompanied me to the Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles, and they will pick me up there on Monday morning to take me to the airport. Providence accompanies me everywhere during these long solitary journeys and makes me find Guardian Angels at every stage. I probably owe it to all of your prayers.

Mère Marie Denyse

³⁴Usumbura became Bujumbura in October 1962 .

News from Ivory Coast

+ Abidján

16 May 1961

Here I am in **Abidjan**, without any certainty of leaving tomorrow for Dakar, because... the Administration is not clear, I assure you!!!

It has been three weeks since Mandaka and Daloa WAT agents sent telegrams to reserve my place, and I am told that we have not received anything!!!! If I don't leave tomorrow, it will be for Thursday, but I'm a little annoyed because of the people waiting for me tomorrow night in Dakar. Fortunately, I have three days ahead of me, so I'm sure I won't miss the flight to Buenos Aires.

What about our three houses? Our sisters are true missionaries, given thoroughly, and in the three houses they are very much loved by Africans.

In **Danané**, everything is poverty until the buildings are finished... When? The Father who was in charge of everything just went on holiday! A very great good is hoped for in this race so open to Christianity. There are about a hundred little girls at school. But what a poverty of teachers: the one of 50 girls from 8 to 9 years old says that he does not believe in God because he has never seen him! What great good will the A.M.A. do there?

In **Duékoué**, the progress is wonderful. There is now a true Christianity that we must try to maintain despite the ravages of polygamy. The Director of the boys' school, who lives on the Mission's premises and is a Christian, has just taken a second wife into his home. It's so sad because of the students who admire their teacher, and since we have no one to replace him, we'll probably have to keep him! Our school is going well, with about 200 little girls who are beginning to have a good spirit of the Assumption, especially the boarders, about fifteen of them. The four AMAs are excellent. The sisters are fine: Sister Paz, Sister Luzia, Sister Francesca has a good troupe of choirboys that she leads so well. Sister Marie Edmond is happy as much as possible with her class of children

who cannot make it to the certificate, and the countless schoolchildren who come for treatment. There, as in Danané, it is really the great family of the Mission where everyone knows each other.

In **Daloa**, Mother Françoise Isabelle and the sisters have the boarding school in their hands: 50 children in 6th and 5th grade, very, very good children, loving the Assumption very much. Several vocations among 15-year-old women. Three of them wanted to talk to me and only want to get to Auteuil! Fortunately, their families are Christian and will probably give permission in two or three years.

In flight to other destinations

Roberfield (Liberia)

18 May 1961

This is the first adventure of this great tour in Africa! Normal departure from Abidjan at 2 am, and we were supposed to be in Dakar at 9 pm. At the beginning some passengers noticed a smoking engine, but soon everything was back to normal. But before the planned stopover in Georgefield, again, worrying smoke. We go down normally, and we are told a stopover of $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. After an hour, we come to say that an engine doesn't work and that we'll be here for three hours. It was 4:00 a. m. We are taken to a hotel, a few meters away, an air-conditioned room. Around 6:00 a. m., they come to tell us that they can't find the cause of the damage... and that we're going to have dinner here! Then, at 8:00 a. m., we are told that we are going to sleep here!!!! We are taken to the plane to pick up our luggage. The hotel is well located, on the banks of a river, it is brand new, not quite finished. We are given the rooms; a young woman will be my companion because the beds are numbered! Good night, peaceful night! At dawn, I get up quietly and say my Office on the banks of the river. No mass, unfortunately, because this is a Protestant country and a priest only comes on Sundays. Maybe I'll have one tonight in Dakar if we can do it!!!! I am thinking of Father Schaeffer, Liliane Auphan and others who may have waited a long time last night! We don't know when we'll leave. I heard we changed an engine and it still doesn't work. The commander believes that the aircraft is finished and that we should consider ourselves lucky that nothing happened in the middle of the flight! That is the effect of the prayers, isn't it... And fortunately, I'm not late for the flight to Buenos Aires! A passenger is not in this case, he was supposed to fly to Rio this morning. Everyone else was going to Paris where you have to wonder what happened to them!

9:00 in the morning. We have just been told that passengers for Dakar will have priority and will leave, if there are seats, on a Russian plane

piloted by Czechs around 2 pm!!!!

19 h. Finally, Dakar. Liliane Auphan, an elder from Lübeck and niece of sister Mireille was there, having spent her day suspended on the phone with Air France phone! That's so kind, and thanks to her I arrived well at the Sisters' where I have the surprise of a good Auteuil envelope! Tomorrow morning, Liliane comes to pick me up and take me to Air France to have the place confirmed. I will probably go to sleep tonight in a convent near the airport on Father Schaeffer's advice (the poor Father waited for me last night at the airport until midnight, because we were still hoping that our plane would be fixed!!!!) So I won't have to disturb people here in the middle of the night.

And so, the long African tour is over. Yesterday, my neighbour on the plane was the nephew of the Superior General of the Little Sisters of the Assumption! The world is small, and another household who was married by Bishop Sédillère! (Ecclesiastical Superior of Auteuil)

Pray for the Council. Unity to be realized in community.
Miracles for Beatification and dossier

To the Superiors

+

Auteuil

1st January 1962

My dearest Mothers,

I must resolve to thank you all together for the wishes and prayers that your letters faithfully brought me and which delighted me either in Italy or in Auteuil, as soon as I returned. Impossible to answer each one as I would like because in eight days I will leave for Colmar, until January 22nd; then it will be the opening of the 3rd Year on February 2nd and I would not want to delay any longer then to make my retreat, probably between February 10th and 20th, before finishing by Lyon the cycle of visits. The ones in Barcelona and León will be done in March by Mother Josefa Ignacia.

Your letters ask if my stay in Rome has given me the grace of an audience with the Holy Father. Well, no; it seemed more filial to us to leave the Holy Father to the great tasks he has to do in these last months of preparation for the Council. You will have read with emotion, my dear Mothers, the Bull of Promulgation³⁵ for the month of October 1962, and I am sure that during this year you will want to intensify the prayer effort for the Council. That in each house the intention of the Mass be requested once a month for the Council, and that prayer for the Council be said with fervour every day.

Add to this a great effort of charity, a positive effort that will make us all attentive, so that no one approaches us without feeling understood and

³⁵Promulgation Bull 962.

loved. May this effort be regularly monitored in community meetings in order to help each other to realize among ourselves the Unity that the Lord Jesus asked the Father for his own and that the Holy Church is ardently asking for as the Council approaches. The image of God is love with the beautiful prayer you know is quite a program that we can follow step by step.

This community effort of charity, let us also offer it to obtain miracles from Our Venerable Mother Foundress. Two are under study at the moment, or rather we are working on gathering the files. Bishop GERAUD, the Superior of Saint Sulpice in Rome, has just been chosen by the Sacred Congregation of Rites as consulting doctor. He explained to us that we should not ask the attending physician to declare a miracle, it is not his responsibility. You simply have to ask him for the documents that must constitute the file on the state before and after the disease.

Three paragraphs follow on this subject.

- I. Previous State.
- II. Subsequent condition.
- III. Description by witnesses of healing.

Let us not lose an opportunity to pray and to have people pray to obtain the much desired miracle which, Father Antonelli told us, will very soon be followed by the Beatification. May our fidelity to the Rule and spirit of the Assumption bear witness to the holiness of Our Venerable Mother Foundress.

I thank all your daughters who have written very good letters to me and all those who, without having written, bring help to their prayers. To them and to you, my dearest Mothers, I remain very united in the Lord.

Sœur Marie Denyse r.a.

Letter from the Holy Father John XXIII to the nuns, July 2,
1962 - Put the house in a state of Council

D.S.³⁶

In the middle of the sky, towards Anchorage

23 August 1962

My dear daughters,

I very much wanted to join you all, if only by a word, before leaving Auteuil, and after having been so united on our Assumption Day. It seems to me that the presence in Auteuil of the Sisters of the Third Year, coming from more or less all the Provinces, helps the union of hearts and makes us closer.

I didn't find the desired free time before my departure, so I take advantage of the long flight hours to write to you. First of all, this little providential fact that was very important to me: we had left Hamburg a while ago when a pilot came to sit next to me and gently showed me on the map the route that the plane was going to take. At the moment, he says, we are flying over Aarhus (DK). I couldn't believe it. Did our dear foundresses feel the intensity of my prayer? It was very clear. I saw the great city and asked the Lord Jesus to reveal himself to all the inhabitants through my daughters.

Earlier, I reread the beautiful letter of the Holy Father to the Religious³⁷. As I left Auteuil this morning, I proposed to the whole community to look for ways to put the house in a state of Council; and as I thought about it, it seemed to me that all our houses must put themselves in a

³⁶Initials of “Dieu Seul” (God alone)

³⁷John XXIII, Letter to Religious, July 2, 1962.

state of Council and put themselves in it following the directives of the Holy Father. *That's why I went back to his letter. He tells us that we must rethink with renewed fervour the duties of our vocation and that we must make an intense effort of personal sanctification.*

How?

- 1) Knowing that only the inner life is the foundation and soul of every apostolate and that only prayer obtains the gift of joyful perseverance. And the Holy Father insists on the meaning of the words life of prayer... which allows us to enter into the intimacy of the Lord... to listen to him in contemplation. He asks that the Holy Mass be the center of our days.... around devotion to the Name, Heart and Blood of Christ. O.V. Mother Foundress has beautiful chapters on these three devotions, and perhaps we could read them again to learn from her how to make them more fundamental in our lives.
- 2) The Holy Father invites us to better follow Christ's example by living our vows more fully.
 - a) The vow of poverty: ... to be content with what is indispensable... not to seek small comforts, satisfaction in food... to keep our homes in a climate of austerity... That all ~~this~~ is suggestive, isn't it?
 - b) In speaking of the vow of chastity, the Holy Father blesses the delicacies, mortifications, renunciations that make this virtue more radiant, and he recommends not to minimize them in the work of education.
 - c) And for obedience, he speaks of annihilation of one's own self, spiritual crucifixion, the most generous obedience (*magis*) to the Rule, all this being in harmony with mutual understanding and obedience made kind. But to achieve this, the Holy Father specifies that it requires profound humility, absolute disinterest, complete detachment.

3) Finally, it is the whole thought of Our Venerable Mother Foundress that the Holy Father gives us when he speaks of the apostolate: to bring all things back to Christ, the only Head. The Holy Father asks us to be spiritually present to all the needs of the Church Militant... so that she feels present everywhere. How I would like all of you who are outside the direct apostolate because of age, illness, studies or hidden work to pause at the words of the Holy Father for a long time. He tells you that the Church expects a lot from these sisters...

And in the apostolate through education that we have, the Holy Father tells us that we must both assume all the demands of today and not complain about the advance of the children of the century but try to prevent and have confidence. This reminds me of a very good article on Religious Teachers in which the author argued against those who, under the pretext of adapting to the current world, push teachers too far to broaden the scope of their activities, as if teaching was not an apostolate in itself. The author of the article concluded by affirming, according to the traditional doctrine of the Church, that God replaces us when, in all righteousness and loyalty, we do everything we can.

I conclude, my dear daughters, this letter which only highlights a few passages from the Holy Father's letter. They will help you to better concretize how to put the house in a state of Council. As the Holy Father invites us to do in closing, *let us cultivate enthusiasm and start each day perfectly... as if we were at the beginning of our conversion... and had done nothing so far...*

I count on your prayers during these visits to the Far East. The dates are approximately as follows: Mino and Sumoto until September 12. Ilo-Ilo and S. José until 28; then Manila and S. Lorenzo. The end of October will take me back to Auteuil where you have M. Josefa Ignacia for cases and permissions that exceed the powers of the Provincial Mothers.

You know that I am your Mother in Our Lord.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement r.a.

Trip to Japan by flying over Aarhus

23 August 1962

Dear Mothers and Daughters,

I started my letter just on board, after a demonstration of the use of the oxygen mask in case of rapid descent. We are barely 20 passengers in this huge plane. Among them was a Brother of the Japanese Christian Schools, completing his studies and speaking very good French. We were told we were flying at 1,000 m and 950 km per hour.

We made an hour's stopover in Hamburg, and the dear Brother came to find me. We talked about the beauty of the teaching vocation. After a few moments of flight, a pilot kindly came to sit next to me and explained on the map the route the plane will take. Then, I could not believe my ears, he said to me: At this moment we are flying over Aarhus... The weather was clear, you can guess if I looked at this huge city, and prayed that the foundresses would reveal God to all its inhabitants. I expected so little from Aarhus.

Between Hamburg and Anchorage, 8:30 flight time. I don't know if the letter that a flight attendant will bring to Paris has already arrived.

I'm explaining a little bit about the time differences. As we revolve around the pole, on the Paris-Tokyo line, these differences are striking. Leaving Paris on the 23rd at 12:30 pm, we arrive in Anchorage this same 23rd at 12:30 pm. It will be, at that time on the 24th, one o'clock in the morning in Paris. It is therefore a famous time saving because I will have done a lot of things in zero hour zero minute. It's more complicated to set the Office hours, because I just said Compline and Matins, since on my watch it's almost midnight, but here it's 11:00 in the morning. However, the time saved will be lost twice as fast because in six hours of flight, we will go from August 23, 1:30 p.m. to August 24, 4:30 p.m.

We will pass across the tip of Greenland without any clouds below us, which is very rare, say the pilots. It is of indescribable beauty. The ice floes, whose brown-red rocks can be seen, because in this season they

are partially covered with snow, the icebergs that can be seen breaking away from the glaciers and going down to the sea. High as we are, the ice floes only seem a little hilly but they are mountain ranges of 1,500 and 2,000 m. The outside temperature: -58° , and with a very hot sun, through the windows of the portholes, and a wonderful dark blue sky. Now we cross the Arctic Ocean, it is as far as the eye can see a sea of ice. We're going to fly over Barter Island on the east coast of Alaska, but the clouds are thick and you can't see anything. When you see all this from above, you wonder how men got through all this by sea. What a wonderful adventure...

Before arriving in Anchorage, a young hostess, 20 years old, came to share her experiences: 3 years of high school in Paris made her lose her faith. She would like to rethink all this. I told her to come and see us, she took the address and seemed very happy.

In an hour we'll be in Tokyo, you'll have the Anchorage polar bear. The entire trip will have taken place under a nearly midday sun and with an accuracy of five minutes on the schedule. Now it's pretty overcast, we're flying in the clouds and it's moving well. So I stop, it's safer, because the plane is starting to descend. I count on your prayers and I have you all in my heart which is all united in Christ.

Sœur Marie Denyse

Cause of Beatification, continued. How to obtain vocations?

God alone

Auteuil

19 March 1963

My dearest daughters,

With what great hope in my heart I communicate to you the story of a healing attributed to Our Venerable Mother Foundress. Bishop Géraud, who has checked all the documents in the file, is full of hope. He is a member of the Medical Commission in charge of examining miracles. The Postulator of the Cause, Bishop Federici, is also very optimistic. We must redouble our faith, fervour and humility by imploring the Holy Spirit, so that the Sacred Congregation of Rites, to whom the file will be communicated, may pronounce itself according to its ardent desire. If this healing is recognized as miraculous, we can hope to see O.V. Mother Foundress on the altars without too much delay.

To this file, I attach the table of masses to obtain vocations, because the houses founded in recent years did not have their day indicated.

I transcribe for you what Our Lord said to Mother Therese Emmanuel in 1879:

- *I will help you build the Assumption. I will build with you; it is my work and I will do it. Your part is love, fervour, regularity. Believe that you are doing my work and make it perfect by your union with Me, your divine Architect.*
- *Lord, this is your work, you know what it takes to accomplish it. It is you who give us the work; give workers to work for your Glory.*
- *I have put you in this need to have workers, so that you may come to Me and it may be proved that it is from Me that relief and development come... By ardent prayers, draw Help from Above. What prayer obtains is supernatural and resists the natural, is not dominated by*

it.

- *What must we do, Lord?*
- *Devoutly recite the rosary.*

Doesn't it seem to us that this request of Our Lord is current?

Finally, I add the list of words and mottos of the Houses³⁸. The last foundations are not mentioned: what they proposed was already taken. They will be happy to make another choice and submit it to Auteuil.

I leave in eight days to visit Malaga, from April 1 to 16. I will be in Madrid from 16 to 20, in León from 20 April to 4 May. Then return to Madrid with a short stop in Valladolid. On the 11th I will be in Lourdes for the visit, which will end on May 19, with the Golden Jubilee of Mother Marie Baptiste³⁹, a few weeks earlier. Bishop Theas will celebrate the Jubilee Mass, and you can guess how happy I am to surround Mother Marie Baptiste on behalf of all of you, on this date which is already dear to us because of the double anniversary⁴⁰ it recalls and which links so strongly the past to the present.

It is good for me, my dear daughters, to conclude this word with the words that our Holy Father the Pope pronounced yesterday, thanking the Sacred College for the wishes that were offered to him:

Those who have faith have no fear, they do not precipitate events, they do not worry those around them, they are not in a bad mood...

The serenity of our humble Pope's spirit finds its inspiration there. It does not result from human ignorance and history, and does not close its eyes to reality. It is a

³⁸Each house founded was given a name and a motto. For example: Auteuil, a small convent: Let the little children come to me; Auteuil monastery: Remain in my love.

³⁹Mother Marie Baptiste of the Blessed Sacrament, Jeanne Cayla, 1st vows on 15/06/1913, General Assistant of Mother Marie Joanna from 1939 to 1953, died in Lourdes on 24/04/1971.

⁴⁰19/05/1922: election of Mother M. Joanna and feast of St. Peter Celestine, patron saint of Mother Marie Celestine.

serenity that comes from God. Saint Paul said: May your serenity in life strike all eyes!

Shouldn't this be the result of our MYSTERY OF ASSUMPTION?

Let us ask for this grace for the Congregation and make every effort to unite with God, and therefore forget ourselves, to prepare our souls to receive it.

You always know that I am very united to each of you in the Lord.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement, ra

Opening of the apostolic process of the miracle⁴¹. Second session of the Vatican Council II - To see oneself in Christ

God alone!

Auteuil

14 October 1963

My dear daughters,

Many times your letters ask the question: *What about the miracle trial? Is it over?*

There was nothing to answer! We were waiting, like you, for the opening of the Apostolic Trial and the calling of witnesses. And then on October 9, a telegram from Mother Erminia Maria announced the first session of the Tribunal for the same evening, at 5:30 p.m.! You can guess our joy! Precisely, at that time, we had the Mass of the Higher Catechetical Institute in the chapel and we were all there, of course, in great union with Rome.

There will be one session per week, until all 9 witnesses have testified. These witnesses are: the miracle patient⁴², his wife, his sister-in-law, (the “alumna” of Rome who gave the relic), Mother Rosa Dominica who closely followed the illness and healing, and five doctors, three do not seem favourable to the miracle. So, you see how we have to pray with a strong faith. The Sacred Congregation of Rites will also have its doctor, and the role of this doctor is of paramount importance. Let us ask fervently that he let himself be guided by the Holy Spirit in a loyal search for the Truth.

That each house have masses celebrated for this purpose, organize days of adoration. And above all, that each of us intensify our efforts to be faithful to the Holy Spirit, to be sincere in observing our Rules. Let us apply to our Congregation what our Holy Father Paul VI says about the

⁴¹ See Etudes d’Archives n°2

⁴²This is Mr. Vittorio Jannetti – Rome 1963.

Church: *May the Assumption say to today's world "Who sees me, also sees Christ", as Christ said: "Who sees me, also sees the Father. "This requires us to have a very intimate union with the Lord Jesus so that it is He who expresses, through all our lives, his love of the Father and souls.*

Do you not think that the session of the Apostolic Process, just before this second important session of Vatican II, is for the Congregation a call to live more intensely with Our Mother the Holy Church? Daughters of the Assumption and daughters of the Church, we must want to lose our own interests, our own life, in the great interests of the Holy Church; in the great, the only Life that is that of Christ in his Church. And it will be the surest way to find our life, the true life of the Assumption, the one that will respond to the current expectation of the Church, the one that has been reformed according to the Gospel, that is, sanctified in the sense that Jesus uses this word in Saint John (John 17:17-19).

How we must remain peaceful, confident, supernatural, awaiting the decisions of the Council and the directives of Our Mother the Holy Church! I say clearly: of Our Mother the Holy Church, and not of this or that spiritual author, however famous he may be. It is normal that in a time when the Church is questioning itself many answers cross and intertwine. It is an asset.

But let's not turn to all the winds. Let us be faithful to the today of God as it is given to us in the Congregation, keeping the unity of the spirit and the unity of the Rule as we have it today. Don't give in to the temptation of easy innovations. Have a taste for austere life so often recommended by Paul VI, after Pius XII and John XXIII. Do not be greedy for radical changes, but be careful and solicitous in studying the accidental and practical adaptations of your Rules, the Holy Father said recently to the Lazarists' General Chapter. This, my dear daughters, is the true thought of Our Mother the Holy Church. In less than two years we will have the General Chapter, and the Council will have guided us well. Until then, live in peace in God's presence today. He is charged with graces for the whole Church if we are faithful.

I conclude by thanking you wholeheartedly for so many letters, prayers, and donations of all kinds on the occasion of the feast of Saint Dionysius. I cannot write to each one in particular, and I find comfort in saying again after John XXIII that it is a sacrifice not to write more faithfully to those we love. But each one really has its place in my heart and my prayer!

I would like to take this time before Christmas to complete the work on the Chapters of Our Venerable Mother Foundress, so you will not be surprised if letters become rarer. But together we go to God, don't we?

Your Mother in Him.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement r.a.

Time of renewal signed by the Council. From the intimate notes of the Father Peyriguere. Review of life and eucharistic spirituality

God alone

Auteuil

12 December 1963

My dear daughters,

The Church wants to see herself in Christ as in a mirror," said our Holy Father Pope Paul VI. And he added: *If this look revealed any shadow, any deficiency, on the face of the Church, it is clear: she should reform herself, correct herself...*

In the last circular, I told you that to help the Church to see itself in Christ, we must each try to see ourselves in Christ, and thus help our entire Congregation to see itself in Christ as in a mirror.

In recent months, about books read, advice asked, instructions received, I have often thought: If all my daughters could read this, hear this, tell me their thoughts on this!

I emphasize this last desire because, in these times of renewal, there are some who, to reinforce their opinion, easily say: Everyone thinks that... The whole community thinks that. The whole Province thinks that... And we think we are telling the truth, of course, but the letters I receive show that this is not the case. We should not be surprised; total freedom of expression in community is not as frequent as we think; we should have a climate of gentle and humble charity rarely achieved in our sinful condition so that everyone can freely express themselves. When it comes to general ideas, of course everyone agrees; but in concrete applications the differences are apparent. For example, about the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, everyone will be unanimous in wanting respect for the human person. But some overly naturalistic minds only conceive of this respect in the suppression of religious obedience, and there will be disagreement. It is true that Superiors often need to reform themselves in

order not to fall into authoritarianism and not to encourage denunciations. But it is also true that the sisters also need to reform themselves constantly in order to go beyond the visible, to hear God's calls through those of the Superiors and to respond to them without falling into infantilism. This is our daily struggle for all of us. It is a sign of research that bites into reality: the resistance proves that we have joined them and that is a good sign. But let us not give in to the temptation to want something other than the simple daily life. The one that the Lord Jesus wanted, for Him and His Mother, for 30 years.

Aren't we listening too much to the extraordinary?

A Father of the Council recently wrote: We want to attract by powerful things and we hunt for spices, delicacies, likely to arouse curiosity, sensitivity or sentimentality. And then the truth is sacrificed: we shock, but opinion is deceived.

This is often true. We must not accept this passively. Recently at a gathering of young girls, the preacher said: ... *Do not make Christianity a set of laws, rules, defenses. If you want that, then enter the convent.* The nun asked the Father afterwards: *Why did you say that? What do you have to say? - What do you mean, I said that? But that's not possible! I take the slogans out of the world without even realizing it... Thank you for telling me, I'll fix it.* And at the next instruction, he presented religious life admirably. What would have happened if the nun present had recorded passively by saying: We must modernize religious life, remove the rules, etc.?

But I'll come back to that, because I have a lot of questions for you.

Am I under the illusion that this circular and those that follow it will provoke a revision of loyal, courageous, supernatural life, in which everyone will participate?

Am I under the illusion that you will each express your true thought? Thought confronted with God's thought in order to bring yours in unison?

Sometimes I am told (sometimes they are also the Superiors!) that you do not dare to tell me during the visits, or write to me in the meantime, your true thoughts. I can't believe it! It seems to me that I know each of my daughters. Am I in an illusion? Of course, I know each one in the best of herself, the best that we talk about during the visits and that is what God puts in each of us of desire for Him, of His Life in place of ours, of His thoughts in place of ours. The dull routine is not always so beautiful, I know it; but this dull routine will no longer exist in eternity, there will only be Christ all in all; and is not the true knowledge of each one that of Christ in each? It is because the time of grace of the visits highlights the living Christ that I believe I know each of you truly. So, do you think it is possible to send me true answers, answers that you will give me by trying to see each other in Christ as in a mirror? (If this allows you greater freedom of expression, do not sign your answers). If so, when I report on the answers, we will no longer have our ideas on the 1964 Assumption, but the very vision of Christ. And, then with what love and zeal we will strive to reform ourselves, to correct ourselves, in order to remove the shadows and deficiencies of today!

So let's start the life review from the Source. We will then go down to everything that this Source must fertilize, in the Church in general, and in the field of work that is given to us in particular.

As I said at the beginning, we will start from some recent texts or proposed directives.

First some intimate notes of Father Peyriguère, called the emulator of Father de Foucauld. I am thinking especially of our dear ones and many missionary communities when I write these lines, but also of all our houses since the whole Church is missionary. Father Peyriguère has found the deep unity of his life where it seems to me that we must find ours.

Because of my vocation, I became one of the Brethren. It is as a Brother that I live here, that I pray, that I say Mass. And then, Christ wanting to live well in me, I also make him become one of these poor Brethren. And because the Father infinitely loves this Christ who is his Son, in Him

he will not be able to resist loving souls who are one with his Son... Every day, through my voice, Christ's prayer begs the Father to give him these souls⁴³...

Is our life so incarnate where the Lord has sent us? Are we really one of those children, white, black or yellow, rich or poor, from the Field where we mission? Do we lend our voice enough to Christ that, through us, He prays for them?

Personally, I never feel more missionary than when I pray before the Blessed Sacrament. On my lips, always new and always moving, the same prayer rises to Christ from the tabernacle: "O Christ, in coming here I have brought you among these poor souls: be ever more alive in me to radiate to them. I am You by grace, but I am one of them by adoption: then, in me, you too become one of them. Oh! Get your Father to lead your brothers to you! "Yes, it is then, by praying in this way, that I feel truly active: then "I see" that my missionary work is being done. And I believe so, since it is Christ who makes it!

Is our faith humble and life-giving enough to allow us to see the missionary work of Christ being done? Our Lord said to Mother Therese Emmanuel: Your lack of faith limits my action.

Become aware that you have been WANTED to be the representative - intercessor and redeemer - of the whole crowd who do not know how to pray for them, sacrifice themselves for them, buy their redemption; or rather, having assumed them in themselves, make them pray, make them sacrifice themselves... Let us go all the way to the end, let us let ourselves be carried away towards the vertiginous horizons; that in my poor soul who has left himself to Christ, it is Christ Himself who, carrying in Him this crowd, prays for it, immolates himself for it, and

⁴³P. Albert Peyriuguère, 1883-1959, The Way of Dialogue - 36, The Mystic of El-Khab.

redeems it... To be alone a whole Christendom... a Christendom fully charged with this Christ; and if we cannot dilate Him on the surface, then dilate Him in depth... To be a concentrate of Christ at work in darkness... but ferment so powerful that one day Christ will be known and loved...

Are we aware that we are dedicated to the redemption of our children, their families and their communities? Do some apostolic failures,—even, if they are failures only according to appearance, push us to take care of Christ in order to diffuse Him deeply? Or do these failures cause us to become discouraged and pessimistic? Do they make us blame others?

Through the Eucharist, everything is told to the missionary about his vocation, everything is given to him of this vocation... At the Mass that I celebrate alone, my chapel is full, full to burst... I feel all these souls... it overflows, it overflows everywhere... My Mass, what does that mean for me? I don't ask myself that; because the Mass I don't expect it to say something to me but to give me SOMEONE. It promises me: I'm waiting for it. It gives it to me: I receive it, I take it, I make it mine, I make it mine to make myself mine... The Mass is the perpetuated Incarnation, it is the sacrifice of Christ unceasingly actualized so that for us, having come after the historical date of the Incarnation, Christ can be ours... God present among us, this divine step is as materialized in the Eucharist. God loving us, this step is as materialized in the Sacred Heart... God present, God loving us, these are the two great palpitations of the life of the missionary's soul.

Do we have enough missionary sense of the Mass? What are we doing to help children, their families to understand that the Mass is not to say something, but to give Someone? Do we dare to speak to them, with an open heart, with an open soul, of the love of the Lord? Pope John XXIII and most recently Paul VI recommended devotion to the Blood of Christ and the Heart of Jesus. Did we pay attention to it? What could we do to warm hearts?

...But Christ wanted to be present as Christ crucified: He wanted this state, this one and not another. Every day, through the thousands of masses, through the thousands of tabernacles, He cries out to us that we are the disciples of a crucified Christ. To live the Eucharist is to want to be saviors like Him, by the means He has chosen to be Savior; to want to be victims like Him. He is the only Redeemer. We must therefore leave ourselves to Him so that, since his own humanity is definitively glorified, He finds in us an "additional humanity" where he can complete what is lacking in his sufferings. We must substitute ourselves for the souls to be saved... to be so One with this people in whose midst we live...

Our Congregation is particularly called to adore the states of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. Does union with his state of crucified Christ mark our lives? Does it bring into us, in the encounter with the small and large daily crosses, a little of the love that made Saint Andrew say: "O good Cross, so much awaited, so desired?"

To plant the monstrance in silence (or in noise) is to allow a beautiful taking possession by Christ... in the heart of what did not seek Him, of what did not want Him... And at the same time, for the one who adores, it is to fill his eyes and heart with charity and kindness. How beautiful our ideal is! In these countries of harsh violence, coming out of his tabernacle as if on purpose, our Christ of goodness, our Christ of infinite charity will, from the monstrance as from a new mountain of the Beatitudes, radiate on the harshness of these poor souls the immense sweetness of his most loving Heart. In this chapel with its walls beaten by the wave of impurity, all the charity of Christ will live and palpate, all the purity of Christ... But it is the Christ of hidden life... This infinite Charity must be prolonged in our hearts in order to be suspected, in order to be revealed. In our turn, shouldn't we be the monstrance?

O.V. Mother Foundress believed very much in this view of the Host. What do we think of the Blessed Sacrament's exposition? Do we seek

together the way to bring souls to Christ so that He can change them? Have we tried or done anything to get others to come and share our worship? Having the grace to have Jesus exposed to our gaze every day, are we with our neighbour the extension of his purity and love? Are we monstanced? Are we aware of our responsibility in this regard?

Do you understand, my dear daughters, why these long quotations? It seems to me that we have here, expressed by an apostle of today, the purest spirit of our Founding Mothers. And if one or the other, influenced by heard reflections, questions itself on the actuality of our contemplative and active life, this lived testimony will perhaps help it to respond and do it good. The chapel, the altar, the tabernacle, Father Peyriguère found there the unity of his life. The hours spent at the foot of the Blessed Sacrament, he did not see them as an exercise in piety to be assured; nor even as a means of supporting a life in a missionary situation.

In front of the altar, we act, he said. And he added: There is activity and activity: in God's work it is not the most active who is the most active.

The Eucharistic prayer was therefore first of all for him as a missionary action. And then there is the source from which daily charity flows. By wasting time before the Blessed Sacrament, we learn to recognize Christ Jesus in our brothers and sisters again and again: Throughout the day, I am constantly called. It costs, and yet it is good, it is sweet to the heart, because everyone who calls, who knocks on my door, it is Christ who calls me, who knocks on my door. Then it's no longer being disturbed. We can't say we're disturbed by Christ! Father Peyriguère found neither rupture nor discontinuity between the chapel and souls, hence the spontaneity and joy of his gift to all. But if he had not had long hours of prayer in all their austerity, his living and enthusiastic charity would not have existed. The encounter is different, but Christ is unique, he said. The work becomes an interview with God, an interview with our Christ.

Through these lines, do you hear a call about us? About the teachers and staff of our houses? About our children, especially team leaders and Catholic Action activists? By responding to this call, would they not

enter into the exercise of this royal priesthood of the laity, which simply puts them in the logic of their baptism and confirmation? Would they not respond to the Council's call, taking care of their families, their boarding schools, their parishes, their communities? Would this ideal, better lived by us, not bring a deep missionary dimension to our lives, caught up in a cycle of activities that are sometimes so numerous and disparate? Through these activities, do we try to show enough of Jesus' tenderness that nostalgia for Him is planted in souls?

And to conclude, this word of love from Father Peyriguère:

In the evening, when I am alone in front of Him, I sometimes tell Him: Yet, if I were not there, YOU would not be there. And he answers me: Neither would you, if I wasn't there, you wouldn't be there.

Do you think that there is something for each of us and for the Congregation to reform, to convert in us, so that we can better fulfill our function as Adorers in the Church? Does your community seem to find the fulfillment of our spirit in our role as worshippers?

What do you propose?

Do you think that renewed and deepened community meetings on our Eucharistic life would enhance the climate of charity in our homes and help children to meet the living Christ? To put their lives at his service?

For this is our work: To extend the Kingdom of God by helping those for whom we are responsible to meet Christ and place themselves at his service. We must assume it in our prayer, but it is not enough: we must also commit all the living forces of our being to its service.

The next circular will be on our Work. This one wants to follow the Council and give primary importance to dialogue with God, to properly religious and spiritual activity, to our interior life in communion through Christ, with the divine world as the Holy Father has so often emphasized in the promulgation of the Constitution on the Liturgy⁴⁴. But before

⁴⁴ Constitution on the Saint Liturgy

sending another circular, I await your answers, my dear daughters. Not to all the questions of course, but to the whole, an answer that is both a review of life, and a commitment to life; an answer that you are obliged not to sign and that you have to send directly, according to our Constitutions. In this Christmas season, reflecting on the Blessed Sacrament will help you to look with more love at the Incarnate Word who wanted to remain present among us. May his feast be full of joy and hope for your souls whom I carry in my prayer with true maternal affection.

Last question: The Holy Church is completing the revision of the Breviary. The Choral Office can be said in the common language if it promotes dialogue with God. What do you prefer: Latin? The language of the country where we are?

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement

Audience with Holy Father Paul VI. Cause of Beatification,
continued Meeting on *Propaganda Fide*

Auteuil

29 April 1964

My dear daughters,

Your letters tell me with what impatience you await the news of Rome; of the Rome we love, the true, the deep, the one of the Holy Spirit who leads the Church to a measured and fruitful *aggiornamento*.

