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Herewith we present to you the fourth issue of IGC in 2018, which will inform you about the following:

**2018 - August (No. 4)**



**Members and staff of the 35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter  
of the FIC Congregation  
Denekamp, 5-25 August 2018**

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## Our Witnessing through Prayer

In the just ended General Chapter 2018, it became very clear that a deeply felt experience and awareness of God's presence in our lives is the source of our religious life. Therefore the quality of our life as religious requires more attention than the number of members we have.

Based on the theme of the Chapter "We consecrate ourselves to be witnesses of God's Love", we tried to explore ways to make our apostolate a more practical way of expressing our love for people.

To be oriented toward God also means to grow as a contemplative in action, to grow as a person who more and more joins with God (in contemplation) and also loves the neighbour (in action). A closer look at the life of Christ, the apostles, and the saints of active apostolic life, suggests that there is an inseparable bond between the spiritual and the apostolic dimensions of Christian living. Vincent de Paul told the Sisters of Charity to "*leave God for God. If the poor arrive even during prayer, the Daughter of Charity should feel free to leave the conversation that she is having with the Lord in prayer in order to converse with the Lord in the person of the poor*". Even our Founder, Louis Rutten, was an incredibly active man, but he was also a man of deep prayer.



A person imbued with an apostolic spirit views prayer as a means, an instrument to enable the individual to more discerningly and fully serve the neighbour. As indicated in "*The Apostolate of the Laity*", Pope Paul VI said "The greatest temptation for brothers is that we become so caught up in our apostolic work that we lose contact with the energizing vision,

the driving force that animates those works. Of course our apostolate is important. We must love God '*with the sweat of our brows and the strength of our arms*.' But our apostolate must flow from our experience of God, of his Spirit, bursting out of the very heart of human existence ....". In other words, our spirituality must be fully alive through works of mercy.

If the Spirit is fully alive in us, the apostolic activities will surely be a striking sign in the world that the Kingdom of God is at hand. As Chittister says, "The religious who does not attend to the spiritual life does not have one. The religious whose life is bound up in the spiritual quest, never knows failure and never gives in to failure. It is finding God in what we do that is the measure of success. It is walking with God that makes failure impossible".

Apart from prayer, our apostolic life has a number of supporting systems which are closely linked. Apart from it being spiritually rooted, apostolate should be done in the spirit of Jesus who is the source of it and entrenched in the spirit of our Founders. To be deeply infused with an apostolic spirit, we first of all need to have the personal experience of being sent to be a witness of God's love among God's people. Therefore prayer, in whatever form is "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God." It renews the strength of the apostle on his missionary journey of apostolate. The active worker who has no interior life does something else and not apostolate. Prayer and action should go hand in hand. Divorced from action, prayer tends to be an escape route.

## Report General Chapter 2018

The 35th General Chapter of the FIC Congregation came to a successful conclusion in the serene environment of "Huize Elisabeth" at Denekamp,

The Netherlands. The six-yearly congregational gathering, which had the theme "We Consecrate Ourselves to be Witnesses of God's Love", took place from 5-25 August 2018. The encounter represents the supreme authority of the Congregation, and brought together 30 delegates from our provinces including Chile (2), Ghana (6), Indonesia (10), Malawi (3) and the Religious House Netherlands (4). The rest were the General Council (GC) members (4) and the General Treasurer.



In the Eucharistic celebration that marked the beginning of the event, five candles were lit to signify that we are united in Christ and in our common mission. The General Superior of the Congregation, Bro. Martinus Handoko in his official opening address, outlined the task of the General Chapter which include, among others, the promotion of appropriate renewal in our Congregation and making of regulations

which are binding upon the whole Congregation. He entrusted the whole process of the Chapter to the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The first week was dedicated to the General Council report 2012-2018. The content of the 159-page report gives an account on the functioning of the General Council and includes the general picture of the Congregation, the functioning of the General Council, how the last General Chapter's resolutions were implemented, international meetings and the financial policy pursued during their term of office. After subjecting the report to a thorough scrutiny, members commended the GC for their hard and serious work in trying to implement all the resolutions of the General Chapter 2012. The GC was highly praised especially for their spirit of teamwork and cordial relationship during their term of office. Members also gave comments on the areas of attention the General Council formulated at the end of the report as the most important conclusions. The Chapter underlined these issues, also as points of attention for the new General Council.

