



19th GENERAL CHAPTER 2014

OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF BORDEAUX

NO: 7

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

19 May

The Morning Prayer, and the day, began,

“In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit...”

The Prayer was an invitation to contemplate the core of our spirituality.

Pierre Bienvenu Noailles’s exhortation to the first members of the *Holy Family* to go often “in spirit to the stable of Bethlehem and to the house of Nazareth” was a call to share his own inspiration to live, as it were, in the ‘very interior’ of the Holy Family.

In this sacred, family space, he contemplated how the love of God lived in total availability, was the cement that united Jesus, Mary and Joseph so that he saw it as the reflection of Trinitarian communion.

“The Holy Family, sweet image of the Trinity,” he wrote.



Andrei Rublev, who created the icon that Christian tradition has seen as a symbol of the Trinitarian harmony, always kept in mind this exhortation of his teachers to:

***“overcome the division of the world
through the contemplation
of the Blessed Trinity”.***

Some centuries later, Pierre Bienvenu Noailles invited us to “build a new society through the contemplation of the Holy Family, sweet image of the Trinity”.

A meditation on the icon brought out the unbelievable grandeur of the Blessed Trinity, three persons similar in nature, different but not separate, among whom circulates a current of love evident in the circular movement of the icon.

It also pointed to the wondrous acquiescence and participation of the Three in the Incarnation and every Divine action.

The empty space before the altar is an invitation to us to take our place at their table, share their meal and their life. If we accept this invitation we have the promise, “we will come (to you) and make our home (with you)” (Jn. 14, 23).

After singing the UBI CARITAS, interspersed with verses from this day’s Word (John 14, 21, 23, 26), all prayed:

God, source of love, in the resurrection of Christ, you have re-created us for eternal life; multiply in us the fruits of the paschal sacrament.

Enable us to draw new strength from this saving food.

This led the Capitulants into the work of the day, keeping the connection with what has gone before.

Christine made the connection in her opening remarks introducing the day’s work.

The Steering Committee had been at work the previous evening collating the work done in the groups into a first document. It is by no means a finished article. More reflection is needed.

The Capitulants were urged to listen more with the heart more than the head.

The Steering Committee’s First Document

The main ideas proposed by the Capitulants were presented succinctly by means of slides. The symbolic pictures speak as eloquently as the words.

A burst of applause from the Capitulants said ‘Thank you’ to the Committee for the work done on their behalf.

Once more, they separated into groups to see what needed more emphasis, what might have been omitted, what additions they wanted to make as a result of the previous evening’s reflection.



Some Points Raised by the Groups

Primacy of God, The contemplative dimension of our lives, the transforming power of the Eucharist, the need to be rooted in our spirituality when we live in real world, are aspects that could be more strongly expressed.

'Exodus', one of the symbols used yesterday spoke strongly and raised further questions: It is a challenge to look closely at what is holding us back from leaping into the unknown, when it seems we really want to.

JPIC issues call us to go out. This may be more implied that emphasised in the document. Integrity of creation as an issue could be more to the fore.

Interdependence, a very important concept needs more emphasis.

Leadership, stress the need to move to a new style of leadership, less hierarchical or pyramidal, more feminine, the wisdom of the elders and newness of the young sisters can be combined. All exercise their membership responsibly.

Mission, all called to be missionary, no matter what the age or location; mission ad extra requires a time of conversion to be open to a new and different situation.

Language, can we not find new words to express old ideas, e.g. God Alone as the Primacy of God.

Witness, in our relationships, do we witness to the joy of the Gospel?

There was more which will be taken up in further formal and informal ways.

Two final tasks for the day

Our Vowed Life for Mission

This document from the 2008 General Chapter, and still very relevant, has been revised. The Chapter is asked reflect deeply on the document, re-read it prayerfully in the light of the work already done and see how it interconnects with it.

Discernment Groups

In another week, the Chapter will have to elect a new General Leader, the person who will be the public face of the Institute. To do this, the first step is to establish criteria.

Considering all that is being said, what qualities are needed in the person who is to lead the Institute until the year 2020? There is to be no talk of names just yet, simply criteria.