It is this Rome that your prayers have helped me to meet. And I come to share with you all the goods received, and especially to transmit to you the blessing of the Holy Father Paul VI⁴⁵ who has reached each of you, for you were so present in my mind and heart during this wonderful audience. We had asked for the favor of being informed of the day of the audience well in advance, in order to be able to make it coincide with the meeting of the Superiors of Italy. Bishop Nasali Roca, always so good for the Assumption, received us at his home on the 10th and fixed the audience at the 16th. The Mothers were summoned for the 14th and it was a good thing because that very evening a Vatican telephone informed us that the audience would be on the 15th at 11:30 am, because of the Plenary Assembly of the Bishops of Italy.

What an emotion when, around 11:15 a.m., we were taken to the room next to the Holy Father's office! Only one genuflection, says Bishop Capovila. A few minutes later I entered the Pope's house, and as I made the deep genuflection I heard: I am happy to meet you. I was getting up at that moment and then the Holy Father, so good and paternal, cried out: But we already know each other! It's been ten years, I think? Do you remember the Castelgandolfo hearing? In the morning at Mass, we read: I know my sheep... I tried to tell the Holy Father that I presented him with the prayers, filial love, devotion, that we would like total

⁴⁵Paul VI was elected Pope on June 21, 1963.

dedication, of all his daughters of the Assumption. I told him that we ardently desire to know his thoughts, in order to find our light and joy in all his precepts and advice. Then, pressing on each word the Pope says: What the Pope wants is your fidelity. The Pope needs your fidelity. When I think of your Congregation, I think to myself: They are faithful daughters. Always remain faithful, faithful. The Pope's penetrating gaze in saying this is inexpressible. It seemed to me that he was reaching each of you and saying to each of you: Always remain faithful, faithful.

Then, as in the past with Pius XII, the Holy Father took an interest in everything: the number of nuns, houses, novices, in which countries we were. When I named Africa: Ah! Africa! Africa! Africa! She is ready, she is waiting for us, she responds so well to what we give her. It takes a lot of African nuns. And in India, do you have houses? I explained the refusal of visas, but the arrival of vocations from India. Oh! Do everything you can to get into India. Here again the souls are ready to receive us... You have to go wherever you can. I asked the Holy Father if the Church's urgent invitation to go to the poor meant, as is sometimes believed, that we must reduce the number of residential schools in order to have more schools. Oh! No! No! We must go from the rich to the poor, from the poor to the rich; we must remove barriers, put charity and unity everywhere. Do not abandon residential schools, have both.

A few more questions. To two more important ones the Holy Father answered: How I would like to say yes to you! But we must think, because there is the discipline of the Church. Make me a note, write what you just told me, explain your mind well.

After blessing me, giving me a rosary, while he was walking over to a small cupboard, the Holy Father said: I also take a rosary for the Mothers. He comes back with three. I was a little worried because there were seven Mothers, including Sister Maria Saveria whom we had taken with us. Fortunately the Holy Father asked the question and went to get four more rosaries. Then he said: There are too many of them to come in here, I'm the one who's going to go. The Holy Father said a word to each Mother, immediately recognized Mother Astrid, Mother Rosa Dominica

to whom he almost promised a visit to the parish of Quadraro. He blessed us three times, said several times insistently: Pray for me. We felt him so attentive to each one, so truly Father. The Angelus was ringing at St. Peter's when we went out.

At half past twelve, the Holy Father had the general audience every Wednesday. With what emotion we then read the speech he gave! A few passages will help you to penetrate a little into the Pope's heart and respond to his calls.

...You can imagine a little bit what thoughts, fears, responsibilities, weight and afflictions weigh on the Pope's heart. Would you like to listen to our requests? Above all, we want you to understand us. When you say, we all say. Tell us, we say the Church. The Church needs to be understood by all, to be better known, as from within in her true being, in her heart, in her mission, in her mystery... Seek to know the Church more perfectly, more intimately, then you will have greater indulgence for her human face, greater enthusiasm for her supernatural face... We will also tell you that one of our most acute, most frequent sufferings is to see all those who abandon the Church. How much criticism!..... It is strange to see Catholics who often have no other thoughts for the Church than thoughts of mistrust, criticism, and cause her difficulties and pains with an inexplicable casualness...

You have to love the Church. To love her as the Lord loved her, even to the point of giving his life for her... To love means to pray: Pray for the Church. To love means to be united: be united with the Church. To love means to work: Work for the good of the Church...

This triple instruction of the Pope, my dear daughters, let us receive it ardently. Could we not concretize our prayer by having, as for vocations, the day of prayer for the Church each month, with an offering of the Mass, of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament? And so that the whole house would be attentive, could we not put the Pope's flag in the choir on that day? Do you want us to agree this: the day allocated to each house

will be just two weeks after the day of prayer for vocations. In this way, we will form an invisible guard who will be, through Christ Mediator *semper ad interpellandum pro Ecclesia*⁴⁶. To prayer we could add the effort to silence any criticism that does not build, any word that divides, so that our hearts may be inflamed with enthusiasm for the supernatural face of the Church. On the eve of the 125th anniversary of our foundation, I think that O. V. Founding Mother, who wanted us to be so true daughters of the Church, is blessing these projects.

Let's talk about her now, about this beatification that we are calling for with all our hearts! There, it is impossible to know what to expect, there are quite a few contradictions. With Mother Erminia and Mother Rosa Dominica who follows this very closely, we first went to see Father Antonelli, Promoter of the Faith. He told us that if the Miracle Trial had been done in another diocese, it would have been over long ago. In the Vicariate of Rome, it is always a little eternal. It is certain that there was a real miracle. Finally, everything is optimistic about him.

The Postulator, Bishop Federici, is equally optimistic. But the Vicariate does too many things at once. The same Court is also responsible for marriage annulments. However, if we go to see Cardinal Traglia, if we insist, perhaps the beatification could be around October 1965. Healing has all the signs of a great miracle that should be recognized; it should be ensured that the number of witnesses is not increased indefinitely. Especially since all these great Doctors have no desire to file. They say they are never free at 5:00 p.m. when the Tribunal sits. They have to be found at home around 9:00 p. m., and that's not the Tribunal's practice! Finally, Bishop Federici was very, very good, very eager for everything to end well and quickly.

We're going to Cardinal Traglia's house. This is something else! When we stated our desire that the beatification should take place in 1965, the year of the General Chapter, he cried out: "It is absolutely impossible! The miracle trial often lasts four or five years. The Tribunal has a lot of

⁴⁶Constantly interceding for the Church.

work to do. You understand that the causes of annulment of marriages are more urgent than beatifications... Your Foundress is in heaven; she will not be taken out until the beatification... And then it is better to take time, because once beatified the Saints no longer perform miracles! So, let's give them time to do it... And he laughed with all his heart! Our own heart wasn't laughing, you can imagine that! The conclusion we drew? "It is better to put your support in God than in men." So, let us pray more, and may our faith obtain the great miracle of making the Vicariate faster!

Among the Cardinals, Bishops, Religious, especially those in charge of Religious, what an encouragement to hear them tell us that our Congregation was very especially in the current spirit of the Church. Alongside the nuns with papal enclosure, the Church today needs contemplatives in the world. This expression is completely new in the Church, Bishop Géraud told us. It removes the grilles that are no longer the necessary sign of contemplative life; but it keeps what remains indispensable, the traditional structures of time to devote to prayer with the Office, prayer, worship of the Blessed Sacrament.

All told us how much they deplored the tone and superficiality of the book Apostolic Promotion of Religious Life⁴⁷. They discussed it a lot with the author who replied that this book was addressed to the diocesan congregations of his diocese! To which it was replied that there was no reason to publish it in seven languages and distribute it worldwide! During the beginning of my stay in Rome, there was a formation session for Novice Mistresses with an exhibition of books. The one on the Promotion of the religious had been put into it, and the Fathers of the Sacred Congregation had it removed. This tells us well the thought of the Church. We must reform ourselves in fidelity to our Rules, said the T.R.P. General of the Carmelites. If the Church asks us to change our Rules, we will change them. In the meantime, we must stand firm because everything is being called into question and believe that for us,

⁴⁷Apostolic Formation of Religious Life.

while waiting for the decisions of the Council, the Rule is perfection; holiness is the Rule. And he added with a smile: *I told some Fathers of the Council that, since a lot of translations of Scripture are being changed, I was proposing an important change: it affects the Father. Instead of saying: Deliver us from evil, we should say: Deliver us from problems. Because the great evil is all these problems that are posed instead of trying not to complicate simple things, and to simplify complicated things.*

At the Sacred Congregation of Religious, we were also told that we will only say a Little Hour when the Decree that is being prepared is published. But we are waiting for the Decree to be published to discuss it.

At La Propaganda Fide, such a kind welcome was extended to H.E. Cardinal Agagianan, H.E. Bishop Sigismondi, the Courteous Father who is also attached to it, and Bishop Zamora, more particularly in charge of Latin America. He was pleased to learn of the many foundations made in Latin America over the past ten years. Education and teaching are the glory of the Holy Church, he told us. You have to hold on to it very tightly, nothing can replace it.

But all those in charge of the missionary Church were unanimous in saying: First of all Africa. Father Courtois added: In Africa, the sisters, the A.M.A., must be prayer teachers in order to form souls of prayer, souls united to God. Because, in Africa, people are carried away by a dizzying current that pushes them to establish very quickly an economic and social order that meets the legitimate aspirations of all. The construction of Africa is therefore threatened by contemporary materialism. It is up to women to bring a valuable spiritual life that allows Africa to maintain its balance. And he concluded as follows: The most urgent missionary tasks are to form religious sisters, to form catechists, to form souls of prayer who let themselves be assumed by Christ and assume souls in their footsteps.

There would still be many things to tell you, my dear daughters, about the visits made during this month and of which we said, with Mother

Erminia who always accompanied me, that each one brings a complement to the others. But I think the main thing is there. It gives us matter to pray, to meditate, and above all to tune our lives ever better to the desires of the Holy Church.

However, I cannot conclude without a more personal word, a very grateful thank you for so many Masses, prayers, offered for my father's soul; for so many letters that touched me more than I can express it to you. May everyone feel thanked here, unfortunately it is impossible for me to reach each one personally. You ask me for some details: in all simplicity I tell you that there is little to say because my father really fell asleep in the Lord and his awakening must have been beautiful. At 7 a.m. on March 20, he was as always, for the past few months, when his worn-out heart (90 years old) kept him at rest. At 7:30 a. m., without agony, the heart gave out. I think the day before he had begged Saint Joseph to come and get him; and he had to, as usual, say many rosaries on his last night. The Assumption of Heaven welcomed him well as he found his aunt, Sister Jeanne Marie⁴⁸, his two sisters, Mother Marie Alix⁴⁹ and Sister Marie Andrea⁵⁰, while the one on earth still keeps his daughter, his granddaughter and his two nieces.

You are waiting for the promised circular on our apostolate. Those who responded quickly to the first circular find the time long, but the mail still brings me almost every day the answers of the latecomers! So, wait a little longer, it will come. The thousand answers are far outdated! There are not many investigators who reach such a percentage, and this proves how much you want to be living stones of the great spiritual edifice of the Assumption.

⁴⁸Sister Jeanne Marie de l'Enfant Jésus - Amélie Pérouse (1834-1911) - Editor of Les Origines.

⁴⁹Mother Marie Alix de Jésus - Valentine Blachère (1865-1943) - Superior of Boulouris and San Dalmazzo.

⁵⁰Sister Marie Andrea of Bethlehem - Marie Blachère (1872-1918) - During the expulsions of the Congregation, sent to Lourdes and then to Sidmouth where she died.

There is also the book on the Chapters of O.V. Mother Foundress to finish. It is moving forward, but it is a work that requires time to insert the best of all the spiritual treasures of our Mothers. You always save me a lot of time when you attach a separate paper to your letters with the list of questions that require an answer. Some of them do it very faithfully, but they are in the minority!

May this new anniversary of our foundation, my dear daughters, be an opportunity for us to return fervently to our roots, to open our souls more fully to the holiness that God offers us... You know how much this desire unites me deeply to each of my daughters on whose prayers I count very strongly.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement, ra.

N.B. Three books of great value have recently been published. I recommend them to houses that don't have them:

1. Éditions du Chalet : La femme et la vie consacrée, J. Laplace, sj.

2. in the author's home: Catholic Catechesis of Marriage, M. Barbara. An indispensable book, it seems to me, and unique of its kind. It contains all the information of the last Popes and the doctors' answers to the questions that can be asked. He can help very much the Superiors, the teachers of the older students.

3. As If He Were Seeing The Invisible: Portrait Of The Apostle Of Today, J. Loew - Éditions du Cerf.

You can request these three books here at the Procurator's Office.

Several houses are subscribed to Catholic Information International. We must read this review with great discernment, and not accept everything. A serious warning was issued by Rome. There is a filial and a non-filial tone to talk about the Church, the Pope, the Church's directives. The letter from a Japanese bishop, which many of you have read, is not approved by the Sacred Congregation of Religious. It shows.

GENERAL CHAPTER 1965

In the light of *Ecclesiam Suam*⁵¹. Aggiornamento

God alone

Auteuil

24 September 1964

My dear daughters,

While our Bishops are gathered in Rome for the third session of the Second Vatican Council⁵², this circular announces another gathering.

The Council decided that the next General Chapter will open in Rome, Viale Romania, on April 26, 1965, on the feast of Our Lady of Good Council. It will be preceded, on the 23rd, 24th and 25th, by a preparatory Triduum.

A General Chapter, and the Provincial Chapters which are its immediate preparation, is always an important event in the life of a Congregation. The next Chapter is, especially so, since it must be part of the great aggiornamento of the whole Church in a state of Council.

An *aggiornamento* is first and foremost a questioning and research. Books, magazines, newspapers, taking advantage of the invitation to a great freedom of expression, launched their ideas on all the subjects dealt with by the Council, including that of religious life. A certain confusion is always the result of such a mixing: it is the clash of ideas. But from the clash of ideas comes light, we must wait patiently for the ideas to be clarified and for the light to come out under the action of the Holy Spirit.

⁵¹*Ecclesiam Suam*, Encyclical of Paul VI, 6 August 1964.

⁵²3rd session of the Second Vatican Council, from 15 September to 21 November 1964.

This expectation costs some temperaments, and a few letters have told me: ... Let us hurry to obey the Church! ... Can we say only a Little Hour since the Council has decided it?... What are we waiting for to reform this... that... etc. Others, faced with contradictory positions, asked themselves the question: What does the Church think? You know that I asked this question on behalf of all of you to our Pope Paul VI, telling him how much his daughters of the Assumption desire to know his thoughts and always find their light and joy in his words. And the Pope answered. He opened his soul to all his religious sons all over the world, and then to all men of good will. Let us thank God because it is a great grace for us to be able to prepare our *aggiornamento* by following the ways of the Church specified in ECCLESIAM SUAM and in the speech to Religious on May 23. Thanks also to having our Chapter in 1965, because the Church will already have given its positive, effective and fervent answer to many of the questions that people of our time are asking themselves and that we are asking ourselves with them.

On these questions, you are all called upon to reflect. Each in your place, you are responsible for the spiritual and apostolic vitality of the Congregation. Questionnaires on the problems of each Province and questions of general interest will be sent to you in due course to help you in this reflection, but I invite you today to prepare for the Chapter by penetrating into the heart of the mystery of the Church that ECCLESIAM SUAM has discovered in us.

Paul VI presents his Encyclical as a thought of love and veneration for the Church, the loving mother of all men. Let us make our own, with all our strength, the attitude of love, veneration and humble amazement of the Holy Father, in order to better appreciate the intimate richness of these admirable pages. Let us be of those little ones to whom the mystery will be revealed because we will let ourselves be enlightened, shaped and inspired by it. Let us let ourselves be carried away by the two movements described in the Encyclical, which will bring joy, dynamism and fruitfulness to our lives.

The first of these movements goes inwards. It is the recollection of a

consciousness that wants to go from depth to depth, to that God of whom Saint Augustine said: He is more intimate than what I have most intimate. This first movement will make us deepen the awareness that the Congregation must have of itself, of the spiritual treasure of which it is the heir and guardian, of the proper character that distinguishes it.

The first fruit of the deepened awareness that the Congregation must have of itself will be the renewed discovery of its vital relationship to Christ, the Christ of the Gospel and the Christ of the Church. The encounter between this Christ and us, will put in our souls a generous desire and an impatience for renewal. We must tirelessly seek to revitalize our traditions, our rules, our customs, so that all this meets the real expectations of today's souls. It will be the work of the Chapter to discern, among all those you have proposed, the adaptations in conformity with our vocation and our spirit. The January⁵³ circular laid some milestones that could help us discover our vital relationship with Christ. The responses received are valuable and will guide our work.

The second movement goes from this God more intimate than what we have most intimate towards the world. Our mission in the world, the Encyclical reminds us, ~~that it~~ is exercised in the midst of opposing influences. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy already spoke of the human and divine Church; visible but a sign of invisible realities; ardent in action and dedicated to contemplation; present in today's world and always on the way to another world.

Our mission in the world is to remain the leaven in the dough, the salt of the earth. Our Congregation will fill it to the extent that what is human in it will be subordinate to the divine, what is visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, and the reality present to the future reality towards which we are going.

Driven by an inner impulse of charity because it is more aware of her divine treasure, the Assumption in Chapter will seek out the orientations that are most in keeping with her spirit, her goal, those that will ensure,

⁵³Presumably, the one of 12/12/1963.

in the present circumstances, the best apostolic effectiveness.

For this search, we must penetrate the thought of Our Venerable Mother Foundress⁵⁴ through a thorough study of her life and writings. We will better understand then, what was her charism, her message, what the need of the Church she wanted to respond to. It is from there that we will be able to discern how this same need for the Church presents itself today and how we must respond to it.

Then our *aggiornamento* will not risk disfiguring the work of Our Mother Foundress and we will be faithful to the directives recently given by the Sacred Congregation of Religious, which I quote almost entirely:

... Each religious family has a specific vocation, a determined mission to fulfil, with particular means. To this end corresponds a structure and character of its own: spiritual, apostolic and juridical.

... Certainly the Holy Church is motherly concerned that each Institute is constantly renewing itself to respond to its own vocation and mission, both by returning to its roots and by adapting to new requirements. However, the Church does not intend to impose changes on structures of life that are part of the characteristic aspect of the Institute and that have received the approval, declared and definitive, of the Holy See... New organizations may respond to new ways of conceiving the practice of the evangelical counsels. (Session of priests in charge of Religious Women - Angers 1964)

The last sentence of this text deals with an issue that I think is important. In recent years, new ways of conceiving the practice of the Evangelical Councils have developed and been approved by the Church. We must rejoice in the apostolic effectiveness of so many Secular Institutes and the complementarity they bring to the apostolate of our Congregations. But we should not try to imitate them. Their function in the Church is not

⁵⁴ Mother Marie-Eugénie was proclaimed Venerable on June 25, 1961.

our function. They are secular, that is, of the world, living in the world, exercising their apostolate through the means of the world, its activities, its professional commitments. Through a total incarnation in the world, they work for the consecration of the profane world.

Religious life, on the contrary, is a rupture with the world to constitute a new society, that of children to the glory of the Father. It means in the world the transcendence of God, but of a God-Father who became close to us in Jesus Christ our Spouse. From below, in a spirituality of waiting alongside those who settle down as if this current world were definitive, religious life tends to realize, in a visible way, the community of love and adoration that will be that of heaven. By its existence, this community is a real sign of love revealed more effectively than any other. This is what the Church teaches us.

However, the publicity given to new forms of consecrated life, the praise that is rightfully given to them, may have led us to think that traditional religious life was outdated, because it no longer met the apostolic needs of our time. This is not the thought of the Church, and the Holy Father never ceases to affirm it. Let us say that our defects and errors are outdated, yes, but not religious life!

Doesn't our own experience prove it a little bit? Many of our houses, specifically missionary, live our religious life to the full. A bishop from Africa recently wrote, referring to those who think that our life, too full of prayer, diminishes our apostolic possibilities: You have a special place in this diocese of Daloa! We are well placed, at home, to know that prayer, adoration, sacrifice, bear more fruit than speeches, travels and all the agitation so common to so many others...

Does not our life of contemplation in fully lived action put us in a privileged situation of dialogue with men? Of this dialogue which has its origin in God and is modelled on divine pedagogy? The Pope tells us: We must always have present this ineffable and real relationship offered and established with us by God the Father, through the mediation of Christ in the Holy Spirit, in order to understand what dialogue we must seek to establish and promote with humanity. Our apostolate therefore depends on our dialogue with God. *Our Venerable Mother Foundress*

told us this when she invited us to live habitually in the presence of God, a bottomless and limitless ocean in which we are immersed⁵⁵.

This is also what Our Lord taught Mother Therese Emmanuel:

All you have to do is to adjust to make ME live. It is not about doing many things, or more things; it is about doing one thing only: it is about ME. It's not the value of the work that counts! So many people do the same things all the time! It is the inner intention of the one who makes them. If you adjust to Me, I will come out of you in the action, showing myself there and performing there, as I enter into you in prayer... I am for you like the ocean where we take water: the more we take it, the more we find it. The more you draw from Me, the more you find my inexhaustible richness. Be faithful to spreading me.

We are well in the two movements of the Encyclical: movement towards the Lord to adjust ourselves to Him, movement towards creatures to announce Him. These two movements are an invitation to effort. A serene, assured, confident, but continuous effort, which consists for each of us in an overcoming towards a deepening, a renewal of ourselves.

If we are faithful to this effort, our dialogue, let us say our apostolate, will have the qualities that Paul VI enumerates:

He will be aroused by a fervent and selfless love.

He will be without limits and without calculation.

He will offer himself in the respect of freedom.

He will be universal.

He will know how to wait for the hour when God will make him effective.

He will not postpone until tomorrow what he can do today, because every day he will start again without waiting for

⁵⁵Chapter Instructions, May 20, 1881, The Spirit of Prayer is to Look at God, Vol. IV.

his interlocutors.

He will listen to the voice and even more to the heart of man in order to understand him and, where he deserves to be understood, to go in his direction.

He will be held in an atmosphere of friendship and service.

It is the whole Encyclical, my dear daughters, that would have to be transposed and applied to our Congregation, in order to be the work plan for our next General Chapter. This General Chapter, which will be a Chapter of elections and affairs, our Constitutions tell us that it exercises extraordinary supreme authority over the Congregation. That is to say, its importance and the good we must expect from it, if we all work to prepare it and if we welcome it with faith.

Chapter of elections. Each must take her share of responsibility in the elections seriously. Those who vote at the Local Chapter must be fully aware that their delegates will have to debate the affairs of the Province; to seek ways in which each house can be more involved in the pastoral care of the country as a whole and of the dioceses; to choose the members of the General Chapter whose decisions will be so important.

The responsibility of the Provincial Chapters is even greater with regard to the choice of delegates. The more these delegates are religious united to God, sensitive to all the calls of the Church, having a sense of the universal, deeply loving the Congregation and living by its spirit, the more they will bring to the General Chapter a quality participation.

The responsibility of the General Chapter. All of the above allows you to measure it. Since its first act will be to elect a Superior General and her Council, allow me, after twelve years of experience, to give you some thoughts.

The development of the Congregation since the last Chapter of elections: 44 open houses and 500 religious sisters more, it seems to me, asks us to

intensify the decentralization effort begun with the creation of the Provinces⁵⁶.

It also asks us to entrust the government of the Congregation to religious who, by their supernatural and natural qualities and by their age, will be able to understand our time and be open to its immense spiritual needs, to adapt the apostolic task that is specific to us to the current circumstances and conditions (Paul VI), to combine prudence with boldness, firmness with goodness, the meaning of God in the sense of the real human being. To those who have faced them, these demands seem both necessary and daunting; they leave in the soul the regret of having been so little up to the task.

The other major task of the Chapter will be the final revision of the Directory and the drafting of the Customary. Six years ago, after having completed the revision of the Constitutions, the General Chapter began the revision of the Directory which, in our country, is quite involved in the Customary.

Since then, the Holy See has requested that the Customary be replaced by a collection of Chapter Rules. These Rules are of a mandatory nature because they complement the Constitutions. We must be careful not to multiply them because it often happens that the more laws there are, the less attention is paid to them, Paul VI just told us. They should only be established to meet proven needs. Any General Chapter may modify, add or delete them. The Sacred Congregation asks that the Chapter Rules adopted be applicable in all the Provinces, local adaptations being left to the decision of the Provincials and their Council.

⁵⁶Creation of Provinces: France (11 houses); Spain (8 houses); Italy (5 houses); England (6 houses); Central America (4 houses); South America (3 houses); Philippines (2 houses + Osaka / Japan) and Vice-Provinces attached to the Mother House: United States (2 houses). The houses of Val Notre-Dame (Belgium) and Copenhagen (Denmark) also form a Vice-Province attached to the Mother House as well as the house of studies in Leuven.

The Directory, on the other hand, is a collection of texts expressing the ideal, the purpose, the spirit of the Congregation, and the reasons that should inspire the practice of evangelical vows and virtues. These texts are mainly drawn from the writings of the Founders, but others can be added, presenting religious consecration and what must be our presence in the world in a very contemporary language.

From now on, you are invited to look for some beautiful texts and send them to us: may they be an expression of our spirit. To facilitate the filing process, please type them and put only one subject per sheet.

In our common effort of preparation, my dear daughters, let us not forget that the purpose of the Chapter is not to dwell on the past, but to prepare for the future. May our deficiencies not stop us, but may they be an opportunity for us to propose concrete and achievable measures, in accordance with our vocation and our spirit and in response to our best aspirations.

I conclude with a dialogue between Our Lord and Mother Therese Emmanuel on the Church. Its relevance will stimulate the generosity of your prayer and sacrifices for the Council, and you will also apply it to our next Chapter.

- *There's one thing I want from you for my church. You don't have enough of it.*
- *Oh Lord! What can I do for her?*
- *Give your life for her.*
- *How, Lord? The martyrdom is not there.*
- *Do you think it was only the last day of my life that I gave my life for my Church? Throughout my years, I have worked to build a Church without spots and wrinkles, to purify, sanctify and beautify it. I want you to give your life for her, in the way I have decreed and my grace is always asking you. It will be working with me to*

purify, sanctify and beautify it. Your renunciation of your own life, made under the inspiration of my Spirit, becomes my work in one of my members; and the life that extends there is mine for the salvation of the world. I give you this powerful reason to constantly sacrifice your own life: the Church and the souls you serve at this time. By diminishing and increasing yourself, you put my life in the body for the whole body, because my life is a universal thing and benefits all members, like the soul in the human body. I associate you with me for all this work and I will be with you. (April 11, 1878)⁵⁷

In the great hope that this work with the Lord gives us, I repeat my motherly affection.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement, ra.

N.B. The Superiors will kindly translate this circular for those who do not understand French, and make sure that each sister has a copy.

⁵⁷Mère Thérèse Emmanuel, 11 April 1878.

Residence in Rome. Approach to the Sacred Congregation of Religious: modification of the rule. Cause of Beatification.
Our spirituality: reflections and questions for the General Chapter

D.S.

Auteuil

21 November 1964

My dear daughters,

Your prayers accompanied me to Rome, and I can only thank you better by sharing with you the results and hopes of some of the steps that motivated this trip.

The first step was with the Sacred Congregation of Religious. Desiring that as we approach the General Chapter we all feel more united in our effort so that the **Institute as a whole may continue to grow and be built in love**, the Council, with the approval of all the Provincials, wished to obtain that all the Professed Perpetual Vows, choir and co-adjutors, be members of the Local Election Chapter.

You know that the Holy Church is very cautious and reserved in granting a modification of the Rule outside the General Chapter. The petition had to be examined by several committees and we have just received, to our great joy, an affirmative answer. We are very close to the unity of rank⁵⁸ that the Chapter, we hope, will proclaim.

Each house can therefore hold its local Chapter the days following the receipt of this circular, and send the results very quickly to the Provincial Superior. All sisters of perpetual vows have an active voice, and all sisters who will have been professed for ten years on April 26, 1965 have

⁵⁸The General Chapter of 1965 decided to abolish the distinction of rank among the sisters.

a passive voice. All the capitulants must receive the list of sisters of the community with 10 years of profession. The grouped houses - those concerned will find the indications at the end of this circular must have a list of the sisters of these grouped houses with 10 years of profession.

It is a grace to live in Rome in time for the Conciliar Session, to be able to meet our Bishops there, to talk with them about our religious life, our apostolate, our insertion in the pastoral care of the dioceses. Often, with Mother Erminia, we noticed how each new meeting brought a new clarification to the previous one and completed it.

The last few days were dedicated to the Cause of Our Venerable Mother Foundress. We have seen the Postulator, the Promoter of the Faith, the Civil Advocate, and the Miracle recipient whom we listen to with emotion, because his soul has received life as much as his body, through the intercession of Our Venerable Mother.

The miracle trial is closed at the Vicariate. The file was solemnly submitted on November 17 to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. It must be photocopied and then, as in any trial, the Instruction and Debate will begin. Two experts, doctors from the S.C. des Rites and whose names are unknown to anyone, not even the Postulator, will examine the trial documents. Two others will examine the exhibits of Sister Marie Kevin's trial. If the vote of these experts is favourable, the two dossiers will be given to 9 Doctors of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. It takes at least 6 votes in favour out of 9 for the miracle to be recognized. We will know the results in February or March at the earliest.

But the Civil Advocate told us that if miracles are recognized and if the 4th Session of the Council is held in September or October, we are very likely to have beatification from that date, because the Holy Father always places ceremonies during the Council Sessions.

You can see the importance of these two ifs! We don't know if miracles will be recognized, and we don't know the date of the 4th Session! We were waiting for it to be announced to us, a Council Father from Rome told us tonight, and then nothing, it's an enigma. For us, they are two enigmas! Faced with this, here is what the Council decides: the opening

date of the Chapter is maintained at 26 April. If in the meantime we learn that the 4th Session is taking place in September or October, we will probably postpone the Chapter to that date. For even if it is not God's desired time for beatification, it will be a grace to gather in Rome while the Fathers study the patterns that affect us so directly: religious life, Christian education, the Church and the world.

The dates planned for the Provincial Chapters do not have to be modified by the uncertainty about the date of the General Chapter. The sooner we know who the delegates to the General Chapter will be, the better it will be for the more direct preparation of the work.

And now, dear daughters, here are some thoughts and questions: they call for your answers. Please send them by January 10.

As we prepare the General Chapter, with the Holy Church, we ask ourselves the question: Assumption, what do you think of yourself?

To answer this question, we must specify the specific character to which it is absolutely necessary that we remain faithful, for it is for an Institute the guarantee of its fruitfulness and the constant abundance of celestial graces, as Paul VI has just said.

The Assumption was founded to rebuild the world of the 19th century on Christ through Christian teaching. *It was a world* which was strongly marked by naturalism.

1. Do you think that today's world needs to be rebuilt on Christ through Christian teaching?

yes no

The name of Assumption expresses our ideal: Following the example of the Blessed Virgin, to let ourselves be assumed, grasped by Christ. We are called to honor the mystery of the Incarnation of the sacred person of Jesus Christ, as well as the adherence of the Blessed Virgin to Jesus Christ. This is what dominates our views on education. (O.V.M.F.)

This requires a joyful release from the human being, in order to seek less the means to go to Christ, than to take Christ as the

means to go to all things: to bring everything up to the Father in Him, through a living and loving union in the Holy Spirit.

What O.V. Mother Foundress foresaw was, from the beginning, the contemplative life enlightened by religious studies and the principle of an intense life of faith, zeal and freedom of spirit.

May the divine realities be present to you, our mission in the Church is to make them visible in our life and teaching and to attract souls to them. (O.V.M.F.)

2. Does our ideal, as expressed in these texts borrowed from O.V. Mother Foundress and Mgr Gay, seem to you to be current?

yes no

If not, what do you propose? (answer in a few words)

To strive towards the ideal thus expressed, the Rule wants to be the support of a spirituality of **contemplation in action** by maintaining the balance between our two great functions:

The one that directly relates to God is Adoration. It is expressed through Oraison, the Divine Office, the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The one that concerns souls is education. It aims to Christianize intelligences and give character to children's souls through the philosophy that should guide them and the passion that should animate them. Passion for the truth of God and the coming of His Kingdom; philosophy which is the knowledge of all things in God, *omnia et in omnibus Christus*⁵⁹.

3. Do you find that our Rule maintains the balance between these two main functions?

yes no

If not, what is missing? (answer in a few words.)

⁵⁹Christ is all and in all. Eph 1, 23.

O.V.M. Founder wanted to frame this life of contemplation in action in monastic forms: For us, monastic forms must be like characteristic features of the Congregation. Our apostolate must therefore find a way to enter into these forms. It is better not to do all the good that is possible than to do a good that would harm our monastic life. (O.V.M.F.)

These characteristics are:

the Choral Office,
silence and a certain closure,
the Chapter of Coulpes,
the exercise of obedience,
the Benedicite and the procession of the Miserere,
austerity of life (crockery, tableware, penances in the refectory and afflictive penances),
the family lifestyle and the blessing of the Superior. A tenderly united family where life is fervent and seriously religious. (O.V.M.F.)

4. Does the monastic form of life seem to you to be compatible with our apostolate today?

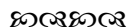
yes no

5. Among the characteristics mentioned, are there any that do not seem to you to be very conducive to maintaining our spirit? Which ones?

6. Do you recognize yourself through all that precedes the profile of the Assumption and the answer to the question: Assumption what do you say about yourself?

yes no

If not, what do you propose?



The Council spoke a lot about Poverty. The Holy Father wanted to set an example by offering his tiara for the poor.

7. Do you sense poverty?

yes no sometimes

Name one or two cases.

8. If your age or illness does not exempt you from it, are you aware of your duty to earn a living through your work?

yes no

And if you can no longer do a tiring job, what task are you most capable of doing?

9. Do you think your community lives in poverty?

yes no

10. In the exercise of the apostolate, do we believe that poverty is not being questioned in the boarding schools?

yes no

If yes, give 2 or 3 examples.

11. Is poverty kept in your community to:

housing? yes no

food? yes no

the care of objects? yes no

Books and magazines? yes no

Travelling? yes no

12. Does the testimony of material poverty in your community seem to you to be readable in the eyes of children, teachers? families?

yes no

13. Does the community seek together how to better fulfil its mission of working in souls to bring about a fundamental revolution... leading them to understand and taste evangelical poverty? (O.V.M.F.)

yes no rarely

14. Does the poverty and disinterest of the sisters, not attracting praise and gifts, help the children to understand that an atom of

grace weighs more before God than all the gold in the world?
(O.V.M.F.)

yes no

15. Doesn't a secret esteem for the good and honours of the world sometimes make you fall into compromises with the spirit of the world, of which O.V.M.F. said: By covering the worldly paganism of children with a layer of Christian practices, we make evil incurable?

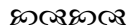
yes no

Give one or two examples.

16. Does the material poverty of your community seem to you to be a sign of a more total poverty, spiritual poverty, which knows from its heart that it has nothing, that it cannot do anything, but expects everything from God and complains about nothing?

yes no

17. Do you see any concrete action that your community could take to imitate the action of Paul VI?



*It was said at the Council that the **state of consecrated chastity** justifies the presence of the religious in the world; a presence that is no longer justified as in the past by a function, since the religious is mixed with the laity who perform this function like her.*

1. Does our consecrated chastity seem to you to be a witness?

Yes no

Our consecrated chastity makes us those of a single love, Paul VI said.