A recollection on the theme of the Chapter concluded the discussion on the General Council report. It was led by the facilitator of the Chapter, Fr. Bernard Mardiatmadja, SJ. He invited us to recall the very personal experiences of our call to religious life and as people who believe in God and try to be witnesses of His love. What are our memories? What are the experiences of our faith life? We tried to listen to what the Spirit revealed to us. After a substantial time of personal reflection we could share our experiences with another Chapter member.



The second week was devoted to the discussion on proposals and formulation of policies. The discussion focussed on a wide range of issues including our Congregational Statute, FIC leadership, formation, vocation promotion, promotion of association, communication (with a focus on social media), our mission towards the poor and needy, care for the environment, FIC logo, our spirituality as lived through prayer, apostolate and community life, and the dogma of Immaculate Conception of Mary, which bears our name.

The discussion on the proposal on the Religious House Netherlands (RHN) took a long time as participants wanted more clarification on the administrative role of lay people in the House, and to what extent they participate in decision making in the Congregation. To enhance the understanding of the style of administration within the RHN, especially where lay people are involved, a copy of the statute of the House was provided. This led to a clearer picture of this new development in the Congregation.

What engaged the members of the Chapter in the final week was seen as the heart of the encounter, namely the election of the new General Council. The process which began already in the first week included



discussing in provincial as well as in mixed groups, the qualities of the brothers that will be elected into the General Council and a number of proposed General Council teams consisting of the General Superior and three Councillors. All these discussions ended up in plenary. The process was done in an atmosphere of silence and prayer to enable the Holy Spirit work within each of us, and in serious consideration of the requirements and qualities listed earlier for members of the new General Council. Finally on August 22, the election proper was conducted with the following results:

|                              |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Bro. Augustine Kubdaar       | General Superior |
| Bro. Raphael Besigrinee      | 1st Councillor   |
| Bro. Theodorus Suwaryanto    | 2nd Councillor   |
| Bro. Valentinus Daru Setiaji | 3rd Councillor   |



Later during the day the new General Council met and proposed Bro. Theodorus Suwaryanto who was later elected as Vicar. The election

was followed by a festive get together in which brothers congratulated members of the newly elected General Council and expressed gratitude to God.

Having accomplished the last major task of the Chapter, we spent the last three days putting final touches to important issues, namely working on the final version of the Chapter message, voting on proposals and evaluation. The newly elected members of the GC and the outgoing members also had the opportunity to meet during these last days. During AOB, Bro. Wim Luiten addressed the Chapter on behalf of the RHN. He presented a paper to Chapter members, with the title “What we, the Dutch brothers want to pass on as part of ‘The story continues ...’”. All Chapter members were deeply touched by the message of the Dutch brothers. It was an emotional moment for all because the message was indicative of an advice of an ageing parent to the younger generation. However, deep down, the brothers were grateful for it.

At the official closing on 25 August, the chairman invited the General Superior-elect, Bro. Augustine Kubdaar, to deliver his closing address, after which he declared the Chapter officially concluded.

## My impression of the General Chapter 2018



This was my second experience of a General Chapter, and I feel this was a wonderful moment of gathering of brothers, in the sense that participants demonstrated a high level of seriousness, but at the same time there was time for relaxation. I felt free to express my opinion, feelings, and ideas. I felt the spirit of brotherhood and an atmosphere of a religious meeting. This atmosphere enabled us to learn from and enrich one another.

The detailed report of the General Council is indicative of the seriousness and hard work of the General Council for the last six years. In so many ways I felt I was part of the report.



There are two proposals that impressed me very much. The first is Proposal 19: "Deepening on community living, prayer and apostolate". The General Chapter 2018 requests the General Council to initiate and stimulate a congregational movement of deepening on community living, prayer and apostolate among the brothers in the Congregation. This proposal is meant for each one of us. It encourages us to deepen our quality of life as this is what determines the quality of our apostolic activities.

The substance of the proposal is taken from art. 32 of our Constitutions. Community living, prayer and apostolate are three elements that are

deeply connected. We all feel borne by the apostolic spirit that animated our Founders. The word "spirit" in "apostolic spirit" refers to the fruit of community living and prayer, that affect our apostolic work. This point makes us realise that the goal of our work is related to the spirit of our Founders, which is: for the sake of the Kingdom of God. "As brothers we are called together and thus sent out to continue the work of Jesus".

