INFORMATION
GENERAL COUNCIL
(IGC)
BROTHERS F I C

2024 – February (No. 1)



General Board of CB Sisters and FIC General Council after an informal meeting. (L-R: Bro. Augustine Kubdaar, Sr. Rachel, Bro. Valentinus, Sr. Dwina, Sr. Sofia Gusnia (General Superior 2023-2029), Sr. Rosaria (former General Superior), Sr. Carolina, and Bro. Raphael)

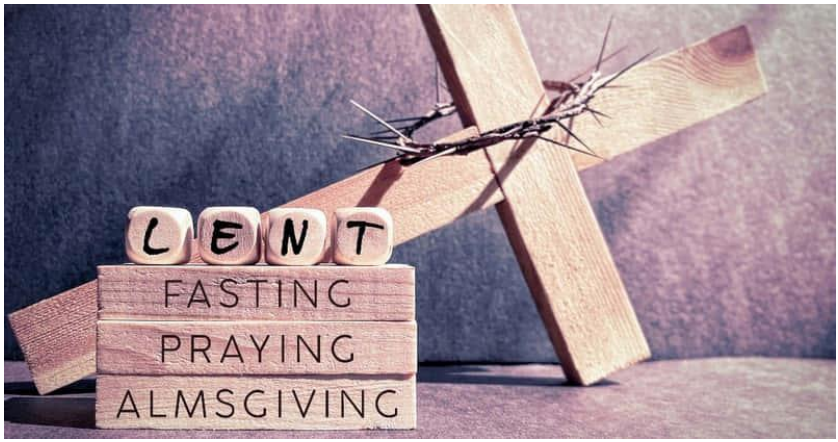
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Herewith we present to you the first issue of IGC in 2024, which will inform you about the following:

- **The Word is a gift**
- **What is the General Chapter**
- **Preparation for the 36th FIC General Chapter 2024**
- **Celebrating the Day of Consecrated Life, Malawi**
- **In Memoriam**
- **Special Birthdays**

The Word is a gift *(Pope Francis' Lenten Message 2017)*

The Gospel of the rich man and Lazarus helps us to make a good preparation for the approach of Easter. The liturgy of Ash Wednesday invites us to an experience quite similar to that of the rich man. When the priest imposes the ashes on our heads, he repeats the words: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return". As it turned out, the rich man and the poor man both died, and the greater part of the parable takes place in the afterlife. The two characters suddenly discover that "we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it". We too see what happens in the afterlife. There the rich man speaks at length with Abraham, whom he calls "father", as a sign that he belongs to God's people. This detail makes his life appear all the more contradictory, for until this moment there had been no mention of his relation to God. In fact, there was no place for God in his life. His only god was himself.



The rich man recognizes Lazarus only amid the torments of the afterlife. He wants the poor man to alleviate his suffering with a drop of water. What he asks of Lazarus is similar to what he could have done but never did. Abraham tells him: "During your life you had your fill of good things, just as Lazarus had his fill of bad. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony". In the afterlife, a kind of fairness is restored and life's evils are balanced by good.

The parable goes on to offer a message for all Christians. The rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers, who are still alive. But Abraham answers: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them". Countering the rich man's objections, he adds: "If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead".



The rich man's real problem thus comes to the fore. At the root of all his ills was the failure to heed God's word. As a result, he no longer loved God and grew to despise his neighbour. The word of God is alive and powerful, capable of converting hearts and leading them back to God. When we close our heart to the gift of God's word, we end up closing our heart to the gift of our brothers and sisters.

Dear friends, Lent is the favourable season for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in his word, in the sacraments and in our neighbour. The Lord, who overcame the deceptions of the Tempter during the forty days in the desert, shows us the path we must take. May the Holy Spirit lead us on a true journey of conversion, so that we can rediscover the gift of God's word, be purified of the sin that blinds us, and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need. I encourage all the faithful to express

this spiritual renewal also by sharing in the Lenten Campaigns promoted by many Church organizations in different parts of the world, and thus to favour the culture of encounter in our one human family. Let us pray for one another so that, by sharing in the victory of Christ, we may open our doors to the weak and poor. Then we will be able to experience and share in full the joy of Easter.

