



Circolare del Superiore Generale

SOCIETA DI MARIA - MARIANISTI

CIRCULAR N° 13

**CONVOCATION
OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2006**

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Superior General of the Society of Mary,
Missionary Apostolic

**Rome
22 January 2005
Feast of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade**

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DAVID JOSEPH FLEMING, S.M.
Superior General of the Society of Mary,
Missionary Apostolic, to all his fellow
Marianists throughout the world

CONVOCATION
OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2006

Dear Brothers,

With this letter, I convoke the Thirty-third General Chapter of the Society of Mary. This Chapter will be held at Rome at the same venue as our last Chapter, Villa Aurelia, a conference center close to the Vatican directed by the Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Dehonians). The Chapter will convene about eighteen months from now, on the afternoon of Monday, July 10, 2006. Sunday, July 30, 2006, is foreseen as the concluding date.

The *Rule of Life* in art. 93 reminds us that the General Chapter is “the highest authority of the Society. It determines policies and objectives for the entire Society and elects the Superior General and the members of the General Council. Its purpose is to ensure fidelity to the spirit of our foundation, as well as continuing adaptation to the needs of each age.” It has both legislative and evaluative functions, which are detailed in the revised version of Chapter 7 of the *Rule of Life*, arts. 7.24 and 7.25.

Every General Chapter is, in God’s Providence, an ecclesial event and a time of special grace for each member of the Society, each community and Unit. General Chapters are important moments to reaffirm and deepen our common identity as a worldwide community of life and mission.

This Chapter comes at an important moment in our corporate life. We feel our collective fragility and weakness, while at the same time we rejoice in promising new beginnings of Marianist life and areas of vitality on every continent. What I said in convoking the last Chapter five years ago still remains true: “sometimes with our conscious collaboration, sometimes despite our resistance, a new kind of Marianist life is taking shape.” The Chapter will be called to evaluate our reality and direct us for the years immediately ahead.

Topics and Themes of the Chapter

I invite all of you to begin already now reflecting, as individuals and in community, on any topic or theme that you consider important for the work of the Chapter of 2006. Here are some examples of areas that seem important, even though all of them may not be able to be treated by the Chapter:

- In recent years, our life as a Society has been deeply marked by the reappreciation of our Blessed Founder's charism, following upon his beatification in September, 2000. How can we better live his charism and transmit it to others?
- We are realizing increasingly that Marianist life is a unique style of following Jesus and Mary, and a gift for the whole Church. How can we be more effective in sharing this Marian style of Church in our life and mission today?
- We continue to deepen our sense of sharing in mission with many partners and belonging to a worldwide spiritual family that embraces all states of life. What more steps do we need to take in developing this worldwide spiritual family?
- How can we better collaborate and share our resources in a global mission? How can we connect the varied segments of the Society around the world?
- Polarization and violence seem to be on the increase in many places. What resources do we bring to the urgent tasks of reconciliation and peace-making?

During the General Leadership Assembly in February, 2004, at Quito, many Unit Leaders of the Society suggested that the Chapter of 2006 reflect on a single theme in more depth, rather than attempt to cover all dimensions of Marianist life.

All of you will soon receive an invitation to give your ideas to the Preparatory Commission as it attempts to focus the agenda for the Chapter. Each community and each Unit of the Society will be invited to give ideas; individual contributions will also be welcome.

Elections and Juridical Matters

One of the major tasks of the Chapter of 2006 will be to lay out a Plan of Action for the new General Administration and for the whole Society during the next several years. The Chapter will elect a new Superior General and a General Council to work with him. It will be important to set a reflective and prayerful atmosphere of discernment for this purpose.

Another obligatory task of this Chapter will be to finalize the work on Book II, Chapter 7 of the Rule of Life, concerning the governance of the Society. Significant changes in the past twenty years have led to a reformulation of our governance adapted to new realities. A new text was approved *ad experimentum* at Quito last year, but the Chapter will have review this text and give its final word.

Preparatory Commission

Following the practice that seemed successful five years ago, a nucleus of the Preparatory Commission has already begun its work. George Cerniglia (General Administration), Domingo Fuentes (Madrid-Brazil) and François Rossier (Switzerland) generously agreed to serve the Society to begin the work of preparation, and they held a first meeting in Dayton from November 26-28, 2004. Once the Chapter elections have been completed, two additional members will be chosen by the elected delegates to complete this Preparatory Commission.

Election of Chapter Delegates

Attached to this Circular is an Appendix with information about Chapter membership, elections, and deadlines for each ballot.

New Units represented at the Chapter will include Korea, Togo and Mexico. A delegation from the new Province of the United States of America will replace those from the four previous Provinces.