The second proposal that I am so impressed about is proposal 28 on "Care of our environment". The essence of the proposal is derived from the encyclical "Laudato Si'" of Pope Francis. The encyclical states that there is a strong connection between the (lack of) care of our environment and poverty. Degradation of our environment spoils our precious resources such as water, energy, air, trees, minerals etc. Taking care of our environment and helping others to do the same is a real and structural contribution to the well-being of people, especially those who are underprivileged. As stated in the encyclical there are some simple steps or actions that can help us preserve the environment, namely planting trees, doing gardening, switching off lights when not in use, turning off taps to prevent wastage of water, proper disposal of rubbish, planting flowers to beautify our surroundings, maintaining cleanliness in our surroundings, among others.

Apart from the General Chapter message, what impressed me also was the message presented by the Brothers of the Religious House Netherlands. It was very touching and was warmly welcomed by all Chapter members. There are 5 points stated namely, concrete action of love, in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, across our borders... to the ends of the earth, growth of international brotherhood and recommendations to those in other provinces. This message will ensure that the story of FIC continuous long into the future.

*Bro. Martinus Dariyo, Provincial Superior Malawi*



## My impression of the General Chapter 2018

The 35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Brothers FIC) took place in The Netherlands at Denekamp from 5<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> August, 2018.



My impression of this Chapter is positive. It was a well organized Chapter which ended with rich outcomes. It was an occasion that offered me another opportunity to meet and interact with fellow Brothers from other Provinces vis-à-vis our common joys, challenges, concerns and future aspirations for our Congregation. The experience brought me to a greater awareness of where we have come from as a Congregation, where we are now amidst the myriads of potentials, gifts as well as the challenges that stir us in the face and where we aspire to be, as we grope into the future.

Chapters are meant to keep the heritage of Congregations alive, to promote appropriate renewals, to elect new leadership, to ratify resolu-

tions that are not only aimed at providing the spiritual and material needs of Congregations, but also to make the Congregations responsive to current trends. In my view, these needs were fulfilled through this Chapter. These find concrete expression in our General Chapter message, Chapter resolutions and the young team of General Council we elected.



Personally, I experienced this Chapter not only as a decision making meeting but also a true spiritual and social celebration of our FIC Brotherhood. Participants demonstrated seriousness in all Chapter proceedings. Discussions were marked by good sense of humour, keen and empathic listening, and mutual respect for each other's views, yet remaining constructively critical.

The wealth of creativity brought to bear on our liturgical celebrations was very enriching and reflected the international character of the Congregation. We celebrated one another through birthdays, feast days etc. Equally, we had a day of outing to the neighboring country, Germany. We also had time to recreate together after each hard day's work. Though the entire Chapter period was intensive, these interspersed activities helped participants to relax without feeling overworked. Also the serene nature of the Chapter environment added value to the entire experience.

In conclusion, it would be reiterated that this General Chapter was a great success. It yielded the desired results with a call on all Brothers of the Congregation and our associates to live the Chapter message wherever we are, for the sake of promoting the Kingdom of God. It is my fervent hope and prayer that, through the implementation of these Chapter resolutions, we may each experience the desired renewal and work selflessly for the greater glory of God.

*Bro. Seregeous Dery, Provincial Superior, Ghana*



## Second session of Provincial Chapter Chile

The second Session of the Chile Provincial Chapter 2018 was held in the Brothers' House in Buin, from 15-18 July 2018, under very cold weather conditions. This event which had the theme "Called and Sent to Encounter Life" was preceded by an inspiring prayer service led by Bro. Luis Munoz. In his welcome address, the Provincial Superior, Bro. Diego Izquierdo Gallego outlined the main agenda items of the session, which include a recollection, the Provincial Council report, Chapter proposals and financial issues.



We began with a recollection led by the moderator of the Chapter, Fr. Sergio Pérez de Arce, SSCC, on the theme "Revitalizing our religious being". There was an input, personal reflection, group discussion and sharing in plenum. With this spiritual nourishment, we were well-armed to tackle the issues on the agenda for the next three days. The first was to review the minutes of the last session of the Provincial Chapter.

In all 15 proposals approved by the Provincial Chapter were reviewed. They include associated life, property commission, provincial statute, avoiding sexual abuse of minors, vocation promotion, self-sustainability, aggiornamento, relationships, new presence and apostolic plans.

The next was a discussion of the Provincial Council Report 2012-2018. The discussion focussed on four important themes that the brothers had selected in the previous session. They include the future of the province of Chile, financial responsibility, the third age (elderly), our organizational structure and the presence of brothers in Chile.

