

June 12, 2024

Dear Sisters,

We want to send our deep gratitude to all of you for your timely and sincere responses to the call for an extraordinary chapter this summer. The participation of virtually every sister in the initial meeting, either in person or by Zoom meeting, as well as in Local Chapters has been exactly what we hoped for. Even sisters who cannot participate as delegates have prioritized being part of these very significant conversations, offering prayers and insights for our process of discernment regarding our future.

We are enclosing with this letter the feedback from our Local Chapters for your reading before we gather. We are also enclosing the chapter proposals the Central Administration will bring forward for our consideration during the two sessions of the Chapter on June 20th and June 21st, 2024. We have crafted these proposals after receiving your input, as well as with the results of our own study, prayer and reflections as a leadership team, and based on the input we have received from LCWR and various canon lawyers.

The first two proposals will be discussed on Thursday afternoon with the hope of moving toward a vote. The next three proposals will be discussed with the intent of moving toward “leanings” if we need more time to deliberate on these. These are meant to give direction to the Living into Our Legacy Task Force and its various committees. Once we can accept that we will no longer accept new members in the U.S. and that we are moving toward completion as a congregation, our planning together can be focused on how we choose to shape our future.

We realize that we cannot answer all the questions these decisions will raise for our sisters in Brazil. They too need to face their realities regarding demographics, mission, ministry, resources, new membership and much more. They are part of us. They matter deeply to us. They will have to take our North American realities into consideration as they plot the journey to which they are being called as well. We will be working hand in hand with our Brazilian sisters as they too discern the future.

We all have much to celebrate as we prepare to come together for four days. We are thrilled that eight of our sisters from Brazil will join us. We look forward to gatherings with our sisters at our four long-term care residences, especially with those who cannot join our meetings. We rejoice with this year's Jubilarians! And we pray for safe travels for each sister and associate as they travel to Joliet for the important conversations in the Spirit that we will share.

With prayers of peace and all good!

Your sisters,



Jeanne Bessette, OSF
President



Peggy Quinn, OSF
Councilor



Roberta Naegele, OSF
Councilor



Barbara Kwiatkowski, OSF
Councilor



Rene Simonelic, OSF
General Secretary



MJ Griffin, OSF
General Treasurer

Discussion Points for May Local Chapter Meeting at Heritage Woods

Present: Mary Ann Clark, Rosie Fonck, Ann Freiburg, Theresa Noser, Joan Clare Wisner, Irene Yosick and Susie Bruno

1. Name 2 or 3 reactions from your group to the proposed Constitutional Changes.

Everyone expressed understanding and support of the following moves:

Apply for a change in our Constitutions to:

-extend the present Central Administration from the Present 4-year term to a 6-year term on the condition that all 6 members agree to this.

-reduce number of Councilors from 3 to 5 to 1 to 2 for the next chapter of 2027.

2. Does your group have any time sensitive questions that you want to raise for the Extraordinary Chapter?

-The Question of Brazil was raised and how does all of this affect them?

-A very serious discussion took place concerning question number 4 on the *Questions for Your Consideration Sheet*.

How many sisters who are able to serve the Congregation in any capacity are willing to do so, especially if it means uprooting their current lives?

The Sisters spoke of their appreciation for the hard work and willingness of our Sisters to serve one another whenever and wherever they can whether it is driving, taking Sisters to the Doctor, or even visiting our Sisters in the various facilities. Knowing that we are all getting older, they also shared their concern about some Sisters unwillingness to help serve the Congregation in ways that they are capable of helping out. They spoke of times when they themselves have had to make hard choices in their lives for the “good of the Congregation” and they don’t understand that there are a few of us who don’t share that same attitude or concern of making choices for the “good of the Congregation.” As our own Constitution (29) states, “Our consecration to God by religious profession is expressed through a commitment of our lives to Jesus, to His Church and to one another.”

We had a vibrant discussion concerning the Article itself. All agreed that it was timely, filled with appropriate information for the questions our Congregation is facing right now, and it's an easy read...though a very long article.

Words or Phrases which kept coming up during this discussion were:

- This is happening all over the World; it must be the Holy Spirit.

- This is a positive, though there will be a mourning, this is a period of transformation for us.