In April of this year, we will publish the complete list of members of the General Chapter.

Conclusion

I urge you to enter wholeheartedly and prayerfully into the period of preparation for the Chapter. Please pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the openness and fidelity of Mary, the spirit of faith that characterized our Founder, in all aspects of the Chapter's work. I invite you to meditate on articles 7.8 and 7.12 of the *Rule of Life*, which stress that such prayerful and dialogic union of mind and heart is an important way of being faithful to our own vocation as members of the Society of Mary.

Fraternally,

David Joseph Fleming, S.M.
Superior General

APPENDIX: INSTRUCTIONS
FOR THE PREPARATION
OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2006

A. MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER:

1. Guidelines of the Rule of Life:

“The General Chapter is composed of the Superior General, the members of the General Council, members by right, and elected members from each Province. The number of elected members must be greater than that of members by right. Book II specifies further details concerning the composition of the Chapter.” (art. 95).

The following articles of the revised Book II, Chapter 7, apply to this election:

- 7.30 *The members of the General Chapter are the Superior General, the Assistants General, the Provincials and Assistant-Provincials of those Provinces having the number of members of the Society specified below (7.33), and the elected delegates.*
- 7.31 *In determining Chapter representation, the number of members of the Unit is calculated as on the day of the Chapter’s convocation. Members in temporary vows are included.*
- 7.32 *In providing for General Chapter representation, members are counted with the Province, Region, or District in which they are living and working on a permanent basis at the time of the convocation of the Chapter. They also have active and passive voice in this Unit. With the consent of the Superior General, a member may be authorized to vote instead with the Unit to which he belongs.*
- 7.33 *Delegates shall be selected on the basis of the following criteria:*
- a) Provinces, Regions, or Districts with less than 50 members elect one member, of either category;*
 - b) Provinces, Regions, or Districts between 50-100 members elect two members, one priest religious and one lay religious;*
 - c) Provinces of more than 100 members send the Provincial and Assistant-Provincial by right. In addition, these larger provinces elect delegates as follows:*
 - 101-200: one priest religious, one lay religious;*
 - 201-300: two priest religious, two lay religious;*
 - 301-400: three priest religious, three lay religious;*
 - for each additional 100 members or fraction thereof, a Province elects two additional delegates, one priest religious and one lay religious.*
- 7.34 *The total number of eligible electors in a Province or Region does not take into account those members who are assigned to a District. In the District, only those members who are living and working there on a permanent basis constitute the electoral body.*

2. Ballotings for Elected Members of the General Chapter of 2001: (Rule of Life, art. 96, 7.35).

“The electoral body for the General and Provincial Chapters is composed of all the perpetual professed in each province with active voice, and of temporary professed with at least four years of religious profession. All perpetually professed of the province with passive voice are eligible as delegates to the General Chapter and the Provincial Chapter. Book II of the Rule of Life gives further norms for elections.” (Art. 96).

7.35 Two ballots for delegates to the General Chapter are conducted in the Province, Region and District. On the first ballot each religious nominates twice the number of delegates to be elected in each category. If there is a tie for the final place – whether between priests or between lay religious – those with the same number of votes are retained on the list. On the second ballot, the voters choose from the list of nominees the specified number of delegates to the General Chapter. If there is a tie for the final place, the older in first profession is elected; if they have the same date of profession, the older in age is elected.

In the first balloting, the electoral body elects twice the number of delegates (nominees) needed in each category (see Chart). The suggested date for terminating this first balloting is **February 28, 2005**. Immediately after the results of the first balloting are tabulated, the Provincial or Regional Superior conducts the second balloting.

In the second balloting, the electoral body elects its specified number of delegates to the General Chapter of 2006 (see Chart). The results of both first and second ballotings should be present in the Office of the Secretary General by **April 4, 2005**.

B. THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION

Once the election of delegates is completed, all delegates will be invited to vote for two additional members to complete this Preparatory Commission. The Commission will communicate directly with all Capitulants about the agenda and procedures of the General Chapter of 2006. Once the Chapter actually begins and elects its Coordinating Committee, the Preparatory Commission will cease to exist.

The Superior General, using the list of Capitulants for 2006, will conduct the elections for the two additional members of the Preparatory Commission.

The first balloting will take place in April. All delegates will be invited to vote for four nominees and to return their ballots to Rome by **May 5, 2005**.

In the second balloting, two members will be elected from a list of the top four nominees. All delegates will be invited to vote and to return their ballots to Rome by **May 25, 2005**.

A meeting of the complete Preparatory Commission will be held in Rome at a date to be determined once the results are known.