2. Does it seem to you that your community bears witness that this one love fills our hearts?

yes no

3. Is the blossoming and joy of your consecrated state a permanent denial of the accusations made against religious life that are said to be a refusal of love?

yes no

4. The pure hearts will see God. Consecrated chastity should make us seers of the invisible. Father Loew said: Cinema and prayer, television and adoration, cannot coexist in the same man, because to see the invisible one must preserve his gaze. Do you believe him completely?

yes no

5. Do you believe him fully to think about helping the children who are called upon to make choices that will make them see from the invisible, in front of the cinema, television, reading?

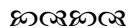
6. Is your apostolate, for your consecrated chastity:

support ? balance ? obstacle? stimulant?

7. Is the family climate of the community a support for your human balance?

yes no

If not, why not?



***Obedience** must be contemplated in Christ in order to be lived in union with Him, and in the prolongation of his own obedience... If for Jesus obedience is identical to love, we can define the obedience of Jesus to his Father as the continuous encounter of two personal loves (Bishop Huyghe).*

1. Does the obedience of your community seem to you to take its source in the obedience of Jesus to his Father?

a) towards the Superior? yes no

b) towards community members?

yes no

c) in the human relationships required by the apostolate?

yes no

d) in events, visits of God? yes no

2. Do complaints and criticisms naturalize obedience?

Often Rarely

3. Does your community bear witness to the spirit of freedom and love with which those who have chosen to be slaves of Christ (I Cor. 7:22) make their lives a continuous consent to the Father's will in the most diverse moments of the day?

yes no

4. In your position, do you always have sufficient initiative?

yes not always no

5. Is there a disagreement between obedience and your professional duty?

yes no

6. Are you concerned to give your Superior a clear and regular report of your duties? yes no

7. When you ask your Superior for advice, is it

To get her opinion?

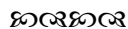
To know the will of God?

To relieve you of responsibility?

8. Are your relationships with your superiors easy?

If not, why not: independence, superficiality, lack of time and welcome on the part of your Superior?

9. Are there any rule points on which you would prefer to be free? Which ones?



*The ideal of **community life** is to be a fraternal life where we seek Christ together, where we find him together, where we share him together.*

1. Is your community life really fraternal?
yes not enough no
2. Are you aware that you participate in the development of the pastoral care of the house, being able to take initiatives and propose concrete solutions?
yes no
3. On the contrary, does it seem to you to be merely executing decisions from above, without concerted action?
yes no
4. Does it seem to you that your community is, through its charity, a sensitive sign of the Church? yes no
5. Is it open to the local, diocesan and parish Church? At its direction? Yes no
39. Is it open to teachers of the house, service assistants? yes no
40. Is she a missionary? Do we often talk about the spread of the Gospel in the world? yes no rarely
41. Are there causes of discomfort in your community? lack of fraternal charity, lack of organization, lack of time, etc., excessive work....
42. Do you help each other spontaneously, for the work of the house as well as for the apostolate?
yes no not enough
43. Do you feel personally responsible for the spiritual and charitable climate of your community?
yes no

True cooperation between the bishop and his priests requires in each other's hearts the spirit of faith that enlightens everything, the self-sacrifice that purifies everything, the life of prayer that enriches everything, the divine charity that vivifies everything (Mgr Guyot).

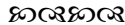
44. Apply this to community life.

Which of these features do you think you miss the most?

Which one seems to you to shine brightest?

45. Is life review regularly practiced in your community?

yes no rarely



You can complete this questionnaire with any questions, remarks, suggestions that you consider useful and constructive.

Further questions about your apostolate will be sent later.

This work will unite us in the expectation of the Lord.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement

P.S. Answering to this questionnaire is not mandatory, but I hope that many will want to participate in this preparatory work for the Chapter.

There is no need to copy the questions. You may not answer all of them, but number your answers.

Put your name and that of your House at the top of each sheet.

Delegates to the General Chapter 1965

Auteuil

2 February 1965

Dear Mothers and Daughters,

I would like to take this opportunity to join you all in this late mailing. How I would like to personally respond to so many letters received this month! All the more so are those who want even a word telling them what I think of their letters, their ideas, their answers to the questionnaire.

I understand them and I agree with them because trust requires trust and its written expression! In the absence of a personal answer that I cannot give, I answer this to all those who are waiting: your letters give me great joy because I feel the part that each one of you wants to play in the search for God's current thought about the Congregation. Even more ardently than a few months ago, I tell you this: Intensify your union with God. Ask the Holy Spirit a lot to come and renew the face of the earth and the Congregation. A poor soul, a humble heart, ask this for yourself and for all the members of the Congregation, then you will be sure to meet God's thought, in front of which you understand that mine is of no importance! Communicate what you have grasped of this thought of God in the answers to the questions that will still be asked of you, and wait patiently: the General Chapter will have grace to draw, from all partial lights, a great light that will grab all of us in its clarity and unity.

Here are the names of your delegates to the General Chapter:

Central America: MOTHER ROSA INES - MOTHER FERMINA GUADALUPE

North America: MOTHER THERESE MARGARETH - MOTHER M. DOROTHY

South America: MOTHER RITA - MOTHER M. SABINE

England: MOTHER FRANCOISE IRENE - MOTHER EMMANUAL CLARE

Belgium: MOTHER ANNE MADELEINE - MOTHER MYRIAM EUGENIE

Spain: MOTHER MARGARITA EMMANUEL - MOTHER M. BAPTISTA

Far East: MOTHER GUADALUPE M. - MOTHER CRISTINA AUGUSTA

France: MOTHER ETIENNE - MOTHER CLAIRE EMMANUEL

Italy: MOTHER ASTRID EUGENIE - MOTHER M. LAURENTIA - MOTHER ERNESTA M.

(substitute of MERE ERMINIA, as Provincial)

Out of 34 capitulants, 11 nationalities. We are well in our small place, in the image of the Church. And while only 15 are ex officio members, 19 are elected.

We will all be united in prayer with our Sisters of Malaga who are celebrating from 11 to 14, the centenary of the arrival of the Assumption in Spain. Let us be in thanksgiving because this generous country has contributed more than any other to the influence of the Assumption under all the heavens. Mother Josefa Ignacia leaves on the 6th for Malaga, then will go directly from Madrid to visit Brazil and Argentina, your prayers will accompany her.

Thank you to all those who wanted to assure me of their prayers on January 30. On the day of his 60th birthday, John XXIII wrote: an age when it is permissible to call oneself old and to feel old.

I am happy to be here and to think like him!

Well united with all of you in DOMINO.

Sr Marie Denyse r.a.

Circular to the Capitulants, for the purposes of the 1965 General Chapter 1965

Mother House of Religious of the Assumption
17, rue de l'Assomption, Paris XVIème

Auteuil

14 March 1965

My dear Mothers,

Now is the time to prepare together for our General Chapter. For more than a year, the questions asked of the entire Congregation have made us think. We have a better understanding of the importance, complexity and sometimes novelty of the solutions we will have to find.

The number and quality of the responses to the various questionnaires reflect in-depth work, but also a certain confusion among those who consider *aggiornamento* as a compromise between *old and new values*. Is it not rather a deepening of the evangelical requirements, according to the pastoral and missionary needs of our time?

It is now up to us to begin the direct preparation of the Chapter.

Let us undertake it in faith and humility. Above our capacities and disabilities, let us believe that there is for each of us the grace of the state, and let us hear the Lord tell us: *My grace is enough for you*. Let us have faith in this grace, ask for it fervently and each one of us must take our share of responsibility.

We are in a privileged situation since we are still seven months away from the opening of the Chapter. Let us take this opportunity to broaden our souls so that, in our work, we no longer thought of house, or province, but Congregation. We come back to the question: *Assumption, who do you think you are?*

To help us to better situate the Assumption and to better ensure the educational work that is ours, this circular would like to ask you some important questions:

1. HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD?
2. HOW DO YOU CONCEIVE THE ROLE OF THE NUN IN THE CHURCH?
3. HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF THE ASSUMPTION AMONG RELIGIOUS SISTERS?
4. WHAT NEEDS OF THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD DO YOU THINK TODAY'S ASSUMPTION MUST ADDRESS?

Please answer these questions briefly, and within eight days if possible, because we will leave from there to make the general plan of the Chapter.

- a) how you would like the preparation work to be done,
- b) c) the plan for the Chapter itself, as you see it,
- c) d) the questions that you think are the most important to deal with at the Chapter, in order of priority.

If you don't mind, let us meditate to guide our work, these words of Paul VI: *The secret of the renewal of the Church (of the Assumption) will be found not so much by a change in its laws, but by an attitude taken within the souls of obedience to Christ. (ECCLESIAM SUAM)*

May our effort of obedience allow us to always say: *The purity, the beauty of the Church (of the Assumption) is the whole purpose of our effort. (ECCLESIAM SUAM)*

Sr Marie Denyse ra

P.S. The General Council proposes that secrecy be kept over the circulars and documents sent to the Capitulants in preparation for the Chapter. Other circulars will keep the Congregation informed of the work.

Preparation of the General Chapter: Building the house, our apostolate

God alone

Auteuil

March 1965⁶⁰

My dear daughters,

The last circular shook those who had not shown themselves to be alive enough! The number of responses to the December questionnaire has not yet reached all members of the Congregation, but it is approaching it. In addition, the quality of the responses reflects a real awareness of its responsibility on the part of many.

Let us continue our work and reflect on what is an integral part of our religious life: our apostolate and its specific form. I was thinking about it when I saw what the Bishop said to the priest when he conferred on him the sacrament of the Order:

By your word and by your example you will build the House, that is, the Family of God.

Building the House. Is this not our apostolic task? Each of our communities, from the largest to the smallest, must build the House, gather the Family of God.

And in each of our communities, each sister must feel responsible for the work of building the House. Yes, while not forgetting that, in terms of faith, she is a useless servant, each sister must, day after day, continue her effort to acquire ever more capacity to better carry out her own task.

⁶⁰Antes del Capítulo General en Roma: 15 de octubre - 16 de diciembre de 1965.

However, a House must be adapted to a time and an environment. To fulfill each one of us better and better, we must know our time and love it; we must know the environment in which we work and love it.

The living environments in which the Assumption works are very diverse according to whether they are traditionally Christian, dechristianized or pagan environments.

Our works are also very diverse with university and secondary boarding schools; teacher training and technical schools; dispensaries and homes.

Each community must therefore strive to know the environment in which it must be incarnated, in order to build a house that meets the spiritual and human needs of this environment. It must do so in close collaboration with the parish and the diocese. Let us recognize that too often we have not been open enough to the parish and the diocese. This cut us off from the overall pastoral care.

Already Pius XII, concerning pastoral adaptation, said: the Church listens to her time and the faithful must listen to the Church in order to be straightforwardly oriented... and to be able to cast an identical gaze on the world to that of Christ.

Today the Church in Council is listening to its time more carefully than ever before. She is looking for ways to adapt to the major currents that flow through her while remaining fully faithful to Christ.

The discussions around Figure XIII⁶¹ allowed us to measure a little the complexity of the task and the vigour of the clashes: if someone exposes his ideas and defends them, it is because he thinks they are right. From all these divergent ideas, the Holy Spirit, sent by Christ to lead his Church towards the whole Truth, will bring forth this profound, universal Truth, in conformity with the living Tradition. Then the partial truths, the personal perspectives, will be unified around the great mystery of God's

⁶¹Working document prepared during the 4th and last session of the Second Vatican Council. It is at the origin of the Pastoral Constitution: The Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), December 7, 1965.

love for the world he wants to save. Let us not deviate from this light of faith by waiting for the decisions of the Church and also for the decisions of the Congregation.

A French Cardinal recently wrote: *Let us not be among those who, instead of asking the Church to guide their action, seem to expect only the consecration of their own ideas from her.* And he added: *It is a temptation against which we all have to defend ourselves so strong is our natural inclination to rely only on our own judgments. If we have succumbed to temptation in the past, let us take advantage of Lent to convert!* Let us not let ourselves be confused, discouraged by the oppositions. If they come from the faithful who listen to the Church, let us not try to defeat them, but to convince them. Convince, that is to say: win together, by seeking together a more precise, purer, better expressed truth.

If the oppositions come from those who are not faithful to the Church, who do not listen to her, let us not worry because the Lord has warned us: If you were of the world, the world would love its good, but because you are not of the world, since my choice has taken you from the world, the world hates you.

Saint Paul *also speaks to us of the time when men will no longer tolerate the holy doctrine; they will give themselves many masters, turn away the ear of the Truth... they will cling to fables more likely to raise vain problems than to serve God's purpose.* And he tells us what to do: *Hang in there. Don't give anything to partisanship. Walk rooted in Jesus the Lord, built up in Him.* And the so beautiful passage to the Corinthians on the building of God that we are and whose foundation can only be Jesus Christ. *If, on this basis, one builds with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, the work of each one will become manifest... For the fire will test its quality.*

We are now back to the House we must build. All of the above is a little bit like my answer to some of your letters where discouragement, distress and even sometimes a decrease in love and trust towards the Congregation were felt. Since I cannot answer all the letters, I would like to direct those who doubt to these Scripture texts and to many others,

especially this one from the Lord himself: *Peter, I prayed that your faith would not fail... Confirm your brothers in the faith.*

These words are still relevant because Peter is still there, alive, active, unshakeable. He speaks to us through the speeches and homilies of Paul VI, and his word *confirms us in faith*. To what extent does this word reach all our homes? I strongly recommend subscribing to the French edition of the ***Osservatore Romano***. I don't know if there is also an edition in English, Spanish or Portuguese. The headquarters of the French editions are:

6, rue Magellan, Paris 8ème (36 fr)

3, avenue de la Bergère, Brussels (350 F.B.)

5,090 Papineau Avenue, Montreal (\$8)

Let's go back to the House. Today's Assumption has the mission to build 84 Houses that were founded on Christ. Have you thought about it? The 84th part of the Congregation is entrusted to you. You will not be asked to take into account the other 83 parties, but yours. Are you building? How? With what?

Works and living environments being very diverse, can we talk about a common animation among all, the builders? Can we talk about similarities among our 84 Houses?

What must animate us all is faith in our mission as religious teachers and educators. The Fathers of the Council have just affirmed: This is one of the most sacred tasks of our time. It is an authentic apostolate necessary for our time. They explained to us that the Church, as a visible society, needs, like any society, to have its institutions visible, because our religion is not disembodied. It is a mistake, they said, to oppose Christian institutions, addressing Christians, and missionary Church addressing non-Christians.

Strengthened by the mission received from the Church more than a century ago, and received again today when everything is being rethought and questioned, let us not go astray by focusing our apostolic research on new works. Let us instead seek and find this new language

that will allow our 84 Houses to make Christ and the Church signs intelligible in our time. Let us seek to present an incarnate Church in the modern world. Not triumphalist, but humbly confident that she can do everything in Him who strengthens her.

Driven by this deep faith in our mission, let us be aware of a very important fact: we are living in a time of change, which makes it difficult to find stable solutions. Every year, it is necessary to create, renovate and adapt. Listen to what one educational expert has to say:

The future for us is the unknown. But is the future so much more precise for an officer, for a chemist, for a spinning mill manager, for a farmer?... To run a school today, the essential quality is neither the knowledge of the decrees and circulars of the National Education, nor financial competence, nor a solid health, nor an ability to adapt to the most diverse tasks, nor the gift of improvisation, although all these qualities are useful. The essential quality is the ability to remain in the face of unresolved problems, the solution to which is neither clear nor immediate. If you cannot live peacefully in imperfect structures, in methods that are transformed and sought from day to day; if, in order to be able to sleep, you must immediately bring a solution to the questions that arise to you, tell your Superiors that you are not suited for the position you hold. (R.P. Sinclair)

That, my dear daughters, is our time with which we so much want to be in solidarity. Let's face it, this fluent situation requires trial and error, research. Is this not a way of sharing the insecurity and poverty of our brothers and sisters? Should we be discouraged? The same Father continues:

Our mission is more beautiful than ever. The educator, the teacher, is no longer the executor of what his predecessors thought for him. He must become a researcher, because the world expects him to be a creator.

In our 84 Houses, we are called to an awareness of our responsibility, our duty to seek and create. Will this isolate our Houses from each other and

remove any similarities?

It seems to me that it will not. And I would like to propose a plan on which, as a community, you could work during the Easter holidays. Each community will then send its work. It would be a question of developing the plan and looking for ways, in concrete terms, to make each of our Houses:

- ✓ a House of Faith
- ✓ an evangelical house
- ✓ a missionary house

1. HOUSE OF FAITH

- a) priority given to God
 - religious and community exercises
 - liturgical life
 - catechism
- b) selfless self-giving
 - to believe without seeing
 - other one who sows, other one who reaps...

2. EVANGELICAL HOUSE

- a) poverty
 - sharing
 - availability of the heart
- (b) charity
 - open to all
 - respect for all
 - joy
- (c) unity
 - around Christ present in authority
 - among all educators through the review of life

with the Bishop, the priests, the parish

3. MISSION HOUSE

(a) in its design

bring Christians together

attract non-Christians

(b) in its teaching

orientation in the direction of missionary conquest

to rebuild everything on Christ

(c) in its outreach

send on a mission to suit everyone's needs

The more concrete this work remains, the more profitable it will be. A school pastoral care should be developed that can enlighten and train three lay people: teachers - parents - students.

It is the moment to create, to invent, in this concern for realism that allows tradition to become creative and evolution to remain in line with tradition. In the midst of all the encounters, all the research, all the adaptations, the essential thing is to be first and foremost, today as in 1839, the one who only wants to be to Christ. We will not bring the salvation of Jesus Christ to today's world if we are not first of all in Christ.

As you read this, my dear daughters, do not judge me too quickly as disconnected to real life and cut off from your worries. While each house lives its own, it seems to me that I live a little all yours at the same time; my heart and soul receive a deep echo of your worries. With you, I know how important it is to be attentive to the world, to the social realities that extinguish faith in souls. But our apostolic efficiency does not come from our analysis of the world. It is an initiative of God. Apart from that, our apostolate is only activism. It is the love of Christ alone that will develop in our hearts the love without which no apostolate is possible.

The more we surrender ourselves to God's love, the more we are adapted. We sometimes seem knotted, tense, because we seek in ourselves the generosity of our apostolate. However, it can only come

from the source, from our intimacy with Jesus Christ. The love of the Lord, if we allow it to overflow in us, rests and strengthens. In labore requies⁶². A priest pointed out the little "in" to us. It is not after work, it is during work that we find rest, if we are poor enough to expect it from God.

May it be our prayer for each other on the eve of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary who believed in the action of the Almighty.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement

P.S. In addition to the work proposed, each community can add a list of cases, obstacles encountered, which it would like either to be clarified in the next circular or to be resolved at the General Chapter.

If all the Houses do not yet have in their hands the Acts of the Council, I would like to point out:

- Éditions du Centurion: The Church, Ecumenism, Eastern Churches.
- Aux Éditions du Cerf: Les Actes du Conseil.

These two books provide not only the full text of the Constitutions voted at the Council, but also illuminating introductions that help to better understand the texts.

⁶²Dans le labeur, le repos.

Preparation of the General Chapter

Auteuil

30 April 1965

To the capitulants

My dear Mothers,

I do not write without emotion the date of April 30 at the beginning of this letter. I begin it at the very moment when our first two Mothers were meeting, *"while the bells of Paris announced the opening of the month of Mary. "Our Origins say: "... souls aspired to ascend like Mary from the desert of this world, supported only by the Beloved. »*

A few days later, Our Venerable Mother Foundress wrote *"may the Assumption be a Congregation of regularity, fervour and love, whose fidelity is never to be denied. "And she added: "Let us give our prayers, let us give our will, let us sacrifice our small resistances, our small attachments, and the Divine Bridegroom will do the rest. »*

Isn't it a beautiful program as we prepare to look for where we stand, and what should our fidelity be?

Thank you for your answers to the first circular. They were examined and classified by the Mothers of the Council.

This second circular asks you important questions. You can answer either personally or by Province, depending on the possibilities you have or not to meet to work.

1. What do you think of the following plan for the Chapter?

Do you have another one to propose?

a) Triduum of prayer, and study of the thought of O.V.M. Foundress. As we did at the 1959 Chapter, we could reread together the most characteristic pages of the Origins.

b) Statement of charges by the Superior General and the Councillors, and research on what the Central Government should be.

- c) Election of the Superior General.
 - d) Election of the General Councillors. We'll have time to enlighten ourselves, to consult each other. Would you like a list of names to be proposed?
 - e) Appointment by the New General Council of the Provincials to replace those who have completed their term of office. This would allow the new Provincials to be called to the Chapter. They would not have the right to vote, but the exercise of their office afterwards would be more in line with the exchanges and orientations given.
 - f) Work of the Chapter (details will be proposed after having received the answers to these questions).
2. Adaptation of the Central Government to the development of the Congregation.

What do you propose?

- a) A Visitor of the whole Institute, chosen among the General Councillors?
- b) Several Visitors, one for example in charge of Europe, the other of Asia and Africa, the other of America?

The first proposal further safeguards unity: the entire Central Government will take a universal, not partial, view of the problems involved.

The appointment of one or more Visitators does not eliminate the visits of the Superior General, but it allows these visits to be less long and less frequent. This will encourage regular meetings of the Provincials and Superiors at the Mother House.

3. Would you like a twinning between countries or Christian houses, and countries or Mission houses?

How would you conceive it?

4. Since our Constitutions were revised at the last Chapter, it seems reasonable to keep them until the Holy Church completes the revision of Canon Law. However, would you like to review

them, chapter by chapter, and note the corrections you suggest?

5. Do the same for the Executive Board. Indicate pages or paragraphs or terms that you think you should delete in the New Directory. Instead, propose new texts to be included.

Try, my dearest Mothers, to do this work without delay. The importance of the Chapter is worth the time devoted to its preparation, isn't it? Even if it means retiring for a few days away. If you are doing a collective work, please let those who will participate in it sign it.

The Provincials will judge whether part or all of this circular can be communicated to the Houses. They will reproduce what they believe is most appropriate to unite all the Sisters in the prayer and reflection proposed.

The Sacred Congregation has granted us a General Indult so that the mandates of the Superiors may be extended until the end of the Chapter. I therefore urge the Provincials to make only those changes in the Houses that are considered truly necessary. The less there will be, the better.

An excellent breviary in French will be published in a few weeks. Perhaps translations into other languages are already made and approved? If so, the Provincials are free to organize a REFERENDUM in the houses of their Province.

- keep the Latin,

- take the language of the country,

and send the result to the Mother House. The fundamental reform of the breviary will not be completed for five or ten years. It is prudent to examine the translations very closely. For French, the one proposed by Desclée would not be suitable, while Mame's is very good.

With great joy, we are expecting Mother Josefa Ignacia around May 15. And around June 15th, I will make a quick trip to Togo, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta.

In great union of prayer, my dear Mothers, you know me all yours in Our Lord.

Mère Marie Denyse, Superior General

To the Provincials

Auteuil

4 June 1965

My dearest Mothers,

Last Thursday, the Vicariate of Rome handed over to the S.C. of the Rites the documents of the trial concerning the miracle attributed to O.V. Mother Foundress. This ceremony was supposed to take place in November 1964, but you learned from the newspapers about the changes in the Vicariate of the Rites, and all the work was suspended.

- 1) The S.C. of Rites will therefore open the Trial these days: two famous and esteemed Doctors are not in favour, others are convinced of the miracle. When all have submitted and voted, it is the Doctors of the S.C. of the Rites who will have to decide. Do you want to ask the Houses of your Province without delay to pray a lot? In these times of Pentecost let us call the Spirit of Truth so that the judgments made may be according to God.
- 2) I will send to all the houses the text of a very beautiful conference on Poverty. From this text, and almost page by page, I would like each community to look at what points
 - (a) the house
 - b) the Congregation could place itself more at the service of the various forms of poverty we encounter, accepting in advance all the consequences of this Council's call to poverty.
- 3) It would be enlightening to have the sisters of each house vote for or against the choir robes⁶³. The question arises because the houses in tropical countries, the missionary houses that have adopted the white habit, no longer wear coats. The vote of all the Sisters will help in the decision to be made.

⁶³ the white choir robes worn by the sisters during the office

I conclude, my dearest Mothers, by recommending the next trip to Africa to your prayers.

Departure on the 16th for NYAMEY - There, a quick trip to AGADES, at the gates of the desert, because we would very much like to prepare for the opening of a school - it would be the first, for the girls of the Tuaregs

-

On the 24th I will be in LOME where, until July 7th, you can reach me quickly if necessary. Then Ivory Coast from 7 to 17: the communities will gather in Daloa. And back to Paris on the 22nd after 4 days in Upper Volta. The Bishop of our future foundation, Bishop DURRIEU, who has been so good to us, has just died. Please pray for him and his diocese.

United with you in Domino.

Sr Marie Denyse ra

P.S. To all those who wish to participate in the Council's research on poverty, I strongly recommend the book: CONSOLEZ MON PEUPLE by Paul Gauthier, Ed du Cerf, price 12.00 / 9.00.

All the interventions of the Fathers of the Council concerning the Church of the Poor are grouped and commented on. This book can be obtained from the Prosecutor's Office.

Responses can only be sent at the end of July. They will serve as a basis for the work of the General Chapter.

Foundations in Niger

Tchirozérine
21 June 1965

D.S.

Dear Mothers and Daughters,

I'm thinking of you here. I begin this letter next to what was once Father Ploussard's chapel tent. Three large piles mark the location. Then, three meters away, a stone marks the place where the Father was found dead. It is a Muslim tombstone that the Tuaregs⁶⁴ wanted to leave, although it was transported to Niamey. Everything is very meaningful to the soul; we feel that a great love has marked this place and we can only ask for the grace to love so much.

But I pick up the news where I left off on Thursday nights. You probably won't have had the letter⁶⁵ until Monday or Tuesday because there was no plane before Saturday. So, Thursday night (17), contact with the first tornado. Wind twisting trees, water invading everything. Thunder, etc... It's both beautiful and frightening; it lasted part of the night.

Friday morning (18), visit of Akoli, the Tuareg who had written to me. Young, open, delicate, called to truly serve his race. He has just been assigned to the African Tourism Department and must travel a lot. His centre is therefore Niamey, and he brings his young wife and son who was at the school in Tchirozérine. It's a shame for Tchirozérine, but he will have more influence in his new position. He hopes to have to come to Paris, and you think if I invited him to come to us. He would know more than anyone to make us love the Tuaregs.

⁶⁴The Tuareg (singular, a Targui) or in its Frenchized form, the Tuaregs, singularly a Tuareg.

⁶⁵16 or 17 June 1965

Then the Bishop took me to the Tuareg Minister's house. This new Ministry was recently created as a result of unfortunate influences that have done great harm to the Tuaregs. In 1959, when we talked about Niger's independence, the French soldiers, very close friends of the Tuaregs, pushed the Chiefs to write to General de Gaulle saying that they wanted to remain French, being of white race. General de Gaulle sent this letter to President Diouri, who was dissatisfied and had many of the best Tuaregs exiled, arrested and so on. In 1960, with the proclamation of independence, French soldiers once again pushed the Tuaregs to ask that a territory be given to their race, and form their Empire. The letter was addressed to the President of Niger, who, dissatisfied, repeated many sentences. Father Danet (or Dannel) seemed to regret that the Tuaregs did not have their own country, but that is not at all the opinion of the Monsignor or the Fathers who are here. All this has left many wounds in the hearts. A Ministry for the Tuaregs has been created to invite them to take direct action in the development of the whole of Niger. The Ministry was so grateful for what we were preparing to do for the Tuaregs.

On Friday afternoon, a quick visit to the Niger Museum, recently completed by the city of Niamey. There is the costume pavilion, the various crafts, the fauna, the flora, from lions and giraffes, to the countless hummingbirds of all colours. Their kingdom is the desert and as I write to you, sitting on the sand, I am surrounded by a multitude of these charming little red, green, yellow, blue and grey birds, who sing to perfection. We could look at them and listen to them for hours without getting tired.

Saturday morning (19), the departure was announced for 5:30 am in order to avoid the sand wind, still possible at that time. The Bishop came to say Mass with the Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles at 4:30 a. m. He had with him a young Gerard who will enter the Major Seminary in September. He is the only seminarian in Niger. You have to pray a lot for him. He has been our travelling companion for the past three days.

Even with the President's plane, surprises are possible. We were on board when we were told: The batteries are dead. Fortunately another aircraft

was on the runway, and with an hour's delay we took the flight. Barely half an hour and we flew over the desert, low enough to see everything, including caravans and herds. I'm not trying to describe. The desert as far as the eye can see, it's very beautiful. After three hours of flight, here we are in Agadez where the only three Fathers of this immense region were waiting for the Monsignor. The Commander of the Circle (this corresponds to a deputy) was also there. And the two Little Sisters of Jesus of Agadez. The photos of Father Dannet (or Danet) have captured the whole city with the large triangular Mosque that dominates the whole.

Monsignor wanted to give me the first honour of Tchirozérine, and as the presidential plane left Agades for Niamey around 4 a.m., it was necessary to leave without delay. Notified by the President, the Commander of the Circle sent his truck and a driver to follow us and rescue us in the event of a breakdown - only 50 km between Agades and Tchirozérine - and it takes two hours to cover them. You can't imagine what it's like: rocks, wadi, sand, the truck climbing everything, going down, going up with these jumps!

Tchirozérine is a green valley after the desert. A 30 to 40 m well has been dug by the Father, an ox pulls water into a container made of goat skins. We first went to the place where Father Ploussard fell, then to a hut to have tea in the Tuareg style. It's a rite: it's a three-step process. The glass circulates between all of them. We had to go fast to catch Monsignor's plane. The two trips at noon were my first time in the sun.

Halfway back, Father Monnet, with whom I was, said: I have no more petrol. Both trucks stop. Thank God, the rescue truck had a small reserve. We're going up, we can't start. Everybody get down and push forward, backwards, there's nothing to do. The Bishop had to find his plane, so Father Monnet insisted that we let him alone try to see what was there, and that we get in the other truck. It was really painful to leave him like that in the middle of the desert. I don't know what the others did, but I asked Our Mother Foundress and Father Ploussard to get him out of there, and $\frac{3}{4}$ an hour later he joined us. After the farewells to

the Bishop, I was taken to the Little Sisters of Jesus who are delicious in their hospitality, simplicity and charity.

I did not expect such a beautiful day the next day (Sunday 20): after Mass at the Mission church, the Father (it is Sister Paule Madeleine's cousin, the world is small!) told me that, at the Bishop's request, we will go in the morning to visit the Brotherhood of the Little Nomadic Sisters with the Tuaregs, in Kerboubou, 30 km from the desert. We had to look for them a little bit, asking them at the camps we were meeting. We found them around 10 a. m... Joy to see each other again and to meet the little sister⁶⁶ Martine, a friend of Sister Marie Danielle. We sat in their tent; where we wrote the letter to Sister Marie Danielle with Bishop Maury, said little sister Martine. At 11 a. m. Mass, in the chapel tent where they guard the Blessed Sacrament. Such a simple and touching homily from Father Monnet, on the love of God and our brothers; then meal in the tent, return to Agadez for two hours of rest, and departure again for Azel, 20 km away, the 3rd Fraternity of the Little Sisters. They live there, in the middle of a sedentary camp; there are only two of them. Evening Mass in their chapel tent. You have to come to the desert to have three masses during the day. We were coming out of it when a sand storm started. In the middle of the desert, what a sight! We see the cloud of sand advancing like a thick wall; the goats, the donkeys running away, the wind blowing violently. And when the cloud is there, all you have to do is stretch your back and close your eyes. We wanted rain but it fell elsewhere, towards Tchirozérine. The truck is full of Tuaregs. Because of the tornado, we almost sank several times into the sand and wadis full of water. I envy those who one day will come to worship the Lord in Chirozerina. I already have many friends there. With the little boys in the school we can speak French, with the women we speak by signs; they come to sit next to you, we look at each other, we smile at each other.

The Father is constantly called by one or the other. He radiates the love of all. He's only been in Africa for three years. He was in France on the

⁶⁶ Congregation of the Little Sisters of Jesus

Belfort side, taking care of a workers' mission. When he learned of the death of Father Ploussard and no one to replace him, he asked to leave. Looks like he's been living there all his life. In the evening, we go to bed under the stars.

Agadès, Tuesday morning (22). It took me all day yesterday to write this letter because the visits often interrupted me. We were supposed to sleep on the sand, but it was too wet because of the tornado the day before, so we took out the beds of the school monitors who had gone on vacation. Wonderful night under the starry sky, in the great silence of the desert. At dawn, I went to say Lauds on the little hill where Father Dannel had said that Father Ploussard was coming to say Compline. It is there, built on the rock, that the Father would like our convent to be. The day before I had said Third: He gave me shelter in his hut... He hid me in the secret of his tent... and this morning, 4 Tuaregs were praying at the same time as me, facing the rising sun: they could have prayed with all the Psalms of Lauds. Each word takes on a new meaning in this desert so close to that of the Hebrews. You had to leave. Repeating the journey for the 4th time, I started to orient myself a little. There is hardly any trace of a track. We go up in the rocks, we go down, sometimes we meet caravans, we make great signs of friendship, it's very beautiful.

This afternoon, meeting with Father Monnet and Father d'Agadès to clarify a little bit about future projects.

Tomorrow (Wednesday 23rd) as planned, return by plane to Niamey where a very good word from the Bishop tells me that at the distribution of the Canadian College Awards, the President of Niger spoke about the Assumption and the hope he placed in our coming. It was said in front of a crowd of ministers and personalities, and he is a Muslim. The Bishop also told me that he would wait for me at the airport so that, despite the late hour, we could go to the President's house to find out how everything went. And Thursday (24) morning, it's flight to Lomé.

I feel your prayers very strongly. It seems to me that the Assumption is made for Chirozerina and that Chirozerina is made for the Assumption. And three months ago, we were ignoring each other. We will really be there among the poorest and most abandoned of God's children, and we

will have much to receive from them because the image of God is very much alive through their natural qualities of welcome, modesty, nobility, self-control. They are in God's hands, waiting for everything from Him, receiving everything from Him. They are fundamentally opposed to atheistic communism because of its negation of God. It is faith in Christ that must be asked for them.

Tomorrow morning the fathers want to take me to the Commander of the Circle; this will be the last official visit to Niger. I hope that a Father from Niamey, who takes care of the photos, can get me some of them. In Niamey you can't find any.

