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LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION

Auteuil, 1st of November 2012



Very dear Sisters,

Today, on this Solemnity of All Saints, a feast that renews our hope in a promise that is fulfilled, it is fitting for us to write to you as General Council.

The invitation for us is to BE GLAD and to TO TRUST, because in this journey that is ours, we never cease to keep believing in Christ. We make this journey with all of our brothers and sisters – both here and in the Assumption of heaven – as **one big family** that transcends historical and geographical boundaries. We celebrate Christ and the triumph of his life that has been received and welcomed and humbly lived by so many of those – silent, loving and anonymous – who follow Him.

It is with joy that we come to share with you, now that the General Community is complete! From the 4 corners of the earth, - as this *multitude of different nations and tribes and peoples and languages of the Apocalypse* – called by God and by the WORD of our General Chapter, we arrived at the Motherhouse from the 2nd of October – Martine, first, and then though unintentionally, strictly by order of chronological age: Carmen, Françoise, MarJo and Mayi. Does that speak of the “art” and readiness to “let go” that is learned over the years?



By Saturday, the 20th of October, we were all here in Auteuil, our place of love and mission for the next six (6) years. Much has happened since we separated in August to return to our respective Provinces and prepare the way for the inevitable detachments and new beginnings. A lot of paschal moments were lived at this time. We shall give each other a word to express herself.

Martine

My return to my country on the 14th of August was full of emotion. I arrived in the evening, and in the morning of the 15th after Mass, I went to join all the sisters of the five countries of the Province, who were gathered at Bobo-Dioulasso (Novitiate) for the transmission of the General Chapter. Also there to greet me were the Sisters of the three (3) other Congregations of the Assumption who were invited for the occasion (Oblates, Little Sisters and Orantes), as well as a few alumni. After the assembly, I stayed a few days in the Novitiate Community before joining my family. My mother, brothers and sister were happy to welcome me. The days were very busy with lots of visits. I was very touched by the attention of people who realized the extent of my new mission and assured me of their prayers. I had long moments of sharing with my mother. I received her blessings anew as well as “the way” to move on. She recalled my personal and family history and reminded me of her choice not to take back the gift that is her daughter, whom she has given to the Lord once for all. This echoes what the sisters have written to me after the 17th of July – “you are a gift to the Congregation.” On my part, I recognize that each one of you is a gift for me and for the Congregation. This is what assures me and gives me the strength for the mission which has been entrusted to us as the General Council. My retreat gave me the grace and the space to experience being “sent” anew.

Mayi

“Let us cross over to the other shore...” That was the invitation I received on the 24th of July which I took as a second call for me. And as I “crossed over to the other shore” I recognized all the gifts that the Lord has given me during the years of animation of the Province and of the Conference of Religious in Ecuador.

Gratitude is what fills me within, and this enabled me to do a beautiful rereading of the life of the Province together with the sharing of the experience of the General Chapter (23-26 August), my Annual Retreat at the Trappist Monastery, the Perpetual Profession of two (2) of my sisters, Alexandra and Margoth and the visit to the Community of Santiago with all of the Provincial Council (4-14 October).

There have been many meetings and efforts to pass on what is at hand and to prepare for the immediate future, both in the province and in the Conference. I am invited to trust that the Lord takes care of our efforts and that He alone provides the growth.

An immersion with an inter-Congregational Community in Haiti for 15 days, with its aspirations and hopes, and the work with the Commission Haiti-CLAR has left in me the seeds of the dreams of Religious Life in Latin America. With all these, I come with an “excess baggage” of blessings and good wishes of my sisters, the sisters and brothers of other Congregations, Assumption Together and those of my people. And with this joy that I have lived I also bring blessings to the Congregation here in my “other shore”.

Francoise

For our Provincial Council in France, working days followed the General Chapter that was very intense and moving. We had reflections with the Tutelle (after the death of Marie Isabelle), concerning decisions that we must put in place as we look for the necessary reorganization, relationships with the Laity who have responsibility in the Association, etc... Then each one of us left either for her community or her family for some holidays. I spent some days with my mother in Britania and a few days with the Community of Orleans.

The celebration of First Vows of Amelie opened our Province Assembly at the end of August. It was a joy to have gathered so many (70 sisters, 14 lay people) for the first echo of the General Chapter, at the same time to begin the discernment together as regards the consultation for the new provincial. The second stage happened with the PPC in the middle of September (sisters and laity). These two (2) months of September and October were busy with the activities of the province. In Lyon for the

“Tutelle”, two or three days with certain communities; at Fluer des Neiges and Lourdes, for a group that continues to look into the future, meetings of associations, search for new team members...

In these three (3) weeks in Auteuil, I am living something new that fills me: the living presence of Marie Eugenie, our new community, our work that is international, my heart and my prayer are filled with names of sisters, communities, persons, places, events of multiple colors of continents where we are.