- page 26 of article: "Acceptance requires time. People need time to mull over things they have never imagined or thought of before." All highly agree with this statement and expressed gratitude for our Congregation leadership who have been leading us in this direction, they have informed us very well, kept us updated on what is going on not only with our Congregation, but with other Congregations around the area and world, and they have made us aware of what we can expect and hope for in this new reality.

- page 29 of article: Time to Lament: "Even the transfiguration of a life form is a type of loss and cause for grief. The journey always involves risk, but at the same time connects us in ever deepening solidarity with the consciousness of evolutionary life." All agreed that there may be a need and a time for mourning the loss of who we have been to the people of God.

- page 31 of article: "There is not time for prolonged discernment, but a time for intense meaning making that will support a quality witness of consecrated life as it is transfigured through the Pascal Mystery." We believe strongly the phrase, that Religious institutes exist for the witness of consecrated life and for ministry. Our lives and our commitment, each and every one of us, chose on the day of our final vows to "permanently commit ourselves to this radical way of life in the hope that the Kingdom of God may be furthered." Our Constitution (28)

May Local Chapter Meeting

At St. Patrick's Residence

May 21, 2024

Present were: Marge Krieger, Mary Agnes Cross, Phyllis Pitz, Grace Ann Rabideau, Pat Skowronski, Odelia Kloc, Mary Jean Morris, Sue Bruno

Excused was: Paula Bingert

Observing for a Clinical Reasons: Binh Tram

1. Name 2 or 3 reactions from your group to proposed Constitutional Changes.

Everyone agreed with the following:

- Extending the Present Central Administration from 4 to 6 years, making our next ordinary Chapter in 2027.

- Applying for the next term of office for the Central Administration to be a 6 year term ending in 2033

- Reducing the number of Councilors from 3 to 5, to 2

2. Does your group have any time sensitive questions that you want to raise for the Extraordinary Chapter?

Sisters asked the question about our Sponsored Institution. What happens to them? We talked about the Public Juridic Person and how that would help to preserve our Franciscan Charism in both USF and JCA.

Sisters also spoke of the gratitude they have for our Central Administration who have acknowledged and met our current reality with courage. The CA has been extraordinary in communicating with us about our future. As sad as it may be, we cannot ignore the present situation which our Congregation finds itself in right now, along with the many, many other congregations who are facing the same reality.

Phyllis P. pointed out that "there are not too many people on the A list; we know that those of us here (at St. Patrick's) are on the B list!"

We had an excellent discussion!!!

Villa Local Chapter Meeting

Conveners: Peggy Quinn (Leader), Roberta Naegele (recordar)

Other Participants: Mary Ann Jerkofsky, Janet Tucci, Helen Zulka

After prayer: Sharing of the 2 readings:

- 1) Elements for a Path to the Future: Demographics, communication, care of members, Sponsorships, finances, Rituals: good roadmap to direct our attentions.
- 2) “Religious institutes exist for the witness of consecrated life and for ministry: This dual directive identifies our purpose, with the first being our Consecrated life then ministry. We have maybe offered more attention to Mission and not on the call to consecrated life. This writing kept addressing this throughout.
- 3) Given the data on vocations on p. 16, the statement on p. 14: “the necessity of creating structures that could responsibly carry forward the charism and mission of our institutes is a new summons from the future,” holds true that the increasing age and the lack of vocations is inviting our awareness to ready for change, and p. 16, offers the many but not all, the options that could be chosen.
- 4) There seems to be a lot a hope in all the future planning that is needed to be planned to carry us forward.

Other discussion related about the topic: Sooner rather than Later...

Dealing with this is hard. Fearful. Requires change. It's a scary feeling that yet holds excitement and hope. It's a shot in the arm! A wake up to our call to live the call of the Spirit.

Though there could be fear in all of this, there is no reason to worry. We have had hard times in the past and we have been led by God through them all. Trusting the leadership to work for the common good, expecting us to offer our input into shaping the next steps.

There must be chaos for creation to happen. And going through the chaos requires patience with the process. But each needs to jump in—not just “stick the toe in the water.” Enter the chaos.

We have been called into this transition time. To be the ones to do this. We won't fail. We can't go backward into our habited pasts. Moving into the new and different: this is an exciting time. It is for us to do this work.