June 23, 6:00 p. m. I had to have a little adventure. This morning, at noon, departure by the small regular Agadès-Niamey plane which makes three stops. We had barely gone down to the last one, Tahoua, when the order was given to us to quickly go up to take off before the tornado. But it arrives in a few seconds, and we were all barely on the plane when the flood started. We couldn't even get down and go to the small hangar, it was so strong. It lasted a good hour, and after that it was impossible to leave because the track, which was not paved, had been changed into a lake. A family from the country took me to the Mission where there is a Redemptorist Father and a Brother. Welcome, as always in mission, to the most fraternal. And the Father laughed when he said: this is a move of Providence, and he showed me his school for girls that he was building, with a small convent for four or five sisters. He doesn't have the sisters, but he thinks God will send them, and he already sees us there. I'll spend the night here. The Commander of our plane was supposed to fly tomorrow at 6 a.m. on the Niamey-Lomé flight.

June 24th at noon. What a deal! This morning at 9 am, the Commander had it said that the plane was going to leave for Niamey, then after half an hour of stopover, left for Lomé. I had left my big suitcase with the Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles so as not to drag it into the desert. All we had to do was wait and let Providence lead us. In Niamey, the Monsignor was waiting for me in the President's car, impossible to leave without going to his house. The Commander of the plane tells me that to

save time, we leave in half an hour for Cotonou from where the passengers will be driven to Lomé by car.

We decide with the Bishop to leave quickly for the President and try to return in time. Then the Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles arrive with my famous suitcase! We instruct them to prevent the plane from leaving too quickly.

Reception, most kind of the President. He tells me that he will come to Auteuil on his next trip to France. If he ever comes during my absence, receive him very well, ask him to tell you about Niger. He is a great Muslim believer. I told him not to come until the end of July. After 10 minutes of conversation, race to the airport where the plane's engines were already running, but as we knew I was at the President's house, everyone rushed to my suitcase without checking in or looking at my ticket, so I was allowed to board. The Commander and the crew applauded as I boarded the plane and we are flying to Cotonou.

I am in thanksgiving because I feel carried by your prayers and led with so much love by the Lord. I would like to tell you so much about Niger; but it will be for the return. The Redemptorist Fathers are the only missionaries, in addition to two or three *Fidei donum* priests. They are the religious as we have always appreciated them so much at the Assumption. How they understand our life! Niger is the least supported country: only 9% of children attend school. This is because it is said, wrongly explained to me, that it is not worth going to the Muslims. Now there is a whole Muslim youth seeking, and no one is helping them to meet Christ.

The Father of Taouha (where I just spent the night) gave me a very interesting book on Air and the Tuaregs. I will come with a lot of documents; and I think the Fathers will make us have more. It is a great country that we will know and love.

Thursday evening (June 24). That's it, it's Lomé. The Airline made us drive; but Mother Anne Bernard and Mother Marie Sainte Anne, badly informed, had left on their side but we missed them: so they were not there when I arrived at 6 am. The poor people! Mother Anne Bernard quickly went back to Noépé where I am going tomorrow, after mass.

I will stop this long letter, which you will not read without difficulty. May it bring you everything that fills my soul with a desire for true poverty to be more certain of imitating the Lord Jesus and being the simple Christ among our brothers and sisters, feeling responsible for all of us who have known how much the Lord has loved us.

In Him, I remain united with you.

Sœur Marie Denyse

What were the Capitulants doing in Rome?

Auteuil

28 September 1965⁶⁷

In eight days, Mother Josefa Ignacia and I will arrive in Rome. The Mother Councillors, Provincials and Delegates will follow us closely, and on October 13 all the Capitulants will be at their posts.

For the past month, the work of preparing for the Chapter has been intensive. You are all present because this work is based on the surveys and questionnaires to which you have replied, and on the desiderata.

Nine main schemas, prepared by the Capitulants, summarize both the responses to the surveys and the questions to be addressed. These are:

The Liturgy of the Assumption in the Church's Liturgy.

Collegiality on three levels: Congregation, Province, House.

The Church and the World: role and insertion of the Congregation.

The Assumption and the work of Education and Teaching.

The Assumption and Missions.

Pastoral care of Vocations.

Observances and Regular Life.

Poverty.

Obedience.

In addition, you have also collaborated a little bit in the preparation of the Executive Board by sending texts.

As this work of preparation for the General Chapter progresses, we become more aware of the importance, complexity, novelty often and

⁶⁷Véase la Nota 30 de la circular anterior.

problems that will be addressed. Fundamental questions are asked about the Congregation itself, about its apostolate and methods, about the witness it gives to today's world, in fidelity to Vatican II.

We must face the difficult problem of reconciling the demands of contemplative and community life and the apostolate. *Our very ideal, to live assumed by Christ*, should be apostolic in itself and nourish our entire apostolate with evangelical sap. But does our life reflect our ideal?

Another difficult problem: In the overall pastoral care concerted by the episcopate of the twenty-three countries where we work, should we always be available for any apostolic task? Or should we stick to our educational tasks? Or should we commit ourselves as a priority where missionary emergencies require us to create a new way of life rather than to maintain a traditional apostolate?

The Constitution *Lumen Gentium* asks us to always return to the intuition of our founders. The Church does not want the levelling of the Congregations. *But the Church wants us to approach the world around us, to assume its language, customs and mentality, as long as this is compatible with the Church's mission* (Paul VI).

One feels, my dear daughters, that such questions cannot be addressed with our human lights alone. The purpose of this letter is therefore above all to appeal to your generosity to obtain for the Capitulants the grace to purify their minds and hearts to be only the docile instruments of the Holy Spirit. An article in the last issue of Christus⁶⁸ said: *It is not a question of being right or stating your reasons, but of transforming yourself to make way for the Holy Spirit*. The sometimes conflicting positions that investigations have revealed make us feel that we all have to let ourselves be transformed.

Practically what are you going to do for the Chapter? Already you are all praying in community for the Council. You will add to this the celebration of the month of the Rosary. It seems to me therefore

⁶⁸Christus, Sept. 1965.

preferable not to overload, but to let each community decide what will put the most in attitude of generous fidelity. For everything is there: the fidelity of each one will make the fidelity of the whole Congregation in Chapter.

And now a few clarifications. The opening Mass of the Chapter will be on October 15. Then, after three days of reviewing the most significant features of our spirit, as left to us by O.V. Mother Foundress, we will devote a few days to the study of the government of the Congregation. We do not yet know what the election day will be because H.E. Cardinal Traglia must tell us if he will chair the meeting himself or if he will delegate someone.

You will be kept as informed as possible of the progress of the work, as you were of its preparation. When they are finished, if the question: what were the Capitulants doing in Rome? were to be asked, may we answer in truth, as the Holy Father said of the Council: They loved. They loved God, to whom they sought to give more priority; they loved the Church, in whose service they sought to place themselves more fully; they loved all their brothers and especially the poorest, and they resolved to lose everything and to lose themselves in order to win them all to Jesus Christ.

In Him you know me all yours.

Sœur Marie Denyse, r.a.

ABOUT THE GENERAL CHAPTER

D.S.

Roma

9 November 1965

My dear daughters,

For fifteen days, cables and letters have not finished bringing me the support of your hearts. I count on your prayers so much! That's the first thing I need to tell you. In return, I would like to be more and better than in the past at the service of all of you, at the service of the great interests of the Church and the Congregation.

In the minutes before the elections, do you want to know what was occupying my soul? Bishop Paul Philippe had just named the Blessed Virgin: *invisible, permanent, perpetual Superior General, Mother and Handmaid. And I thought to myself: Just believe it and let it happen.* So, after having asked to pray, I tell you as simply as possible what to ask in your prayer: to believe in it and let it happen, I count on you and I confide in you.

And now a word (not news, the Communications convey that to you well) about the momentum that raises us all in this great work of the Chapter. I would like you all to be here to marvel at how an assembly can achieve such unity, sincerity and mutual love in the search for the one will of God. Then, when we disperse, it will be necessary for each House to strive for this unity, this sincerity, this mutual love, in the implementation of the conclusions of the Chapter. Altogether, pressed by the love of Christ, supported by our fraternal friendship, we must live truly happy, free, available in the fervour that comes from love to consecrate ourselves to rebuilding everything on Christ.

This will not happen without self-sacrifice, without fighting against our selfishness. You have to lose your life," said one bishop in recent days. We will lose it, will we not, all together, for the one love of Christ, and

because we know that we find it, the true LIFE, by losing ours. And also because it is this renewal that will put us fully at the service of the Church.

May each of you find in these few words my deep thanks for your messages ~~so good~~ and the expression of my maternal love recreated by this new call of the Church.

Sœur Marie Denyse r.a.

LETTER OF PROMULGATION OF THE CHAPTER

Roma

4 December 1965

My dear daughters,

St. Peter's Square is already being adapted to accommodate the crowd that will participate in the solemn closing of the Second Vatican Council on December 8.

Our hearts are full of admiration and joy, before the obvious manifestation of the Holy Spirit in his Church. It shines through the wonderful work done by the Fathers.

The Holy Father calls us to thanksgiving, for so many goods received and for the promises of renewal of which they are the pledge.

It also calls us to enlightened, generous, persevering obedience to the decisions taken and the directives that our bishops will give to specify their application.

We have followed the work of the Council with such fervour that we will enter into these calls of the Pope as a matter of course. Moreover, to be faithful to our status as loving daughters of the Church, we will study the Council's Decrees in order to assimilate their teaching and see how to translate them into our life as Assumptionists.

Thanksgiving, enlightened obedience, generous, perseverance, study of the various chapters in order to assimilate their teaching and translate it into our lives; these same calls are addressed to us at the end of the General Chapter, my dear daughters.

Soon you will have the Acts of the Chapter in your hands. You will see that we have tried to give a triple direction to our gaze.

One turned to our center: Christ.

The other towards the starting point of our Congregation: Our Venerable Mother Foundress.

The other towards the Church of today, present to the world in its reality today, open to the signs of the times, with optimism, sympathy, love and interest.

It would be too long to go into detail: this letter of Promulgation of the Chapter only wants to let you know without delay about some important decisions taken.

I. First, the one that you all await with such great desire and which was adopted unanimously by the votes: Unity of rank in the Congregation. The Choir Sister and Co-adjutor Sister no longer exist. We are all Sisters of the Assumption, striving to be one in all things, because we will all strive to have the feelings that were in Christ Jesus. This will not prevent us from serving differently in our communities. We will understand Saint Paul's teaching: There are different gifts, but the spirit is the same. There are various services, but the Lord we serve is the same and He is the one who operates everything in everyone.

This unity of rank in the Congregation must be the point of our renewal in charity. May all those who see us alive say: See how much they love each other. But let us not forget that God revealed his love to us by giving us his Son who loved us to the Cross. Our unity will be achieved through the Cross, that is, by renouncing what is personal, to help each other and support each other in true charity.

We will meditate on this instruction addressed to nuns:

If the nuns do not take into account themselves, but others, they will be able to bear with ease that one has certain permissions that the other does not have, or that she is at a pace of work that does not correspond to that of the others... A sister will not be sad, but will rejoice in the glory that belongs to God, if she realizes that a sister has facilities, or gifts, or advantages that she does not have; for she only desires to be like Christ who, although He was like God, renounced everything and became a servant, obeying even the Cross.

In the renewal of the Council and the Chapter, it is this provision that

will help us most to open ourselves to each other, respecting in each one the will of God who distributes to each one his gifts as He wills.

- The Sisters, who in their profession have not committed themselves to say the Divine Office, will see directly with their Superior and Provincial how they can replace it, if they find it too difficult to assume the entire burden.
- In each House, either at the time of spiritual reading or during the holidays, lessons of Canonical Hours will be organized for the sisters who did not have them in the Novitiate.
- Places in the choir, chapter and refectory will be given according to the rank of profession of all the sisters.

II. The General Chapter reorganized the Provinces of the Congregation.

The Congregation includes:

- 11 Provinces
- 3 Vice-Provinces
- 3 Regions

Here is the detailed list

Provincial Houses

Country

Vice-Provincials

or Regional

Province of North America	United States, Canada	Philadelphia
Province Hispano-American	Guatemala, Nicaragua, Salvador, Ecuador	Guatemala
Province of	England, Tanzania	London

England		
Province of Belgium	Belgium, Denmark	Bruxelles
Province of Brazil	Brazil	Sao Paolo
Province of Northern Spain	Mira-Cruz, Santa Isabel, Gijón, Roces, Valladolid, Salamanca	Santa Isabel Mira-Cruz
Province of South-East Spain	Los Olivos, Velasquez, Vallecas, Barcelone S.E.A.T., Málaga, Santa Cruz	Los Olivos
Province of the Far East	Philippines	San Lorenzo
Province of Italy	Italy	Rome
Province of Lyon	Lyon, Cannes, Colmar, Lamazou, Lourdes, St Gervais, Montpellier, Haute-Volta	Lyon
Province of Paris	Lübeck, Bondy, Bordeaux, Canisy, St Dizier, Forges, Beyrouth, Tchirozérine, Togo	Lübeck
Vice-Province de	León et Sarria	León

León		
Vice-Province of Rwanda	Rwanda	Birambo
Vice-Province of Ivory Coast	Ivory Coast	Daloa
Région of Mexico	attached to the Hispano-American Province	Mexico
Region of Argentine	attached to the Province of Brazil	Buenos Aires
Region of Japan	attached to the Far East Province	Sumoto

The Regions will be set up as Vice-Provinces when their development allows it.

Twinning arrangements have been planned to better express our Collegiality and respond to the missionary aspirations of Provinces that do not have Mission Houses.

The Vice-Province of León prepares missionaries for Latin America in its Latino-American Novitiate. Her Apostolic School prepares missionaries for non-Christian countries.

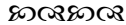
The two Provinces of Spain prepare the A.M.A. for Latin America, provide training for leaders and send liturgical, cultural and pedagogical information.

The two Provinces of Spain also support Upper Volta spiritually and materially.

North America prepares A.M.A. for Africa and Latin America and provides spiritual and material support to Togo and Japan.

The Province of Belgium remains in charge of Rwanda to which the Province of Italy provides its spiritual and material support.

(Following is the list of appointments of Provincial Superiors - Vice-Provincials - Regional Superiors - Novitiate Mistresses - Junior Mistresses - 3rd Year Mistress)



III. We were just beginning our work when the Council promulgated the Decree on the **Renovation and Adaptation** of Religious Life. We wanted to give the words their full meaning: Renewal in fidelity to the Gospel and in fidelity to Our Venerable Mother Foundress. Adaptation to better respond to the urgent needs of the Church in a great missionary impulse.

The vow of Obedience requires us, in order to be renewed and adapted, a true conversion of heart. This conversion will unite us all, Mothers and daughters, in the one common search for God's will.

It is therefore to this new conception of Obedience that the General Chapter calls the Congregation. We will no longer see it as a heavy yoke but as a communion with the Agape of the Father in Jesus. Just as Jesus' obedience to his Father is not tense or juridical, it is the continuous encounter of two personal loves, so we will strive to enter into the deepest attitude of Christ responding to the Father's love.

Each will have to take more responsibility for its response and many permissions to ask for have been removed.

The Conciliar Decree on religious life strongly emphasizes poverty. It asks us to practice it carefully, and to manifest it in new forms.

We have dwelt at length on the new forms to be given to our religious poverty. They will not always be spectacular: we have our large Houses that do not bear evangelical witness. But we will seek to entrust their management to lay people, which will prevent us from considering them as our good; we will open them more widely to all, so that they appear and are in reality a common good that everyone can use.

We have also adopted, at the suggestion of the Sacred Congregation of Religious to those Congregations who want greater poverty, the system of subordinate ownership. Each House makes available to the Province or Congregation its profits or the fruit of its work, and the Province decides on the best use to be made of them in the Province.

When you have in your hands the Acts of the Chapter, you will better understand how these decisions affecting our Obedience and Poverty take our whole life and consecrate it to God. May these few indications already help you to consider your vows as means of following and imitating only the Lord.

IV. We have also profoundly sought to adapt religious life in the openness to the world and in the response to the Church's urgencies.

The first thing we expect from your openness to the world, the Archbishop⁶⁹ of Paris told us, is that *you should be witnesses and authentic signs of evangelical life. There are many lay apostles and holy priests. But how tempted they are, in the very name of the apostolate, to give themselves feverishly to action, to bring themselves up to the level of men!*

May your religious life decide on common thought, on the way to raise the problems of existence, life and death. Let your life stand out, mark, remind. Let the signs be legible. It is not enough that they are in the depths of your heart, we must guess values that stand out.

Many human qualities nourished by the Gospel: smile, joy, simple charity, patience, presence, welcome...

That's quite a program. And Bishop Vuillot concluded with a few words on education: *Testify that it is worth giving your life for the education of young people.*

It is therefore around our great work of education that the Chapter has worked, in order to renew our fidelity to the first apostolate bequeathed to us by our Venerable Mother Foundress and that the pressure of events

⁶⁹Mgr Maurice Feltin, Archbishop of Paris, 1949-1966.

has sometimes faded. The best service to the Church is to remain attached to our own vocation. It is not making us unavailable, but it is ensuring that our availability is more effective.

Our Houses must be frankly, fully, radically Christian. It's very demanding.

It was because she felt this need that Our Venerable Mother Foundress wanted to give to our apostolic vocation the foundations of a contemplative life centered on liturgical prayer and in the simple and family context of a monastic life where, day after day, the fraternal community is redone among the sisters.

The General Chapter studied well the problem of "contemplative action" in our lives. Our entire openness to the world: means of culture, leisure for our children, visits to our families will be subject to this presence, which is essential to our religious life. It is not our enclosure that will be in question, but our fidelity to God, in a loyal and generous search for his will for a better apostolic service.

V. Finally, one last point that is not without importance: our religious habit. The Decree on the adaptation of religious life has guided our research, and the Sacred Congregation has just approved the model presented. It will be a sign of our consecration and our form of monastic life since we will have the scapular; much simpler and more discreet, much poorer in terms of the quantity of fabric, much quicker to make. We will not keep the white choir robe on.

This is only a very small summary of the Acts of the Chapter. When you have them in your hands, you will see. I think that the Chapter projects on the present and on the future a light that shows the way, without exempting us from reflecting, seeking, acting, experimenting. It is to the extent that we place at the service of the Church our fidelity to who we are that we will be alive and of our time.

The Assumption lives and is more than ever a daughter of the Church. We felt this especially during the audience on November 10, and also during the meetings with so many of our Bishops. Their affection and trust were a real encouragement.

And now, my dear daughters, after our Pope Paul VI I say to you: The time has come to act.

The Assumption of Vatican II and the 1965 Chapter is something you will do. Make her radiant with God's love for all her children.

Sœur Marie Denyse du Saint Sacrement r.a.

P.S. : The Vice-Province of Rwanda is autonomous. The Ivory Coast is dependent on the Province of Lyon. The one in León, which only works for the Missions of the Congregation, is dependent on the Mother House.

SECOND TERM: 1965-1970

The 1965 General Chapter was held in Rome and its conclusion coincided with the end of the First Vatican Council.

It was supposed to be an election chapter. Mother Marie Denyse was re-elected Superior General for 6 years, according to the Constitutions.

The Acts of the Chapter present the different aspects of our lives in the light of the Council's documents, and the final message addressed by Paul VI to the Congregation illuminates the way forward.

If the foundations continue to be built (the number of houses rose from 40 in 1953 to 136 in 1970, especially in mission countries), the main issue of this period was the preparation of the General Chapter of *Aggiornamento*, requested by Rome and planned for 1971.

LETTERS TO THE CONGREGATION

After the 1965 General Chapter of Rome. Election at the U.S.G. Foundation in Tchirozerine

To the Provincial Superiors

VICE-PROVINCIALS and REGIONAL

Auteuil

9 January 1966

My dearest Mothers,

A month ago we parted, aware both of the great work that God's grace had allowed us to do during the Chapter, and of the even greater work that still remained to be done so that the spirit of the Church that had animated us could pass into the life of our communities.

Since then, so many letters have been received telling the emotions of souls as the texts become known! Each one waits for her own to be able to meditate on it. The printing work is progressing, Sr. Aimée gives all her time to it, and I hope that the translations are progressing as well. You should write to me as soon as possible the number of copies in French you wish for your Province, Vice-Province and Region (which the Vice-Provinces and Regions dependent on a Province send first to the Provincial who will group). If either of them have made a request to know about a letter, please specify it again on separate paper; with the overabundance of mail these days, it makes the job a lot easier. I have the figures for Italy, Central America and Brazil. I would also remind you that, when you want a quick answer, you save a lot of time by summarizing on a separate sheet of paper the questions asked in the letter.

It is to be more at the service of the Church that we must organize our time in order to gain time. I am still amazed at what happened to me

when I returned to Paris. The Major Superiors of France were convened for the election of the General Council of the Union of Major Superiors. I went there with a light heart, and now the office of President has fallen on me! Shortly afterwards, a very paternal letter from Bishop Paul Philippe confirmed this election and ended with these words: You will soon receive your official appointment as "Councillor of the International Union of Superiors General".

Through my poor and unknown person, it is the Congregation that is called to the service of all religious life in the Church. I would also like to associate you with this service through prayer, I ask you very much, but also perhaps by communicating to me all that you think you can do good to the Religious: reports, experiences, apostolic initiatives, liturgies, etc..... which have had a happy influence in your country.

Another very effective way of associating yourself with this service for the whole of religious life is for each of you to take charge of the government of your Province or Region as fully as possible. The Chapter has strongly decentralized the government of the Congregation! We have also tried to think very much about universal. The Lord was preparing the ways so that I could have time to give to the two Unions of Superiors General who entrusted me with an office. Be very close to each House in your Province; communicate to them all that you know about the Mother House, about the other Provinces, in order to maintain a true family spirit. It is especially through you that the Mother House will reach each House, because it will be impossible to write directly to each one. On the contrary, I will do it as much as possible to the Provincials, either directly or by circulars like this one, and you will transmit what you consider good to the Houses.

- The first decision to be sent is that there will be no Third Year this year. The Acts of the Chapter will benefit from being worked on in the Provinces, in order to clarify their applications.
- Those who have not yet sent the Report for the annual report in Rome are kindly requested to do so as soon as possible. Remember that when a Province is composed of several countries, the figures should be given country by country.

- Please send the dates of all the entrances in noviciate and first vows in 1965. And remind the Novice Mistresses of the Novitiate Report to be sent to me at the beginning of January.
- The four foundresses of Tchirozérine will leave on the evening of January 19, and will be in Niamey when we will still be sound asleep, at 4 a.m. Their names are: Mother Anne of Mary Immaculate, Sister Carmen Luz (novitiate in León), Sister Marie Bosco from Rwanda, Sister Anne Eugénie from Canada. Those who wish to know what this mission in the heart of Islam will be like, among the Tuaregs, can read: Le carnet de route du Père Ploussard, a book ranked among the fifty best of 1964. It's to where he died in 1961 that we'll go. His successor, Father Monnet, took back his Tuareg name: Brother Yakhia. Our address is:

Tchirozérine B.P. 50 - Agadès - Niger

- Notice that this is not the Hoggar where Father de Foucauld was in the Sahara, but the Aïr where the highest number of Tuaregs are found. We will be the first religious to dedicate ourselves to them in the Aïr region.

Mother Jeanne Françoise, Vice-Provincial of Rwanda, will reside in Kabuyé, of which she is the Superior. It is more central and it is the place of Mothers and Sisters when they go to the Capital for administrative matters. Mother Marie Robert is Superior of Birambo.

In Spain: Mother Maria Cruz is Superior of Velasquez, Mother Maria Immaculada de Vallecás, Mother Rosa Magdalena de Santa Isabel, Mother Carmen Luisa d'Olivos at the same time as Mistress of the Juniorate.

In France, Mother Agnes Catherine is Superior of Lyon, Sister Therese Myriam, General Treasurer, Sister Anne of the Blessed Virgin, Mistress of the Philosophers in Lübeck.

I think that each House has in its hands the Acts of the Council. Editions du Centurion will issue the latest decrees these days. If some countries do not have them yet you can go through the Procure to order them.

Mother Josefa Ignacia continues the visit of the Houses of Italy. She is at the Quadraro these days, then Cagliari and Genoa, which will bring her back to Auteuil, where she is wanted so much after such a long absence, around the middle of February.

My dearest Mothers, may each House be thanked by you for the wishes and prayers that strengthen the bonds between us all. As we contemplate the Son of God who came to dwell among us, let us accept the wonderful exchange He proposes to us, let Him make Him for the glory of the Father.

I remain united with you with my deepest affection.

Sœur Marie Denyse r.a.

Union of Superiors General (UISG): structures and mission

+ Auteuil

2 February 1966

TO THE PROVINCIALS

My dear Mothers,

I didn't think I would come back to you so soon, but first I want to assure you of your prayers the soul of Mother Josefa Ignacia's Mother's Mother that the Lord has just called to Him. On January 23rd she had an embolism. She then regained consciousness, but not the word, Mother Marie Andrea wrote to me, and on the evening of the 30th the Lord took her back. Mother Josefa Ignacia is in Genoa until February 15, so that's where your letters and prayers will join her.

On the 16th, the dear Mother returned to Auteuil after an absence of 4 months, and I had just received a convocation from the International Union of Superiors General which forced me to leave for Rome on the same 16th, in the evening. The Sacred Congregation requests the participation of religious sisters in the preparatory work of the Post-Conciliar Commission for the rules of application of the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*.

This work, done in collaboration with religious sisters, is to be handed over to Bishop Felici at the end of March. The Council of the International Union of Superiors General, plus twenty Superiors General from various countries and works, is therefore gathered in Rome. Four commissions will be formed and will work hard for fifteen days to three weeks, under the direction of T.R. Father Le Bourgeois, Superior General of the Eudists and Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Union.

You understand the importance of this work. The Rules for the application of the Decree (the Holy Father, as you will recall, said that from 29 June all decisions of the Council must pass through life) will undoubtedly serve as the basis for the Rules of Canon Law concerning

religious life. The aim is to ensure that the legislation is broad and flexible enough to guarantee the specificity of the Institutes, its purpose and its own spirituality. Each article of the Decree will therefore be studied with all its practical applications. This is the time to pray much that the primacy of spiritual renewal, the soul of external renewal, so strongly emphasized in the Decree, will be highlighted in the applications.

Several letters ask for more information about the International Union based in Rome. It was erected on December 8, 1965. All the Superiors General of the world are members by right. The purpose of this Union is to establish fraternal and effective collaboration among all the Institutes for a better service of the universal Church. The General Council is composed of twenty members, and the Superior General of the Religious of Jesus-Maria is its President. The Council is scheduled to meet in Rome twice a year. The other Congregations represented on the Council by their Superior General are:

The Ursulines of the Roman Union	The Sisters of Carità dell'Immacolata
The Sisters of Saint Paul	The Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul
The Religious of the Sacred Heart	The Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross
The Suore di Carità delle St Bartolomea	The Ancelle del S. Cuore du Gesù
The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians	The Sisters of the Good Shepherd of Angers
The Religiosas Bethlemitas del Corazon de Jesus	The Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa
The Die Granen Schwestern von der Hl. Elizabeth	The Little Sisters of Father de Foucauld
The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady	The Sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of Montreal
The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary	

This Union, as you can see, is international. Several countries, but not all yet far from there, have had their National Union of Major Superiors.

Here too, the aim is to coordinate efforts for a better integration into the pastoral care of all countries. The national episcopates almost all have an Episcopal Commission, composed of four or five bishops, and specially responsible for all matters relating to religious life in the country. It is a question of all these organizations being animated by a true collegial spirit and of each Institute, knowing that it is insufficient, being happy to find in others a complementarity for a more effective Church service.

Here, my dearest Mothers, is a little glimpse of our religious structures. It only makes sense if everyone strives to be a living stone, doesn't it?

I'm leaving later to visit Lübeck. It will have to be fast because a fairly important preparatory work has to be done before the meetings in Rome and I will have to come back to Auteuil on the 10th or 11th.

Let us be more than ever loving daughters of the Church. I commend myself to your prayers.

Sœur Marie Denyse du St Sacrement

P.S. : Some Provincials asked me if we could communicate in full the circulars I am sending them. This one ~~does~~ *can be*, because it is good that the Houses are aware of what concerns religious life in the Church. Anything in the circulars that does not only concern the Provincials can be communicated.

Death of Mother Marie Joanna

God alone

Auteuil

4 July 1966

My dear daughters,

It is a need of the heart to join you all this evening and to share with you a little the feelings that fill your soul.

For a few years, we had been following the march towards the Lord of Our Mother Marie Joanna, feeling that he was robbing her more and more to become her only wealth; and yet the speed of her departure from here on earth deeply moved us.

Only a month ago Mother Josefa Ignacia wrote to us: *Our Mother Marie Joanna is doing very well, only her memory and attention are sometimes missing.*

On July 1, a word from Mother Suzanne Emmanuel said that several sisters in Val had been intoxicated and that Mother Marie Joanna was more affected, but that her heart was good.

The next day already, a telephone call warned us of the doctor's concern, because the dear patient was hardly conscious and slept a lot: she herself had asked, two days before, for the last Sacraments. Our prayer for her was very instinctive, not so much to keep her here on earth, but to help her soul to let itself be filled with love. Today, during recess, a telegram sent at 11:00 a. m. informed us that our revered Mother had passed from death to life. We don't know anything more yet. We surround her with our prayers through the living Rosary as if her body were there, in our midst. And in her soul, each one relives this past so present, offering to the Lord the graces received through the intermediary of the One He has given us for Mother for so many years. What a weight of grace! And now, close to the God whom she loves in all things and above all things, she sees the promises of the Lord that surpass all desire fulfilled. How

beautiful it was to be able to find our prayer so well expressed in today's Liturgy!

Our love and veneration should not make us forget to pray much for the One who has carried the responsibility of the Congregation for so long. The more universal the duties have been, the more extensive the purification will be. Let us draw on the merits of the Savior and the treasures of the Holy Church and let each House celebrate the thirty Gregorian Masses. Be sure also to inform the Friends of the Congregation: bishops, priests, religious, former students who have known Our Mother Joanna and who will pray for her.

And thinking of our young sisters who did not know her, may I ask those who lived closer to Our Mother Marie Joanna, in Saint Dizier, Auteuil, Lübeck, Bordighera, Genoa and Val to send me their memories, so that we can together give her a true and living portrait?

My dear daughters, in prayer, in gratitude and in generous fidelity to the teachings received, I remain united with you in heart and soul.

*Sœur Marie Denyse
Superior General*

P.S. I add this word, having received the first news from Mother Therese of Mary Immaculate who spent a few hours yesterday with Our Mother Marie Joanna, with Sister Françoise Elisabeth.

The Mother recognized us, shook our hands, but could not speak. Around 3:00 a.m., it seemed like the end, we said the prayer of the dying, sang the Magnificat and the hymn she loved so much: "May I love you..." and many invocations. She was so peaceful, her cell where prayer did not stop, was the antechamber of paradise. In the evening, Our Mother Marie Joanna began to suffer. A shot relieved her and it was only this morning, at 7:00 am, that she gave her soul back to God.

Hope for Beatification .

Official recognition of Sister Mary Kevin's healing. India, Kerala, first foundation in the Diocese of Palai. Towards a fusion with a Congregation, a Gap

Auteuil

12 October 1966

My dear daughters,

An intense prayer with the same intentions unites us very strongly these days. Universal intention for world peace⁷⁰, in response to the Pope's calls, and a more family intention for the beatification of Our Venerable Mother Foundress.

Your many letters this week also tell me that October 9 has not been forgotten, and I thank you very much for that. That day and the day before, I participated in important working days of the National Committee for Catholic Education. Days so busy that on the 8th we didn't stop from 2pm to 9pm, and the next day I left at dawn! The feast of Saint Dionysius was therefore lived in the intimate heart of hearts, waiting to be able to relive it during the short All Saints' Day holidays.

But you're waiting to know what happened on the 5th⁷¹. We must persevere in prayer. By Mother Erminia who was informed of this, I knew that Sister Marie Kevin's healing has been recognized as miraculous, but the study of Mr. Jannetti's healing from Rome has not yet been completed. It is more complex, given the constant progress in medicine, and doctors have asked for more information. Let us think that

⁷⁰In 1966, tensions intensified between Israel, Syria and Egypt. They were at the origin of the Six-Day War (June 5-11, 1967).

⁷¹Cf. Circular of 14 October 1963.

the Holy Spirit hovers over their searches and humbly ask Him to be the light of hearts.

This morning, very good letter from Mother Josefa Ignacia, after her first day in Kerala. You can guess if the Indian priests, our friends in Rome and Auteuil, and the families of our sisters, gave her a warm welcome! At the bishop's house where Mother Josefa Ignacia spent the day, the visits did not stop. Priests speaking a little French are there to serve as interpreters; Mother Josefa Ignacia and her companion, Sister Laurentia, are struck by the exquisite simplicity of all. Part of the day was devoted to our first foundation in this diocese of Palai, which has already sent us about thirty vocations. Bishop Vayalil would like the Assumption to take charge of a house of welcome and retreats for priests and lay activists, and spiritual and catechetical formation for young girls. Everything will probably be ready in the course of 1967, and gives us hope for one-year visas that can be extended there. Mother Josefa Ignacia also saw the five young girls⁷² who are due to arrive in Auteuil these days to return to the postulancy.

On the 14th, I leave for Gap where Mother Marie Angela and five sisters are preparing the merger with a small Congregation of 18 members. Difficult and painful moments. I became more aware of this during the day reserved for Congregations of small numbers, following the National Days of Major Superiors of France. Nearly 200 Superiors General begging that we plead their case in Rome because they do not want to die. Their Congregation, for many, has 20, 25, 30 members, after one or two centuries of existence. Much prayer is needed to obtain for them the grace to enter fully into the Church's decisions, however painful they may be. In Gap, after desiring fusion, the sisters are afraid of the austerity of our lives. I will stay with them until the 20th, and I count on your prayers, and also afterwards because I will make my great retreat from the 21st to the 30th. I feel a great need to be helped by all of you in the concrete search for the will of God, in these years when we have to

⁷²Sister Leela (Brigit C. Kottor) was part of this group.

choose between multiple duties. I expect this help from your prayer, but also from the fact that each one of you is free to follow Christ in the spirit of the Council and the Chapter. Each one is irreplaceable for that, where it is, in the service entrusted to it. Our Lord said to Mother Therese Emmanuel: Always affirm Me, by thought, by word, by deed. This is indeed taking charge of our following of Christ.

Letters received from several Houses tell me that a certain confusion in ideas still sometimes confuses people. ~~It is such a~~ *This* priest, ~~that such a~~ religious ~~who~~ affirm that religious life will be totally reformed, that nuns who are not cloistered will have to live as lay people, etc. My dear daughters, I can only repeat: Read, read again the Pope's speeches. Two or three times a week, with remarkable clarity, firmness and depth, the Pope takes a stand against all the ideas that circulate. If your newspapers and magazines do not give these words of the Pope, subscribe to the Osservatore Romano in spoken language, or to the Catholic Documentation which gives everything in its entirety. But do not let yourselves be stopped and disturbed, while the Acts of the Council and those of our Chapter have so brightly charted the way forward. When you participate in Sessions or Conferences that propose new adaptations, ask your Provincial Superiors before taking action. *Be each personally aware of what our specific spirit is, which the Church asks so strongly to safeguard, so that through the varied gifts of her children, the multiple resources of God's Wisdom may be manifested*, we read in Perfectae Caritatis⁷³. Let us lovingly keep the part of Wisdom that God has entrusted to the Assumption; it is our ever-old and ever-new treasure if we receive it day after day, with a child's soul, from the Father who gives it to us.