What is the General Chapter?

(reflection by Josep M. Abella Batlle, Superior General, cmf.)

"The General Chapter – in obedience to the Spirit and in full fidelity to our missionary charism as sanctioned by the Church – is the highest authority of the Congregation devoted to watching over the charism for our brothers. It is also the greatest symbol of the whole Congregation's communion of life and mission. It authentically represents the whole Congregation and collegially expresses the participation and concern of all its members in the life of the Congregation and its activity in the Church." This is how the Constitutions present the Chapter to us. It is clear then that we are able to fulfil the mission given to us by our brothers only through a profound openness to the Spirit of the Lord and in full agreement with the charism which has been entrusted to us through the mediation of our Founder. With this attitude we begin our Chapter itinerary, placing ourselves under the watchful care of Mary, our Mother, and feeling in our heart that ardent love for God and his children that filled her heart.

The Chapter is an exercise in discernment. It is not a forum for different groups to try to get their proposals approved, too often at the service of their own interests. In the Chapter we sincerely and solely look for the will of God for our Congregation and for each one of us. Brothers, don't forget this during the work of the Chapter. For this, it is so necessary to be clear what criteria must guide our discernment and which ought to be none other than the Word of God, the Magisterium of the Church regarding the consecrated life

and our life project as expressed in the Constitutions. There we find the motivation for listening to the voice of the Spirit which comes to us from the multiple situations that mark the path of humanity at this time. There we also find the keys that must help us to concretise our response to these calls of the Spirit of the Lord. I sincerely confess to you that I have been negatively surprised to discover in some Assemblies or congregational forums in which I have been able to take part, that there are preoccupations and interests that have nothing to do with all of this. We must be attentive so as not to fall into the temptation of power, of interests, in short, of 'worldliness', as the Pope called it.



35th FIC General Chapter 2018, the Netherlands

The moments of internalization and silent reflection during the Chapter are important. Let us dedicate the necessary time to personal prayer. We want the Spirit of the Lord to fill us so as to be able to harmonise with the heart of the Father, and of the Mother and to discern how we must live and act as signs of the Kingdom and, with its values, instruments of transformation in the world.

A former Superior General of SSND has the following to say about a General Chapter: It is the meeting of elected members (delegates) from all the provinces, each provincial leader (*ex officio* members), and the general council (*ex officio* also). Every professed member of

the congregation may vote for a chapter delegate, however only perpetually professed members can be elected as chapter delegates. When the General Chapter is meeting, it is the highest authority in the congregation. A General Chapter is called by the Superior General every six years.

She listed eight purposes of a General Chapter:

1. promote the mission and unity of the congregation;
2. ensure that the congregation is being faithful to its mission;
3. give direction to the life and mission of the congregation for the future;
4. elect the general superior and general councilors;
5. review the acts of previous chapters and take appropriate actions;
6. approve the chapter agenda and proposed procedures;
7. review and, if necessary, change the constitution and general directory;
8. seek the approval of the Apostolic See for any constitutional amendment accepted by the chapter.

A General Chapter is a special moment in the life of a congregation. It is a time of intense prayer and dialogue. Members of the chapter form an international faith community as they pray, dialogue, and search together for the will of God for our congregation.

Preparation for the 36th FIC General Chapter 2024

This six-yearly chapter is the most important gathering in the Congregation. We diligently follow the guidelines stated in the Constitutions and the previous General Chapter resolutions in its preparation. Article 119 of our Constitution states that the better the preparation for the chapter meetings and the more intensely the people concerned are involved, the more fruitful the chapter will be.

The General Superior convenes the six-yearly General Chapter up to six months before the conclusion of their term, as stipulated in the Constitutions (Article 120). On January 16, 2024, the Superior General issued the Convocation letter to the Provinces and RHN. Consequently, the official preparations for this event are now underway, both at the Congregation's headquarters and in the provinces/RHN.

We organized two preparatory phases for our chapter: long-distance and short-distance preparations.

