

General Council Newsletter June 2024

Very dear Sisters and Lay Friends,

As we write our last newsletter, we marvel at how God allowed us to weave our stories together and share our life experiences. For the past months, we have been deeply connected in praying for the General Chapter 2024. We have asked the Holy Spirit to enkindle the hearts of every sister and lay person who together form the Assumption. What a grace and a blessing to belong to our Assumption Family. We trust that the coming General Chapter will be an experience of “Pentecost” for us, so that our hearts will be moved and we will be inspired to live with a single gaze fixed on Jesus Christ and the extension of his kingdom.

In our Newsletter last March, we shared with you our life from January till our celebration of the Feast day of Mother Marie Eugenie. This time, we would like to recount some experiences that will give you a glimpse of how we are doing and living our last months together.

- **Session of Sr. Rekha at Assisi, Italy**



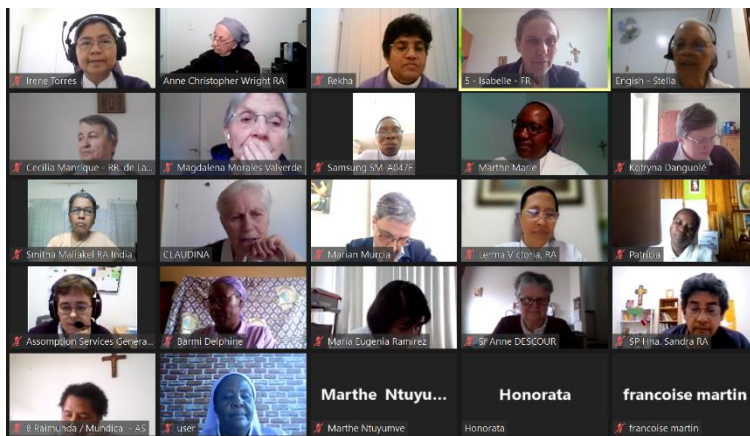
Sr Rekha participated in an ecumenical seminar held in Assisi on 14-17 March 2024. The seminar was convened by the World Council of Churches, the Anglican Communion, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, and was organized by the Laudato Si' Research Institute (based at Campion Hall, University of Oxford), in collaboration with Pro Civitate Christiana and Centro Laudato Si' as the local Assisi co-hosts.

After decades of ecumenical celebrations of the annual “Feast of Creation” of September 1, also known as “Creation Day” or “World Day of Prayer for Creation”, this historic gathering took place in Assisi, bringing together church leaders and theological and liturgical scholars from various denominations. Its purpose was to explore a proposal to elevate such an observance to the status of a liturgical feast in the calendar of Western Churches to mark the Nicaea centenary (2025).

Rekha says: “As we arrived in Assisi, we were offered a memorable gift: a glorious rainbow in the sky, reminding us of Noah’s Covenant: ‘when the bow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature’ (Genesis 9:16).”

Rekha also spent two days with our community in Rome. She is immensely grateful to Sr. Carmela and the entire Quadraro community for their warm hospitality. She was delighted to be with them, and it reminded her of her own time in Rome during her studies at the Biblicum.

- **Online CGP 2024**



It was the first time in the history of our Congregation to have an Online CGP last April 4 – 6, 2024. These three days were grace-filled, we were able to present, discuss, and reflect important matters that heightened the preparation for the coming General Chapter. The main agenda for the first day was the presentation of the Findings of the Survey on Sisters by the survey team composed of Sisters Mercedes, Fe Emmanuel, Odessa, Cathy, Illuminata, and Francoise Martin. This

work was truly appreciated and the team was commended for their dedication and hard work. The document serves as a pre-chapter material for study, reflection, and the discernment on the findings will be continued during the General Chapter. On the second day, there was a continuation on the questions and answers on the Survey Findings, and the manner for transmission to the Provinces was discussed. This synodal process of the General Chapter is very significant for our life and directions as a congregation. The other two items were the presentations of the journey of the Provinces of US and Central America Cuba, and the Region of Central Africa – Journey towards becoming the Province of Central Africa. On the third day, we had two important topics: First, the Generalate Consultation (Paris – Rome) and second, the Safe Guarding Policy for the Congregation. Both reports were sent to the Provincials to be shared and discussed by the sisters.

As part of our synodal journey towards the General Chapter, let us be inspired to read and to discuss the different reports. May the Holy Spirit guide us in our reflections.

- **Young Sisters’ Session Culminating**

You have been receiving the news of the session of preparation for perpetual vows which ended on May 6. God has been great with us and we are happy! Family spirit, joy and thanksgiving marked the farewell with a moment of celebration, prayer and re-reading of this beautiful experience of pilgrimage to the interior of each one and to the sources of our charism and our consecration.

Simplicity, joy, deep sharing and great communion characterized this young international community that has now returned to their “Galilee”, to their respective communities and missions.

We continue to accompany them with our affection and prayers as they prepare to celebrate their perpetual vows in the coming months.



