



19th GENERAL CHAPTER 2014

OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF BORDEAUX

NO: 1

Suore della Santa Famiglia di Bordeaux, Via dei Casali Santovetti 58, 00165 Roma, Italia

12 May

The 19th General Chapter of the Holy Family Religious Institute has begun...

Opening Celebration

It began, as all such actions begin, with a time of prayer.

In the afternoon of 12 May, Chapter delegates and auxiliary staff assembled in the foyer of the 'Enrico de Ossa' house. The prayer was in three movements:



- **GATHERING**

It was a call to the Spirit to gather all, to open hearts, to guide and direct all paths, to be in and with, not just the Chapter members, but all the Sisters of the Institute, the whole world-wide *Holy Family*, and all associated with it. Present, too, in all hearts were our ancestors, our Founder and foremothers.

Conscious, too, of our communion with all beings in the Universe, the invitation was to “breathe in Love’s creative energy rooting all in the now, in this sacred space of encounter, of life and love, grace and friendship, ...the place of God”.

- **ONENESS IN UNITY AND DIVERSITY**

It was a celebration of the rich diversity the *Holy Family* brings to the Mission of Jesus in all its local contexts – cultures, languages, complementary vocations.

A candle was lit for each continent by a member of a different continent. From these, held together, Margaret lit the Chapter candle.



Scripture Reading:

“I in them and you in me - so they may all be brought to complete unity...”. (Jn. 17, 23)

The invitation to all to repeat the words, “*Here I am, send me*”, in their different languages helped them “to contemplate the mystery and the miracle of our Oneness”.

- **OPENNESS TO BE SENT ANEW FOR MISSION**

Responding to the call to Mission, a prayer:

*for the world, asked God, source of all communion, that “our desire for peace and harmony prevail over war and division and make us open to welcome (God) at all times”;

*for the Church, that she may welcome “the deep longings of men and women today as the voice of the Spirit, as inspiration and impetus for its mission”.

*for the Chapter, asking God’s Wisdom for guidance in the direction the *Holy Family* must take today – SENT ANEW FOR MISSION.

After the singing in French, *To find your Presence in my life*, Margaret called each delegate by name. Each signified her presence and willingness to be a Capitulant with all that it implied by answering 'YES'. Then, carrying the Chapter candle, Margaret led the assembly to the Chapter hall to the sound of the refrain, *Sing Alleluia to the Lord*, sung in all languages.

The Chapter prayer concluded this part of the ceremony.

Formal Opening Address

Margaret welcomed all the Capitulants to the hall, to what would be a 'sacred space' for the next few weeks. She recalled the preparation and events over the past years that have led up to this Chapter and in which members of all *Holy Family* vocations were involved. She quoted Articles 54 and 56 of our Constitutions that set out the nature and purpose of the General Chapter.



Our main focus now is on Mission. Our theme reminds us: Sent for Mission... if we don't dare now, then when? In her address, Margaret returned constantly to the theme of MISSION.

We "need to develop our understanding and living of mission" and the realisation that "our vowed life for mission needs to be renewed in a profound way, so that we can respond more authentically to our call for mission today".

The spirit of God Alone, bequeathed to us by our founder, should be for us as it was for him, a source of life and energy. It was a spirit of love. To respond to this we must be detached from all that blocks our total commitment to mission.

Our awareness of the new universe story, begun at the 2008 Chapter, has also had repercussions on our understanding of mission and calls us to give new and courageous responses.

In recognising the urgency of mission and being missionary we find encouragement from Pope Francis' letter *Evangelii Gaudium*, from which Margaret quoted (#272, #273).

The capitulants were invited to continue to pray thus:

*May we listen to your Spirit inviting us
To respond with the mind and heart of Christ,
Discerning where and how
Your love wants to be expressed today.
Send us anew with courage and daring.*

“And now,” Margaret concluded, “with trust in the Spirit working within us and among us, I declare the 19th General Chapter open.”

