



Glimpses from the General Chapter



November 6-24, 2023
Thú Duc, Vietnam

Glimpse 10 – November 22-23, 2023 Coming to the Close of the Chapter Final Proposals and Voting

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Father Darren Maslen (*England*) preaching

After Morning Prayer and Mass led by **Darren Maslen, the delegate from Great Britain and Ireland**, we gave reports from various **Geographical Conferences**. They are Europe, Africa, Asia-Oceania, and Americas Conference (*which we belong to this conference, stretching North America-USA to the central and South American continent*). There were exciting proposals and creative ideas that each conference discussed. For us, we wanted to highlight the essential realities that are coming to the Americas. Our name is **Sacramentinos Americas Conference (SAC)**.

First, in honor of the 40th Anniversary of the ***Rule of Life***, the Province of Saint Ann will have a retreat at Provincial Headquarters in Highland Heights (*Cleveland*), Ohio, **August 5-9, 2024**. As we have already announced, *all from the Eymardian Family are welcome* to participate with our male



religious branch as **William Fickel SSS, Michael Perez SSS, and Mary Muehle, Associate**, lead us.

The 53rd International Eucharistic Congress will be in Quito, Ecuador, from September 8 to 15, 2024! Our conference would like as many as possible to participate in this Congress. We are finessing the idea of having some gathering time for the Eymardian family with retreat time for our Associates and parishioners of ***all*** our places. We will see if we can offer some programs to support the Congress (*such as a Life in the Eucharist Retreat*). Stay tuned for this, but we hope, especially our Spanish-speaking Eymardian Family may wish to have the retreat and worship experience, that it will be a grand event for us all in this Equator country.

Additionally, our conference plans vocation collaboration and hopes to update our website with a Portuguese and Spanish section so that this ministry is trilingual (*English – Spanish – Portuguese for the SAC*). We hope to promote vocation ministry using our chapter theme: **Together for the Eucharistic Mission – Juntos por la Misión Eucarística**. The other provinces of our conference appreciate the grand design of our website.

2 After the conference reports, we reviewed the propositions and the recommendations for changing, updating, and editing our ***Vademecum and Rule of Life***. We discussed the changes for which we would vote. During the vote, there was no discussion or amendments; this was for today only! We left much time for the process because of working in multiple languages and the understanding of these changes. (*There were about 250 proposals to review.*) Sometimes, a word exists in both French and English; sometimes, it does not. We look for another word that meets the clarifications and works for comprehension.

Lunch provided a welcome break since it can be challenging talking about words, phrases, and ideas, especially when there are differences in translation between French and English. After our break, we returned to our Cenacle to hear the proposals of the different Chapter Commissions. First, we heard thirteen proposals from the SSS International Theological Commission and their reasons. This Chapter would like to continue on many items that have been part of the past and General Administration, and multiple work areas are proposed.

Next, we made recommendations for the **Commission for Eymardian Places**, followed by **Internationality, Formation**, and our **Juridical Commission**. They clarified points and synthesized items to be ready to vote upon the next day.



The next day came – **Thursday morning** after Mass with the Haitian-Peruvian Father Elibien Joseph- and the voting began! Our new policy on sexual abuse, guidelines on procedures for living our life, many forms we need for aspects of our life, etc., are in the *Vademecum* and were voted upon unanimously. (*Special thanks to John Keenan for his input on this.*) It is essential to note the Holy See is continuing to update its policies worldwide and provide guidance to dioceses, especially in rural areas. We work in tandem with this Vatican Dicastery.

Then, we went to modifications in the *Rule of Life*. We vote upon them today and then submit these changes or updates to the Holy See for confirmation/approval. (*All religious orders in the Catholic Church have these regulations as part of our systems.*) For a change to the *Rule of Life*, there needs to be a 2/3 majority vote. Some of the issues we voted upon:

- Updating *Rule of Life* 1. (*No was the vote and the answer!*)
- In each piece of the *Rule of Life*, as Pope Francis has allowed, we voted to have brothers in leadership positions in our Congregation.
- We also voted on most of the other recommendations for language or grammar that were not accepted. These were submitted by religious such as myself and **Fr André Guilton of Paris, France**. The capitulars were not ready for some biblical updating.

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We then went to our General Statutes, where a simple majority changes or adds something to the text. These were also modified to incorporate religious brothers' ability to be in leadership positions. We added a new procedure to replace a Provincial/Regional Superior when he is elected or leaves his office. We will officially have an election to replace him if it is more than two years before his term ends. One of the provincials, Roel de la Cruz (*Philippines*), became the General Consultor and Treasurer. Now, in his province, they can hold an election for their Amplified Provincial Council to choose a new Provincial Superior.

Then, the **International Theological Commission** (ITC) made proposals, and we voted on them. We voted to have the SSS ITC continue working with the other commissions to collaborate and invite the laity to join this Commission. The General Council is asked through the proposals and the vote to focus on the Eucharist, theology, liturgy, prayer, *Rule of Life*, and Internationality. The Chapter wishes for an ITC at the international level and geographic conferences. We want to continue our work in Internationality and have our men in formation learn another language, especially French or English, depending on pastoral needs.



