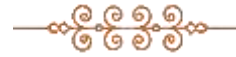




Glimpses from the General Chapter



November 6-24, 2023
Thú Duc, Vietnam

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Glimpse 3 – Opening Rituals Uniting Us Together for Our Eucharistic Mission – Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Yesterday, we enjoyed our traditional opening ritual, where members from across the Congregation unite as one body – the chapter! We become not delegates from individual countries but together as one body with our many gifts and blessings, the one Chapter body.

The “opening ceremony,” while not as grand as the Olympics, but in our unique way, was moving. We were alerted by a bong, a representative from each continent bringing items to the place of reverence. Especially bringing the Gospel, our *Rule of Life*, and our host’s symbols to ignite the assembly. Having been blessed to be part of two other general chapters as a coordinator of liturgy and music, it was a pretty notable difference to have everyone on a mobile phone, taking “selfies,” and wanting to take pictures together, not even if you knew the others’ languages. The tech



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language and our symbols of the order united us with an excitement that was so moving and joyous. We were all like teenagers on “Tick Tock!”

For the first time in our rituals, we had other members of the Eymardian Family, the local sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, who did a very moving interpretation of a popular Vietnamese song. This led to a special talk from our current General Superior, Father Eugenio Barbosa, highlighting in his opening address the nature around us in Vietnam and its symbolism for us. Here are some excerpts:

In this country that welcomes us, gourds and green pumpkins are among the vegetables people eat almost daily. Gourds and pumpkins are two varieties that belong to the same plant family. Both, like the vine, climb trellises. Their fruit is green, and their flowers are very similar. They differ in color and shape: the gourd has a white flower and a long fruit, while the pumpkin has a yellow flower and a round fruit. Vietnamese farmers usually plant them together and make bamboo trellises to climb together.

The ancestors, who receive special reverence in this culture, trained the younger generations to live meaningful values in life. Contemplating the plants that grew together, they said: “Gourds and green courgettes love each other. Despite your differences, you share the same trellis”.

As they grow together, gourds and courgettes gradually intertwine and become close and intimate. They eliminate any comparison of their differences that generate prejudice: colors, shapes, and sizes. Intertwined, they share the same living conditions and the same destiny. In the abundance of water, they benefit together. In scarcity, they are united to resist and continue to grow on the trellis.

As capitulars, we are here representing provinces, regions, countries, continents, cultures, and models of the Church. We carry differences that distinguish and identify us in the uniqueness of God’s creative project. Gourds and pumpkins come from the same family of plants. *Sacramentinos*, together: we belong to the same Eymardian Family. Sharing in the same water that guarantees life, communing in the same Eucharistic bread that nourishes us, we can achieve fidelity in our witness. Gourds and pumpkins give of



themselves through their fruit to generate and sustain many lives. **Together**, strengthened in our **SSS** identity, **faithfully witnessing to** who we are, we take on the **mission of Eucharistizing** our lives, our **Family**, and the present world.

After our Father General's address, Pope Francis sent his greetings, too, with his esteem, love, care, and prayers for our successful chapter. He quoted from his recent 2022 Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi* 65:

From Sunday to Sunday, communion in the Body and Blood of Christ wants to make also of our lives a sacrifice pleasing to the Father, in the fraternal communion of sharing, of hospitality, of service. From Sunday to Sunday the energy of the Bread broken sustains us in announcing the Gospel in which the authenticity of our celebration shows itself.

Let us abandon our polemics to listen together to what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Let us safeguard our communion. Let us continue to be astonished at the beauty of the Liturgy. The Paschal Mystery has been given to us. Let us allow ourselves to be embraced by the desire that the Lord continues to have to eat His Passover with us. All this under the gaze of Mary, Mother of the Church, *(and not from DD 66 he continued)*, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, and your holy founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard; may you have a blessed chapter.

Joseph Ai, the host provincial superior of the province of the Martyrs in Vietnam, welcomed us to this grand provincial center. As a province, we are welcomed during their 50th anniversary year of the SSS presence in Vietnam.

Before approving the calendar and the moderators – the president of the General Chapter, Eugenio Martins Barbosa, reminded us that:

The LORD chose us to be here to represent the global needs of our religious order. We are to think a lot broader than our province and nations. The manifestation of God and the Holy Spirit's work. We represent the faith and the people from our provinces that we bring to this meeting. We are called



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to build up the community of service, working in small groups of reflections, forming special commissions, and working a lot personally. We are together for more than 10 hours daily over three weeks. This forms a Eucharistic dimension in the community and to live our Eucharistic spirituality well.

We were invited to be open to the chapter and one another. Father Barbosa gave special recognition to the “patriarch” of the Chapter, Father Norman Pelletier SSS, former vicar general, general superior, and, of course, our provincial superior for 12 years in the Province of Saint Ann.



In the Meeting Assembly Hall



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Pho (delicious Vietnamese breakfast soup for us) is what many of us take.



Capitulars Fathers Ben Ho (Australia), Jean de Dieu Passy (Republic of Congo), Eliebién Joseph (Peru), John Thomas Lan, Abraham Faye (Senegal)



Placement of the Chapter Candle, Bible and Rule of Life



Ringling the Gong





General Superior Father Eugenio Barbosa Martins
(Brazil)



Our Vietnamese Sisters add our to prayer ritual



Francisco De Oliverira Marques (Brazil), John Thomas Lane, Marcelo Da Silva (Brazil), Severin Amos Mvouka (Republic of the Congo)



Tallest and least tall: Abraham Faye (Senegal) and Roel Dela Cruz (Philippines)



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Anacleto Bambala (*Democratic Republic of the Congo*)
and Abraham Faye (*Senegal*)



Darren Maslen (*England*), Bro Reynaldo Gupilan
Acabado (*Philippines*) Norman Pelletier (*USA*) and Bro
Ignatius Joseph Thambi (*India*)



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