In Him I love you and am all yours.

Sœur Marie Denyse r.a.

⁷³Perfectae Caritatis : Council Decree on the renewal and adaptation of religious life (28 octobre 1965).

On the renewal of religious life. Foundation of the U.I.S.G.
Interior renewal and presence in the world.

God alone

Auteuil

19 March 1967

My dear daughters,

We are preparing to enter into the Paschal Mystery of the Savior's Death and Resurrection, to receive this new life offered to every soul who consents to be of Christ. This is the right time, wishing to live this great Week to the fullest, to talk about renewal. This is what I am coming to do with you, by transmitting to you some echoes of this great Roman meeting centred on the **true renewal of religious life** in the Church.

You know that on December 8, 1965, the very day of the closing of the Council, the International Union of Superiors General was established: U.I.S.G. The constituent members of the Union are the 2,215 Superiors General in the world.

Speaking of the variety of religious Institutes that manifests the multiple resources of the Wisdom of God and makes the Church appear embellished by the gifts of her children, Decree Perfectae Caritatis No. 1 says that the closer their union is, the richer will be the life of the Church and the more fruitful its apostolate.

This is the *raison d'être* of the U.I.S.G. To establish between Institutes of different countries, different races, different civilizations, a fraternal and living union, which is the visible expression of the universal Church, and a coordination of forces, which makes the apostolate more effective.

The Statutes of the U.I.S.G. provide for a General Assembly every three years, composed of the members of the General Council and the Superiors General delegated by the National Unions. At this first assembly there were 124 of us from 64 countries on five continents.

In these great world meetings, it is an ever new joy to discover all that unites us with those we meet for the first time. First of all Mother Marie Philip, of the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption (Cape Town), so affectionate and fraternal. She is very interested in coming to Auteuil to study the history of our two Congregations⁷⁴.

Then the African Superiors General of Rwanda, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Upper Volta, whose presence was a living testimony to the beautiful work done by a generation of missionaries that we would be too inclined to criticize. And also the non-African delegates, including our Mother Anne Bernard, representing Togo, and Mother Agathe, Superior of the new Ivorian Congregation of Our Lady of Peace, so well known and loved by our houses in the Ivory Coast.

Then the delegates from El Salvador, Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, the United States and Canada, who almost all knew our Houses. Those of the Philippines and Japan too, and then Mother Teresa of Calcutta, known throughout the world for her charity towards the dying. A Lebanese Superior, very in contact with our sisters in Beirut; Mother Genevieve, from Papua New Guinea, sister of Sister Catherine Elisabeth. I do not mention the Superiors of Europe, except to say that it was very moving to have the Church of Silence represented by two Polish Mothers and one Yugoslav. Some reflections, but even more so their silence, made us realize a little bit how much they live the mystery of Christ's Passion.

The theme of the work was the renewal of religious life throughout the Church, according to the two fundamental orientations of *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Motu proprio*⁷⁵: interior renewal and presence in the world.

The main topics covered are:

The Special Chapter

⁷⁴Sister Marie Philip, then former Superior General, will come to Auteuil for several months in 1982.

⁷⁵*Ecclesiae Sanctae*: apostolic letter in the form of a motu proprio (norms), for the application of the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* (16 August 1966).

The revision of the Constitutions

The formation of the sisters

The insertion of religious life in the Church and in the world

Government and decentralization

The life of prayer

Poverty and Mortification

Community life

All this was considered from the perspective of the government and the orientations to be given to the Special Chapter. We find there almost all the points of our General Chapter. The Sacred Congregation, which has the Acts, will soon tell us if we should plan a Special Chapter.

The working method was exactly that of a General Chapter: very few conferences, two in all, and just a twenty-minute presentation each morning by a Mother to begin the subject. But as much time as possible was devoted to the Working Committees, either among us, about ten per group, or from time to time, with an expert. Every evening from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm, the conclusions of the Commissions were discussed in the Plenary Assembly chaired by Bishop Paul Philippe. A remarkably organized simultaneous translation allowed everyone to express themselves in their own language and to follow the debates.

All the work clearly showed that religious life is entering a new era of its existence, characterized by a different situation in the evolving Church and by a transformation of its relationship with the world. Hence the need to know what the Church expects from us.

It expects from us the witness of a life consecrated to God, of the Gospel lived to the end, of the concern to contribute actively to the missionary work of the Church, but in accordance with the specific vocation of each Institute, while respecting the vocation of all.

This is indeed what the Holy Father has taken up, expressing what the Church expects from religious sisters with a clarity, a depth, that makes his speech one of the most beautiful of all those he has pronounced on

religious life. I think you have had all the full text in your countries' journals; otherwise tell me and I will send it to you. We must return often to it to nourish our desire to be fixed in God, anchored in the Absolute, *soli Deo* alive⁷⁶. With what emphasis the Pope asked us to inculcate in the souls who entrust themselves to your Institutes a unique love, to which the heart is entirely given and to which we must constantly return to live religious life in depth and in truth. All his speech was such a strong affirmation of the primacy of the contemplative life, of the inner dialogue of the soul with its God, inherent in every form of religious life! And the Holy Father added: How, you may ask, in today's hectic world, can we instill in our religious this primacy of contemplation? In response to his question, he listed the traditional observances that, under the pretext of updating, some would like to reject:

places and times of silence to encourage reflection;

the mental prayer that some would like to oppose to liturgical prayer;

community life, which provides consecrated souls with a permanent opportunity to grow in love and to dispose themselves to contemplation.

The paths of renewal could not have been clearer and our hearts were in joy.

Cardinal Antoniutti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, also came to speak to us. He placed great emphasis on the attention we must pay to the authentic teachings of the Council, transmitted through the authorized channels to translate them into concrete realities.

When you want to receive broadcasts from a radio station, he said, you connect the receiver to the transmitter in such a way as to avoid foreign interference and to hear, in its clearness and clarity, the voice that carries you the desired communications.

⁷⁶Living for God alone.

If you want to receive the decisions of the Second Vatican Council in their truth, you must connect to the first transmitting station; you must avoid certain dubious stations that transmit theories, opinions, proposals, different from the letter and spirit of the Council guidelines. Meditate on the words of the Pope, who has often vigorously recalled the very high goals of religious life. Let us remember, therefore, that it is above all a question of preparing and bringing about a true spiritual renewal which, if properly achieved, will lead to the adaptation by itself to the living conditions of today's world and its new needs.

The renewal of religious life is not only a simple adaptation to the external demands of the present world: it does not consist in making concessions to the spirit of the century; it is a renewed fidelity to the Gospel and to the Founders. It is on the basis of these solid principles that we must face the world with renewed sensitivity to its problems, with a current vision of their requirements, with a broad understanding of the needs of a rapidly evolving and changing society.

It is still the Pope who expressed it with such simple and strong words: *The aggiornamento demanded by the new demands of the times must make it easier for all religious today to follow their divine model. In this aggiornamento, it is not a question of conforming to the century, but of seeking with love and sincerity everything that can encourage us to spread more faithfully in the world the presence, **example and life of sacrifice of Christ**, sacrificed for the glory of God and the salvation of his brothers and sisters.*

This is in the true sense of the text of Perfectae Caritatis which recommends that Institutes form their members in such a way that they discern wisely, in the light of faith, the particular characteristics of today's world, and that, burning with apostolic zeal, they be able to give men more effective help. This discernment requires a firm conviction, a regulated orientation and the possibility of flexible adaptation to all circumstances, in fidelity to the specific spirit.

Supported by figures, the Cardinal then confided to us that religious

crises and defections are multiplying, alas! where the traditional conception of religious life is rejected, under the pretext of demystifying it; where the love of the Institute is lacking, fidelity to its spirit, and where, under the pretext of knowing the world, one wants to experience its life, adopt its way of living and entertaining oneself, in contempt of the austerity and reserve that all religious life implies, because being in the world does not mean being of the world.

My dear daughters, do these pages give you a little insight into what our Mother the Holy Church expects from consecrated souls? The victory that defeated the world is your faith. We must often repeat this to ourselves in order to remain strong in faith in the face of the ideological crisis that is tormenting the world and even affecting consecrated souls.

Our Holy Father Paul VI wants this year of the 19th Centenary of the martyrdom of Saint Peter to be a year of faith. What are we going to do in each of our houses?

When I heard ourselves reminded so often in Rome that the apostolate is only fertilized by our faith and the intimacy of our union with God, I wondered if we didn't have to reflect together on this.

Does not this apostolate of ours, which constantly requires us to adapt methods, to seek new forms and expressions, take too much precedence over contemplative life? Do our community meetings, our conversations, often enough aim to seek together to find ways to be more anchored in the Absolute, fixed in God? During the visits, Mother Josefa Ignacia and I were struck to hear the sisters say how much they regret that in community there is so little talk about the consecration values of our religious lives.

Our communities, we were told in Rome, must strive for a communion of persons that joins the Trinitarian life. It is simply to answer Christ's prayer: That all may be one as we are one. There must therefore be a certain similarity between the union of the divine Persons, the exchanges between them, and the union of the children of God in truth and love.

The *Perfectae Caritatis* Decree relies on many scriptural texts to remind us of this. As soon as God's charity is poured into hearts through the

Holy Spirit, the community, like a true family gathered in the name of the Lord, enjoys his presence.

Wouldn't our apostolate be deeply invigorated if more often, in community, we looked for ways to live more of Christ and be witnesses of his love? *The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* stressed that the apostolate must be exercised in the Faith, Hope and Charity that the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts.

May this Easter feast be for each of our communities a new awareness of our Faith, to revive it, purify it, consolidate it, witness it. Let us make our own the words of the Holy Father to express our total support: *We want to offer a profession of faith, individual and collective, free and conscious, interior and exterior, humble and frank. We want this profession to spring forth from the depths of all faithful hearts and resonate in the Church, the same in all and full of love.*

May it be for each other, our paschal wish, sign of our deep union in the living Christ.

Sœur Marie Denyse du Saint Sacrement r.a.

Fusion with the Sisters Gardiennes Adoratrices de L'Eucharistie

To the superiors

Auteuil

26 April 1967

My dearest Mothers,

I join you all with joy on this feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel, image of the goodness of God, says today's liturgy. And Saint Bernard reminds us that if, in tribulations, doubts, confusion of all kinds, we think of Mary and invoke her, we will not deviate... we will not fall... we will not fear... we will not tire ourselves. This is a text whose meditation is well suited to revive our faith in Mary on the eve of the month dedicated to her. *Lumen Gentium* presents us with the Model of the Church in the order of Faith, Charity and perfect union with Christ. Model of the Church, she is especially our model as Superiors, whose service is to form and make Jesus grow in souls. Let us frequently turn to her advice, she will teach us to see all the members of Christ in Him.

She has just told us about it in a very specific case that I want to talk about confidentially. This is the Congregation of the Gardiennes Adorers of the Eucharist, whose Mother House is in Orléans. Our first meeting took place in May 1966, when the Superior General⁷⁷ came to ask for some clarifications on the Federations and Mergers of the small Congregations. She was in talks about to reach agreement with an Institute. A few months later, she learned that this Institute was abandoning the work of teaching to limit itself to hospital works. Meanwhile, she realized that we were adorers and teachers, and she felt very inclined to get closer to us. She spoke to the Bishop of Orléans⁷⁸,

⁷⁷Sœur Marie Christilla.

⁷⁸Mgr Guy Marie Joseph Riobé, Bishop of Orléans (1963-1978).

whose mother is an old girl of the Assumption, about it and he strongly encouraged her. Some priests and religious as well. She then came back several times, saw the Mothers of the Council, brought her entire Council to meet with ours. We exchanged: Rules, Acts of the Chapter, Customary, etc. Shortly afterwards, we received the official request which ended with: "What you do to the least of mine, you do to Myself," Jesus said. We hope that you will be willing, and can receive it in the form of our small Congregation.

The Council's answer was in the affirmative yesterday. It is at Pentecost that the Superior General will speak to her 105 daughters, all of whom wish to merge with a stronger Congregation, but do not know that it is the Assumption. That's why this letter is confidential. You can give the news to the sisters, asking them to pray a lot for this intention, but recommend the most absolute secret.

The Guardians Adorers of the Eucharist were founded twenty years later by Bishop Dupanloup and Mother Therese of the Cross whose life Father Plus wrote (Éditions de Gigord). Of Ignatian spirituality, their religious life is strong, well structured; we do not understand why they have so few vocations. Since the beginning of the century, they have successively closed several houses in France and Belgium. They made a foundation in Pamplona, and another in Italy, in Como. In France, they still have two large boarding schools: Orléans and Marcq-en-Barœul near Lille. In Paris, a dispensary and young workers' home where they are in service, because it does not belong to them.

It is Christ, is it not, my dearest Mothers, that we will receive by opening our hearts to the Guardian Adorers of the Eucharist. They choose to die in order to live Christ more fully and serve him better in his Church. For the Assumption, welcoming them will be a grace of inner deepening. Our apostolate will also extend to regions where we wanted to find a place, in the north of France and in the north of Italy. A few days before April 30, let us ask Our Venerable Mother Foundress to make us receive her new daughters in a very ecclesial spirit of humility, charity and unity.

I am not extending this letter, but I will come back to you without delay in order to clarify with you some decisions of the General Chapter whose interpretation does not always seem easy to you. Today I only recommend that you seek advice from your Provincials before giving permissions that have never been given and that are not according to our Rules. You will thus be more sure to remain in line with the Church and the Congregation in these periods of experimentation when the right measure is difficult to keep.

I repeat again that it always costs me not to answer your letters directly, not to thank you personally for all the delicate attentions: prayers, memories, offerings, etc... which are so often renewed on the occasion of the trips of one or the other person to Auteuil. I know that you do not doubt the fidelity of my prayer and the union with each of you, with each of your houses, which I find in the love of the Lord Jesus to whom I entrust you with all my heart.

Sœur Marie Denyse r.a.

In the triple fidelity to our origins, in the Church, in today's World, where is for us, Religious of the Assumption, the adapted renewal to be continued: contemplative dimension of our lives; monastic observances; a sense of community.
Death of Mother Cécile Geneviève.

God alone

Auteuil

January 1968

My dear daughters,

What a breath of life comes through your letters, which are so numerous at the beginning of this year! I find there an echo of this wonderful post-conciliar grace that ferments in the Church in order to raise all the dough.

This is not done by itself, of course! The call to initiative, to audacity, to a creative spirit; the search for a new language, which embodies the word of Christ in the daily reality of each country, all this is very far from the convenient uniformity we have known!

But if uniformity is to be proscribed, unity always remains the goal given by the Lord. However, it is in a well-divided world that we must strive for unity. The world and the Church contest each other, Father Congar told the World Congress of the Apostolate of the Laity. How could we not feel this contestation on the double level of our consecrated life and our apostolate?

Father Congar⁷⁹ *also says, it is about something else and more, than adapting to his century, to being of his century. It is a question of assuming in Christ the material of the history of this century, of building the world in its reality as a world going towards God.*

⁷⁹Father Congar

Now this world, created for God, going towards God, a natural movement pushes it towards what is called secularization, laicization, desacralization. The Holy Father tells us that he is sad to learn that Catholic writers are calling for the disappearance of the sacred character of places, times and people. With all his authority as Pastor, he affirms: Your apostolate is the opposite of these currents and he calls the whole People of God to unite to re-sacralize the world.

let us feel how much this call of the Pope especially concerns us. Our Congregation was founded for this purpose: To restore everything in Christ. This is really our apostolic specificity.

To restore everything in Christ. This All that is ours. Saint Paul says so, but who, because we are Christ's, is also Christ's, must be brought to him, so that he, who is God's, may hand over to the Father his creation re-sacralized by us.

Weigh carefully the meaning of this All. How it engages our lives. During a reading, I noted this: The consecrated person must connect to God everything that crosses his gaze, everything that his hands grasp.

Much is said about the new way of looking at the world that Christians must take up. The Council told us: A look of joy and hope. Yes, but always to connect it to God, to restore it in Christ. There must not be in our lives on the one hand a look at God and on the other hand a look at the world. Our life is One, it is the Holy Spirit who makes this unity in us. A single gaze, a single presence, presence and gaze of Christ, which the Holy Spirit forms in us, and which lives with a single movement for the Father and for men. *Lend me your eyes, I'll put my eyes on it.* Through Mother Therese Emmanuel, we are called to this one look at Christ.

To religious sisters, Cardinal Suenens⁸⁰ said: You are the only Gospel that many people will read. They will not read the Synoptics, but they will read the living Gospel that is a religious in today's world. They must

⁸⁰Cardinal Suenens.

be able, by looking through the life that is there before them, to discover a message, as if reading the Gospel, a prodigious Good News. May they find someone, Jesus Christ; a living Jesus, contemporary with all, understanding them all, loving them all. Is this not what Our Venerable Mother Foundress tells us: *If it were lost, the Gospel should [still] be able to be read in the life of a Christian and, even more so, of a religious.*

Throughout all the continents where the Assumption is implanted, in the diversity of our insertions, in the material of the history of this century, are we aware that each of our lives is leafed through by those who look at us?

Can they find, through each of our lives, a living, understanding, loving Jesus?

I believe that, in all communities, the question of how to make the witness of our religious life readable is often asked. Nothing that makes up our life as Assumption Sisters escapes challenge: numerous communities, an exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, regular prayer exercises, silence of rules, common recreation, religious habit, monastic customs, etc., etc., etc... well, everything. We often talk about it in Auteuil where we receive echoes of what is being said or done everywhere, and where our young sisters help us to understand the aspirations of their time. We are also listening to the answers that God gives us, the signs that He gives us, by those who are watching us.

I would like to transcribe the letter of a young religious after a short stay:

...The days spent with you have done me a great deal of good. When I got there, I believe that God was about dead in my soul. But never have I felt so strongly the truth of Christ's Resurrection. Seeing the faith of all of you, full of youthful ardour, with your persuasive conviction, the Easter light came into my home and illuminated me more and more in the days that followed. Of course, it is Christ whom I must thank for this light He gives me, but how can I not also thank all of you, who were his instrument? Truly your example has convinced me that the most powerful means of apostolate for our time is to witness, not by words but by one's life, to the simple and radiant joy that faith in the Resurrection brings. And I think you do this in a wonderful way by showing yourself

as you are: simple without any artifice, women, young, full of enthusiasm. If you could always stay that way!..... Really you made me believe in the effectiveness of a testimony of religious life.

In a less elevated language, a visiting priest said to a sister in recent days: *I am impressed. Anything that gets out of hand everywhere, we find it here.* And he wants to send young people to see young people who are searching.

These two facts, to which many others could be added, can be compared to the instructions that Cardinal Veuillot⁸¹ gave in Rome, at our General Chapter: *Many lay apostles, holy priests, are tempted, in the name of the apostolate, to give themselves with feverish enthusiasm to action, to reach the level of men,... that your life be resolutely different, marks, recalls... Many human qualities nourished by the Gospel: smile, joy, simple charity, patience, presence, welcoming.*

I ask questions of our 108 Houses, from the many young communities in the formation houses to the mission posts, including our boarding schools, university homes and schools.

In the triple fidelity to our Origins, to the Church, to the world of today, where is there for us, the Religious of the Assumption, always an adapted renewal to be continued?

- In the suppression of regular spiritual exercises, leaving it to each one to decide the time, place and hour that suits her?
- In the suppression of the daily rhythm of prayer to replace it with the weekly or monthly rhythm?
- In the suppression of the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for a greater interiority?
- In the suppression of places and times of silence for a greater fraternal charity?
- In the suppression of the postulancy and novitiate. Every girl living with a community until the community finds her ready to

⁸¹Cardinal Pierre Veuillot (1913-1968), Archbishop of Paris from December 1966.

take vows?

- Or in a novitiate with two months of work as a housekeeper and two months of inner life?
- In the freedom left to each community to decide whether or not it wants a Superior?
- In the freedom to be able to dispose of a sum of money received each month as you wish?
- In the freedom for each sister to wear the religious habit or to wear plain clothes? etc....

Of all these renovations decided in the General Chapters, the news from several countries reports. Generally, the Congregations are praised for their boldness in emphasizing the essentials of the faith and for the universal value of this way of life.

The question is therefore raised, and especially to us, an apostolic congregation, but whose apostolate is exercised within a regime of life that is clearly contemplative and monastic.

Some of your letters also ask it, but it seems to me, without personal and profound reflection. This circular would like to provoke a personal and community reflection based on who we are and what our last General Chapter wanted to maintain: an apostolic Congregation, contemplative and monastic based.

Is such a Congregation valid in 1968?

A religious, called to Rome to work at the *aggiornamento* of her Institute, wrote to a postulant: ... *I am glad that you are in an Order where contemplation works in tandem with activity. Despite the headwinds... at the moment, I am convinced that this is a deep and excellent formula.*

Headwinds: I underline these words. Think of the parable of the Lord, the house beaten by the winds; the one that stands firm, the one that crumbles.

We are beaten by the winds. Let us be aware of this, let us not be afraid to say it. In almost all the articles on religious life, we read *of the 19th century Congregations that slavishly copied the monastic forms.*

This may be true for some Institutes. They are then right to renew themselves by getting rid of monastic forms that have no spiritual meaning for them: regular exercises, community life, silence, habit, etc.... But what about us? Read again the study on the letter of Our Venerable Mother Foundress to Father Gros, which was made for the 1965⁸² General Chapter. As Our Mother fought to keep us a monastic life form! She didn't copy servilely; she went against the flow. Would we be faithful to her by renouncing it?

Let us try to study the issue.

Let us first take the contemplative dimension of our life. What does it mean in our time, which places a strong emphasis on global presence and effectiveness? Can we justify the long hours given to prayer every day?

Many answers come to my mind, but it seems to me that one summarizes them all: our contemplative life is an affirmation of our faith. It simply affirms in our time that God exists and that He is God. That He, the Lord, the Almighty, the Savior, wants to reveal Himself to human intelligence; that He deserves to be sought, worshipped, loved for Himself. Do you know who I am and who you are? If you have this double knowledge you will be happy, God told Saint Catherine of Siena. *Our motto, God Alone, calls us to be contemplatives oriented towards the Absolute, for whom only the Face of God counts. You have seduced me, O LORD, and I have been seduced.*

To the priests of the post-Council period, Jean Guitton⁸³ wrote: "We need to have with us beings similar to us who, in their mediocrity and misery, embody the idea of the Absolute, prove to us by their presence that He can exist, that He is even closer to us than we think.

Jean Guitton said: We need it. Our contemplative life must respond to this need of our time. Our fidelity to seeking God in the night, in the length of time, wants to affirm that God is. Otherwise, if it is only for this life that we have put our hope in Christ, let us say with Saint Paul (I

⁸²Study by Sister Claire Madeleine, who died in May 1971.

⁸³Jean Guitton.

Cor. 15:19) that we are the unhappiest of men! Now, in their beautiful message to the Fathers of the Synod, the contemplatives, without hiding the fact that their faith can be affected by the temptation of atheism, wanted to bear witness to their happiness and wonder. Happiness that is in the encounter of personal love, in an experience of God who revealed himself and saved us, in order to make us participate in the dialogue of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

This happiness, I tell you first of all: may your fidelity allow you to taste it. Then, because we are an apostolic Congregation, I add: Share it with the world. Seek tirelessly how to bear witness to the world of a life centered on Christ, so that the world may feel concerned, called. Seek how to make the People of God - the closest, who works and lives in our houses, and the most distant, who is only passing by - discover that the primary purpose of life is to get to know God, to dialogue with Him so intimately that one day we will become a son according to his resemblance. Tell people that if they make this discovery, a new dimension of joy will be poured into God's people.

Do you think all this is important enough to justify the long hours given to prayer every day? As you can see, it is a question of being able to give an account of our choices to those who write: There is no longer any way of assuming our prayer every day. Isn't that a little hasty? For us, Religious of the Assumption, does our daily prayer life value or devalue our apostolate?

After the contemplative dimension, let us move on to monastic observances.

In a monastic-based Congregation, the day is organized in such a way that it is bathed from one end to the other in an atmosphere of contemplation and prayer. Silence, the austerity of regular places, the frequency of community exercises, penances, the habit, are means that a long tradition presents as favouring the search for God. They have the value of signs insofar as they are part of an attitude of listening to the Lord. This listening attitude must inspire all the activity: there is the interpenetration of contemplation and action. It is like a deep magnetization of the soul, which makes it available to let itself be grasped by God through each encounter with the neighbour.

Above all, you must be contemplative, said the Lord to Mother Therese Emmanuel, to see things invisible before things visible, Jesus before people. And you must remain at this height by acting... The sight of God in all things must illuminate your path.

The purpose of the monastic lifestyle is to illuminate the road by focusing attention on God, so that all things may be seen in Him. He wants to put the soul in a state of receptivity.

Isn't this attitude of listening and receptivity essential to the dialogue we talk about so much? Dialogue implies first of all listening to what the other person will reveal of himself. It is from there that we join him with our personal thoughts. Dialogue therefore requires the renunciation of assertiveness. The whole *Journal of a Soul* of John XXIII⁸⁴ teaches us that, to reach the world as an apostle, we must rediscover the essence of Christian asceticism: humility, gentleness, abandonment. We must listen, receive, before acting. All life can then take place in the form of a deeply personalized dialogue in the encounter with God and neighbour. It becomes, at the very heart of daily activity, a prolonged adherence to God's multiple calls.

Monastic observances are only justified if they lead to this renunciation of oneself for a more constant listening to God, present in all and in all.

Do they lead to it? Are they adapted to an era whose attention is not primarily focused on the Absolute, but on the self, concerned about achieving something? Is it possible for him to be attentive, receptive and open to the radiance of God present in all and in all?

Many of the apostles of our time, and the best, are carried away in an activity that is often feverish and anxious; they forget to give the apostolate its inner grasp.

Do you think that the Assumption, with its double movement of contemplation in God and openness to the world, has a readable witness to bear?

Of course, with the whole Church she will have to constantly purify her

⁸⁴Journal of the Soul, Spiritual Writings, John XXIII, October 1964.

face, so that through her the face of her Lord may manifest itself more perfectly. This is what the General Chapter has tried to do, this is above all what each of us, day after day, is called to do, in great inner fidelity, with great humility.

25 January 1968

I have reached these reflections with you, and I interrupt them to tell you that this morning, at 5:30 a.m., very peacefully, Mother Cécile Geneviève⁸⁵ entered into the joy of her Lord. She had the grace of total lucidity almost to the end, uniting herself with the prayer that did not cease. At 4:40 a.m., one of our priests came to bathe her soul one last time in the Blood of Christ with absolution and plenary indulgence. Her dear mother was there, valiant and painful. A circular will retrace this short life, but so fully given to God and the Assumption. What I want to tell you today is how much we have been touched by the assurance of your prayer so often renewed during these months of illness. We asked only one thing, the grace of seeing only the will of God in the "event", so much so that, whatever the outcome, we could say with Christ: Father, I give you thanks for the fact that You always answer me. Your prayers have given us this grace and the young people know that their Mother is still there.

Thinking of Mother Cécile Geneviève who had such a strong sense of community, I would like to end this circular by asking one last question:

Is common life, so beaten by the winds, a sign in 1968?

Does a community of fifty sisters, twenty sisters, five sisters, witness to Christ?

And first of all, what is a community?

⁸⁵Mère Cécile Geneviève, Geneviève de Miollis, born on June 6, 1937, entered September 1957, 1st vows on April 30, 1959, perpetual vows on April 30, 1964. Mistress of the Juniors in Auteuil, since August 1966.

Of course, they are not nuns who submit themselves to a regulation in a virtuous way! They are sisters who live together because they know they belong to the same spiritual family and love each other.

They are not nuns who live in bulk (sorry for the expression, I can't find another one, but it's in the dictionary!). So in bulk, hitting each other, hurting each other. Jesus died to bring us together in unity. It is always necessary to avoid bulk, and build the community.

It is not a team, or an easy solution to the needs of our time. A community is constantly being built in permanent asceticism, in the witness of fraternal love, in self-forgetfulness to accept the diversity of characters, functions and ages.

In a monastic Congregation, a Community must be the manifestation of the Father's great family, the first place where the new Commandment is lived: Love one another; where witness must be given to it: See how they love one another.

What must establish together a community of the Assumption is that each member has dedicated her life to God Alone to work to restore everything in Christ.

Knotted together fraternally, it is normal to share everything, what we have and what we are. Life review can help us do that. In a fundamental attitude of poverty, it is a search to discover the will of God, his calls, his action, in what makes everyday life. We then feel committed together, with the same duty to take charge of the community.

The revision of community life then becomes an authentic approach to the Lord, a constructive exchange of prayer and friendship, so that the bread is not only offered and shared, but according to the Gospel, multiplied.

It is a gathering around God present, leading to the Eucharist. Community prayer, especially Eucharistic prayer and the Divine Office, derives from this all its meaning, all its need for charity and unity. This is the highlight of Unity building. It is the most total expression of fraternity in Christ.

Of course, a fraternity in Christ does not conceive of itself as closed in on itself. It can only be conceived as open to all, welcoming, poor, inserted with the same simplicity into the most diverse environments of life, in communion with all, especially with the little ones and those who are farthest away. No matter how important the Institution in which we are engaged, our first apostolate can always be the radiance of charity and joy of a fraternal community, open to all.

But it would be too long to talk about the apostolate today. I'll save it for another circular. I would like to end this one with a quote from Father Daniélou, which is a bit like a synthesis of these long pages:

The intimate crisis of Christianity, if we want to go to the bottom, lies less in a lack of adaptation to the modern world than in the inner weakening of the faith... It is necessary...:

- *that this faith is radiant,*
- *that it tends to communicate to each other,*
- *that it wants to set the world on fire.*

There are too many Christians today who do not dare to proclaim their faith. They confuse certainty with triumphalism.

How she believes in it! said so many young people after interviews with Mother Cécile Geneviève. She believed in God, she believed in Christ, she believed in the Virgin Mary, she believed in the Church, she believed in O.V. Mother Foundress. And because she believed in this way, every creature was transparent to her from God.

Her short passage to the Assumption leaves a trail of light. Let us receive the reflection of it.

In such a great union of heart and soul with each of you and the whole Assumption of Heaven.

Sœur Marie Denyse
Superior General

P.S. This time I don't think anything will delay my retreat set for the first ten days of February. I am counting very much on your prayers.

For a Christian reading of the social events of May 1968 in France

Auteuil, 24 May 1968

My dear daughters,

The revolutionary turbulences that are reaching their peak in France these days are stirring in almost every country in the world. It is a Christian reading of the events that I would like to invite you to do. What does God, who leads history, want to tell us? What does he expect from us? How can we reach Him?

Read the *Sermon on the Mount* again. Not only the Beatitudes, but also what Jesus says about justice, charity and respect for others. Take it as you were told; get into it. Also read again N° 35 of *Pacem in Terris*⁸⁶, what John XXIII says about the Signs of the Times. It speaks of the effective respect of rights, of the faithful fulfilment of duties, of the love that makes everyone feel the needs of others as their own, that makes them share with all their own goods... etc....

May all this touch us closely; may it touch us closely in our personal lives, in our community life, in our life as a Congregation, in our apostolic life in our insertion into the present world.

On all this we must exchange among ourselves, inform ourselves, seek in the light of the Gospel how to live in fidelity to what God asks for. We need to talk to children, to their parents, to seek with them how to discern God's calls in the concrete events. Be careful not to say too quickly that it is a communist movement.

Young students, young workers from almost every country in the world, are demanding a more active education, a truer dialogue with their masters, the end of a competition that makes individualism possible, the change of an economic regime oriented solely towards consumption and production to the detriment of the Third World. Above all, they ask to participate in the search for new forms of tomorrow's society, and insist on sharing and responsibility.

⁸⁶Pacem in Terris : Encyclical of John XXIII (April 11, 1963).

Do these claims not have an undeniable human value? Do we listen to them with sympathy? In an attitude of dialogue?

Of course, there is hatred, violence and contempt for the opinions of others. Some leaders are driven by a sectarian ideology that is contrary to God and man. But let us not stop at mistakes, signs of Satan's action. Let us know how to discover the values, signs of God's action, and let us seek ways to welcome them into our own lives. To a young man who, with his comrades, was provoked to face a multitude of calls night and day, a priest asked: *Are you praying?* He had this wonderful answer: *We do not make long prayers but we try to live in reference to the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*

Let us understand that when a person, or a group of people, cannot make their voice heard because they lack intelligence and culture, lack experience of age, lack of wealth, lack of influential relationships, they feel they are considered as *something*, not as a person. Let us understand that then he or she has the right to revolt in the name of ~~her~~ *her* dignity. They have the right to shout to force the other to listen ~~to her~~, to be able to express their point of view, so that, in the confrontation of different points of view, the truth can be found.

It seems to me, my dear daughters, that I had to write this to you to encourage constructive reflection, in the concrete context of the events, each in your place. Our apostolic vocation is to Christianize the intelligences, to make it clear that *Jesus Christ wants to work in every soul, through every soul, for the coming of the Kingdom of God, and that each one enters into his plan to pray, to suffer and to act.*

Let us enter into this plan of God. Let us not only be spectators or judges of events. Let us commit ourselves with all our love of God and men, all our lucidity, all our humility.

Let us love them, all these people who are in conflict and, with the Lord, let us pray to the Father to keep them from evil.

Sœur Marie Denyse r.a.

To the General Chapter 1970: Chapter of *aggiornamento* and
Chapter of elections. Towards a new Rule of Life. News from
Africa

God alone

Auteuil,

25 January 1969

My dear daughters

The Provincial Mothers, on their return from Auteuil, will have told you about the General Chapter⁸⁷. The General Council has just decided on the place and date. It will be held in Auteuil and will be preceded by an eight-day retreat. The Capitulants must be there on June 3, 1970, because the retreat will begin on the 4th, at the first Vespers of the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

On the 13th, the retreat will close and the Chapter will be opened.

For our Assumption life, the months preceding the Chapter are of great importance: the Local Chapter and the Provincial Chapter will be the stages of our journey forward to realize the renewal of spirit and life to which the Church invites us.

These two steps will prepare the General Chapter which will be responsible for *revising the Constitutions, Directories and Customaries, removing what is outdated and conforming to the documents of the Council*⁸⁸.

⁸⁷The General Chapter will take place in Auteuil from August 8 to October 10, 1970, one year before the end of the mandate of Mother Marie Denyse and her Council.

⁸⁸*Perfectæ Caritatis*, n°3.

The 1959 Chapter gave renewed and completed Constitutions. *The 1965 one continued the work in order to promote spiritual renewal and thereby achieve, with prudence but also haste, an adapted renewal of life*⁸⁹. (E.S.II)

The Motu Proprio *Ecclesiae Sanctae*⁹⁰ lists the particular points to be renewed and adapted. It is good to recall them here to establish continuity between the 1965 Chapter and the one we are preparing.