After lunch, we voted on other proposals. We heard from the Commission for the Studies of the Founder and the Eymardian Places. We voted and overwhelmingly accepted our proposals, which were:

- a) Produce a publication expressing the relationship between “Father Eymard and Holy Scripture.”
- b) Offer the means of animation in parishes on the Christian faith and Eucharistic values.
- c) Continue the search for texts about the *Rule of Life*.
- d) Produce documents accessible to younger generations.
- e) Look in the writings of Father Eymard for intuitions linked to current themes: synodality and the role of women in the Church.
- f) Seek to highlight the existing material through Days of Recollections, Eymardian Seminar, Eucharistic Weeks, etc.
- g) When necessary, the Provinces/Regions ensure the translation of works into their local languages to allow accessibility to the laity.
- h) The works be republished that have had great success, especially among the lay people, such as: “It is Christ who lives in me,” Father Eymard: one Eucharistic Thought per Day,” and “Spiritual Life Advice.”
- i) Each province has at least one specialist on the founder and his writings.
- j) The provinces seek to disseminate Eucharistic Spirituality through modern technological means: Facebook, Zoom, YouTube, podcasts, radio and TV.
- k) Maintain our presence at La Mure to keep the memory of the founder.
- l) The General Council will have to study the question of La Mure and subsequently make a proposal on the animation and support of the Community.
- m) The General Council and the Community of La Mure must decide on the Grenoble bishop’s new proposal to accept or refuse a second parish, knowing that our priority is the Eymard Spirituality Center.
- n) Those responsible for the Center will have to see how to disseminate the founder’s thoughts in the different parishes within the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Grenoble.
- o) May La Mure always be a place of retreat, training center, and international pilgrimage intended for the entire Eymardian Family. May the religious continue collaborating with the association “Les Amis du Père Eymard.”

Next, the **Finance Commission** made their proposals, and we voted overwhelmingly to support them. Here is a summary:

- i. To explore ways to convert the unused space within the General House into accommodation for temporary lease by external parties, which will generate income for the General Curia.



- ii. To consult with external agencies, engaging their expert advice, to creatively convert this unused space to suitable for temporary lease.
- iii. Upon the completion of the conversion of this space, engage a leasing agent or a professional organization to assist with the leasing process.
- iv. To determine and execute a proper ongoing maintenance plan for the General House, reducing the risk of future unexpected repair works.
- v. To allow for future significant repairs and renovations, set up a “sinking fund” in the financial statement and make provisions for this account annually. This provision can be funded by apportioning a percentage of the rental income from the leasing out of the unused section of the General House.
- vi. To re-constitute the International Finance Commission to continue this critical work, including looking at engaging new members within the wider Eymardian family for the composition of this finance commission.
- vii. To continue to engage external consultants with financial investment insight to advise on ways to optimize the returns on investments for the General Curia, in particular, consider diversifying the investment portfolios.
- viii. To utilize the General Statutes 34.01 and 34.02 as the criteria to allocate the Mission Fund.
- ix. To maintain the current contribution computation towards the Formation Fund and to explore, in detail, the scope of its allocation and governance.
- x. Additionally, to encourage respective Provinces/Regions and the General Curia to consider making annual provisions for potential legal suits stemming from abuse.
- xi. Set up the Mission Development Office with a part-time professional to oversee the sourcing of funds for the SSS African Reality.
- xii. Accept the proposed budget for 2023 – 2028 as presented, with the ability to make provisions and amend for extraordinary expenses resulting from significant events and material changes affecting the Congregation.
- xiii. Accept the draft Guidelines for Treasurers as presented.
- xiv. To continue seeking external experts to advise on the Congregation’s treasury ministry matters.
- xv. To consider including the formation of religious, in particular, treasurers and their assistants in essential financial acumen, including understanding basic financial reports and financial planning.
- xvi. Organize a meeting of all treasurers and the International Finance Commission at least twice a year.
- xvii. To encourage all treasurers within geographical conferences to meet more frequently. These meetings can be coordinated by each conference, respectively.



After this presentation of voting, we heard from the Formation Commission and overwhelmingly approved each proposal. Here are some highlights:

1. We propose that the Formation of the formators (*Novice Master and Scholastic Director*) be conducted in the context of Eymardian Places and that the orientation on “follow me” be regular before assuming the responsibility as Formators.
2. We propose that pastoral exposure should be compulsory to form future Eucharistic missionaries.
3. We propose having a planned program for learning languages in the context of Internationality... This will compel them to pastoral exposure in any international scholasticate.
4. We propose prioritizing maintaining the program for final profession (IP4), if there is a difficulty for three months, to make it at least one month to come together for their international preparation as IP4 brothers.
5. We propose maintaining the IP4 as the priority, if there is a difficulty for three months, to make it at least one month to come together for their international preparation as IP4 brothers.
6. We propose that each province plan for the ongoing religious formation for all. It should spread out throughout the year for the initial years and periodically for the rest.

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Sadly, we voted to suppress our USA mother province, the Province of Saint John the Baptiste (*Canada*), and attach them to the Curia. Additionally, we voted for the Region of the Republic of Congo and Cameroon to become a province when the new General Council deems it appropriate.

In the last part of the day, we spent time with our “**Final Message of the 36th General Chapter to the Whole Congregation.**” The third draft has wonderfully brought together our realities and thoughts, but there were questions, suggestions, and compliments. When it is completed, we will send this statement in the next and last Glimpse 11 on Sunday.

So, you can see we have been busy the last few weeks, and the commissions worked hard to listen and propose ways to set ourselves on an essential track for the next 6-years with the General Administration team leading us. I do not think they nor the Congregation will be bored! Our long days and nights have come to fruition. The next *Glimpse* will also have some final pictures.



Thank you for your feedback, questions, and interest. We appreciate your prayers and care from across the globe. We could feel your love and hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday.

Various photos...



Father Elibien (Peru) presides at Eucharist for the Spanish-speaking countries of South America

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Father Ai (Vietnam) leads prayer after breakfast. We are so grateful for his Province hosting this great event





Hard-working 2nd year novices of Vietnam supporting and serving us



Brother Rey, Father Vergel and Roel (*Philippines*) enjoying a coffee break, happy to stand up after voting on so many proposals