1. Long distance preparations

During the Congregational Conferences (Con-Con) held in Ghana (2022) and Indonesia (2023), discussions took place, leading to an agreement on a Chapter membership structure (delegates for the 2024 General Chapter) as below:

i. **Ex-officio members** (4 GC members and the Provincial/RHN Superiors 5),
ii. **Elected members** (two from Chile, two from Malawi, two from RHN, six from Ghana and nine from Indonesia)
iii. **Non-elected member** (the General Treasurer)

They all make up the total number of thirty-one (31) chapter delegates.

In consultation with the Provincial and RHN councils and also some selected brothers in all the provinces, the GC eventually discerned the theme of the chapter as: **"Renewal of our Consecrated Life and Mission in the Spirit of Synodality"**

Period of the chapter: 4th – 24th August 2024
Venue: Ghana province: In-Service Training Center (ISTC), Wa, Upper-West Region of Ghana.

2. Short-distance preparations

Commencing discussions in December 2023 through an extended multi-day meeting and a series of General Council (GC) meetings, we have reached a consensus on various crucial aspects. These include the chapter logo, chapter prayer, the agenda, appointment of a moderator and translator, and other logistical matters.

Chapter logo



A brief explanation of the symbolism and significance of the chapter logo

The logo of the 36th FIC General Chapter is characterized by the representation of our collective synodal journey. The logo depicts the interconnection between "Mother Church" and our FIC congregation through two circles. The larger circle signifies the unwavering support provided by "Mother Church" in the pursuit of our mission.

Within this unity, a dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit, guiding us in our sacred vocation. The outstretched wings of the dove symbolize the inspiration and guidance bestowed upon us by the Spirit, underscoring its pivotal role in shaping our mission. This logo serves as a reminder that our endeavours are guided by a higher power, instilling in us the courage to transcend boundaries and embrace the influence of divine intervention.

The symbol in the inner circle represents the values of "Communion" and "Participation," highlighting our dedication to unity and collaboration within the FIC congregation together with all our collaborators and "the people of God." As we embark on this chapter, let the logo inspire us with unwavering faith, a clear sense of purpose, and a shared responsibility towards our community.

May the 36th FIC General Chapter serve as a testament to our collective journey, guided by the principles of tradition, spirituality, and the unifying force of the Holy Spirit. Together, let us embody the true essence of our calling, embracing the power of unity and active engagement in our sacred mission.

PRAYER for THE 36th FIC GENERAL CHAPTER 2024

Loving God,
As Brothers, we recognize the sacred connection of communion
that unites us and calls us
to actively participate in your holy mission,
begun by your Son, Jesus Christ.
Our journey through the 2024 FIC General Chapter process
is a turning point in our shared commitment
to your transformative work.

Our humble submission
places this Chapter process in your loving hands,
seeking inspiration and divine guidance for all members.
May the decision-making
be informed by a deep feeling of communion,
that our lives and those we serve are intertwined.
Let your Spirit guide us to respond to the signs of the times
in meaningful and innovative ways
as we traverse life’s complexities.

Lord Jesus, our Brother,
pour your Spirit on the FIC General Chapter delegates,
and let this conference revitalize our consecration and mission
in the spirit of synodality.
May the Holy Spirit inspire humility,
confidence in God's providence,
joy, perseverance, and creative obedience to God's will,
in all who participate in this congregational exercise,
all for God's glory and the well-being of the poor and needy.

We ask the Blessed Virgin Mary,
your Mother and Patroness of our congregation,
to help us on this precious pilgrimage.
May her protection shield us throughout the Chapter.
As brothers and messengers of love,
we trust you, our everlasting Saviour,
to guide us, now and forever.
Msgr. Louis Rutten and Bro. Bernardus Hoecken:
pray for us.
Amen

Provincial Chapters

1. **Indonesia Provincial Chapter**
   a. **Theme***: "In the Spirit of Brotherhood Actualizing the Identity of Brothers FIC in Accordance with the Times*".