We understand the need for XO chapter to seek a later chapter, a longer term of office and fewer councilors. Clarity on not seeking vocations.

Need: Canonical rules needed for election, for chapter, for leadership. Also: Current eligibility of persons for leadership among us.

Feedback for May Local Chapter

Local Chapter: Deborah Gaughan – convener

Present: Deborah Gaughan/ Clarita Schumacher/Dolores Zemont/ Lois Prebil/ Lou Krippel/ Roberta Naegele/ Peggy Quinn/ Rita Vahling/ Mary Lou Marchetti

Missing: Sue Bruno / Mary Ann Hamer

1.Name 2 or 3 reactions from our group to the proposed constitutional changes.

- a. We, having been dialoging and after some further dialoguing together at the gathering, are ready to vote in June.
- b. The reading was a lot of 'new' for us but it was appreciated and needed. We need to keep being educated to the words being used and options for us and what the nitty gritty would mean for us.
- c. Another response was "What does belonging mean to us today."? This will have impact on other congregation questions.

2. Any time sensitive questions?

- a. Conveners and coordinators...what does it mean for their terms? Are they willing and able to go longer?
- b. We need to remember that we are ecclesial. Can we be educated on the canonical requirements or limitations in regard to Chapter or Canon Law in relation to constitutions.
- c. Vocations – discuss and come to our answer.

P.S. 1. We'd like to look seriously at the words we choose as we describe who we are as go forward.... Completion, fulfillment, transformation... and what it means to us as congregation.

P.S. 2. We shared that in our discernments we need to operate from the essence of who we are and why we are...that we exist "for the sake of the gospel and its mission"

P.S. 3. We had a discussion on the 4th item in the list of question for consideration (from the letter April 11)

How much can people do? This relates to all service. We may need to respect people's limits as they learn to see their abilities and limitations for themselves. Some expressed that they wouldn't want to have someone leave their local ministry when we could hire someone to provide the service. The belonging question fits here as well. What does belonging to congregation mean for each of us? and for all of us? How can we all help care for one another?

We may need to invite more; but we may also need to offer what we can.

To our Local Chapter:

This is the feedback I will send to Joliet from our meeting today. Please let me know if you want anything changed. Thank you for the open, honest, deep sharing...as always!
Karen

Feedback from our Local Chapter on May 10, 2024

Facilitator: Kathleen Rossman Scribe: Karen Berry Other members
present: Margaret Hoffman, Martha Eckstein, Mary Kay Cmolik, Nadine Koza, Marie Miller, Theresa Fifer

1. Reactions to the proposed constitutional changes:

They sound sensible.

The proposed process would provide continuity.

Some concern that one member of the current administration was appointed, not elected. Does each current member want to continue for another year or two?

2. Time sensitive questions for the Extraordinary Chapter:

Financial questions - Regarding wills and patrimony: What needs to be done quickly? Where will money go when the community ends? Do we need to set up a Trust Fund supporting ministries we hope can continue in the spirit of what we have been about?

LOCAL CHAPTER REPORT: MAY 11, 2024

Present: M.J. Griffin, Meg Guider, Brigid Jacobs, Elaine Kerscher, Barb Kwiatkowski, Jane Nienaber, Marianne Saieg, Sandi Salois, Mary Fran Seeley

Feedback:

1. Name two or three reactions from your group to the proposed constitutional changes.
 - We agree with the list of changes needed in the *Constitutions*.
 - We have one question that needs to be answered before the Extraordinary Chapter: Is everyone in the present Central Administration willing to extend her term of office until 2027?
2. Does your group have time-sensitive questions that you want to raise for the Extraordinary Chapter?
 - We had an extended and lively discussion about a flowchart of leadership should a present member of our Central Administration decide not to extend her term. At this point, we understand that our present canonical documents, namely, the *Code of Canon Law*, our *Constitutions*, and our *Directives*, would determine our next step.
 - Having answered our own question, we have no further questions to raise for the Extraordinary Chapter at this time.

