



19th GENERAL CHAPTER 2014

OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF BORDEAUX

NO: 17-1 Suore della Santa Famiglia di Bordeaux, Via dei Casali Santovetti 58, 00165 Roma, Italia 1 June

Sunday, 1 June

Conversations and privileged listening

**Communion within the Institute – between Apostolic and Contemplative Sisters
(Friday, 30 May)**

✳ **As an Institute of two vocations,
how do we relate to one another?**

Are we walking together, but on parallel paths, or is there a real relationship of communion between the two vocations?

Is there a genuine understanding of, and respect for, the contribution each one brings to building an Institute of two complementary vocations?

The Capitulants met in groups, each one of which included a Contemplative sister, to share experiences and feelings.



Discussion in the groups was frank, wide-ranging, and fruitful for both vocations.

The importance of knowing each vocation in depth, particularly the contemplative vocation, was emphasised as a way of building respect and confidence.

They talked about the ways in which each vocation lives our Corporate Commitment and how common formation might be understood and practised.

They suggested members of each vocation could be invited to be resource persons for one another providing animation. This has already been done by the Vicar in the Congo.

In countries where there is a *Holy Family* monastery there is, in general, regular interaction between both vocations on the occasion of Family feasts and events that concern them. The other vocations where they exist are also included and they grow together in communion.



Where there are no Contemplatives, they and the Apostolic sisters can devise ways of promoting communion via their websites and speaking of both vocations when talking to others about the *Family*.

Many other matters such as the role of the Vicar on the General Council, visits by the General Leader, where and when the

presence and participation of both vocations would be enriching..., were raised, all with the sincere desire to go deeper into what is a source of life and energy for us.

Intercultural Communities

An unknown future

This was the apt title of an input Christine gave prior to the discussion on Intercultural Communities.

Both leaders and members need to be prepared for intercultural living in any defined context.

In this session, however, the stated aim was “to reflect on the urgent need to prepare leaders of different nationalities and contexts to take up the role of leadership of the entire Institute in the near future”.

Our *Holy Family* growth areas are Africa and Asia. We have some idea of the changes that are taking place in the North and South and of the profoundly changing contexts for which leaders will have to be prepared.

Christine dealt with the need to clarify and be explicit about tasks and roles by constantly “examining, interpreting, reflecting and making sense of their own and their members’ experiences”. The changing and complex contexts of the world today make new demands on leadership.

International teams see closely what is happening and appreciate diversity and interculturality. To deal with it they need to re-assess what is required of them or risk responding to tomorrow’s needs with yesterday’s answers. This involves risks, taking responsibility and being accountable.

“It involves letting go and encouraging the south to develop their own models of apostolic religious life.”



Group reflection

Intercultural communities are not new in the *Holy Family*, nor is living in conflict areas, so the groups had much to share on

- ❖ *their experiences,*
- ❖ *the risks and failures they had met*
- ❖ *the steps to be taken now to renew enthusiasm for mission in intercultural communities*

Some points that were raised:

There is a great sense of how enriching the experience can be and how it deepens, and is a sign of, the communion we so desire to build. This requires close listening to one another, great respect for each culture, letting go of fixed ideas, prejudices... awareness that it does not happen immediately.

There are many risks involved: one culture may tend to dominate; people from another might have feelings of inferiority; culture, not mission, could become the focus; members need to know themselves as they will bring their 'baggage' with them to any situation...

Steps that need to be taken include: strengthening the role of members; preparation in discernment by those being sent and those receiving,; awareness of the context of mission and a definite aim for being there to which the community returns frequently.

There were suggestions about mobile, rapid response communities in areas of conflict or other human disasters or urgent needs of any kind. The conversation is ongoing and will never end...