   b. **Schedule:**

First session:	5 to 8 March 2024
Second session:	13 to 16 June 2024
Third session:	1 to 4 October 2024
Fourth session:	7 to 10 November 2024

2. **Ghana Provincial Chapter**
   a. **Theme**: *"Deepening Our Religious Identity As Brothers FIC In The 21st Century*"

   b. **Schedule**:

First session: 21 to 27 January 2024
Second session: 21 to 27 April 2024
Third session: 22 to 28 September, 2024

3. **Malawi Provincial Chapter**
   a. **Theme**: *"Transformation and growth of the Malawi Province in the spirit of our founders*"

   b. **Schedule:**

First session: 22 to 24 February 2024
Second session: 27 to 29 June 2024
Third session: 17 to 19 October 2024

4. **Chile Provincial Chapter**
   a. **Theme:** To be announced later.

   b. **Schedule:**

First session: 7 to 10 April 2024
Second session: 9 to 12 June 2024
Third session: 6 to 10 October 2024

Just as the human body operates harmoniously with its many interconnected parts, our congregation thrives on the unity of its diverse provinces. The General Council warmly invites each of you to stand in solidarity through your prayers for the upcoming provincial sessions across our congregation. We firmly believe that your spiritual support is invaluable for the success of these sessions, providing strength, guidance, and discernment to all involved.

To further strengthen our sense of unity, we encourage both Provincial Councils and individual brothers to express solidarity in tangible ways. Please take note of the session periods and consider sending goodwill messages, offering words of encouragement and support during these pivotal times. Your messages will serve as a testament to the resilience of our international brotherhood and our shared commitment to common goals.

Let us unite in prayer and fraternity, binding ourselves in a collective spirit that transcends borders and fortifies the bonds that unite us. May these provincial sessions be blessed with wisdom, discernment, and unity, as we continue our journey together in the spirit of love and service.

Celebrating the Day of Consecrated Life, Malawi

On 2nd February every year, Religious of the Catholic Church commemorate the feast of the presentation of the Lord. This year's celebration in the Archdiocese of Blantyre was marked on 3rd February under the theme *"Go and invite everybody to the banquet"* (Matthew 22:9) and was combined with the belated birthday celebration of Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa of the Archdiocese of Blantyre. The Archdiocese of Blantyre is made up of 16 religious congregations out of which nine (9) are women and seven (7), men.

The mass started with a procession into the cathedral with lighted candles as a symbol that we are the light of the world. It also signifies our prayer life, which is offered in faith, entering the light of God. In addition to that, it also shows reverence and our desire to remain present in prayer.



Some of the Priests, Religious Brothers and Sisters who were in attendance.

In his introduction and homily, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Blantyre, Fr. Boniface Tamani DP, expressed his appreciation to the congregation for coming together to mark this historic day. He reminded them to forge ahead with the good works they are doing in the Archdiocese and beyond. He called on them to allow their light to shine in the corners they find themselves. “We are called to share this light with those in darkness so that they too may see the light”, he said. “Jesus says in the gospel of John that he is the light of the world and anyone who follows him will never be in darkness (John 8:12), therefore, Religious are encouraged to keep their candles burning like Prophetess Anna and Simeon who kept their candles burning even in their old age”, he concluded.

Bro. Amoss Patrick Kamwendoh

In Memoriam



Brother Denis Dery
Denis was born on August 21 in Ko-Tokuu, in 1940. He made his first profession on September 15, 1966 and his final profession on October 11, 1975. He passed away on January 13, 2024 in Wa, Ghana.



Brother Jozef Hengst
Jozef was born on May 5 in Schiedam, in 1935. He made his first profession on August 15, 1957 and his final profession on August 15, 1962. He passed away on February 24, 2024 in Maastricht, the Netherlands.

Special Birthdays



March

7 Johan Muijtjens (85) – Maastricht-Bernardus
27 Patrick Gyereh (65) – Wa-St Louis

April

23 Chris Sukarman (75) – Pemalang
Godfrey Naa-Tampah (65) - Wa-Provincial House

May

11 Lambert Dorsana Batogbee (60) – Accra
24 Anacletus Tinper (60) - Damongo