Submitted by: Elaine Kerscher, OSF

May 20, 2024

CHAPTER GROUP MEETING

May 18, 2024

(Via Zoom)

Members Present: Sisters Kathleen Bushur, Anita Beloin, Sharon Frederick, Jaye Nelson, Alice Ann Harcharik, Rene Simonelic, Sandra Sudkamp, Kathy Salewski

Convener: Sandra Sudkamp, OSF

Scribe: Kathy Salewski, OSF

Reactions to Proposed Constitutional Changes

This group of prayerful women, see the need for the three main issues of the Extraordinary Chapter. We realize that all of these issues would result in Constitutional changes, which need approval from Rome. These issues are:

- Extend the time before our next General Chapter
- Possibly change the length of the NEXT leadership term
- Consider a change to the number of elected leaders

Time Sensitive Question

This group considered a time sensitive issue (due to having half of the Brazilian Community with us) is to clarify the status of the continuing relationship between the US and the Region of Brazil.

Thank you for giving us the time to prayerfully consider together

- The concept of an Extraordinary Chapter
- The realistic probability of this being a necessity at this time in our Community history
- The importance of discussing the Issues for that Chapter.

Faith Szambelanczyk, Convener

Date: May 24, 2023

Present: Geri Podobnik, Kathryn Stimac, Rosemary Huzl, Janet Tucci, Maria Pesavento, Lourdes Boyer, Margaret McGuckin, Faith Szambelanczyk (Convener)

Feedback:

Re: Constitutional Changes

1. Understanding the urgency of our reality, we support Constitutional changes that facilitate the Congregation moving forward. e.g. Governance structure etc.
2. Embracing "If you want to go far, go together"(April 11 letter) we welcome the opportunity to be involved in the process of decision making for our future .

We request: Written proposals for Constitutional Changes as well as an Agenda for the extraordinary chapter be sent out prior to the June Gathering.

Re: Sensitive Questions/Concerns

Need for Education (Leadership, Sisters, etc) on the Journey to Fulfillment

*When and how to engage a Commisary or other entity.

*Understanding of ramifications and involvement in decisions going forward.

*How does Brazil fit into changes in Constitutions as well as possible fulfillment.

*Communication on all levels

*Care of our Sisters going forward

Local Chapter Meeting - Extraordinary Chapter Prayer and Process

Friday, May 17, 2024, 10:00 am – 12 noon; in person at our House of Prayer
or via ZOOM.

Present: Sisters: Maria Bui
 Mary Rose Lieb (scribe)
 Leomarie Luecke
 Joanne Marusa
 Carol Mecko
 Albert Marie Papesch
 Yvonne Weidner (convener)
 Phyllis Wilhelm

Feedback:

1. Reactions:

- the group is realistic about, open to and ready for living and doing the hard work that is before us.
- Now is the time – not later, not earlier.
- Lamentation came up in our sharing often. It was put forth and embraced as a necessary reaction and feeling to where we are as a Congregation and as individual members. Lamentation, as described in the RCRI article entitled “Sooner Rather Than later: Preparing for Institute’s Journey to Fulfillment.”, was appreciated. The descriptions fit where we are and where we feel we will be as we move forward.
- Care of our members and living fully our vocation and our mission are the primary forms of evangelization.
- No baptized person, no institute is completely autonomous and no one is Catholic simply on his or her own terms.

(Note: Not sure **what** the “proposed constitutional changes are.” We know general topics and areas and questions – all with options/alternatives. But, do not recall specifics.)

2. Time Sensitive Questions:

- Sponsorship and its role, impact on the future and decisions about the future.
- Nothing more than **all** that is implied and stated in the “Questions for Consideration”, the April 18 in-person or ZOOM Legacy meeting, and the RCRI article.

3. Comments to ponder:

- Ask for help; step beyond those who may be available or who are always asked.
- To all - offer to help.
- Be positive
- Simplify.

Proposals for Extraordinary Chapter 2024

VOTE

- 1. Change the length of Central Administration terms to six years.**
- 2. Change the minimum number of councilors to two.**

(Does not mean we can't still elect three)

LEANING (if we are not ready to vote)

- 3. If needed, the Central Administration elected in 2027 could serve up to six years or until a commissary would be in place for canonical leadership.**
- 4. We accept that our mission as Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate is moving toward fulfillment and completion.**
- 5. In the United States, we are not actively recruiting new members, and if approached, we would respond that we do not have the capacity / resources to accept new members but would steer them to another congregation.**

(The first two items will be submitted to the Dicastery for Institutes of Religious Life and Apostolic Life for approval.)