1. Close participation in the liturgical life of the Church through the importance given to the Divine Office (II, 20).
2. Greater emphasis is placed on mental prayer than on vocal prayers, for a more interior and fruitful participation in the Mystery of the Eucharist and in the public prayer of the Church (II, 21).
3. The importance of penance and mortification, revisions of the penitential observances specific to the Institute and the adoption of new forms of penance (II, 22).
4. Search for new forms for effective witness (II, 23).
5. Renunciation of present and future heritage properties (II, 24).
6. Importance of common life, unification of ranks (II, 25-27).
7. Formation of the subjects to be prolonged, by adapting it, during the duration of the temporary vows (II, 35-36).
8. Development of the missionary and ecumenical spirit (III).
9. Review of apostolic activities and closure, in order to respond to the calls of the Ordinary and the urgent needs of souls, while respecting the proper character of the Institute (I, 36).
10. Close participation in the liturgical life of the Church through the importance given to the Divine Office (II, 20).

If the 1965 Chapter reflected on these particular points when the **Motu Proprio** had not yet been promulgated, it is thanks to Bishop Paul

⁸⁹Cf. Note, circular dated 19 March 1967.

⁹⁰*Ecclesiae Sanctae*, Apostolic letter in the form of a Motu Proprio, August 6 1966, Paul VI.

Philippe who kindly participated in our work and guided it.

But, taking advantage of the experience of these five years, the next Chapter will have to review all these points, modify them, complete them and adapt them. It will do so with the collaboration of all of you, my dear daughters; the whole Congregation must be put to work, according to the directives of Vatican II, of which I would like to remind you briefly.

1. Effective renovation and fair adaptation can only be achieved with the support of all members of the Institute. But determining the rules for renewal, enacting laws and authorizing sufficient and prudent experience, is the sole responsibility of the competent authority, in particular the General Chapters (P.C. 4).
2. For the renewal and adaptation of religious life, the main role belongs to the Institutes themselves, acting mainly through the General Chapters (E.S.II, 1).
3. For questions concerning the destinies of the whole Institute, the Superiors will consult and hear the members of the Institute in the most appropriate way (P.C. 4).
4. In order to prepare the Chapter, the General Council will take the necessary measures for a broad and free consultation of the religious and will draw up the results, so that the work of the Chapter will be facilitated and oriented. This can be done by consulting local and provincial chapters, organizing Commissions, sending questionnaires, etc. (E.S.II, 4).

My dear daughters, you see how important the work we are undertaking is. This requires from us a very great righteousness of soul: we must seek only the greatest glory of God and the true good of the Congregation. This good that we desire and hold out for, Scripture tells us that it comes from above, it comes down from the Father of lights. But we also know that God, in His mercy, gives all grace to those who ask for it with humility and perseverance, and who strive to correspond faithfully to it. In order to receive this perfect gift, let each Community choose the prayer and effort that will be offered, until the General Chapter, to obtain the grace of a generous renewal and adaptation of our Assumption life. Let us ask for it through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of

the Church, by offering Mass and adoration on the first Saturday of each month for this purpose. Supported by grace, we will do our work, undoubtedly humble, but fruitful for the Church, with joy and confidence.

I say our work because you will each have to work on the questionnaires. The answers will require time and serious thought. I advise you to give them after working:

- a) All the documents of the Council.
- b) Pontifical documents promulgated after the Council and concerning its application, as well as the Holy Father's speeches on religious life.
- c) The Acts of the 1965 General Chapter.
- d) And of course, *The Origins*, where we find the genesis of our spirit.

In reviewing these documents, I would like to draw your attention to the principles that are of paramount importance.

1. Religious life is above all ordained for this purpose: that religious follow Christ and be united with God through the profession of the evangelical counsels. It is therefore important to seriously consider that the best adaptations to the demands of our time will not produce any results if they are not driven by a renewal of inner life. We must always maintain the primacy of inner life even when we have to engage in external works (P.C. 2, e).
2. FOLLOWING CHRIST according to the model proposed by the Gospel, must be held by all Institutes as their supreme Rule (P.C. 2, a).
3. The very good of the Church requires that Institutes have their own character and function. This is why it is important to recognize and preserve what constitutes our heritage: the spirit of Our Venerable Mother Foundress, the proper ends of the Assumption, the healthy traditions (P.C. 2, b; E.S.12, a).
4. The very good of the Church also requires that religious life be purified from foreign elements and freed from the obsolete. What is obsolete is what does not constitute the nature and

- purpose of the Institute and which, having lost its meaning and effectiveness, does not really support religious life (E.S. 16:17).
5. Every Institute must share in the life of the Church and, taking into account its own character, make its initiatives its own and promote them with all its power. This is in the biblical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social fields (P.C.2,c).
 6. We must exclude from the Constitutions anything that varies according to the customs of an era, or that responds to purely local lifestyles. These rules, which depend on a particular situation, will be transferred to the customary rules (E.S.14).

To these principles, which seem to me to be the rock on which we must build, I would like to add the directives that the Holy Father gave, on October 21, to Congregations gathered in Chapter.

*...These are the desires suggested to us by the **general needs** of the Church.*

1. *The first of these needs is that the Church needs religious who, in the most intense way, lead an interior life. The more acute, urgent, tempting and seductive are the calls whose spirit and actions are invaded by today's world, the more necessary it is that there are men who know how to renounce these external solicitations, which are so strong and oppressive; who know how to judge them in reference to the profound demands of conscience, reflection and prayer; men who are willing to meet God in the silence of their spirit, a silence in which the heart opens and becomes welcoming.*

My dear daughters, weigh every word of this text: the first necessity - in the most intense way - the acute, urgent, tempting, seductive calls - men who know how to renounce - the silence where the heart opens and becomes welcoming. This quality of welcome so sought-after, see where the Pope places it. Let us meditate on this beautiful text in order to prepare ourselves to respond better to this first necessity of the Church.

The Holy Father continues:

2. *Nowadays, the Church wants to promote liturgical renewal so favourable to contemplation, especially because this renewal insists on two aspects of primary value that are unique to it: a greater importance given to listening to the Word of God, and a greater participation of the faithful in celebrations; in this renewal proposed by the Church, you can find abundant food for your spiritual life, and remarkable help to make your apostolate effective. If you support the Church's effort to make liturgical prayer authentic, beautiful, communal, you will help yourself to achieve the spiritual perfection that is appropriate to your state and you will better fulfill your role as educators of piety and prophets of God's people.*

In a circular last year, I asked the question: Are we concerned about sharing with the world the riches of our contemplative and liturgical life? Do we see this sharing as a remarkable help in making our apostolate effective?

Finally, the Pope points out the third necessity of the Church:

3. *The Church needs your joyful and balanced austerity. Can we imagine a religious worthy of the name granting himself the superfluous commodities of the world which, in our time, are even introduced into convents? Can we imagine that he would enjoy at his ease the profane satisfactions that we can hardly approve of, under the pretext that he must know or that he must be able to adapt to the people of our time in their concrete way of life? What authority will he have if, filled with the experience of concrete realities, he lacks a true spiritual experience and courage experienced by endurance in trials?*

My dear daughters, we ardently wish, ~~is it not so,~~ to contribute through our renewal to the revival of the holiness of the Church, to put ourselves at the service of her great needs. The synthesis of all the above was given, it seems to me, by Mgr Mauro, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Religious:

Religious renewal, urgently demanded by the Holy Spirit,

can only be carried out if each of us becomes, to the greatest extent possible, a great believer: if faith illuminates in our souls the eternal realities, and leads us to a total adherence to the divine will: to save men by resuscitating in us a long-lasting faith.

Let these considerations guide and support your thinking. I intend to come back to you regularly and answer, if necessary, any questions you may have, any suggestions you may have. The broad and free consultation requested by the Council sets no limits. To facilitate the dialogue, I will only ask you to put questions and suggestions on a separate sheet of paper - never during a letter - and to indicate the subject at the top. Do not be afraid of contestation as long as it tends to clarify ideas, and is constructive.

It is also appropriate to inform you now, my dear daughters, of a decision of the General Council that will change the nature of the 1970 Chapter. Since this Chapter will adopt texts that will be our Rule of Life, it must also be able to choose those who will be responsible for ensuring the application of this Rule. We, the members of the General Council, have decided to offer our resignation to the 1970 Chapter. Our renewal Chapter will therefore also be an election Chapter. It is important that you know this without delay since the election of delegates, at the local level, then at the provincial level, will have to take this into account. This decision of the General Council will prevent us from convening the Chapter in 1971, which was to be an election Chapter.

The Capitulants will probably not want to hold elections without thinking about our current structures of government. Also the resignation that will be offered to the Chapter will be effective when the Chapter considers itself ready for elections.

The next circular will give you all the details about the Local Chapter - which will be held as far as possible between August 15 and September 1, 1969 - and the Provincial Chapter which will be held during the Christmas holidays. Time is thus well shared to allow for a serious use of the results of the surveys.

This circular is already long, but I cannot finish it without telling you a word about my recent trip to Africa. It coincided, almost to the day, with the fourteenth anniversary of our first African foundation. Fourteen years ago, we arrived in Birambo so inexperienced, so poor in human resources, simply confident in God and in the Church, and strengthened by Bishop Bigirumwami's⁹¹ answer to our question: *What is the most important preparation? "All you have to do is love us. »*

Love calls for love. The foundresses, those who joined them, sowed love, and the harvest is there, so abundant! Thirty-three Rwandan sisters of perpetual vows, including a Mistress of Novices and a Superior, twenty-six sisters of temporary vows, twelve of whom are in the Juniorate, twenty-six novices and postulants. And seven houses with the most diverse works, from secondary schools to schools, dispensaries, parish apostolate, the secretariat of the archdiocese... and responding so well to new needs.

In Tanzania, two educational houses so well adapted to the formation of teachers, one sister of perpetual vows, four of temporary vows, four postulants in Auteuil and fifteen postulants in Mandaka.

In West Africa, where we have sixteen houses, vocations will not be so numerous, except perhaps in Upper Volta since three are already in the novitiate and others are preparing, while one Ivorian woman is in the Juniorate and the other has returned to Ivory Coast. And then, the great work of the Church that has been entrusted to us by the Togolese Sisters of Our Lady of the Church, which Mother Anne Bernard and Mother Anne Bernadette will soon have completed. Truly during these fourteen years, the Lord in Africa has done wonders for us. Of course, there were no lack of hard blows, nor failures, but it would be a denial of the Gospel to want to participate in the redemption of souls with success! In our chapels, where every day the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, our Bishops having allowed the Superiors to expose and return the Holy Host, I have

⁹¹Mgr Bigirumwami (1904-1986), 1st Bishop of Nyundo (Rwanda).

asked all our missionaries a lot for fidelity to this spirit of poverty, simplicity and charity that makes us expect everything from God.

Our prayers will be with Mother Josefa Ignacia who flies away on February 1st for the visits to Brazil and Argentina. And also Mother Cristina Augusta, from whom we have just received the first letter from Palai! But the visa was only given for three months and she had to promise not to take any action for an extension. So we pray that... others will do the work for her!

May the Holy Spirit illuminate our hearts and minds so that this great search that we undertake together may be a work of Light and Love.

Sœur Marie Denyse
Superior General

Reflections after the circular of 1969

Work to present each house: life of prayer, apostolic life and
community life of the community

God alone

Auteuil

10 March 1969

My dear daughters,

So many letters received, so many questions asked since the circular of 25 January!

I was a little committed to answering your questions, so this is where I will start, while not forgetting that this circular is intended to tell you about the Local Chapter.

Why do so many of your letters, after having said the relief of knowing that continuity is assured from one Chapter to another, express concern? *Why fear ruptures, the abandonment of contemplative life, the rejection of all monastic forms, the abandonment of boarding schools, the alignment with secular institutes, etc., etc.?*

Coming from all continents, these fears make me feel the similarity of situations in all countries: the priesthood, religious life, are going through a very strong crisis. The Holy Father often refers to it and denounces, with great lucidity and courage, excesses of all kinds. On January 15, he said: Novelty, novelty, novelty! Everything is in question, everything must be in crisis!..... It's a wind of madness that drives everything to turn upside down. But a few days later, on January 29, he also said: *The Church today manifests an extraordinary vitality that places our time among the most fruitful in its history. There is no doubt that in a Church so "contested" from the outside, so "tormented" from within, there is an immense reserve of goodwill and love.*

It is up to you, my dear daughters. What will you let yourself be pushed by when preparing for the General Chapter? By a wind of madness or by an extraordinary vitality to Saint Paul: Is my life Christ? Mother Cécile Geneviève said: The Assumption is Jesus Christ, period. So there is only one thing to do: give the Assumption a more meaningful face of Jesus Christ today! In your search, ask yourself over and over again: Do I want this removed so that the Assumption may be more meaningful to Jesus Christ? Would I like this to be adopted so that the Assumption would be more meaningful for Jesus Christ? If you do this, you will see how much your search will be done in serenity, trust and charity.

But again, feel free to write to me when you have doubts or when you hear amazing things. That's how I read in letters:

- ✓ *We are told that young sisters no longer find support for their religious life in monastic customs, and that even if they agree in principle, in fact they no longer practice them. A sister staying in Auteuil during the holidays said that no sister in the dormitory took the discipline.*

I would like this sister to write to me and give me some details, because, after information, this seems totally inaccurate. Mother Marie Sabine tells me that the making of disciplines is not discontinued! Sign that they are being used! That being said, I would add that the discipline is not a particularly monastic penance.

- ✓ *It seems that young people in the communities never make coupes on weekdays. So we are told that we must think of the Assumption that is coming up and not impose on the young sisters gestures that they no longer want and will not practice.*

I answer: Are the young sisters the only ones who do not make coupes in weeks? Do they find among the older sisters the example and stimulus that would support their efforts? During visits to the houses, it is sometimes pointed out to me that the coupes on weekdays are not faithfully made, but the young sisters are not implicated more than the others. Fidelity to the coupes is a sign of an inner attitude of loyalty to God and to the community. It is difficult: the mode of expression of this

loyalty may change, and your suggestions for the General Chapter will be useful. The community must help each other a lot on this point and search together.

- ✓ *Is it true that it is better to let each sister pray at her own pace? Some prefer to pray in the afternoon and not in the morning, others have enough for half an hour; others need an hour; some need much less. They say it's because human beings are entitled to respect. But is it the best solution to reduce the time of prayer because of the difficulties? Is not monastic life based on a common rhythm of prayer, silence and penance?*

To this I reply that the General Chapter will have to decide on our prayer life, that is for sure. But we must not forget the tendency of human nature to slide towards ease, and the tendency of our time to let itself be dominated by activism. Many Congregations of men and women who have suppressed the prayers of the Rule find that religious no longer pray and that this is the cause of so many painful defections. By choosing religious life in such a Congregation, we are choosing a Rule of Life that must support our steps in the narrow path of the Gospel. There is, at the basis of this choice, a recognition of our sinful being: I need support to reach Christ. This must apply first to what is most difficult, and therefore to the prayer life.

- ✓ *Is it true that the Office will be reduced, grouped, and that we will no longer have the Little Hours?*

Here again, the General Chapter will decide, but it is up to each of you to decide. Our Venerable Mother Foundress gave us the Breviary of the Roman Church. To mutilate it would, it seems to me, be an infidelity. The reform of the Breviary will be completed at the time of the Chapter, which will help in the choice of the capitulants.

- ✓ *Is it true that at the meeting of the Provincials, penances in the refectory were removed, and that other penitential practices will be removed at the Chapter because we have to adapt. We have been told so much about the meaning of everything in the novitiate that nothing seems useless or outdated, but when I say it, I am told that the Mothers may not respect our freedom*

enough.

I want to answer with the famous phrase: *Freedom, freedom, freedom*, that many things are said and done in your name! It is true that our time is terribly sensitive to conditioning. I would not be surprised if, as I read these pages, many of you wondered: Does our Mother have the right to condition the Congregation in this way? I don't know if it's a right, but I firmly believe it's a duty. At a time when we are under terrible naturalistic social pressure on all sides, those who bear before the Church the responsibility of keeping the Congregation faithful to Jesus Christ must say and repeat how they understand this fidelity. From one General Chapter to another, there are not two ways, there is only one: the one that the last General Chapter indicated. To not follow this path today would be to choose infidelity. The next Chapter, which is in your hands, will see what renewal is all about. But you must all prepare it, if you really want to serve the Church, in the sense that Bishop Marty, the Archbishop of Paris, expressed it so well: *Any renewal involves new demands, and never abandonment. It must be all the more demanding because it is more missionary; it does not belong to us; it belongs to the Church for the salvation of all men.*

This is what the Pope keeps telling the Congregations. The last circular quoted ~~you~~ from his November speech; today I quote ~~you~~ from the February speech, which you may not all know, addressed to four Congregations.

Renewal, while requiring a prudent and courageous adaptation of the Institutes to the needs of the present times, does not mean conformity with the spirit of the world. It will be a fervent and sincere search for everything that can better restore to religious life its true meaning of consecration to God. The work of renewal must preserve the distinctive features of the various religious congregations. This work must be carried out in fidelity to the primitive spirit and true traditions. Renewal must think of origins: a path is marked by its starting point. The tree lives from its roots. The example and

teachings of your founders will undoubtedly be your most vital root. In this way, you will be able to harmoniously unite the old and the new by letting yourself be inspired by the love of the Church, by the zeal of souls, by fidelity to the Vicar of Christ. You will safeguard the primacy of the spiritual life. Without this primacy, the most generous renewal effort would be in vain, and any program of pastoral activity would end up being fruitless.

Is this word of the Pope not the best conclusion to the answers to your questions?

I now come to the Local Chapter.

The importance that the Holy Church attaches to the consultation and cooperation of all the members of the Institute has prompted the General Council to propose the following: Instead of simply being an Election Chapter, the Local Chapter could be a three- or four-day community reflection on your House; and the election session would close. Who, better than the community, can think of their House? What is it? What it could be to better respond to its mission today?

Here, we should not hesitate to face up to the changes that are transforming the world; to seek how they provoke us in the very line of our apostolic religious vocation. This clearer vision of the world in which we live, of the environment in which the House is inserted, should enable us to situate ourselves better, in our own place as religious, in this world that is being built. It is on the basis of it that new forms of prayer, apostolate and common life can be invented; that a bold prospect can be formulated that knows how to break, when necessary, with outdated patterns (Plenary Assembly of the Bishops' Conference).

If we undertake this in the light of the Gospel, let us not be afraid! We will never exceed the depth of the changes inscribed in the Beatitudes!

You understand what a precious basic document this presentation of each House will be for the General Chapter, developed in a constructive way, in the light of the experiences and convictions of each community.

To unify the work a little bit, here is the plan I propose:

I - PRAYER LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY

- a) Personal: Does your dialogue with God during prayer hours continue with Him in work? in human contact? (contemplation in action)
- b) Community: Is it the center of community life? Are you working together to better express it?
- c) What do you suggest to renew and adapt the prayer life of the community in your house?

II - APOSTOLIC LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY

- a) Does the community feel solidarity with the missionary work of the universal Church?

of the local church?

What do you suggest to make it more so?

- b) Are all members of the community in solidarity with the specific mission of the House?

What do you suggest to make them more so?

- c) Do those who work in the House or benefit from this work feel committed to the Apostolic Mission of the House?

What do you suggest to make them more so?

- d) Is the apostolate of your House the one that seems to you to best meet the current needs of the Church?

What do you suggest, in fidelity to the purpose and spirit of the Congregation, to better respond, according to our possibilities, to the new needs and calls of today's men?

III - COMMUNITY LIFE

- a) Is it a sign of God's Love in the world through the attention given to each sister, fully recognized and loved in her own personality?
- b) Does your apostolic zeal focus first on your community?
- c) Do you express it through life revision?

- d) Is your community, as such, open to the local Church?
- e) Do you feel solidarity with other communities at the level of the Province and the Congregation?
- f) What do you suggest to achieve a more meaningful community life?

This work plan therefore proposes three themes for your consideration. Do you think you could communicate them, adapting them if necessary, to all the groups in the House: priests, teachers and auxiliaries, parents, students, and also former students who sometimes complain about being kept out of the life of "their House"? Many lights can be given to us by those who see us living from the outside. They can also make us hear new apostolic calls that we do not think about.

Only one community response will be written on each theme during the three or four days preceding the Local Chapter election session. It will summarize the work and specify, for each suggestion, the number of sisters who will take care of it. Care should be taken in this drafting, avoiding superficial or improvised answers; they should all be thought out and prayed for because of their importance.

It is also to ensure the active participation of a greater number of sisters that the General Council took the following decisions concerning the Local Election Chapter.

- a) All sisters who have completed two years of temporary vows have an active vote in the Local Election Chapter.
- b) All sisters of perpetual vows have a passive voice.

N.B. active voice = can vote

passive vote = can be elected delegates

- c) The community must have at least ten sisters with two years of temporary vows. Communities that do not reach this number will be grouped, by deliberative vote of the General Council, in such a way as to form a group of at least ten.

IV - NOTICE OF THE ELECTION SESSION

1. The *Veni Creator* and the *Sub tuum* will be recited in the choir the previous three days.

2. The election session will open with a short liturgy of the community's choice.

3. The Chapter is responsible for electing:

- a) The delegate to the Provincial Chapter, chosen from among the perpetual professed members of the community.
- b) A first substitute, perpetual professed.
- c) A second substitute, perpetual professed.

These cannot be elected, since they are members by right of the Provincial Chapter: the Superior, the Provincial Councillors, the Provincial Treasurer, the Mistress of Novices, the Mistress of Youth.

4. The secretary of the Local Council acts as the secretary of the Local Chapter.

The two scrutineers will be the oldest of temporary professions and the youngest.

5. Election of the delegate and two alternates. These three elections are held by separate and secret ballots, by an absolute majority of votes. This is how it works:

X The Capitulants have, in five copies, the list of the sisters of the community with passive voice.

X Each person places their closed ballot in an urn on the table. If there are sick people, the assistant accompanied by a scrutineer will collect her vote, in a closed envelope, which is opened in the Chapter room to put the ballot paper with the others.

X With all the ballots cast, a deputy returning officer counts the votes, reads each name and shows it to the Superior and the second deputy returning officer who points them out.

X If an absolute majority is not obtained in the first or second ballot, a third ballot is held to elect the person who has obtained the most votes. If there are two, the senior member of the profession is elected, and in the event of equal seniority, the senior member.

X The same procedure is followed for the election of the two alternates.

X If the Superior or the delegate is unable to attend the Provincial Chapter, the first substitute replaces her. If both are prevented, the two alternates replace them.

HOUSES WITH LESS THAN TEN SISTERS

They shall be grouped, by deliberative vote of the General Council, in such a way as to form a group of at least ten. The Provincial Superior will designate the House where the local Chapter will be held.

a) If the sisters of the grouped houses can go to the House where the local Chapter is held, the session will be as follows:

Under the presidency of the Superior of the House, the Capitulants will elect:

1. The Superior of one of the grouped Houses.
2. A delegate, superior or not.
3. A first substitute.
4. A second substitute.

b) If the sisters of the grouped Houses cannot go to the House where the Local Chapter is held, they will send their sealed ballots. This sending should be done early enough so that the votes can be counted at the same time as those of the sisters present at the local Chapter. They will be removed from their envelopes in the presence of the community and placed in the urn with those of the sisters present.

Each sister will send four ballots, each in an envelope marked:

1. Election of a Superior of the grouped Houses.
2. Election of the delegate.
3. Election of the first alternate.
4. Election of the second alternate.

For these grouped Houses, the relative majority of votes will decide on the election.

✓ In order to ensure the representation of all the Houses of the

Province in the Provincial Chapter, the 1965 General Chapter decided that the Superiors of the grouped, unelected Houses would participate in the Provincial Chapter, but would not have the right to vote.

- ✓ The list of grouped Houses will be sent in due course to each Provincial.

I end this circular, my dear daughters, with the words that complete, in our Origins, the account of the last days here below of Our Venerable Mother Foundress. On this March 10th, in many Houses, we will have liked to read it again:

The true spirit of the Assumption: an ardent faith, an unfailing hope, an ever greater love for Jesus Christ, the Church and souls.

May it be in this spirit that we prepare, together, the renewed Assumption of Vatican II.

*Sœur Marie Denyse
Superior General*

After the conference of Dom Jean Leclercq: Religious Life after Vatican II. Will the Congregation be composed of two branches?

Pentecost 1969

My dear daughters,

Perhaps you have read books or articles by Dom Leclercq⁹², who was an expert at the Council on Religious Life and Liturgy issues. He was kind enough to come and talk to us a few days ago, and he agreed to have his talk recorded. He spoke of the abundance of heart; everything he told us corresponded so strongly to the thought of the Church and the Pope at the same time as to the spirit of our Congregation that we took the text⁹³ and communicated it to all the houses. This can help our reflection and research by placing them at the heart of renewal: consecration to God.

I would like to emphasize one thing that struck me particularly, it is the distinction Dom Leclercq makes between apostolic celibacy and consecration to God in religious life. Read page 3 carefully. Then stop at this sentence: *...religious life brings limits to certain activities. This is where the difference lies between apostolic celibacy, oriented towards activities for which one puts oneself in good conditions, and religious life, which is a personal call from God to a total consecration to God... If one has not made this total gift, one is not happy.*

Do you see the difference? It is not about more and less, it is about two different vocations, two different consecrations.

If this has particularly struck me, it is because I have been thinking about it for a few years, and more concretely in recent months, by reading a

⁹²Dom Jean Leclercq (1911-1993), monk of the abbey of Clervaux (Luxembourg).

⁹³Cf. Text in appendix.

few letters and replies to the questionnaires. By schematizing, I could separate them as follows:

- Some insist that the Chapter should not remove anything from the exercises of our contemplative and community life (except of course what the Church will do in the reform of the Breviary), because they regard them as the means for a better missionary apostolate. When it is Novices or young professed who write, it is imperative: *Can you promise me...*

- Others believe that today the adaptation of the Congregation requires a reduction in spiritual exercises and community life, because they see it as an obstacle to professional duty.

As I said earlier, are these not two different vocations? I had already asked myself this question in 1965, and I had talked about it to the Capitulants. I had asked them if we could not consider the creation of a branch more oriented towards the apostolate than towards contemplation and community life. The General Chapter refused the proposal, so it was not God's time.

Could we not take it up again, in line with the teachings of the Council which tells us that to be traditional is to be creative, imaginative, inventor? We spoke about it in the General Council: to conceive an Assumption very deeply One with its two complementary branches, each community being established with sisters from the same branch. It seems to me that we would live more in the truth, and that is so important.

Read these pages of Dom Leclercq in community in depth; speak about them together; take them each in particular, pray and ask yourself what has been the concrete answer of your life so far. Then, in full knowledge of the facts, ask yourself what your personal option would be if the Chapter asked you the question. Again, this is not about more or less. It is simply a question of responding, after having benefited from all the insights of the Council, to your personal vocation.

We believe that this first survey is worth doing and will clarify the sometimes somewhat *ambiguous interpretations of religious life*.

Each will therefore want to answer yes or no to these two questions.

1. Do you think that the organization of the Congregation with two complementary branches would be a good thing:

YES NO

2. If there were two branches, would you choose

a) for the one who would have more or less the current spiritual and community exercises?

YES NO

b) for the one more oriented towards the apostolate?

YES NO

Signed:

A Superior writes to me that we are bending under the questionnaires! The answers to this one will not take long to write! Do not give them in a letter; just a note with both questions, yes or no, and your signature.

And may the Holy Spirit illuminate our minds and hearts.

Mère Marie Denyse
Superior General

On the next General Chapter and the question of the two branches

God alone

Auteuil

5 August 1969

My dear daughters,

These last few months were good when, because so many Mothers and Sisters came in such large numbers to Auteuil, each Province and even each House became so present. Your letters responding to the last circular often animated our exchanges by making them concrete. We noticed that, in the four continents, the questions that arise are very similar. We also noticed that, even if the paths envisaged differ, and they sometimes differ, our research goes in the same direction: the renewed Assumption. We all want it to be faithful to its past and very present in the Church of today.

This circular will find you immersed in the preparation of the Local Chapter. You know the importance of this community work. Each House will kindly send it directly to Auteuil, at the same time as to the Province, as soon as it is completed.

It is because our religious life, in each house, must strive to be an authentic response to the real needs of the world, that this work is important. I have been struck these days by some very strong words from *Gaudium et Spes* about what the world expects from us:

...The witness of a living and adult faith, that is, a faith that is formed to clearly recognize difficulties and is able to overcome them.

I underline two words: **formed**, it does not come of itself; faith is a gift from God, but it calls for our collaboration. **Capable**, and this will be to the extent that we know that we can do everything in Him who strengthens us and nothing without Him. The authentic response to the

true needs of the world depends on our authentic relationship of love to God.

This is what Dom Leclercq's talk expressed. Many letters say how much, by praying to God, the soul feels strengthened in its total and radical surrender to Christ. Other letters express their disagreement with this presentation of religious life, and especially with the words *doing things*. By the way, let me point out that these same words have been used in the same sense by the Lord: ... You are worried and agitated about many things, yet only one is needed. Read again the teaching of Vatican II on religious life, it is the same insistence. An instruction from the Sacred Congregation of Religious to the Superiors General, recently sent, also insists: The essential purpose of religious life is consecration. The apostolate flows from it, but it is not the goal.

I am convinced that the more the General Chapter renews us in a voluntary, total and radical consecration, which gives us the immediate grasp of God, the more we will be adapted to respond to all the calls of today's world. If I insist so much on this, circular after circular, it is because our presence in the world will be worth nothing if our presence in God is not renewed. If you read Paul VI's teachings in depth, you know how much he constantly brings us back to this. Why? Because what is disputed today is not the presence to men, but the presence to God. How often do your letters from all countries confide in me the sad results of this protest to which we have subscribed! So many defections, and even marriages between religious men and women! This very morning, a superior of America wrote to me: I have just learned of the marriage of a Father I know with a nun. This Father was good, although a little rebellious. His frequent and familiar relationships with religious sisters were for him an opportunity to be unfaithful to his vocation. I am afraid that in our country too there will be defections because of the Sisters' relationship with the Fathers. The young sisters see this as so normal and do not understand why they need to put restrictions. The slightest evil, and it is nevertheless great, is that these sisters are imbued with the ideas of a desecrated world... In recent days, in Africa, a Provincial asked for prayers for the parish priest of one of our missions

who married a religious sister, and for a newly arrived religious who, instead of her mission, lived with a man whose home she had broken. This is not sensational news spread by the mainstream press; it is about priests, religious men and women we know and love. This should encourage us to intensify our loving relationship with God. Cardinal Marty reminded us not long ago: The first service, I say even today the only service, is to be the witnesses of Jesus Christ. If we do not see the Invisible, if Christ is not someone, the friend we meet who has converted and shaken up our own existence, our service will be in vain, our efforts, our thoughts, our adaptations will be in vain. We must be able to say with Saint Paul: "It is no longer I who live, it is Christ in me. »

It is because religious consecration is first of all a radical relationship with God and because Our Mother Founder gave us a strong Christocentric spirituality that I hesitate before this definition of the religious that the Superiors of a Province send me after studying Dom Leclercq's talk:

The religious is a person who lives life fraternally, in a radical availability at the service of the human community, in a constant denunciation of all idolatry (which unjustly limits God in human existence) and in struggle against it, by virtue of her faith in the infinite God, Father of Jesus, lived as the immediate radical motor of her existence.

This definition seems to me to be more appropriate for a committed lay person than for a religious. It is more sociological than theological. It seems to me to be marked by the phenomenon of secularization that is invading today's society. Not the positive secularization which is the accession of man to a greater responsibility for his life, but this secularization which minimizes the relationship to God and the action of God because it maximizes the relationship to man and the action of man.

I think it's a matter of words more than thought, but it's so important that I don't hesitate to draw your attention to it. The call of authenticity of our time is an extraordinary grace. It requires a great effort of truth. Let us go to the end of this effort.

And I come to the two branches, since they are proposed precisely to

invite us to this effort of truth. The Congregation will give an authentic response to the real needs of the world through what we live and not through what we write in Acts or say. This is authenticity: being, living. To propose the two branches is to ask each one for a personal effort of truth. *What have I done for Christ? What should I do for Christ?* says Saint Ignatius in contemplation of Christ on the Cross. The survey asks the question between: the current spiritual and community exercises, taking into account of course the wonderful reform of the Breviary that the Church is preparing for us, or a reduction in these exercises in favour of the apostolate, for those who believe themselves called by the Council to a greater apostolic openness. Taking up the questions of Saint Ignatius, I make them concrete in this way: *How did I experience the current spiritual and community exercises? What does the Lord ask me to live, within the Assumption, if the Chapter proposes a reduction of these exercises for a more authentic response to the true needs of the world?*

A sister who rejects the two branches, who affirms that the Assumption without the choral office is no longer the Assumption, and who (her Superior writes to me) constantly misses the choir because she lets herself be taken by a thousand secondary occupations, this sister has not made the truth about her life. Or if she calls primordial the occupations that her Superior calls secondary, wouldn't the truth, for her, be to accept both branches? This divergence of appreciation between her and her superior, is it not a divergence of calls from the Holy Spirit within the Congregation itself?

Another replied: Two branches, no, but to be more appropriate, we should no longer say Matins and only have worship at the big holidays. This answer doesn't answer the questions asked by the survey. I insisted and I still insist on this. It is no less choosing or lacking in generosity than choosing the second branch if this choice responds to an effort of truth, to a call from the Holy Spirit. But I would add that not all Mothers share this opinion; some find that it is choosing less, while I find that it is choosing something else, and that both branches can be a new response to new needs, within the same Congregation.

What enlightens my personal thoughts, of course, are all your letters for several years. At the beginning of this circular, I told you that we were pursuing the same goal, but that we were diverging in the choice of means. We all want an Assumption faithful to the spirit of O.V. Mother Foundress and adapted to the Church of today. But the spirit of the Assumption is embodied in Rules, observances and that is where we diverge. I will speak clearly about the two questions in the survey.

For many of us, the spirit of the Assumption must remain incarnated in prayer, silence, the choral office, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed, all this in the wonderful spirit of Vatican II, which is a famous renovation.

But this life of prayer, in order to be lived with fruit, requires apostolic choices that are more oriented towards the deepest good than towards the most widespread good; perhaps it requires a renewal that is more focused on the opening of souls and hearts than on the opening... in kilometres (Of course, is it worth noting, it is not a question of cancelling the opening of the last Chapter on apostolic outings).

But in the face of all those who speak or write in this way, there are those who think that the demands of education and teaching today require much more openness and flexibility: these two words often come up again. They believe that the presence at current spiritual and community exercises (not to all, but as much as possible, as has always been the case) undermines apostolic effectiveness and prevents students from being given what they are entitled to. They think that our apostolate requires visits to the families of the students, the presence to the students in their leisure time: shows, swimming pool, sports, camps, etc. Some think that this is incompatible with current spiritual and community exercises, so they need to be lightened. And others think that in each community, some sisters less involved in the apostolate could take on the exercises. To these sisters, I reply that in our time we precisely consider this way of doing as a lack of authenticity. These reflections have sometimes been made: They say they have the choral office, but they are barely half in the choir... What can I say?

