



**PLENARY GENERAL COUNCIL
AUTEUIL: 1-20 February 2020**



**Discernment, Communion, Peripheries
Calls, Promises and Challenges
A Journey Forward**

**“It is folly not to be what one is [Religious of the Assumption] as fully as possible”
Saint Marie Eugenie**

CONCLUDING MESSAGE

Very dear Sisters,

We have come to the end of our Plenary General Council. As we asked in our prayer at the opening liturgy, God has granted us eyes to see the best and ears to listen attentively and hearts to forgive and trust one another. As daughters of Saint Marie Eugenie, we want our Charism to come alive as “a source of healing and integration in a wounded, broken, and divided world.”¹ We have expressed again and again our great desire “to return to the sources in order to help us discern creative and meaningful expressions of the **Assumption Way** for today.”²

First of all, I thank God for journeying with us, evidenced by the many **blessings** that we have received during this CGP. My heart is filled with **joy and gratitude** to each one of you. I thank God for my council who worked hard to make this CGP a different experience for all. We are grateful to our resource persons, translators, listening group, drafting committee, secretaries, communication team, celebration team, and liturgy group – as well as to the communities of the Provinces of France and Europe which welcomed our Sisters for the immersion experience and the community of the motherhouse. I am deeply touched by the many messages that I have received from the Sisters after having listened to or read the opening message. Thank you, Sisters, for your personal sharing which was a source of inspiration for me. I greatly appreciate this communication of deep union and want us to grow more in this spirit of synodality – our journey together as sisters and covenant partners in God’s mission. I am also grateful to the members of the Assumption Together and our friends for their messages from the four corners of the world, assuring us of their prayers for CGP 2020. Yes, together we have come on a long journey, in the presence of God and in communion with one another.

As our beloved Pope Francis often reminds us, our CGP 2020 should not become an “unproductive meeting” with “empty talks.” Let us make it a source of new energy and

¹ CGP 2020, Opening Message, # 4.

² CGP 2020, Opening Message, # 8.

dynamism for new expressions of our RA way of life, implementing the calls and challenges of CG 2018 – discernment, communion and peripheries, for the next 18 months.

Interpreting the parable of the **fig tree** from the Gospels of Luke (13) and Mark (11) from the perspective of the contemporary experiences of consecrated women, Sister Inigo Joachim invited us to challenge ourselves to become high-quality fig trees which produce fruits in season and out of season: “there is no season for religious to smile, to be gentle and compassionate, to be honest, and humble, and to be sensitive and serviceable. We retire from our profession but not from the religious mission and not from living the values of religious life.”³

The fraternal exchanges we had with both Monseigneur Michel Aupetit, the Archbishop of Paris, and Monseigneur Pascal Delannoy, the bishop of Saint-Denis, touched on the ever-growing multicultural reality in many of our societies. Monseigneur Aupetit invited us to identify the real challenges behind the realities in which we find ourselves and accomplish the mission of Christ, which, according to him is unity and authentic witness as consecrated persons. He also shared with us his priority for the Church in Paris as creating spaces for fraternity, where people who are very different can meet and realize they are sisters and brothers.⁴ Similarly, in the context of the multi-cultural and ethnic community in his diocese, Monseigneur Delannoy made the prophetic statement: “There are NO foreigners in the Church; there are only members of the family in the Church.”⁵

Our experiences tell us that living interculturality is not merely an intra-community call but an ad-extra reality within which we find ourselves today. Father Antonio Pernia presented the multiculturalism as an integral part of the Project of God for humanity, something that has to be embraced gracefully as an opportunity. He challenged us to seek the face of GOD in the other, or to see the “other face of God” in the stranger, unfamiliar situations and uncertain realities.⁶ He also reminded us to protect our unity while we promote diversity. In this context, let us keep in mind what I talked about in my opening message on the principles of balance and integration.