- **Visit to Japan**



Sr. Rekha's visit to the Communities in Japan, last April 18 – 26, was grace-filled. Sr. Lerma joined her in this common journey with the sisters in Japan. The warm hospitality in each community, school, and parish are deeply appreciated. The ascetic life of sisters is a valuable witness in a

materialistic world. The signs of hope and prophetic presence in every community manifest different possibilities for discernment towards restructuring for greater life.

- **Visit to the Philippines**



The complementary visit of Sr. Marthe and Sr. Irene to the Philippines, last April 18 to May 6, was short but fruitful, and we cannot thank God enough for the blessings and graces received and shared. The preparation of communities and the very warm and joyful welcome manifested the thoughtfulness, hospitality, and the openness of both sisters and lay partners in receiving the grace through the General Council. Community meetings, personal dialogues, encounters with our students and lay partners, assemblies, meeting with the Provincial Council, and celebrations allowed us to enter, listen, discover and

affirm the gifts and the blessings. It was also an opportunity to highlight the challenges for Religious Life and to deepen the three key words of the Chapter: metanoia, prophetic mission, and culture of care.



We have been enriched by the life-witness and sharing of our sisters and lay friends. We palpably felt the care and love through the details put in the encounters, celebrations, meals, “pasalubong” and kind gestures. Again, thank you very much Sr. Lerma and Council and to each one of you dear sisters.

- **FABC in Malaysia**

After the visit to Japan, Sr Rekha went directly to Kuching, Malaysia, to participate in the annual meeting of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences – Office of Theological Concerns. Based on the Emmaus story from the Gospel of Luke, Rekha also presented a Paper on Synodal Paradigms for the Asian Church from a biblical perspective, which was much appreciated. Her Paper will be published by FABC in July 2024, and will be used to further the reflections on Synodality. She profited much from the visits to the local indigenous communities and meetings with local theologians and youth.



- **Online Meeting on Lay Survey**

On Saturday, May 18, 2024, an online meeting was held, bringing together General Chapter 2024 delegates / lay delegates, Provincials/ regional and Provincial/regional Coordinators of Assumption Together - sisters and lay people, the General Secretary, the General Treasurer, the General Chapter 2024 facilitator, and members of the pre-capitular work team (survey). The aim of the meeting was to share the results of the Survey launched among our lay partners. A prayer to the Holy Spirit, prepared by the CPAE members present, helped us to enter the meeting; then Sister Rekha addressed a word of welcome to the sisters and laypeople. Sister Mercedes, team coordinator, introduced the members of her group, who shared the presentation of the Survey results. The meeting enabled the team to restate the aim of the research. At the end, Sister Rekha highlighted the immediate preparations for the General Chapter, while specifying the task facing the lay delegates. This involves having reflected with her community on two calls and responses to these calls in the areas of:

- Assumption spirituality and fraternal relations, commitment to the Way of Life.
- Shared mission in the Assumption (Education, JPICS, Youth, etc.).

We ended with the prayer in preparation for the General Chapter.

- **Visit to US of Sr. Rekha**



Rekha made a quick visit to the Philadelphia community of the US province and met with sisters who came from both Worcester and Chaparral. She is very grateful to have this opportunity to be with the sisters of the US province, to clarify things, to reflect together on the restructuring process in the Congregation and to share the experiences of the General Council. Sr. Rekha was fortunate to have the possibility to visit Sr. Diana and say farewell to her during her

visit. She considers it a special blessing.

While in the USA, she also participated in the meeting of the International Finance Team. She also shared through a videoconference her reflections on the theme: “Ageing Gracefully: Biblical Reflections” with the 70+ sisters of the continent of Europe. She concluded her talk by saying: “Biblical

spirituality encourages us to approach ageing with grace, purpose, and a sense of fulfilment. It reminds us of aligning our lives with God's purpose, trusting in God's timings, strengthening our relationship with God, and celebrating our lives with one another."

- **Session of Sisters 70-85 years of the Continent of Europe in Auteuil**

The Continent of Europe was able to bring to fruition a wonderful meeting for the older sisters aged 70 to 80, with the theme "Let's cross over to the other shore". The theme evokes the transition from the 3rd to the 4th age. The session had three axes: 1) to get to know and recognize each other as sisters of 3 very different Provinces, but with similar challenges; 2) to return to our sources as sisters of the Assumption; 3) to share questions, take up challenges and open up some perspectives for living this passage of change of stage.

The sisters were thus able to reconnect with their roots. Time spent alone or in groups at the Sanctuary enabled direct dialogue with Marie Eugénie. Sr Véronique, archivist, also shed new light on our foundress: Marie Eugénie at 70, a pilgrimage in her footsteps through Paris, sources in the Archives and Museum.



With life expectancy on the rise, and more particularly as consecrated women, sisters have entered the dynamics of their life stage. After the biblical approach given by Sr. Rekha, Caroline Dry, psychologist and member of the Institut Séculier du Cœur de Jésus, distinguished two vital curves: that of physical growth, ascending then descending as we approach 50, and that of psychic and spiritual growth, the curve of our interiority, which increases until our last breath. Her clear, frank talk on the diminutions and losses we have to go through was good for everyone, as it led to acceptance of this reality rather than resignation. The wisdom and humor of the participants also helped!

