OPENING MESSAGE

30th Congregational Chapter, 7th June 2015
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ENERGIZED BY THE SPIRIT, WE RISK TOGETHER FOR MISSION!

Welcome Sisters and Lay Mission Partners! Welcome to our 30th Congregational Chapter, which officially opened this morning during our beginning ritual. Welcome to our Maison-Mère, our Casa Madre, our Mother House! Welcome to this beautiful place filled with:

♥ A history which inspires us;
♥ A history which gives us courage;
♥ A history which unites us with St. Mary Euphrasia, who grew in her love for the holy work and the spirituality passed on to her from St. John Eudes and her Sisters of Our Lady of Charity;
♥ A history which exemplified energy and risk-taking!
♥ A history which is impelling us to go forward beyond borders.

Today, we are the living history! We have come here to make history. We have come to co-create new historic moments yet to be experienced! Why? In order to “be communion” for the life and future of our mission! We have come to engage with one another as we listen to our realities, in order to build our congregational future! This communion holds new moments of searching together as to where the Spirit might be leading us! It is a blessing that we begin this experience of communion on this Feast of Corpus Christi. This is our sacred time! It is a new moment of history for us and for those for whom we have the responsibility to generate and pass on this legacy.

Already we are in a new moment as we celebrate the first Congregational Chapter since our reunification almost a year ago. Let us welcome this moment of union and communion! More lay mission partners are present at this Chapter and for a longer period of time than in the past. Let us welcome this moment of growth in our understanding of ourselves as partners co-responsible for our mission and its development! And for the first time, we welcome three representatives of the temporary professed sisters who were present at the ICAs and chosen to attend this Chapter as invited guests. Let us welcome this moment of leadership potential, youthful enthusiasm and innovation. Perpetually professed, apostolic and contemplative sisters, let us welcome a wealth of experience and wisdom, particularly significant during this Year of Consecrated Life. Welcome!
We will be creating something new! What will this require of us? It will require risk! Risk!
Energized by the Spirit, we are here to risk together. We are here on this most solemn Feast
of Corpus Christi to risk being “communion.”

Ilia Delio says that “The Eucharist…is the sacrament of evolution, because every act of
Eucharist is an act of making a new future through a new divine presence, a new
relatedness, a new freedom to love.” (The Emergent Christ, p. 68). Let me repeat her words:
“The Eucharist… is the sacrament of evolution because every act of Eucharist is an act of
making a new future through a new divine presence, a new relatedness, a new freedom to
love.” Can we “wake up” to this newness?

Pope Francis, in his letter to all Consecrated People, challenges us to “to wake up the
world.” He says: “In a polarized society, where different cultures experience difficulty in
living alongside one another, where the powerless encounter oppression, where inequality
abounds, we are called to offer a concrete model of community which, by acknowledging the
dignity of each person and sharing our respective gifts, makes it possible to live as brothers
and sisters”. In creating something new, we will risk and we will do even more! Are we ready
to take on the challenge offered to us by Pope Francis “to wake up the world?” Awake! We
can witness to being “communion” so as to use our internationality, our global solidarity to
“wake up the world”.

“Reawakened” solidarity requires us to be Eucharistic people. Thus, it is imperative that we
be people in the act of making a new future. People who are conscious of the divine
presence. People who can relate and are free to love. People who believe that communion
nourishes us. People who are open to the sustaining energy of our God within us. It is this
supportive energy that “wakes us up”.

I am confident that we will embrace the sacred energy stirring inside and among us. I am
confident that we will transform and burst forth – that we will become a dynamic, new
explosion of God’s love! We will connect with this energy through the beauty of God’s
creation around us here, in this sacred home of ours, and with one another. At this Chapter,
we must erupt with tenderness, compassion and reconciling love for our ever present and
challenging mission.

Our work here at the Chapter is to call forth, nurture, harvest and spread this risk-taking
energy. Why? Because we can make a difference in the world today. We are part of a world
torn with wars, terrorism and violence; a world where 21 million people are in the situation of
trafficking; a world ridden with poverty; a world where the majority are hungry; a world of
forced migration; a world where the majority of women and girls are denigrated; and a world
which is ecologically mistreated. How will we make a concrete difference?

We begin today by celebrating together the fact that we are Eucharistic people in
communion with one another and with our world. Let us be consumed by the zeal for life that
God unleashes in us. May we envision peace in our world because of our willingness to risk,
advocate and collaborate.

With the background of our history, of directions set at past Chapters and of the present
reality in which we find ourselves, let us go forth with courage, and risk! For only then, will
we create something new. What will our “risk-taking” create? What will this “something new” look like? We don’t have that answer yet! But, we can be certain that the Spirit within and among us will enlighten us, will engage us, and together we will produce a magnificent new design which will carry us into the future.

♥ We can anticipate a design that will incorporate an integration of spirituality, justice and mission development.

♥ We can anticipate a design that considers the Prologue – our history since 1641, and our Chapter Report of the past six years.

♥ We can anticipate a new design that will not only capture the past and present moments, but will pave the way for the future. As Blessed Oscar Romero reminds us: it is “a future not our own”.

♥ We can anticipate a new design, because we have been spiritually blessed through the canonization process of Blessed Maria as well as all the input we have had these past six years on Creation Spirituality, the Great Heart of God, and Shepherding Today.

♥ We can anticipate challenging input from Brother Philip Pinto who told his brothers: “If we decide really to live for others, then we have a future.” (Religious Life: A Call to Move Beyond, Philip Pinto, cfc).

♥ We can anticipate that the ideas we share with each other during our sacred conversations and our prayer together will encourage us and motivate us.

♥ We can anticipate the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the Chapter and especially during the days of discernment as we elect a new Congregational Leadership Team.

♥ We can also anticipate that our new Congregational Leadership Team will build upon the directions we set for the next six years with great dedication and vision.

The time has come. Let us begin to create our new design! I invite you now to spend some time connecting with one another. Let us break bread and drink wine to symbolize the sharing of our hopes for this Chapter. Let us start now to build discerning Covenant Communities as described by Sr. Rekka Chennattu at the Intercontinental Assemblies. Let us “be communion” so as to be fully Energized by the Spirit to Risk Together for Mission during this our 30th Congregational Chapter.

Brigid Lawlor
Congregational Leader