

## Report for the General Council meeting December 3-4 2008 Grammont.

### *Fr André misses the snow.*

Fr André was unable to obtain a visa and had to miss the meeting. This was particularly unfortunate as Fr André had long expressed the wish to see a snow fall while visiting in Belgium. This December there was a heavy fall of snow on December 4<sup>th</sup> but Fr André was not there to experience it.

### *Scripture sharing.*

The meeting began as usual with a Scripture sharing. The members of the council shared their own thoughts and insights into the gospel reading from the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent. (Mark 13.33-37) Over the years the Scripture sharing has proved to be an excellent way of starting our meeting together. Feeding one another with our own understanding of the Word of God helps to create a spirit of brotherhood which remains throughout our discussions.

### *Fr General's introduction to the meeting.*

Fr Robert emphasized the importance of the year which lay ahead. A number of important appointments had to be made.

The great challenge facing the General Council remained formation. We must maintain our effort to form future formators and we must continue to improve our formation process in the Institute.

In the not too distant future the General Council would have to address the request made by the



General Chapter of 2006 to present a proposal for the future government of the Congregation. This would require a lot of thought and consultation before the next Chapter in 2011.

In spite of the need to control expenditure it was essential that the Central Government kept in touch with the regions. Visits to the regions by the Superior General and other members of the General Council were essential to the well-being of the Institute.

Fr Robert reported on his visit to California. He had spent a month in Holy cross Parish (Santa Barbara) replacing Fr Ludo during his holiday in Europe and Africa. The experience had been a rich one and he had enjoyed living with Frs. Tom and Alfred in Santa Barbara. During his stay Fr Robert had preached a day of recollection to the Josephite Associates in California and he had assisted at a regional meeting in order to explain the Congregational plan to confreres.

Some concern was expressed at the lack of knowledge concerning the Founder. Fr Robert has composed several short tests with multiple choice answers which might be useful in the formation process.

### ***A review of the Enlarged General Council July 2008.***

A discussion was held on the results of the E.G.C. of July 2008. It was important to note that there was still a lot to be done both at the level of regional government and central government to implement the Acts of the Chapter of 2006.

### ***News from the regions.***

Various items of news from the different regions were shared and discussed.



### ***Visit of Fr Bill Muir.***

Fr Bill Muir, Regional Superior of the English region was able to inform the General Council of discussions which were taking place between the English region and the Governors of St George's. These discussions were concerned with securing the future of St George's in the years to come.

Fr Bill also presented the council with a fairly detailed proposal as to how the English region might implement the Congregational Plan.

### ***Reports.***

1. ***Visit to Rome.*** Fr Jacob reported on his visit to Rome to attend the meeting of the Union of Superior Generals. During the meeting Fr Jacob had been elected as a U.S.G. delegate to the Assembly of Bishops on Africa to be held in Rome next autumn. The list of elected delegates now requires papal approval.
2. ***St Etienne.*** Fr Paul Janssens had visited the R.D. Congo at the beginning of April 2008 at the request of the General Council. The College had now been in existence for a number of years and the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of pupils would be sitting the State Exams at the end of the current school year. Fr Paul's excellent and coherent report highlighted the achievement of our confreres in the African province in establishing a successful College. The Report also indicated certain areas which required more attention to organisation and others where clarification of roles was needed. It was agreed to send the report to the African provincial and the members of his Council. The Superior General and the Vicar General would discuss the report during the official visit in January/February 2009.

3. ***Financial report.*** The Bursar General presented his report which enabled the members of the Council to keep up to date with the general financial state of the Congregation. The present economic crisis has affected investments in England and America but the Congregational finances remain sound. In accordance with the decisions of the Enlarged General Council, the members of the council are working on a budget for 2009-2010.



Fr Robert thanked Fr Willibrord for all his hard work on the finances both of the Congregation and of the African Region.

4. *Official visit to England.* Fr Jacob presented his report on his official visit to the English region in October. The aim of the visit had been as some one coming from outside to listen and to appreciate the spiritual, community and apostolic life of the region. It was also an opportunity to hear from English confreres their views on the future development of the region. He was able to have a private meeting with each confrere. The English confreres had been very open and willing to talk about their hopes and fears for the future. The English confreres were in favour of the establishment of a European Region. There was also a good deal of enthusiasm for the proposal to internationalise the congregation. The region was busy exploring ways of integrating confreres from Africa into the apostolate of the region.

Fr Robert thanked Fr Jacob for his lucid and thoughtful report.

#### ***A European region?***

Fr Robert reported on progress in the discussions prior to the establishment of a European Region. After his visit to Belgium in September Fr Robert reported that some confreres were still a little hesitant and required a little more clarification. A meeting would be held in Melle the following week to try and clarify a few points. A further meeting of the General Council would be held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January when the necessary regional appointments would be made.

#### ***In the footsteps of the Founder.***

There was nothing new to report. The programme was more or less settled. Details would be sent out in the New Year.

#### ***Medical care of African confreres.***

With advancing years some confreres in the African region were likely to experience health problems in the future. Fr Willibrord had consulted other congregations to get information from them. Fr Jacob presented a brochure from the International Missionary Benefit Society who had made a presentation to the Union of Superior Generals during their meeting in Rome.

There was a good deal of discussion. More research was need before we could decide what to do for the best.

#### ***Calendar.***

Fr Robert and Fr Jacob would make an official visit to the Congo in January February 2009. At a later date Fr Robert and Fr André would make an official visit to the Gabon and the Cameroon.

The next meeting of the General Council was fixed for May 4-6 2009.

In the footsteps of the Founder 13<sup>th</sup> of July to the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2009.

Enlarged General Council 20<sup>th</sup> of July to 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2009.



RDH  
Stanwell Moor  
12.12.08