This is the direction in which the research, reflections and suggestions in your letters are going. It is by praying and reflecting on all this, on the

calls of Vatican II to respond to new needs, on pluralism, that it is a richness in the Church if it converges towards unity (Cardinal Renard), that it seemed interesting to me to make this survey among the whole Congregation. Survey, not to extinguish the Spirit (some see in both branches an obstacle to the opening of the whole Congregation), but to test everything, so that the Chapter, with your answers, may be helped in its mission to retain what is good.

We still have ten months to go. It is a true grace because time is changing and we will benefit from the experiences of some congregations. All over the place, during the meetings of Superiors and Sessions, you receive confidences. A few of them transmit them, and that helps us in our research. But the most reliable light, we will always find it in the Pope's word. You had his speech to the Novice Mistresses in April, to the Redemptorist Fathers in May, to the Trappists, to the Capuchins. Without tiring, the Pope reiterates what the Church and the world expect from Consecrated Persons and how our lives must witness that God is the source of all these loving relationships that men would like to establish among themselves.

Love relationships... The Sisters of the Third Year will tell you about the Focolare Movement. I will perhaps come back to this in the next circulars as we are so keen to share the grace brought by those who have come to speak to us. They do not make beautiful speeches about Unity, they make Unity, day after day, by learning to love each other as Jesus loved us. But what a requirement in the quality of love to give because the other is Jesus. And what a beautiful community work is proposed to us: to transform each House into a focolari = fireplace that illuminates and warms, is this not the best response to the call of our time?

Let us think about it when we prepare the feast of the Assumption.

May the Immaculate Virgin teach us how to make ourselves free enough like Her to be, like Her, possessed.

*Mère Marie Denyse
Superior General*

P.S. From August 25, Mother Josefa Ignacia will visit many Spanish Houses. The itinerary is not yet clear, but your letters to Madrid will always reach her quickly.

On Provincial Chapters. Reflection in view of the 1970
General Chapter. Explanation in relation to the
questionnaires

Auteuil

20 November 1969

My dear Mother,

You are now in the middle of the work of the Provincial Chapter. This circular would like to answer some questions asked by the Capitulants, transmit the thoughts of the Sacred Congregation of Religious on some important points, and explain the attached questionnaires. These questionnaires will be used both to establish the statistics requested by Rome (there will be no further report to be made this year) and to prepare the state of the Congregation for the General Chapter.

You will be of service by answering it as soon as possible, and in any case before December 31.

An important question is asked by some Capitulants: Delegated by their community, they ask what their attitude should be to the Provincial Chapter? (The same question will be asked to the delegates for the General Chapter).

The delegates must bring to the Provincial Chapter the requests and wishes of their community. In all exchanges, the working groups must express them and make the various trends visible. The purpose of the exchanges is to enlighten each other, and therefore to change positions.

But, when it comes to voting, whether it is a question of motions or the election of delegates, each one must think and weigh before God her answer; she alone bears the responsibility for it. Voting against one's conscience to please a Superior or a group of sisters would be a serious offence. This is quite basic and only wants to answer the questions asked. The minutes of the elections to the Local Chapters, with the many

tosses and turnings, are the best proof of a trained, and therefore free, electoral conscience.

And how many documents were included with the election results! The holding of the Local Chapters exceeded our expectations in seriousness, depth and variety of suggestions. The houses that were not afraid to launch a broad consultation with priests, parents, friends, students, did a great deal of good. The Provincial Chapters will exploit all this and summarize it for the General Chapter. We count on the Secretaries to make this synthesis a basic document for the work of the General Chapter.

It was with a view to this Chapter that Mother Erminia and I spent a good morning at the Sacred Congregation of Religious. We spoke at length with the Cardinal, the new secretary: Father Caston, a Canadian religious, and Father Gambari. While so much is being said and done in the name of the Council and the Church, it is necessary to go to the source to seek the true thought of the Church.

What struck us among the first leaders of religious life in the Church was both their lucidity and serenity. They do not deny the crisis, they affirm it, they denounce it. It's violent, painful... *Satan asked to sift through you.* But how we feel them clinging to the Lord's promise: *I prayed that your faith would not fail.* The Church's faith in religious life, far from being shaken by the thousands of defections, is strengthened. To a bishop who said to him: *If you do not accept some relief and relaxation, twenty thousand religious will leave the Convent,* one of the Fathers replied: *If they want relief, let them go, and then new vocations will come to you in numbers.* And the Father explained to us the confusion between religious life, secular institute, committed laity. It's not a matter of comparing, but you can't level it. Those who seek to level religious life and the Secular Institutes are bad shepherds. The Fathers believe that the crisis is abating, and we understand that a document on Apostolic Religious Life is being prepared; it would aim to give a theology of Religious Life by highlighting what should always distinguish it from the Secular Institute.

About the prayer life, we were told this: *It must be centered on the Eucharistic Celebration, but prayer must remain the rule.* Too much freedom on this point, given the weakness of human nature, is too great a risk. Congregations are made up of "sinners" and not "saints". About the liturgy: Certain Eucharistic celebrations made according to the fantasy of certain priests must be condemned in the most absolute way. The liturgy is the prayer of the Church, it alone can change it. The same is true of the breviary. There are some who want to make their prayer from the breviary every day. These transform the Church's public prayer into individual prayer.

About Community Life: *The bonds of charity unite the members of a community around the Superior, a centre of unity. A community without a superior is nonsense.*

On the base communities formed by sisters from different Congregations: It is very dangerous, we have already recorded disastrous consequences. Each religious must live according to her Rule and the spirit of her Congregation.

On the question: *obedience-responsibility*, whatever the apostolic commitment of a religious, she must live it in dependence on her Superior. It is not a lack of personality or a sense of responsibility, but rather it is a sign of maturity by affirming one's religious personality, which is not the personality of a lay apostle. And the Fathers told us how much it is necessary to study and deepen Chapter VI of *Lumen Gentium* in order to make the *aggiornamento* in the line desired by the Church.

About the apostolate: *The work of education, so important in our time when youth is so hardworking, must keep us in houses that are ours, where we live in community. There is a whole climate that is established by the presence and life of the sisters, which is missing when the sisters educate or teach outside.*

This is a faithful summary of the notes taken by Mother Erminia, which end with these words: *It is the preferential and absolute love of Christ that makes religious life. It is a choice that is constantly being made in all circumstances of life.*

This preferential and absolute choice of Christ is what we want the General Chapter to be, isn't it? Let us prepare it in the light of the Church's thought, without losing sight of what the cardinal told us when he dismissed us: *Have ideas, invent, do something new. The Church gives free rein to your imagination, enjoy it!*

A word now on the attached questionnaires

1) The individual questionnaire

It will make it possible to establish the very exact state of the Congregation as at 31 December 1969, and to draw some interesting conclusions.

The Episcopate of France asked the Union of Major Superiors a year ago to launch a vast survey that would be studied scientifically. The answers are currently being collected on the computer.

Our inquiry-Assumption is certainly much more modest, but it will allow us to situate ourselves better and to make our apostolic choices more clearly. Make sure that the answers are accurate and precise; not to mention those of the elderly or sick sisters who could not write the answers themselves.

2) The in-house questionnaire

It is also part of the survey. Again, accuracy is required; and it is not always easy!

3) The Capitulants will receive from the Provincials, either before the Provincial Chapter or during the Chapter, preliminary drafts to be studied concerning the government of the Congregation and the appointment to office. It is only a suggestive text. Reflecting on a text often makes it easier to put one's thoughts into practice.

It would be good if each Provincial Chapter could write down what it proposes for these two major questions and give the results of the votes.

One last reminder: You can easily guess what mail is like all these months. Those waiting for answers make the work easier by recording

the letter's questions on a separate sheet of paper or at the end of the letter. Thank you.

As soon as possible I will provide you with some documents that I think will help you. Some are made from the *Origins*, either on the charism of Our Venerable Mother Foundress, or on the foundation of our spirit. Another, very recent, is a statement by the French Episcopate on Christian Education and the Catholic School. This is the first statement of an episcopate, and it is valid for many countries, therefore also to help our research on our apostolic life.

This search, let us make it in communion of heart and mind with each other so that the Lord may be in our midst.

Mère Marie Denyse
Superior General

Echoes of the Holy Father's speech. To the Superior
Generals gathered in Rome for a Congress

God alone!

13 December 1969

My dear daughters,

You have already had, in the press, some echoes of the Holy Father's speech to the 550 Superiors General gathered in Rome for a Congress. What I am sending you is the complete translation of this speech, because, contrary to the usual protocol, Superiors General have been authorized to record the Pope's words on tape. And contrary also to what is done in large audiences, the Pope did not follow the prepared notes, but spoke of abundance of heart. You will see how much completer and more accurate what he said is than the written notes published by the press.

A few days before the renewal of our vows, it will be good for us to meditate on this essential aspect of religious life that will resist all crises. May we each receive this message from a filial heart, and choose without fear of engaging in a deeper entry into the Mystery of the Incarnate Word, so that our lives may be more His Life. May it be our Christmas wish and our prayer for each other. It is with all my heart that I ask for each one of you this grace to copy your life on that of Christ.

To this, I add two studies made by Mother Claire Madeleine on the charism of Our Lady of the Founding Mother and on the meaning she gave to the word "zeal" so often used. Your reflection will surely be helped, either before or during the Provincial Chapters. It will be good if these various documents remain accessible to all the sisters; they need to be studied at length and a quick reading together would not be enough.

Also to help you in your reflection and answer questions we are asking ourselves, I am transcribing this note taken from the Missal of the

Christian Assembly of the Benedictines of Bruges. The author thus presents the first reading of the second Sunday of Advent:

In his epistle, Paul answers the question of whether Christianity is a religion of "strong" in the manner of Pharisaism and Stoicism. Too many Christians, free with regard to practices (the "strong"), despise the brothers still attached to certain practices (the "weak"). To this attitude of all times, Paul proposes that of Christ.

This note struck me. It can make us think in the face of a very strong push, in many Congregations, for a Rule that is only spiritual, leaving each conscience free to determine the means of perfection that suit it. As always, perfection is right in the middle, and we will have to seek to achieve it.

In many letters, you ask me to express more categorically how I see the renewal and adaptation of the Congregation. I have given much thought and prayer to these requests. It seemed to me that first I had to let you express yourself and take responsibility. You have taken them from your answers to the questionnaires and from the local Chapters; you will synthesize them into the provincial Chapters.

When the reports have been sent to us, then the work will be done at the Congregational level and I will gladly tell you my thoughts. Many would like more details on the apostolate, what it must be to respond to new needs. But this is where you have to think locally and provincially. What I firmly believe is that:

- ✓ if we live it before all things that God may be loved and then the next⁹⁴
- ✓ if we love the Church and the Congregation filially
- ✓ If we remain in communion with the Centre of the Congregation and receive what comes with a disciple's heart then, a very vast apostolate is open to us, in the most authentic spirit of Our Venerable Mother Foundress, while remaining faithful to our

⁹⁴First words of the Rule of Saint Augustine.

specificity as educators.

But for us to keep this authentic spirit, I believe it is essential that we live the Before All Things... and then. It's not two movements, it's the same love. But a whole spirituality, from which Marxism is undoubtedly not absent, puts the horizontal before the vertical, man before God. This is what is most opposed to the spirit of Our Venerable Mother Foundress. The Pope expressed it with words that could not be more luminous. You know them, I will give them to you anyway at the end of this circular. It was in Bogota. The Pope said:

We have no other business to tell you than this:

In the name of Christ and driven by his intimate Love, make each and every one of you promoters of his CHARITY. Let yourself be filled, in the secret of your personal interiority, by his Love... And then make this Love overflow, ideally extend to the universal dimensions of humanity, and practically to the network of your family and social relationships. May the spark of love lit in each heart become a fire that sets fire to the community environment in which your life takes place. Make the Love of Christ the principle of moral renewal and social regeneration in this Latin America (and also in Europe, Asia and Africa), where we too have come to raise the flame of Charity: Charity that unites us at the supreme source of our salvation, and that transforms human society into a family of brothers, which is sorely needed to overcome its divisions and oppositions.

- Love is the principle,

- love is strength,

- love is the method,

- love is the secret to success,

- love is the cause for which it is worth acting and fighting,

- Love must be the bond that makes the ignorant, shapeless, disordered, suffering and sometimes wicked masses into a new People, a living People, an active People, a strong People, a united People, a conscious, prosperous and happy People.

Love, we mean the Love of Christ, his mysterious, divine and human Charity. And therefore the Love of God which is distinct from the love of men and transcends it, but which is its Light and Source.

We will live this year 1970 in this **Light**, and our Chapter will reflect it, if we drink from this **Source**.

*Sœur Marie Denyse
Superior General*

Participation of all the sisters at the General Chapter: to unite in a common effort for the Chapter. Simplification of the Beatification procedures. Questionnaire replies about the two branches

Auteuil

25 January 1970

To the Congregation

My dear daughters,

We are now in the third and final stage of the preparation of the General Chapter.

Everything you've expressed

- in your answers to the questionnaires,
- during the sessions of the Local Chapters,
- in the Provincial Chapters,

will be taken up, studied, classified, synthesized.

It is on the basis of all this that the General Chapter will be able to pursue its goal: To give us a Rule of Life that will express the renewal and adaptation of our Congregation according to Vatican II.

You are waiting for the names of those who will represent you all. We do not yet have those from South America, but in order not to delay our work any further, we ask Mother Marie of Nazareth to please communicate them directly to all the Provincials and Vice-Provincials when the elections are held.

Here is the list of the fifty Capitulants, twenty-three by right and twenty-seven elected, with an indication of age and country of origin.

[The list follows.]

These fifty Capitulants are of fourteen different nationalities. Europe maintains the majority with eighteen, but the other continents have made good progress with eleven for America, nine for Africa and six for Asia.

Upon receipt of this circular, you have the right to correspond with the Capitulants. It is up to each one to use this right in a spirit of service, to verify in prayer if, in the following of Jesus, she has the concern to say, to propose only what she hears from the Father. This is really what the Congregation expects from us for its authentic renewal.

As I look for ways to unite in a common effort, I stop at two thoughts:

1. Our gaze on Jesus: he had only one desire, that each person should discover the love of the Father, believe in it, live by loving all his brothers and sisters. Jesus did not take sides with anyone. He spoke of love that comes from God and unites all those who believe in Love. Let us try to live this deeply in community; let us not try to classify ourselves or others as conservatives or progressives; they are the people God loves, far above and beyond the categories. Let us try to love each other, to carry each other's burdens together. Each community can see how to specify this effort and how to support it.

2. Never has it been more necessary for us to listen to the Holy Father's word, to take literally the promise of Jesus to Peter and his successors: whoever listens to you listens to Me, who despises you despises Me. Let us live of the Church, in the spirit of the Council, whose Acts we must study without tiring. May each community see how, together, they can seek and find, in the Pope's words, an ever new Message of Truth, Hope, Youth and Joy.

Message of joy: this first month of the year brings us one, long awaited. A telephone and then a long letter from Mother Erminia informed us of the implementation of simplified procedures for the causes of beatification. The Preparatory Congregation and the General Congregation are abolished.

So here's where we are now.

Miracles must be studied by four theologians. These theologians are secret. The Postulator, Bishop Federici, who knows them well, is full of hope. These four theologians are working separately, two by two, on the enormous issue of miracles. They then meet to vote.

If the vote is favourable, everything is submitted to the Congregation, the Cardinals.

If the Cardinals ratify the theologians' decision, the Pope, by decree, promulgates the beatification.

How long will these various deliberations take? It is too early to predict this. May our prayer, all of faith and humility, hasten the much desired day of beatification, and may our life be all to Jesus Christ and the extension of His Kingdom.

In Him I remain so united with you.

*Mère Marie-Denyse du Saint Sacrement
Superior General*

Here is the result of the survey on the two branches:

1st question: Do you think that the organization with two branches is a good thing?

= 508 yes

= 704 no

2nd question:

branch a: 1192 options

branch b: 5 options

About a hundred ballots: no opinion.

IN PREPARATION FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

First: a paragraph announcing the Chapter, Special Chapter and Chapter of elections and the date of this Chapter.

In its *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae*⁹⁵, Vatican II highlights the two fundamental points regarding the General Chapter:

- 1) The General Chapter must promote a new impulse in the spiritual and religious life (art. 1).
- 2) All the activities of the Chapter must really be the concern of all the sisters (art. 2).

It is therefore first and foremost a vital impetus. Our Chapter, dealing with adaptation and renewal, will only succeed if it leads each of us to a religious and apostolic life lived more deeply.

What we expect from the Chapter, does it not help us to live in a state of permanent renewal? What will this renovation consist of? *Perfectae Caritatis* gives us the line: *the adapted renewal of religious life includes both the continuous return to the sources of all Christian life as well as to the original inspiration of the Institutes, and on the other hand the correspondence of these to the new conditions of existence* (P.C. n°2).

Thus the renewal brought by our General Chapter should not be an adaptation giving way to all the relativisms of the present, but rather the dynamic continuity of the vocation providentially traced for us by Our Mother Foundress. For the only fidelity to her primary inspiration is for each Congregation the guarantee of her presence valid for the people of

⁹⁵Cf. Circular, March 19, 1967, note.

today.

The presence of our Assumption in the present world will therefore be made valid by its permanent capacity to adapt, without losing anything of its fidelity to its origins, that is, its specific character.

And since the Chapter must be the work of all, it is therefore up to each of us to seek, under the gaze of God, after having prayed and reflected for a long time, how to enter more deeply into the form of life willed for us by O.V. Mother Foundress: contemplative apostolic life. This must be our sole objective in answering the questionnaire proposed to us.

✽✽✽✽

Only the Assumption sisters sanctify the Assumption. Our Congregation will be what we who compose it, who are its members (M.T.E. Vol. I, p. 109).

I think very strongly of the degree of obedience, poverty, charity, humility, attachment to the Congregation, which each one will need for the Congregation to live. For this to happen, each one must work for the glory of God of which she must be the instrument and not for this house, this place, this work.

✽✽✽✽

Practical observation: The questionnaire is personal and each sister gives her name. The questionnaire is addressed to mature people who take full responsibility for thoughtful answers under the gaze of God and in complete freedom. Simply answer each question with a yes or no in the column provided. It is also desirable that the sisters make suggestions. To this end, they will add a sheet to the questionnaire, and write their suggestions preceded by the number of the question to which they relate.

The answers are sent directly by the sisters to the Provincial Superior and remain strictly confidential.

Your Name:

Your age:

Your years of Profession:

Province :

Country :

House :

QUESTIONS

I. CONSECRATED LIFE

The vows are like the three lines of strength on which our consecration is based in order to be fully realized.

It is created as a spiritual movement of stripping oneself, of material goods by poverty, of the heart by chastity, of our own will by obedience.

This makes sense only for the purpose of possessing God; only God can justify what seems foolish to men (S. Guillemin).

A - CHASTITY

Consecrated virginity is pure openness to the Lord, in joy, hope and charity.

A special communion with the cross and the resurrection, she is entirely faith and hope, and expects nothing but from God.

Pure charity, she speaks to men, announces to them the coming of God, and through her communion at the Cross of Christ, saves them. For, by marrying Christ, the virgin also consecrates herself to humanity in view of the Kingdom of God.

It is therefore in this theological perspective of availability and universality that we must live our consecrated virginity.

- 1) Do the prescriptions of the Constitutions and the Acts of the last Chapter effectively help you to free your heart to make it fully available to the love of Christ, and thus also to the service of all?
- 2) Is your apostolic devotion to your life of consecrated chastity:
 - a support?
 - a stimulant?
 - a balance?

- a call for more loyalty?
- a cause of difficulty?
- 3) The sign (of chastity) is joy, because joy manifests the fullness of a fulfilled love (S. Guillemin).
Do you think we give the impression that we find joy in our gift to God and souls?
- 4) Do you find that the family climate of the Community, of the Congregation, is a support for your human balance?

B – POVERTY

My Lord Jesus, as he will soon be poor, the one who, loving you with all his heart, cannot suffer to be richer than his Beloved... I cannot conceive of love without a need, an imperious need, of conformity, of resemblance, and especially of sharing all the pains, all the difficulties, all the hardships of life. To be rich, at ease, to live gently with my goods, when you have been poor, embarrassed, living painfully with a difficult labor, for me, I cannot, my God, I cannot love so (Charles de Foucauld).

- 5) Do you think the standard of living in your Community is:
 - good?
 - too high?
 - insufficient?
- 6) Do you find that since the last Chapter your community has better understood what sharing means and is pursuing this research on the plan?
 - of housing?
 - of the food?
 - of the heating?
 - facilities for comfort?
 - about the use of the money?
 - of time use?
 - of the use of energy?
 - of work performance?
 - of sharing household work?
 - traveling?

- relaxation?
- magazines and books?

7) Do you think we are giving a visible testimony of poverty to the people of our time?

8) Do you think that you personally practice evangelical poverty on the following levels?

- use of material goods?
- use of your time?
- work?
- personal culture?
- detachment of objects for your use?
- dependency on your superior?
- a sense of the common good?
- concern for the development of your personal competence?

9) Would it be good for the sisters to know more concretely the material difficulties of the workers, the small employees, the poor? (very concrete suggestions to this question 9 would be very useful)

10) While lay people are often forced to accept the work that comes their way, do you feel available to accept:

- any job?
- any change?

11) It is necessary to have devotion to this word that Saint Ambrose said about the Blessed Virgin: "It was not in the uncertain riches and goods of the world that she placed her trust, but in the prayer of the poor. "Each of us is poor. It is in prayer that she must put her trust. I ask you all to pray very much. The goods of the world, human support, a certain prosperity, this is only an apparent security, it must not be our support; our support is in the prayer of a truly poor and deprived soul (O.V.M.F. 28/10/1881).

Do you think having a poor soul is:

- to be off-center?
- recognize and accept your limits and those of others?
- welcome the event as a sign from God?

- live in the nakedness of faith according to God's will?

C - OBEDIENCE

Our Constitutions ask us to be: *the faithful members and submissive wives of the One who was obedient until death and death of the Cross.*

The General Chapter (1965) called the Congregation to this fidelity. He calls us to enter into a conception of obedience which, far from being a heavy burden, will be a communion with the Agape of the Father in Jesus.

He asks all of us, Mothers and Daughters, for this conversion of heart that will unite us in the sole search, made together, for the will of God (Acts of the Chapter p. 65).

The principle of obedience is to always have in our hearts the desire to be only one will of God expressed, the desire to do only one thing in this world, the will of God (O.V.M.F. 24/08/1879).

May religious (...) submit with reverence and humility to their Superiors, according to the rules and constitutions, in a spirit of faith and love towards the will of God, bringing the forces of their intelligence and will, all the gifts of grace and nature to the accomplishment of orders, and to the execution of the tasks entrusted to them, in the certainty that they work for the building of the Body of Christ according to God's plan (P.C. n°14).

12) Do you know how to take responsibility for the direction given by obedience?

- in your job?
- in your apostolate?

13) Do you have the impression of conflicts between obedience and duty of state?

- on a frequent basis?
- in an exceptional way?

If so, would you like to give concrete examples at the end of the questionnaire.

14) Our form of religious obedience requires us to be accountable to the superior for how we carry out our duties, jobs, responsibilities. Do you see this?

- as a call to religious dependence?

- as necessary information?
- or only as a control?

15) Is it easy for you to explain your difficulties or seek advice from your superiors?

16) Do you feel free to correspond with your Major Superiors?

17) *O.V. Mother Foundress translated, in gestures that are specific to us, her reading of the Gospel in which she contemplated the obedient Christ.*

To study his actions, in order to see if the asceticism and the renunciation they entail are educational of our charity today, so that in each one God's love is refracted, this is what the General Chapter wanted to do (Acts of Chapter 1965, p. 66).

Among the obedience practices and customs in use in the Congregation, are there any that no longer seem to value your religious obedience?

(if so, it would be a good idea to explain at the end of the questionnaire.)

One of the things that must take us out of ourselves and enable us to aspire to Jesus Christ is to want only Him, that is obedience. Obedience is the great stripping of oneself by which one gives one's will. When one simply and perfectly obeys, one walks in the way that leads to Jesus Christ (O.V.M.F.1886, p. 417).

II. LIFE OF PRAYER

Dear daughters, you want to be faithful mirrors of Christ, to imbue yourself day after day with the Gospel, to meditate on it, to live it in your communities and to assimilate it ever more deeply through silent adoration under the Eucharistic species in order to bring the beneficial light to your task as educators and all the works that you animate with zeal and generosity in the mission countries.

It is also, nourished by the loving contemplation of the Lord that you can bear his radiant witness around you (Paul VI to the Religious of the Assumption, 10/11/1965).

18) In your religious life, do you tend to maintain a balance between your prayer life and your community and apostolic activity?

19) Are your difficulties coming:

- a lack of spiritual formation?
- of excess work?
- concerns and preoccupations not addressed?
- of uncontrolled sensitivity?
- a too natural need for activity?

20) Is the spirit of prayer sufficiently promoted in your community by:

- the care given to the beauty of the liturgy?
- silence and contemplation?
- poverty?

PRAYER AND EUCHARISTIC LIFE

If it is the spirit of the Council to attract ever more faithful to Eucharistic worship, first centered on the Mass, to direct them towards the fullness of its mysterious meaning of prolonging the sacrifice of the Cross, the fact remains that the adoration service must remain very much alive and very effective.

The Word, the Word itself made flesh that resides in the tabernacle, invites those who worship it with faith to dialogue. The whole ecclesial community receives its life and love from this permanent centre which is the very person of Christ. Adherence to this presence ensures the unity of the Church with Christ (Paul VI).

- 21) Do you find that the prayer done together in the morning supports your prayer life?
- 22) Does the Eucharistic mystery have an important place in the life of the Church?
- in your spiritual life?
 - in your community life?
- 23) Is your personal conviction that adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed is part of our Eucharistic spirituality strong enough not to be shaken by the objections made to you?

SPIRITUAL READING

- 24) Spiritual reading is a means of ongoing religious formation. Are you aware of this?
- 25) Which books do you prefer?
- spirituality?

- Sacred Scripture?
 - doctrine?
 - lives of the saints?
 - spirituality review?
- 26) Do you consider it your duty to deepen in the Community the conciliar documents in order to better respond to the Church's expectations?

OTHER EXERCISES

27) *True devotion proceeds from true faith, which leads us to recognize the eminent dignity of the Mother of God, and urges us to love this Mother with filial love, and to continue imitating her virtues (Eccl 67).*

Does your love for the Blessed Virgin express itself

- in your personal life?
- in the life of your community?
- in the apostolate of the house?

Are you humbly seeking to revalue the Rosary that allows you to concretize your Marian devotion and makes you penetrate the mystery of Christ?

- 28) Does the exercise of the Way of the Cross, recommended by O.V.M.F., help you to enter into a great generosity in following Christ?
- 29) Are particular examination and examination of conscience a support to you in your following of Christ?

MONTHLY RETREATS

- 30) Does the monthly retreat allow you a real spiritual recovery?
- 31) How do you see the retreat of the month?
- a time to read?
 - a time to think?
 - a time to pray?
 - a time to update your inner life?
 - a break from ordinary life?
 - a time to update your notes and papers?

32) Are you helped by a regular spiritual dialogue with the Superior?

Are you preparing it in a spirit of faith?

III. COMMUNITY LIFE

What is specific to the religious community is that it is based solely on supernatural charity. Other communities, while they may be animated by Christian charity, are founded on a natural bond: the family is constituted by bonds of alliance and kinship, the nation results from a proximity of territory, race or mentality, and a desire to pursue together temporal well-being. Religious community is formed on the basis of the common consecration to the Lord; the bond is fundamentally supernatural (J. Galot).

It is good for sisters to be together; because, virginally, they love Christ when they love others, in the one Christ (Bishop Renard).

33) Is community life for you a help, a spiritual support?

34) Do you feel like a family there?

35) Is the spirit of the community missionary?

36) Are the most frequent causes of community clashes and discomfort:

- the lack of fraternal charity?
- lack of organization?
- excessive work?
- lack of time to think and reflect?
- generational differences?

37) Do you feel personally responsible

- of the spiritual climate of the community?
- fidelity to the exercises?
- of the beauty of the liturgical exercises?
- of accuracy?
- silence?
- mutual respect?
- discretion?
- mutual trust?

You must attach yourself to each other and look at each other as

members of the same body. Where will members be more united in serving Jesus Christ than in religion? One walks for the service of religion; another teaches for the service of religion; one speaks, the other is silent and suffers in sickness, it is for the service of religion; another cooks or cares for the house; another watches over the children; all this is for the service of the same religious body of which Jesus Christ is the head and which the Blessed Virgin has adopted: Jesus Christ looks at these nuns as made to his body who work in various ways to do the work that religion proposes (Spirit of the Assumption, p. 135).

- 38) From what sources do you draw your faith for the common life and the strength to assume it?
- Eucharist?
 - Liturgy?
 - Sacred Scripture especially Gospel?
 - Writings of the Congregation?
 - Sharing of spiritual and material goods?
 - Concern sharing and responsibility?
- 39) Do you participate personally and actively in the life of the community?
- 40) Do you spontaneously help each other with the usual work of the community?
- Fraternal charity which is dialogue in evangelical sincerity, in an attitude of poverty, that is, of exchange, in mutual trust, through peaceful self-control, the humble and loyal search for truth, which makes us listen to others and accept the part of truth they bring us (Acts of the Chapter, 1965, p. 100).*
- 41) Do the commented readings allow you to have exchanges between you?
- do you express yourself easily?
 - do you listen to others?
- 42) Have you made any attempts to review your life, to reflect on your apostolate, to share the Gospel?
- are you satisfied with it?
 - From this, are you concerned about establishing a scale of values and updating it according to the circumstances?

43) *...the escape from solitude, or, at the group level, the Order's rejection of its regime of silence and distance from the world, actually constitutes a kind of betrayal of contemporary humanity. By escaping the cathartic regime of solitude, we renounce one of our specific missions: to precede our contemporaries, tragically isolated, in their desperate search for God (Walgrave, p. 208).*

Do you believe in the positive value of silence in community life?

44) Do you work to acquire evangelical attitudes?

- reception desk
- kindness
- forgiveness of offences
- benevolence in judgments
- sharing

The daily rules will always be established in such a way that, apart from the time devoted to spiritual occupations and work, religious have moments at their own disposal and that a suitable part is made available for relaxation (Eccl. S. n° 26).

45) Do leisure and holiday times allow you:

- to grow up
- to relax
- to physically recreate you
 - intellectually
 - spiritually

Do you have any suggestions?

46) Are radio and television used for a greater openness to the different problems of the Church and the world?

Do you think the use we make of it is:

- well-balanced
- overstated
- insufficient

47) Are you happy with the current form

- of daily recreation?
- of the one on Thursday?
- of the great recreations?

OBSERVANCES

The purpose of observances is to help us in our search for love of God. Attention must not focus first on the actions and words to be observed, on a state of things to be maintained, but on the transcendent realities that are reached through them.

And these realities, penetrating into us, arouse in our soul a movement of charity that opens us to the Lord, to our neighbour, to the community.

I would never hesitate to prefer, to a greater freedom of action, the fatigue and subjection of the daily practices that bring us back to the spirit of our state, so to speak (N.V.M.F. Origines I, p. 490).

48) In addition to the great monastic observances (places and times of silence, station before the Office, blessing of the Superior, etc.) which are the framework of our religious life, would you keep:

- afflictive penances?
- the penances in the refectory?
- kiss the ground?
- to bow down?

49) Should the Coulpes Chapter be kept in its current form?
(Read the Acts of the Chapter, p. 105)

50) Do you consider the religious habit as a sign for today's world?

IV. APOSTOLIC LIFE

In the present order of things, from which new conditions for humanity flow, the Church, salt of the earth and light of the world, is called more urgently to save and renew every creature, so that everything may be restored in Christ and that in him men may constitute one family and one people of God. (Ad Gentes, 1).

This is religious life: living for Jesus Christ, living for the Church. A religious of the Assumption must live for the glory of God, for the service of God (O.V.M.F. 1885, p. 263).

Continuing education

At both the individual and collective levels, the religious, where she is, must bring a professional value; (...) Like all her contemporaries, the religious is obliged to update her knowledge, to be subjected to what has been called education, ongoing formation (S. Guillemin, p. 196).

- 51) Do you know how to take advantage of the learning opportunities that daily life offers?
- 52) Do you continue to deepen your professional formation?
If you don't do it, is it a lack:
- of time?
 - of resources?
 - of peace of mind?
 - of personal initiative?

APOSTOLIC WORKS

53) *Missionary duty is rooted in the will of God. The Church has a duty to carry God's message of love to all nations (Acts of the Chapter, p. 170).*

Do you think that the missionary orientation of the Congregation is satisfactory?

54) *In order to fulfil the mission entrusted to it by the Lord who founded it, (...) the Church must take care of the whole of man's life, including his earthly concerns, insofar as they are linked to his supernatural vocation (Gr. Ed. 3).*

Are you convinced that, in our time, the work of education and teaching is a real means of apostolate?

55) The last Chapter gave some enlargements regarding outings and meals with lay people. Do you think this experience was positive?

56) Would you like more freedom in correspondence

- family
- professional

V. GOVERNMENT

Through responsible and active obedience, they (the Superiors) will lead their subjects to actively help them in the performance of their duties and the initiatives to be taken. They will gladly listen to them and call upon their collaboration for the good of the Institute and the Church, reserving the right to decide and prescribe what to do (P.C. 14).

57) For greater participation in the government of the Congregation, what do you propose at the local - provincial - general level?

(answer at the end of the questionnaire)

58) In your house

- do the officers have enough concern for effective participation with the other sisters?
- Is the integration of the laity into the work done in a fairly structured way?

The religious who accepts to share her responsibilities with her professional colleagues, the one who knows how to step aside, to withdraw before the influence of another religious or a lay activist, has a soul of the poor.

She who, in many encounters, knows how to listen, admire, receive as much as she gives, has a soul of the poor. The one who knows how to accept the conditions of the apostolate in which she finds herself: places, persons, situations, that one has a soul of the poor (S. Guillemin, p. 37).

TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER 1970

The circulars become real questionnaires on the different aspects of religious life at the Assumption, questionnaires to which all the sisters are invited to respond: these answers commit the future and their seriousness testifies to this conviction.

Analysed by the Superior General, they relaunched the reflection, while the hope of the Beatification of Mother Marie Eugénie, whose date was constantly delayed by the uncertainties of the progress of the Trial, grew. We pray for the Cause, wishing that the Beatification could take place at the same time as the General Chapter, planned for Rome. It will not be so, it will have to wait until the happy day of February 9, 1975!

In 1968, Fusion, prepared through exchanges, with the Sisters Guardian Adorers of the Eucharist or Sisters of St Aignan, whose Mother House is in Orléans. The path was retraced in *Études d'Archives* n°6 in 1998, for the 30th anniversary.

In Auteuil, between 1971 and 1974, the buildings were extended by the construction of the Cenacle, in order to accommodate the growing number of sisters and the growing number of lay reflection groups to which the house was increasingly opening.

Life is here...

In 1970, the Congregation seemed ready for the Chapter of *Aggiornamento* requested by Rome.