At the conclusion of the reflection, discussions and group presentations, the Chapter came out with a number of points for the attention of the Provincial Council. They include the following:

1. Establishment of a commission to help brothers deepen their religious life, considering the figure of Bro. Bernardus as a source of inspiration to strengthen the apostolate, prayer and community life.
2. Creation of commissions to design a work plan that can be applied at the provincial level in support of enhancing the quality of our life.
3. Consider the importance of the spiritual journey, strengthen the knowledge of Jesus and our relationship and also our participation in the life of the diocese and local church.
4. Development of affectivity, deepening of the vows, FIC history and the spirit of our Founders.

Despite our limitation indicative of the number of brothers, one could easily notice the interest, enthusiasm and spirit of dedication with which the participants contributed. The second session of the Provincial Chapter concluded with a prayer service guided by Bro. Javier Solis Urbano.

*Bro. Diego Izquierdo Gallego*

## News from Provinces



### **Ghana: Junior Aspirants Contact Days**

The FIC Constitutions explicitly state that “Whoever feels a vocation to share our life must go through a preparatory period, before being admitted to the novitiate. During this period he has the opportunity to be better acquainted with the congregation, and the congregation has the opportunity to come to know him” (Const. Art. 101).

In our attempt to achieve this, the Ghana Province has been, among other mentorship activities, organizing contact days for both senior and junior aspirants annually to help young men discern their vocation to Religious Life. Thus, a three-day encounter was organized from 20 - 23 August 2018 for some junior aspirants in St. Louis Community. The encounter which had the theme “Come follow me” was attended by six young men.



In a reflection given to the aspirants on the topic “*The cost of discipleship*”, Bro. Paul Sabogu classified Jesus’ disciples into two, namely the ‘general body of disciples’ and the ‘specially chosen disciples’. The first group refers to those who follow Jesus and still practice their normal life in the world. The second are those who, by virtue of their call, left everything in order to follow Jesus. In either case, Jesus takes the initiative to call the individual to follow him. He calls his disciples first and foremost, to be with him, to learn from him and thus to be sent out on mission.

He further told the aspirants that by their baptism they belong to the general body of discipleship, but to be counted among the specially chosen disciples, a lot is demanded of them. Some of demands are as follows:

- a. “To hate one's family and oneself” (Matt. 14:26). That is to say, to prefer Him beyond one's family and comfort zone.
- b. “To give up all possessions” (Matt. 14:33). To detach oneself from worldly attraction; ‘It is impossible to serve both God and money’ (Matt. 6:24).
- c. “To carry one’s own cross” (Lk 14:27). The cross is not an implement of irritation or inconvenience but a disciple's willingness to bear criticism for Jesus’ sake; the readiness to shoulder responsibilities.
- d. Some caution about following Jesus Christ:
  - ‘Anyone who puts his hands on the plough and keeps looking back is not fit for the kingdom of God’ (Lk 9:62).
  - Disciples should be salt of the earth but if salt becomes tasteless, it is “good for nothing” (Matt. 5:13).
  - A disciple who lacks commitment in following Christ will be ridiculed by people: ‘Look, he started to build a tower but could not complete it’ (Lk 14:28-30).



The aspirants were given the opportunity to have peer interaction through group discussion and sharing of experiences. This was followed by open forum during which they ask questions pertaining to their search for vocation.

*Bro. Clovis Baaka, Aspirancy Co-ordinator, Ghana*

## In Memoriam

### Brother Nico Coolen

He was born on September 27, 1938 in Veghel.  
He joined the FIC Congregation on August 15, 1959.  
On August 24, 2018 he died in the MUMC+ in Maas-  
tricht.



*Members of the outgoing and incoming congregational leadership teams*



From left to right: *Bro. Martin Handoko, Bro. Augustine Kubdaar, Bro. Valentinus Daru Setiaji, Bro. Raphael Besig-rinee, Bro. Theodorus Suwaryanto, Bro. Guido Sukarman.*

## **SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS**



### **September**

*07 Frans Sugi (65) - Semarang-Sultan Agung*

*23 Kees van de Wiel (80) - Maastricht-Prins Bisschopsingel*

### **October**

*01 Methodius Kuusoru (65) - c/o SSS Headquarters*

*P.O.Box 114, South Sudan*

*30 Henk Munnich (80) - Bollenhof 27, NL-1911 DW Uitgeest*

### **November**

*26 Antonius Parjana (50) - Jakarta-Haji Nawi*