Carmen

The return to the Province after the General Chapter was an encounter with my sisters. The first few days were days of rest necessary for the work that was to be done. On the 15th of August, the Solemnity of the Assumption, at five different parts of Spain, the first transmission of the General Chapter took place – in Malaga, Gijon, Barcelona, San Sebastian and Riofrio. In each place, there were one or two capitulants that came together with communities gathered for community vacations.

The following days, more transmissions happened in León, Cuestablanca, Los Molinos and Collado, at the same time, together with the two communities of the Canary Islands where the sisters who were part of the Diakonia Team of the General Chapter were present. This made these first transmissions generally pleasant and even audio-visual.

The sisters were very happy with all the news of the General Chapter with so much interest in what we lived and are looking forward to having the General Chapter Documents in their hands.

After my annual retreat, I could welcome the new mission that I have received, putting in God’s hands with confidence all the work that has been accomplished in the Province. After that, came days of working with the provincial council and teams of the schools to prepare for the PPC, the meeting with the coordinators of lay groups and remembering all that we have lived in the animation of the Province. All these took place with serenity and joy. The message of the Chapter was received with enthusiasm as a concretization of the Word of God for us today, as Religious and Laity in the Assumption. We journey in confidence, in this year of faith, certain that the Lord accompanies us on the path of communion, wisdom and prophesy that we walk along with all those around us.

MarJo

Life continued to be full of grace for me after the General Chapter. As some of you may know, I had the privilege of visiting the US and had a chance to live with our Sisters in 3 of their 4 communities! It was a joy to be there for Catherine’s renewal of vows and the celebration of the Jubilees of Cecilia Agustina and Mary Ann, my 2 “kababayans” (countrywomen)! It was also a joy and a gift to have been there for the “change of guards” from Mary Ann to Nuala and their Provincial Chapter that followed! I cannot thank Nuala and the US Province enough for the welcome and hospitality not only for me but for so many other sisters from the Philippines and Thailand!

Coming home was somehow most awaited especially by me after almost 2 months of being away. I had the delight of receiving two (2) postulants and the First Vows of Maria Minh from Vietnam. Then it seemed that time just passed me by and before I knew it I had to leave for Paris! Honestly, I did not think I would ever finish – between putting order, sorting out things, Council Meetings, transmissions of the General Chapter, gatherings with sisters and lay partners, etc. etc. etc....but I made it, thanks be to God. There was also the blessing of making my 8-Days Retreat with now Cardinal-Elect Luis Antonio “Chito” Tagle! That was truly an experience of God’s gratuity, where I received so much more than what I could have ever asked for or imagined.

Now I am here where, more and more each day, I realize, my grace is. It is truly an honour to be at the service of the Congregation at this level even if I continue to feel humbled and unworthy. But God continues to show me each day that this is where I will hopefully, eventually, truly and really learn about

the “poor and powerless means of faith” that we very often speak of. In this year of faith, I feel blessed to experience, first hand, the utter dependence on Him who is able to do the impossible; that we are all in God’s hand and that certainly there could be no wiser or more loving hand than His.

News of the former General Council:

We also would like to share with you some news from Diana and her Council who are all back in their Provinces.

- Katrin, after some time of rest in Malaga, has accepted to be Superior of the Community of Etterbeeck.
- Brigitte, after returning to her Province with joyful haste has accepted to be Superior of the Community of Aguilas in Mexico and has been elected as Provincial Councillor during their recent Provincial Chapter.
- Maria Emmanuel, chose to re-enter the Province by reinforcing the community of Kibangay where she is also able to take some rest.
- Diana is now living a Desert Sabbath and Renewal time in Arizona.



We would also like to share with you some general information about the work that we have already done these days and that may be of interest to all.

Meeting of the General Councils of the five Congregations of the Assumption Family



Almost immediately upon arrival, Martine, Françoise and Carmen participated in the Meeting of the General Councils of the five Congregations of the Assumption Family. It was a friendly encounter that enabled us to get to know each other and to share the message of each of our General Chapters. We shared about Formation in our Congregations as well as other themes such as the Meetings on the Charism, RIAD, etc. We lived for three (3) days in the house of the Little Sisters of the Assumption, which favoured informal moments, meals and even programs. There was also time for

relaxation and celebration. These encounters strengthen our sense of family that allowed for us to learn from each other (cf. documents attached).

Nominations

We also would like to share with you the results of our discernment, finalized with all of us in the Council together. After carefully studying the consultations, after much time of reflection and prayer,

we have named several provincials and a provincial council (for West Africa, who like Spain have a Special Statute) and have the joy of announcing:

- ◆ Philippines-Thailand Province Sr. Mary Sheryl Reyes
- ◆ Spain Sr. Cristina Ocaña Enciso
- ◆ Ecuador-Chile Sr. Gina Landaverea
- ◆ France Sr. Isabelle Roux
- ◆ Provincial Council of West Africa:
 - Sr. Virginie Kanyala (Councillor – Assistant)
 - Sr. Georgette Dannon (Councillor)
 - Sr. Marie Cecile Somé (Councillor)

We thank God for this experience of listening together to the Spirit and we receive with great FAITH the Sisters who assume their new mission with great generosity and availability. To each one of them – our profound gratitude, nearness and support.