It is in this perspective that Mother Marie Denyse and her Council are resigning with a view to a new stage: the election of a Superior General and a Council, and the elaboration of a Rule of Life *ad experimentum*, based on plans already prepared.

Sister Hélène Marie Bories will be elected 6th Superior General, with a Council now forming a community.

The Rule of Life written in 1970 was revised at the 1982 General Chapter and approved by Rome on February 9, 1983, the anniversary of the Beatification.

In view of writing a new Rule of Life

Auteuil

25 January 1970

TO THE CAPITULANTS

Dear Capitulants,

The names of two of you are still unknown to us, but the General Council considers it necessary not to further delay the organization of our work.

First of all, a few precise dates that will allow you to decide on your plans.

The Chapter retreat will begin on June 4. It will be directed by Father Poelman, Belgian, professor at *Lumen Vitae*. He knows the Assumption of Belgium and Rwanda well, and Auteuil a little, since he gave a session here last year on the Gospel of Saint John.

On the 13th, the retreat ends.

On the 15th, the Chapter sessions open.

We must fix the date of the elections without delay, in order to inform the Cardinal of Paris who must preside over the election session of the Superior General. It seems to us that between the 15th and 29th we will have time to finalize what concerns the Government of the Congregation?

Before the elections, we must also have time to get to know each other and consult one another. The General Council proposes that all the Capitulants arrive in Auteuil between May 25 and 30.

In addition, as in 1965, we wanted a large group to come and participate in the last preparatory work. Each Province and Vice-Province will therefore have to choose, between its two and three capitulants, the one that will arrive in Auteuil between May 1 and 5.

From now on, how to organize our work?

Let us not lose sight of the fact that we no longer work for our respective Provinces. This work has already been done by the local and provincial Chapters. Through the Acts of these Chapters, it is now a question of retaining the thought of the Congregation and seeking to express it in a Rule of Life.

Each Provincial should send as soon as possible, to all Provincials and Vice-Provincials, the Acts of their Chapter. Some Mothers of the Council think that the results of the votes have not been sent: for more objectivity, they should be studied during the General Chapter, each provincial explaining the universal or relative meaning of these votes.

The work of the Chapter is therefore very precise: to give the Congregation the little book that will be its Rule of Life. *Perfectæ Caritatis* tells us that it must contain:

The evangelical and theological principles of religious life and its union with the Church; an adequate and precise formulation that recognizes and safeguards the spirit of the founders, their own intentions and healthy traditions, all of which constitute the heritage of each institute (P.C. 2b).

Ecclesiae Sanctae specifies that the union of the two spiritual and juridical elements is essential to ensure a stable basis for the fundamental codes, to imbue them with an authentic spirit and to make them a Rule of Life (P.C. 12-13).

Feel free to tell us how you would like the work to be organized:

X Commissions within the same Province?

X Interprovincial Commissions?

X Who appoints the members of the committees? etc...

But we are asking each Province and Vice-Province today for the following work:

1. Table of Contents of our Rule of Life (question already discussed at the Provincials' meeting).

2. Writing, in the style you find most appropriate, of the first chapter: The Evangelical and Theological Foundation of Religious Life, the Assumption.

3. General Government, Provincial government, Local government.

Try to send the answer to the first question within eight days; this will be a good starting point for the choice of Commissions.

All those who wish to do so can do their work in their own language.

Speaking of Unity, a religious expert at the Council told us a few days ago: The decrees of the Council must be promulgated unanimously. At the first presentation of a diagram, there are so many confrontations, so many oppositions! Then, through meetings, exchanges, dialogues, we see the action of the Holy Spirit who gathers.

Echoing this, I have just read in a sermon of Saint Augustine: We are on our way from plurality to the perfect unity of God. Love must therefore unite us so that, with one heart, we follow the One.

As we begin our journey together, dear capitulants, let us ask one another for the grace to continue without leaving the "One" gaze.

*Mère Marie Denyse du Saint Sacrement
Superior General*

Certainty of Beatification for October or November⁹⁶.
Projects for the preparation.

God alone

Auteuil

6 March 1970

My dear daughters

We have just had a very important meeting of the General Council because, this morning, a letter from Rome announced that the beatification of our Mother Foundress in October-November is a certainty. The statement coming from the Postulator, Bishop Federici, we can let joy and thanksgiving invade our hearts, without fear of disappointment.

Bishop Federici has a fear: that we are not ready. But you're all here, and by putting all of us there, the work will be done quickly. This morning's Council therefore asked itself a first question: Are we going to hold the Chapter on the date set?

All in all, we voted no. Too many Capitulants have come from far away. They cannot return home in August and return to Rome in October. It will therefore be necessary to make the Chapter coincide with the beatification, either before or after. We will set the date as soon as the date of the beatification is known.

The second question: How to organize the work? The Council replied:

By calling on all the Houses.

This is the work in which you are all called upon to collaborate.

1. On the day of the beatification, two large paintings of Our Mother are to be displayed, one inside the basilica and the other outside. They're about nine by seven meters. Two painters do the work;

⁹⁶ It will be renewed a few years later.

Mother Erminia saw them. They do beautiful things. But they like angels and clouds a little too much. So that's what we're asking you for these two paintings.

- a) To the Glory of Bernini. She must represent Our Mother alone, about 3 meters high, in an attitude to go to heaven. We need to be able to recognize it.
- b) Artists can create a sketch (not a similar painting) but a sketch, with the attitude and environment they would like. Perhaps we can propose, for example, Our Mother looking at the Virgin of the Assumption, who would be at the very top of the canvas.
- c) The one from the outside can characterize the life of the Foundress. For example, Our Mother sits, surrounded by children of all races, looking at or showing them the Blessed Sacrament.

We hope that the presentation of the sketches to the artists will be able, without hurting them, to get the angels and clouds removed.

2. It takes thousands of images, ordinary, in color, to distribute to the crowd. If the paintings are successful, the images can reproduce them. But here too, we call on the creativity of our artists. Send us sketches or images made, that you have composed with good photos, or images of saints that you like.
3. Behind the image will be printed a prayer that we can compose. This prayer can be addressed either to God: Lord God, in your goodness you have filled with gifts, etc... or to Our Mother: O Blessed Marie Eugenie... We can compose it with texts from Scripture, or words from Our Mother. It should be characteristic of Our Mother's spirituality.
4. There is no proper Mass for the Blessed Women; the texts are those of the Common of Virgins; but the Prayer is proper, and we can compose it.
5. Brochures of 20 to 50 pages, in the languages of the countries where we are, should be distributed with the images in the basilica. The text may not be the same in all countries. It must present the new Blessed. You can compose this brochure. If you prefer, you can expect a text that we can send fairly quickly and

that you will have translated, even if it means adding an insert characterizing the works of the Assumption in the country. The Provincials of the countries of the same language will agree among themselves to see who will be in charge of publishing.

6. It would be necessary to have a life of Our Mother in all languages.

This, my dear daughters, is a hasty task in which you are all called upon to collaborate. What must be done in a hurry are the sketches for the paintings and images. As soon as you have something, send it to Auteuil. If it could be within a week of receiving this circular, it would be perfect. The rest, also in a hurry, can wait until the Easter holidays.

Bishop Federici is in charge of everything related to the relics. It takes about twenty large reliquaries for the Cardinals and personalities. About a hundred and fifty smaller, and ten thousand medallions with relics. The Bishop asks that the reliquary for the Holy Father be made in Paris. If you have monstrances or sacred vases in your homes that are not in use, and you can send them to Auteuil, it may help us. The reliquary must be made of silver.

The old Houses, founded by Our Mother, may have photos or projection glasses? Even if it's very old and discoloured, it would be good if everything were centralized here right now, to help the choices. The photos that we prefer are those where Our Mother sits, where she reads, where she is older, with such a peaceful and deep look.

As far as possible, it would be a good idea to stop the pilgrimages or end-of-study trips planned for this year, in order to go *en masse* to Rome in the autumn. Each house will see the best it can. In order to facilitate the participation of as many sisters, students, former students and friends as possible in the beatification, we will probably organize a short trip and a longer trip. But it's too early to talk about it.

Everything in this circular is not official, it must be talked about outside the Congregation as a "great hope". It is so that we are ready that Bishop Federici asks that the work be done now. Only the Pope's decree will make the announcement of the beatification official.

The Chapter, the beatification of Our Mother Foundress, is a double call to live in fidelity to our life as Assumptionists. Fidelity to Vatican II, fidelity to Our Mother, that is one.

It is well all the thought of Our Mother that summarizes the n°6 of *Perfectæ Caritatis*.

Those who make profession of the evangelical counsels must above all seek to love God who loved us first, and must strive, in all circumstances, to nourish the hidden life with Christ in God: a source from which springs forth and in a pressing way, the love of others for the salvation of the world and the construction of the Church.

May our ascent towards Easter make us all progress in a love of the world that wants to join that of God: He loved the world so much that He gave him his only Son, this Son who, to save us, made himself obedient until the death and death of the cross. Our love of the world must lead us there. Let us ask particularly for this grace for each other on March 19 in thanksgiving.

*Mère Marie Denyse
Superior General*

God Alone

Auteuil

6 de marzo de 1970

ALAS PROVINCIAS

My dear Mother,

We would like to hear your opinion on two questions we are asking ourselves:

1. Date of the Chapter. Two possibilities:
 - a) Before the beatification, which would close it. Some Mothers of the Council wonder if the work of the Capitulants would not be disturbed by the organization of trips to Rome, the cases that would arise in their Province or House, the preparation of the ceremony, etc. They think that the Provincials will want to be in their Province to see to everything.
 - b) The Chapter would follow the beatification, and would be held either in Rome or Auteuil. In both cases, the presence of one Capitulant per Province one month before the Chapter is maintained.
2. If we are allowed a certain choice, do you have a preference for the date of beatification? We must think of the students and teachers we would like to see in Rome.
3. The majority of the answers on the way of working before the Chapter are for work within the Province so that exchanges can be facilitated.

The next circular will therefore give the various commissions by Province, with the possibility of exchanges, of course, from one Province to another, especially when working on the same subject. In the meantime, try to write the first Chapter requested in the previous circular, at least one per Province.

M.M. Denyse, Sup. Gén.

On the preparation of Beatification. Reading an article by Father Mogenet, sj, on the "aftermath of the General Chapters". The renewal that the General Chapter prepares.

Auteuil

12 April 1970

My dear daughters,

Since the last circular, how can we not be touched to the bottom of our hearts by so many letters received, so delicate, so good, so full of love for Our Founding Mother, by so many spontaneous gestures of generosity, so many sending of drawings, sketches, prayers, precious objects. May everyone find, through this circular, the thank you that I would like to be able to say to everyone. The Assumption of Heaven, which is rapidly enriching itself these days with what that of the earth is losing (Sister Josefina Isabel, Sister Maria del Transito, Sister Bernard de Jésus who was the oldest sister, Sister M. Lourdes) must look at us with love.

The responses to the consultation regarding the date of the Chapter require, almost unanimously, that the Chapter be back from Rome. I say to the return, because we keep it at Auteuil. In the middle of the school year, the house in Rome does not have the necessary space.

We still have to wait before we can set the dates. Mother Erminia is the most active link between Bishop FEDERICI, the artists and Auteuil. She's not unemployed. All the sketches you sent are in Rome, and we hope that the artists, very good," says Mother Erminia, "will be able to draw inspiration from them.

Some communities have had quite heated debates about reliquaries (I say passionate because here and there, there was a rumour that reliquaries should be made of gold). We have no doubt that you think like us, some

write. It made me think. And once again, I am amazed to see how naturally the Lord sends us the answer when it is to Him that we ask the question in prayer. The answer came to me through these words of the Pope found in an old newspaper that was lying around. I quote: We must honour holy relics, authenticated by serious evidence. They were, for a time, living members of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, destined for a glorious resurrection.

A few days later, at Mass, the Word of God was: What is the point of this loss? We could have given the price to the poor. The Lord to answer: It is a good deed she has done for Me. And a song made us proclaim: We are the body of Christ... for the glory of the Father.

My answer to the question asked is, therefore, once again, that the Lord does not look at what we do, but at the love with which we do it.

Seeing fragments of gold and silver, precious objects that had long been in cupboards or safes, arriving in Auteuil, I tell myself that if all this is sent with love, in praise to the glory of God, for it is his glory that is celebrated in a beatification, the Lord says of us: They do a good deed for my body.

I also tell myself that at a time when so many criticisms and slanders are levelled against Rome, the most filial and humble attitude is that adopted by great spirituals such as Voillaume or Loew: Many, many things have already changed in Rome, the rest will follow. The Pope's answer to someone in a hurry who asked him what to do is also significant: Do as I do, be patient.

Resignation, some may think? Is it not rather the following of Jesus who was silent, in union with his passion which continues in his Body which is the Church? You see that the real answer cannot be written, it is in the heart of each of us.

It is also in our actions. Do we not spend, sometimes a little quickly, much more than reliquaries, without asking ourselves the question of hunger in the world?

Another question asked in several letters: Couldn't we have perpetual professions on the day of beatification? Mother Erminia asked the question to the Sacred Congregation of Divine Worship. A favourable answer, but since it is likely that other Congregations will make the same request after us, we must speak to the Pope about it. An official letter has been requested from us, we are waiting for the answer. May our young sisters who have to choose this year to follow Christ to death obtain this grace.

A few letters are already talking about travel arrangements. We still have to wait. A commission will be appointed in due course. You have to try to group everything together in order to get better prices, so don't take isolated steps. But suggestions will always be gratefully received. One recommendation only: to facilitate the work, give your ideas on a separate sheet, and one sheet per subject, example: travel, prayer to Our Founding Mother... etc. I thank very much the Mothers who are so faithful to note on a sheet of paper apart from the questions that need to be answered. When there is a lot of mail, it makes the work much easier.

Music and singing artists must also be alerted. Our Mother Foundress would need a beautiful cantata. Perhaps also, in addition to "*Monte, Assumption*"⁹⁷ another rhythmic song? Search, compose. One or the other has already thought about the beatification mass. Send us your ideas.

The joy of the beatification and its preparation do not make us forget the Chapter that will follow. The first circular to the Capitulants asked a question on the organization of work and one on the Table of Contents of the Rule of Life. The majority of the responses request provincial commissions to facilitate meetings and consultations, and also the participation of all the houses, according to what the Provincials will organize in their respective provinces.

⁹⁷ Song composed by Sister Anne Chantal (Elisabeth of the Visitation) of Montlebert, in 1960, for the Centenary of Bordeaux.

The Table of Contents projects are more diversified. While, of course, bringing together the same essential subjects. To better coordinate the work, here is what the General Council thinks:

- a) Send to the Provincials a standard Table of Contents
- b) Request that the Provincial Commissions work on each Chapter and send their draft to Auteuil.
- c) The General Council will take up all the submissions, take into account as much as possible what has been expressed, and will in turn send a written Rule of Life to the Provinces. It is on this Rule of Life that the Provincial and her commissions will work, add, subtract.
- d) Sending the work (a) to Auteuil, where a Central Commission, which will then be organized, will draw up the final text to be discussed and voted on in Chapter.

It would be good if work (b) were sent by mid-June, and work (c) by August 15.

I have not yet studied the Acts of the Provincial Chapters in depth, but enough to admire the serious work that has been done before, during and after. A comparison will be interesting to establish between the answers to the major questionnaire, the Acts of the local Chapters and those of the provincial Chapters. It will help us to discern the thinking of the Congregation, and therefore to guide the work of the General Chapter.

The reading of an article by Father MOGENET S.J., on The Future of the General Chapters (these were male Orders), brought me a lot concerning the strong points not to be neglected in the Chapters. I will give you some notes taken during this reading.

1. About the 'return to basics'.

The work accomplished has not always given all the desired fruits, because it has not gone beyond the founders, to their sources, to the spiritual masters who formed them. We are all descendants of the Desert Fathers. Master branches and twigs have grown from this unique trunk. It is also insufficient to study the Rules to revise them as if they had been

formed and developed in a closed circuit, under the immediate and unique influence of the Gospel and the first community of Jerusalem. All the heritage must be inventoried.

2. About Perfectæ Caritatis, No. 2.

The same questions were asked: Who are we by our origins and history? What mission did we receive? How can it be fulfilled in today's world and Church? In this rediscovery of one's own identity, it is necessary to note the inadequacies of the theology of religious life; some intimidations, in the face of the contestation of turbulent publicists, mean that the meaning of consecration, the evangelical foundation of the vows, is not sufficiently asserted, hence the embarrassment and imprecision about the "separations" that the vows imply.

3. About Poverty and its current forms.

Here too, there is a lack of a fairly precise doctrine of evangelical poverty. When incurring an expense, a religious will not dispense with the authorization required by his Rule, but he will know that permissions and control are not sufficient to justify his conduct. No Superior can exempt himself from questioning the Gospel and from knowing that he is responsible before God for the freely dedicated evangelical fidelity.

4. About Chastity.

The austere anchorites of the desert have left us beautiful examples of filial piety. Religious profession must purify and not extinguish the deepest affections of a human heart. Yet, life following Christ requires a separation to which the Chapters may be less attentive. How will we follow Christ who left his mother and his family in Nazareth at the beginning of his public life? What do we mean by the words of Jesus: "Who is my mother and who are my brothers? Let the dead bury their dead, will you announce the Kingdom of God?" When legislating on the relationship of religious with their families, many Chapters have rightly softened rules that are too strict, but have they clarified this question in the light of the Gospel, as religious of the past have understood and lived it?

5. About obedience.

There especially, the Chapters lacked deep theology. In what sense does the superior "take the place of God, of Christ? "How is he anything other than a managing director, a team leader, a group leader? The foundations and specific characteristics of religious authority and obedience are not clearly formulated. The community and each of its members have to constantly discover how to follow Christ. The superior guides this search without reserving it for himself: he needs the enlightenment of all, just as religious cannot do without his discernment and decisions. This is why revisions of community life in which the will of God is sought are multiplying. But all this does not make the adult religious. So many pre-Conciliar religious who were less concerned than we were to become adults or to appear so, were admirably so in structures where their vigour found support, a stimulus, an exercise.

6. About the presence in the world.

Religious want, together with the Church, to be more present in the world that it has the mission to evangelize and sanctify. It is necessary to adapt the Institutes to the men of today, to get closer to the poorest, the most abandoned, the dechristianized or unbelieving masses. Questions arise: to be more supportive of the poor, should we participate in trade union and political struggles? Contribute to Social Security organizations or rely on community welfare? In professional activities, how to depend on Superiors? These three questions raise another one: do not some efforts for a better presence in the laity lead to a secularization of religious life, that is, to its suppression? The Chapters saw the danger; they tried to hold both ends of the chain firmly. But here again, however, a theological vision of the mission of the laity and of the religious was lacking. The silence and vagueness of some chapter directives call for a deepening. In various fields, would not a "worldly" mimicry that satisfies in the short term, probably through group pressure and for reasons of presence in the world, not prepare in the long term a slow degradation of religious life, as has been seen several times in the history of the Church?

7. About the growth and accomplishment of the person.

The study of man has become of prodigious interest in the accelerated mutation of present history. Hence the rise of the human sciences: psychology, sociology, anthropology. Everything that helps us to know man becomes precious for truth and action, hence the importance of the human sciences for the renewal of the Congregations.

8. B

ut the norms of holiness, witness and apostolate come from Christ in the Church. With Christ, the Church "knows" man and his vocation in total Love of God and neighbour and in the eternal vision of the Trinity. Therefore, with Christ, she speaks, not of blossoming, for the word has many instinctive ambiguities, but of holiness and asceticism and union with Christ: "The will of God is your sanctification"; "If anyone wants to be my disciple, let him renounce himself, take up his cross every day and follow me"; "For me, to live is Christ and death is a gain. »

However, the human sciences tell us nothing about this evangelical gift that we must accept as a "revealed", an "unveiled" to mankind through a free gift from Christ. Religious, by virtue of their vocation, have a mission in the Church to be witnesses of the Christian vocation to holiness. If such a vocation were omitted or minimized by insisting on the human sciences, which are very legitimate in their order, it would cost the vitality of the Church dearly.

My notes end here. It is time for the circular to end too. It is long and very serious. Because Father MOGENET's study seemed to me to be very enlightening, I wanted to give you the essential information. This is a bit of an expression of what I noticed at the first reading of the Provincial Chapters: a doctrinal dimension is missing. We will have to find it in depth at the General Chapter.

I thought a lot about it during Holy Week while meditating on some texts. First one from LUMEN GENTIUM, about ~~the~~ martyrdom, which ends like this: Martyrdom is given only to the few, but all must be ready to confess Christ and follow him on the way of the Cross.

This imperative struck me. Everyone must be ready. It's not just for a few. Our deep being, our deep state, is to always be ready to give our life with Christ.

The renewal that the Chapter is preparing will have to keep us ready.

All the doctrine of Saint Paul is there. First of all, this statement: If only one of them died for all, then all of them died. The following sentence explains: He died for all, so that the living no longer live for themselves but for the one who died for them... For me, I am crucified with Christ!

We know these words by heart. But in practice, what does this mean for us? In a commentary by Saint Paul, Father URS von BALTHAZAR asks the question: Why did Christ die for us, it is not enough that we say thank you to Him without committing ourselves to die for Him? The answer is beautiful: God cannot be satisfied with our thanks because his plan of love is so much greater. He wants us to be sons in the Son; in each of us He wants to recognize His Son. So when St. Paul says: I am crucified with Christ, for us it means that, since only one, Christ, died for all, He took all men, and I today, on the cross. So all of us, and me today, have died to ourselves.

And the conclusion comes, quite simple and obvious: If I live, it is no longer I who live, it is Christ who lives in me. Today, every day, by an act of faith, I say yes to the fact that Christ died for me and my yes commits my whole life.

Our renewal must take its source in this fundamental commitment to baptism, which flourishes in religious profession.

Our Founding Mother wants us to be Adorers and zealots of God's rights. God's fundamental right is there: God has disposed in advance of the death of all: If only one of them is dead, then all of them are dead. And God has disposed of it in this way because He is Love. In his love, he thinks that the revelation that God made to us so loved the world that He gave him His Son must be considered by us as a unique opportunity, therefore must be chosen freely and with joy.

Our renewal will depend on our awareness of this opportunity.

This is doctrinal evidence. If I accept Jesus' death for myself, my life can only be a death to myself. It is no longer I who live, it is Christ. It has to

go down into our hearts and do it again. We often ask for a new heart, a new spirit. Let us often ask ourselves: Is my deep being a being who wants to be crucified with Christ? Is my deep state a state that listens to every call of Christ to climb on the Cross with Him?

A very beautiful hymn from the new breviary often made us sing during Lent:

Look where we might be going.

Turning your back on your suffering...

The decisions of our Chapter should help us not to turn our backs on Christ's suffering.

When I receive -- and I do receive -- letters from hesitant, troubled, discouraged sisters, no longer knowing what meaning to give to their following of Christ, I wonder if it is from this source that they draw? The hymn I was just quoting ends with these words:

Explain the open book to us

With a spear.

The decisions of our Chapter should help us not to turn our backs on Christ's suffering.

When I receive -- and I do receive -- letters from hesitant, troubled, discouraged sisters, no longer knowing what meaning to give to their following of Christ, I wonder if it is from this source that they draw? The hymn I was just quoting ends with these words:

Explain the open book to us

With a spear.

This is the source where those who drink are never thirsty for anything but Him, the Savior. This Savior, of whom Father MONCHANIN, a great mystic of our time, said: To find man, the Word "destroyed" himself: the kenosis of God made man absolute. To save man, Christ destroyed himself: man's kenosis deified man. It is there and not elsewhere our following of Christ.

Maybe you think: where is GAUDIUM AND SPES in there? Precisely our joy and hope are there and there alone. And it's because we're looking for them elsewhere that we're disappointed.

Father TILLARD explains so well that St Paul's observation: "I find my joy in the sufferings I endure for you", applies to the whole Church before the world. What happened in the Head for the Redemption of the World must mark the entire body. Until the glory of the Parousia, he said, the Church, because of her saving mission and the responsibility that her Lord has entrusted to her for the proclamation and concretization of the Gospel, must live in a state of kenosis. She too, in Christ and like him, must renounce all that the presence in her of the life of the definitive Kingdom (that is, the Risen Lord) could justify in terms of satisfaction... From Easter to the Parousia, the peregrinating Church is a Church of kenosis. Human reason, the selfishness that sleeps in the heart of every baptized person, can be scandalized by this. It's a mystery. To not consent to it is to refuse to consent to all the folly of God's purpose.

The laws that our Chapter will promulgate must prevent our selfishness from being scandalized by the Cross of Christ, and from refusing to accept the folly of God's plan.

The Good News that our lives must cry out in joy is this, that it is an extraordinary opportunity to die with Christ on earth, for He is alive and prepares for us an eternal mass of glory. The certainty of this eternal glory transfigures today's passing cross.

The press recalled a beautiful fact of life when talking about Emmanuel MOUNIER⁹⁸. Following encephalitis, his 10-year-old daughter remained mentally handicapped. Today of him, it is said: What a great misfortune has entered the home. Mounier answers: Someone very great has entered our house; it is not a misfortune. She is a living host among us.

⁹⁸ E. Mounier (1905-1950), philosopher, founder in 1932 of the Revue Esprit.

You see how everything depends on the inner look. It is not something that is taken from us, it is something that we give.

After praying on all these texts, repeat the Acts of your Chapters. You will immediately see what the work of the coming months must focus on so that the renewal of the Congregation can be the one that VATICAN II asks of us: a renewal in spirit and in truth, which will consecrate us all, following Jesus, to the great mission of preparing adorers in spirit and in truth to the Father.

And since this circular goes beyond the normal limits of length, I cannot resist the desire to go further beyond them by quoting these unpublished reflections of Father LOEW after the retreat given to the Vatican. Perhaps you will do good around you, especially to priests, by hawking them.

... Everything was simple, everything happened in peace of heart. About sixty retreatants, the Pope's most immediate entourage, from the Cardinals to the youngest priests participating in his daily life. But above all Paul VI, attentive, listening, gathered, praying. How many times have I thought of Moses interceding on the mountain for all humanity. What slogans as those of Paul VI nervous, worried, tormented. Of course, how could it not be overwhelmed by the tears of the Church? And what man in the world carries or has carried such a weight before God? But he saw this charge in the presence of God which made me irresistibly think of Moses in universal and continually living intercession.

But Moses, so united and so lonely at the same time, he, the great leader of the People of God, is surrounded by whispers: "Would the Lord only speak to Moses? Didn't he talk to us too?" say Myriam and Aaron... And soon after "the whole community will talk about stoning him" as they will want to stone Jesus, as they stone Paul VI, no longer with stones but with slogans, false news and tendentious articles.

I have always thought and said that one can only be Catholic in union with the Pope. The priest and the faithful repeat it at each Mass, but during the days spent with Paul VI, I experienced it.

Likewise in the long, warm, affectionate face-to-face that followed. Here too I quote Moses, whose words are said to have said that at the time of the murmurs "he was a very humble man, the most humble man that the earth had ever carried".⁹⁹ A Paul VI who wonders, who has nothing against anyone, but who knows that it is up to him before God to make decisions, not according to his own inclination, but in fidelity to God of whom he is the guarantor...

To one of our bishops recently, the Pope said: We would all like to have peace and security. We must accept to live in the storm... but Jesus Christ is there... We seek the language that can help people to discover, at the heart of existence, the God of Jesus Christ and the meaning of the Church. There is only one language, it is Love.

With the Pope, concluded Bishop RIOBE¹⁰⁰, let us continue on our journey, anxious to give an account, in all circumstances, of the hope that Jesus Christ has raised in our hearts.

It is with these words, dear daughters, that I conclude, with the desire that you feel, through these pages, how close I am to each of you.

*Mère Marie-Denyse du Saint Sacrement
Superior General*

⁹⁹ Book of Numbers 12,3.

¹⁰⁰ Guy-Marie Riobé (1911-1978), Bishop of Orléans in 1963.

The Beatification will certainly be in November. It is therefore necessary to separate the General Chapter from the Beatification.

D.S.

Auteuil

3 June 1970

To the Provincials

My dear Mother,

A letter from Rome received this morning has just been read in Council, and I am writing to you very quickly the result of our deliberations.

The Under-Secretary of the Congregation of the Cult of Saints, Bishop FRUTAZ, said that, despite Bishop FEDERICI's incomparable dedication, it would take a miracle for the beatification to take place in November.

The Council therefore considers that the Chapter of the Beatification should be separated. Here are the dates that have been set:

1. Those who will be working on the final preparation of the Chapter must be in Auteuil by **July 5**. Work will start on the morning of the 6th. I remind you that each Province must send one delegate out of three and the Vice-Provinces one out of two.
2. All Capitulants must be in Auteuil by **July 30**. We hope that the retreat will begin immediately. The date will be given soon. After the retreat: preparatory sessions and reading of the reports; celebration of the Assumption; study of the Government of the Congregation. It would be good if the elections could be held on August 25, the birthday of Our Venerable Mother Foundress. Here again, we have to wait for the date given by Cardinal Marty.

Please, Mother, share this letter of convocation with all the houses in your Province as soon as possible and tell us without delay who you are delegating for 5 July.

Let us entrust this last preparation to the Heart of Jesus. May He be more than ever king and center of all hearts.

Sœur Marie Denyse, r.a.

P.S. : Bishop Frutaz approves the making of perpetual vows at the Mass of Beatification. But in view of the uncertainty of the dates, I think that the sisters received this year 1970 will prefer not to wait? We give them the choice.

Last circular from Mother Marie Denyse before the General Chapter

God Alone

Auteuil

11 July 1970

My dear daughters

My thoughts often go to you all these days. In many communities, it is time for retreats. You are preparing to be immersed in the bottomless and limitless Ocean of Trinitarian love. So often I ask our God of Love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to penetrate each of you to the most intimate level of being, not to leave a single fiber outside Love.

You too, I suppose, are very close to Auteuil where a group of Capitulants are working hard. It is everything you have sent that is collected, classified, synthesized. This will be the framework on which the General Chapter will weave the Rule of Life. Already the Government of the Congregation is classified, and also the whole chapter of the Theology of Religious Life, of the purpose and spirit of the Congregation, of contemplation in action. It is the consecrated life and the vows that we will work on this week.

During the Chapter, we will try to send you regularly the texts on which we will work. In this way you will be able to concretize your calls to the Holy Spirit and, if he pushes you to do so, send us these 'ideas'.

What is striking in this first classification work is the unity of thought and often of expression. The same ideas keep coming back, expressed by all the Provinces, so that many pages can be summarized in a few lines.

Mothers are also completing the very large file of novices and young professed. They tell us how comforting it is to find also, coming from all continents, the same desire so affirmed on the Assumption of tomorrow: *May it all be Jesus Christ's...* May it be a rock... It will, of course, be if each one humbly supports itself on the only cornerstone, Jesus Christ.

In order to share everything with you, about what we are discussing here, I am sending you the letter that Father Poelman wrote to me, after the retreat in Auteuil that he gave in June. He will give the Chapter's from July 30 evening to August 8 morning. We were touched by his real interest in the renewal of the Congregation. What he suggests for the formative years is very appealing. More and more we would like a single profession. It is the preparation of this life-long act that must be clearly defined. If you have any ideas, write.

Notice especially in this letter the second paragraph on the essence of a Chapter: contemplating the person of Jesus Christ. Pray very much that we will be able to do this. That we know how to free ourselves from our ideas, from our biases, from the various currents that have influenced us, from slogans in order to contemplate Jesus Christ, to imbue ourselves with his message and, consequently, to ask ourselves what means to give to the Congregation so that it may be more Jesus Christ. It is therefore a true soul of the poor that your prayers must obtain from the Capitulants. Then we will welcome, as given by this spirit of Love, all that the Chapter will promulgate, and we will have a renewed and adapted Assumption. That we each come to the Chapter, each with nothing of our own, to receive everything from the Spirit of Jesus.

That, my dear daughters, is what my heart wanted to tell you. I would like everyone to receive it in their hearts and to repeat, with a deep conviction, that the heart of the Congregation, this heart of Spouse of the Lord Jesus, is made of each of our hearts. Let us constantly ask for the grace of true renewal. Let us live each day of this important time *by keeping our eyes on everything in Jesus Christ and the extension of his Kingdom*, and by seeking in the Community what we can do to make it so.

In Jesus Christ, I love you all very much and entrust you all to the Virgin, Mother of Jesus, so that she may help you to live only on Him.

*Mère Marie Denyse
Superior General*

P.S. : It is on August 19, at 7 a.m., that Cardinal MARTY will celebrate the Eucharist before the election session. We will all be one and animated around the Lord and the one who will be given to us to be, in our midst, his Living Image.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Information about the sisters mentioned in the book can be requested from the Archives of the Congregation:

archives@assumpta.org

Foreword	1
General introduction	5
A little bit of history	9
First term: 1953-1965	16
First circular to the congregation	17
<i>17 de agosto de 1953</i>	17
Letters to the Congregation	19
<i>5 December 1953</i>	19
<i>10 March 1954</i>	25
<i>1st November 1954</i>	29
<i>Notes of Mère Térèse Emmanuel</i>	37
<i>1st November 1954</i>	41
<i>24 November 1954</i>	45
<i>30 June 1955</i>	51
<i>17 August 1957</i>	59
Towards the 1959 General Chapter	65
<i>13 November 1957</i>	65
<i>15 March 1958</i>	67
<i>12 May 1958</i>	71
<i>19 January 1959</i>	77
<i>30 April 1959</i>	81
Second period	91
Letters to the Congregation	91
<i>22 August 1959</i>	91
<i>14 November 1959</i>	99
<i>21 December 1959</i>	103
<i>16 December 1960</i>	107
<i>11 March 1961</i>	111
<i>29 March 1961</i>	115
<i>20 April 1961</i>	121

16 May 1961	125
18 May 1961	127
1 st January 1962	129
23 August 1962	131
23 August 1962	134
19 March 1963	137
14 October 1963	141
12 December 1963	145
29 April 1964	155
General Chapter 1965	163
24 September 1964	163
21 November 1964	173
2 February 1965	185
14 March 1965	187
March 1965	189
30 April 1965	197
4 June 1965	201
21 June 1965	203
28 September 1965	211
About the General Chapter	215
9 November 1965	215
Letter of promulgation of the Chapter	217
4 December 1965	217
Second term: 1965-1970	227
Letters to the Congregation	229
9 January 1966	229
2 February 1966	233
4 July 1966	237
12 October 1966	239
19 March 1967	243
26 April 1967	251
January 1968	255
24 May 1968	267
25 January 1969	269
10 March 1969	279

<i>Pentecost 1969</i>	289
<i>5 August 1969</i>	293
<i>20 November 1969</i>	301
<i>13 December 1969</i>	307
<i>25 January 1970</i>	311
In preparation for the General Chapter:	315
Questionnaire	315
To the General Chapter 1970	331
<i>25 January 1970</i>	333
<i>6 March 1970</i>	337
<i>6 de marzo de 1970</i>	341
<i>12 April 1970</i>	343
<i>3 June 1970</i>	355
<i>11 July 1970</i>	357
Table of contents	361