The CGP community worked hard and recognized the innumerable blessings that we have received from God, from one another and from the people whom we serve. We have also identified many challenges to respond to the urgent calls that we have received from within and without. The themes that we reflected together include: (i) Assumption culture, way of life, new forms presence in the church based on the values of the Gospel and Assumption heritage; (ii) restructuring and new structures of animation at all levels (community, province/region, general community), (iii) our collaboration and partnership with laity; (iv) Intercultural living; (v) pastoral ministry and vocation promotion ; (vi) formation at all levels

³ Sr Inigo Joachim, “Consecrated Life as a Gift and a Challenge for our times,” p. 3.

⁴ Monseigneur Aupetit, Reflections shared on the 5th of February 2020.

⁵ Monseigneur Delannoy, Reflections shared on the 14th of February 2020.

⁶ Fr Antonio Pernia, “Interculturality and Leadership,” p. 3.

(initial and ongoing); (vii) finance and self-sufficiency, (viii) accompaniment of the elderly sisters, and (ix) continental journey and accompaniment. Among these nine topics, we have worked on the first four in the assembly and the other five themes in our respective continents.

As the fruit of the work of the CGP community for the past 20 days, we are happy to present to the congregation **the CGP 2020 Document** consists of the following:

1. Blessings gathered from messages, reports and experiences
2. Calls received during the CGP interactions
3. Proposals made by the CGP
4. Decisions of the CGP
5. Reflections on the Continental Journey and Accompaniment

As a follow up of the work of the CGP 2020, I would encourage you to take up the following three themes in your respective provinces/region. At the next CGP, in light of your deliberations and experiences, I hope that we can explore new ways as a body congregation.

1. The Assumption Way/ the Assumption Culture and New Forms of Presence
2. Restructuring and New Structures of Animation
3. Our Collaboration with Laity

I am sure you would agree with me that this CGP has been a **wake-up call** for each one of us to become more **authentic witnesses of our charism** for our times. Similarly, the experience of “**multicultural societies/communities**” occupied an important space in our reflections. Although we are sometimes discouraged by our frailties and those of others in our communities, I am convinced that a Gospel-value based, intercultural, international, and inter-generational RA community is possible. It is not a utopian dream for me, but a promise of hope as our fragilities lean on God’s fidelity. When we become communities manifesting Kingdom values, we will truly become **a prophetic sign of hope** for our troubled multicultural world. In this context, two inspirational quotes from Mahatma Gandhi can be of great help in our journey forward: (i) “Be the change you want to see in the world” and (ii) “You cannot change how people treat you or what they say about you. All you can do is change how you react to it.” The awareness of this on our part, living humbly and with trust in God’s grace will make a big difference to our intercultural living in our respective communities.

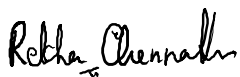
As consecrated women of God, we have NO reason for worries about the future, because God has a project for us. Our dreams and projects for ourselves may sometimes lead to an unsuccessful end, but God’s ways will always lead us to greater life and endless hope. We are driven by the Spirit more than ever before to set out to encounter the other (cultures, languages, races, philosophies, religions) and embrace international communities and intercultural living as an integral aspect of God’s project for our congregation. Let us explore new paradigms of leadership which will help us in the work of restructuring and spiritual

renewal. As we continue to make **discernment, communion** and going to the **peripheries** a way of life, let **radical inclusion** and **holiness** become RA identity marks.

Sisters, as joyful and zealous women of God, let us “run together and run with God”⁷ and fly our kites higher⁸ remaining deeply rooted in our Assumption heritage and discerning new forms of RA presence in the Church for the extension of God’s Kingdom.

With a heart full of gratitude and hope, and this concluding message, I declare the end of the work of the CGP held at Auteuil from 1st to 20th February 2020.

Thank You, and May God bless our Congregation!



Rekha M. Chennattu, RA
Superior General

Auteuil, 20 February 2020



⁷ General Chapter 2018, Promulgation Letter, p. 7.

⁸ The card you find at the end of the message was painted by Sr Maria Theresia and sent to me by Tournai community (Province of Europe) after reading the Opening Message, CGP 2020. Thank you, Sisters.