The group work and sharing of experiences were most appreciated for the quality of the listening and the depth of the exchanges. Rereading one's own story with other sisters met during sessions or companions in formation or on mission adds depth to the experience. The interiorization sessions led by Sr Marie Geneviève enabled them to integrate the different experiences through the body.

The session was an opportunity to talk openly about the challenges and opportunities of this stage of life at Assumption.

This international community of 40 sisters brightened up the whole house. The final evening exuded an atmosphere of joy and freedom.

- **General Community and Auteuil Community Celebrations**



As we welcomed the month of June, we were graced to celebrate the birthdays of Sr. Isabelle and Sr. Irene, Junior sister, last June 1st. We always enjoy greeting and praying for our sisters for the gift of life. We thank God for their vocation in the Religious of the Assumption.

Last June 2, we had our farewell day. First, we thanked the Parish Community during the Eucharistic celebration, and then, we spent the whole day together to pray, to share meals, to celebrate being communities at the Mother House for around two years. We also had the joy to share a dinner-picnic in our garden hosted by Manuel and María.

Six Junior Sisters, after their Theological Studies in France, will return to their respective Provinces this June. One Junior sister (from East Africa) will remain to continue her studies and will be joined soon by other Junior sisters: two from Madagascar; two from Rwanda-Chad; and one from Central Africa. Sr. Leela will be going to her new mission assignment in Kenya, and Sr. Marie Yvonne will be transferred to Montpellier. We are grateful for the gift of one another, for our internationality, and the grace of community life. We have been loved, formed, and transformed by our lives together.



We thank Sr. Illuminata for her Yes, for her service as Junior Mistress and Superior of the Auteuil Community for three years starting July 2024.

We are happy to welcome Sr. Mercedes, our Communications in-charge for the congregation, to Auteuil to form part of the community.



- **Community Vacation as General Community**

In the midst of our super busy schedule – meetings, general chapter preparations, approving requests, etc. – we decided to have a break of three days from the 10th to the 12th of June. We went to Dieppe, France and stayed with the Sisters of “Augustines de la Misericorde de Jesus”. We were all grateful for this experience of renewal, rest, community time, communion with nature, and live simple life with the sisters. We were amazed to discover the beauty of this part of France, rich with historical heritage and with the beauty of creation. Above all, we are thankful for the beauty of one another and the gift of our community.



- **Some Announcements**

We are happy to announce to you the New Provincial Superiors who will begin their mandate of three years this year 2024:

- Spain: Sr. Maria Dolores Herrera
- West Africa: Sr. Marie Claire Issifi
- India : Sr. Sherly Thomas Karottchakangal

We are grateful to Sr. Marthe Ntuyumve of Rwanda-Chad and Sr. Anne Descour of France for their acceptance of Renewal of Mandate as Provincial Superiors for the second term.

- **Final Preparations for General Chapter 2024**

We have been engaged in rigorous preparations for the General Chapter. We can imagine the work done in every Province/Region. We trust that the preparations already lead us to greater hope for our Congregation as we reread and move forward together. Here at the Mother House, we can feel the intensity of the work as we look at all the areas and details to ensure a smooth sailing journey for the Chapter. We are grateful for the generosity of many people facilitating the work, saying yes to requests, giving helping hands for things to be done. As we do the exterior work, it is equally important to prepare interiorly.

- **Remembering Sr. Diana**



In the General Chapter 2018, Sr. Diana Wauters was with us, and this time we are confident that she is with us in spirit and prayers for the General Chapter 2024. We would like to share here an excerpt from her Concluding words for the CGP 2011, CGP preparing for the 2012 General Chapter:

So we see that movement is both in following and in leaving... I ask myself, **“What do we need to leave behind?”** And Diana continues with a quote:

*To his disciples your Son gave peace, not tranquility
He gave truth, not dogmas,
He gave pardon, not condemnation,*

*He gave us your Spirit who tells us
What we need to let go of in light of what we need to receive
What we need to abandon in light of what we need to protect
What we need to erase in light of what we need to create.*

*Your Spirit tells us that ideas ingrained in our minds and the fossilized ideologies of societies are more dangerous for your Word
Than the turbulence of children who plunge into life crying and singing
And than the mindlessness of vagabonds who collapse on the doorstep of our Church.*

That is why we should always give you thanks and bless you by uniting our voices to those who praise you in the heavens¹ ...

- **Thanksgiving of GC 2018-2024**

This is our last Newsletter to the Congregation as General Council 2018-2024. We want to express our deep gratitude for your love, trust, support, and collaboration. We hope that we were able to connect and communicate with each one of you our life as a Congregation. Truly, our hearts are overflowing with joy for the graces received for the past six years. Again, thank you very much. May God continue to bless us abundantly!

With affection and prayers,

Sr. Rekha, Sr. Sandra, Sr. Isabelle, Sr. Marthe, and Sr. Irene

¹ Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer composed by Jacques Merienne, pastor of St Merri CPHB church, Paris