Alumnae of France

We also spent some time with the Alumnae of France - a small group with whom we simply shared family news and the message of the General Chapter, that they appreciated.

International Finance Commission

This last week we met with the International Finance Commission as a whole Council. It was a moment to introduce the new Council and to begin to get to know this Commission that is so important for our life and solidarity among us. Clare Teresa came from the US and Catherine Elisabeth from England. They were the sisters, together with Nicole, our General Econome and the lay collaborators who were present for the Commission.

Augustinians of Notre Dame of Paris (ANDP)

We have also had an intense day of reflection, sharing and work with the Augustinians of Notre Dame of Paris (ANDP). This was the first encounter of the two (2) General Councils after our respective General Chapters. We had time to present ourselves, the important messages of each of our Chapters (July and August 2012), and we began to look together towards the future.



The Council of the ANDP are: Sr. Daniele (Superior General), Sr. Jeanne (Councilor-Assistant), Sr. Jeanine (Councilor), Sr. Marie-Jeanne (Councilor-Malgache) and Sr. Martine (a young French sister).

The meeting was open and sisterly. We had the impression that their General Chapter that took place after ours, welcomed with joy and great opportunity, our decision to move forward towards the fusion. Our decision marked their Chapter in a way that made it necessary for them to express their orientations with so much focus on the journey that we will make together. Their Chapter expressed the following needs:

- ◆ Move forward with confidence
- ◆ Get to know the Assumption more
- ◆ Progress in the following:
 - Contemplation that unifies one's life and is the fount of missionary dynamism
 - Liturgy as a fundamental daily rhythm, food for one's spiritual life and mission
 - Collaboration with the Laity
 - Management of Resources
 - Personal Responsibility and the way of living Authority and Obedience
 - Formation for the transformation of persons and society
 - Self-knowledge – rereading and accompaniment
- ◆ Need to be open to:
 - Internationality
 - Participation in the Transformation of persons and society through a decisive action in one's small sphere

We see our charism and spirituality present in their desires and in all the contacts, sessions, visits, times of immersion that have captured much of what the Assumption is and the thoughts of St. Marie Eugenie of Jesus.

Those days were both intense and beautiful. We are aware of the tasks and challenges that lie before us, but also the grace of communion that this path is for us, for the Church and for our world.

Sr. Therese Agnes came from the US to travel to Madagascar and give a session on Leadership to our Augustinian Sisters. This is a new stage in our getting to know each other and in the sharing of resources for formation.

Sr. Rekha and the Synod of Bishops

We welcomed Rekha on the 30th of October who came from the recently concluded Synod in Rome. She shared her personal experience and some very interesting news of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization. As you may know, Rekha was invited to be an Auditor in the Synod and was asked to make a 4-minute intervention as a Biblicist which was much appreciated. In Council as well as with some Sisters of Paris, we had more time with her where she showed us some photos as well. We thank God for her presence and contribution as we reflect on the Message of the Synod and await to receive with Faith and responsibility its final Document.

Update on Zinder

We all followed with much attention what happened at Zinder – the attacks on the Parish and the School.

On the 14th of October the bishop visited Zinder for the purification of the church that has been desecrated. It was a time of consolation for the Christians. The government took the events very seriously and had kept watch over the sisters and fathers of the parish for a week, until things gradually calmed down. A provincial councilor went to visit them to show them the support of the entire Provincial Council. For the moment life continues as normal.

Storm Sandy

We thank God for keeping our sisters in the US, Cuba and Haiti safe during the time of Storm Sandy. We continue to be in communion with our brothers and sisters especially those who have been most affected by this natural disaster.

This November...

Finally we would like to let you know that in this month of November, there will be two sessions – Conference of the Religious of France (COREF) and the other is with the Tutelle, where some of us will participate. We shall also spend some time of organization and planning as well as rest and relaxation together as Council. We will go the Community of El Olivar in Malaga, Spain. Even now we want to thank them for their welcome and as we stay with them we would like to manifest our love and gratitude to all our elderly sisters in the Congregation from whom we draw much support.

We end this long letter of news in this feast of our **one big family** (the Preface for today's Eucharist speak of *The Glory of Jerusalem, our mother... and the great array of our brothers and sisters...*). Saints of our race, countless men and women who have followed the same path as us, fill our hearts with joyful hope.



May this Year of Faith renew us. And together with our sisters and brothers who have come before us and accompany us, believing and living as *God's beloved children* (1 John 3, 1-3), may we consent with all the strength of our love, making this arduous journey of faith and holiness, in fidelity.

These small and humble daily options allow the often slow and dark manifestation of the Kingdom in each of us and in others.

With all our sisterly affection,

Sr. Martine and the General Council

Note: Two photos included are from [John Nava's Communion of the Saints tapestries at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles.](#)