

GENERAL CHAPTER 1976

Society of the Sacred Heart

October - November 1976

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OPENING CONFERENCE OF SISTER CAMACHO

GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1976

Dear Sisters,

Let us begin the Chapter with an awareness of its significance, and let us live it in peace.

As we begin this celebration-a Chapter is a celebration-with humility and realism, it seems to my Team and to me, to be the right moment to speak of our Congregation with simplicity and truth.

We want to give you an account of the government you confided to our care on November 16, 1970, and to share with you-and through you with each member of the Society-our experience during these six years. I am going to do it very honestly, with an attitude of openness and confidence in each of you, for "the fate of the Society is in their hands".

For each Province, the preparation for the Chapter has represented an experience of co-responsibility and an effort towards communion. There have been steps towards a conversion which is orientated towards our mission. Both as individuals and as communities, this preparation has made us understand that "without a constant conversion, there will be no new vision". (Canada)

Today, all of us see that religious life must be a process of continual formation rooted in an openness to the Gospel and to the world wherein the Word of God is also made known to us. Mother Bulto, who, to our joy is with us, said "Has not the Gospel always been the great Novelty, which calls in question our routine, and, condemning our inertia, shakes us out of sheer passivity? Unless we accept unequivocally the challenge of the Gospel, our undertakings will remain superficial."

Together as a body, we are beginning the celebration of the Chapter; several weeks of reflection and prayer, to search and to decide with the mind of the Church, the way to situate anew our mission in the world today.

To celebrate a Chapter presupposes that we be sensitive and faithful to the Spirit of Christ who lives and acts in history (Perú), and we cannot separate

ourselves from him. He is acting in the Church, in her new beginnings, in her new signs of life. He is acting in us through the little steps we have taken together, with our new insights and desires for new ways of being one with our brothers and sisters.

A Chapter is the work of "the love of God poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us". (Rom. 5:5) With discernment, and in obedience to this Spirit, we must as a body, learn to see:

- what our identity is today in the Church which seeks to be the servant of mankind according to the will of the Father.
- how to glorify the Heart of Jesus Christ suffering in humanity.

There is no question of forgetting our critical powers, or of ceasing to be clear about ourselves or others. No. But it would be an offense against the Spirit, if, as a part of the Church, we were to take serious decisions about the world in the sole light of reason. This is why we must discuss in faith and in fidelity to the Spirit received in community. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them." (Mt. 18:20)

The presentation I am going to make has two parts. I will begin with an overall picture of the way we have effected our opening-out to the world. Then I will study two points: *Government, and The Community in its Mission*. We shall see what our life and our experiences have been, recognizing our strengths and our weaknesses, without forgetting that every difficulty has a hidden potential for the future. (Austria)

I. OPENING-OUT TO THE WORLD:

As we take a first look at the way we have opened out to the world, we find these strengths:

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- We are more aware that the love of Jesus Christ is revealed and transmitted in the midst of the actual reality of today's world.
- We have verified the necessity to grow in interior liberty in order to be able to respond to the call of our Lord, and to know how to maintain our interior solitude.
- We have experienced the urgency of being present to people, of drawing near to them in simplicity, of serving them and learning from them. A new way of relating to others has been born. (Colombia)

- We have tried to be "elements of solidarity" through sharing material goods, (Mexico) with the conviction that while our call is different from that of the laity, we cannot be set apart from them nor be better than our fellow men and women.
- Through contacts with them, we have begun to put our own conflicts into perspective, and we have begun to accept and to integrate tensions as a normal part of life. We have begun to accept insecurity as a part of our life.
- We have been more open to receive what other groups can give, and to collaborate with them as part of the servant Church.
- We are allowing ourselves to be more challenged by those Gospel values which we see around us, above all among the poor. (Egypt) Some communities have realized that "solidarity with the poor has made us question our way of life and has helped us to go forward and to take the means to create new attitudes." (Argentine-Uruguay)
- Our eyes have been opened to the injustice and inhumanity of the society in which we live and of which we are a part. We are endeavoring to direct our mission and our ministries towards a more effective and realistic action.

Our weaknesses in this area are evident:

- Occasionally we have lost the joy which comes from being close to God, from the steadfast relationship with Jesus Christ which gives both meaning and motivation to our life. (England-Malta)
- We have frequently failed to give priority to prayer. We do not seek specific means which make possible the contemplative dimension of our lives, and which is so clear in the thought of St. Madeleine Sophie. This is where we are not coherent.
- Often enough we understand liberty as an escape towards individualism, rather than as giving us the possibility of offering our lives to the service of others. The pluriformity which exists is not always the fruit of discernment nor of being sent; it is rather the result of a concession.
- We exaggerate the small realities we live: "for example, we say a thing is 'given freely' when it is something quite ordinary in everyday life; 'welcoming', when it

is simply a question of good manners; 'detachment' for something which is a law of life. (Spain North-A) This kind of false satisfaction is an obstacle to a deep understanding of reality, and hinders us from being sufficiently receptive to new values.

- We are quick to defend ourselves by theorizing, i.e. we try to justify ourselves:
 - o "Evangelical commitment" is the name some give to what is no more than a superficial engagement which cannot lead to what is a truly profound liberation of the person: the knowledge that he or she is truly a child of God.
 - o Others describe or formulate religious actions without translating them into actions before God and men.

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- When we collaborate, we do it with a certain self-sufficiency; we do not know how to support or second others. (Venezuela)

- Through an excessive desire to be immediately effective in our work, we have at times undervalued hidden work or work which will only have long-term results.

To sum up, I think we can say that our desire to be more open to the world and to respond to the appeals of people has become a reality in many respects. It is true that we are closer to people, that the Society is seen to be more welcoming (Holland), and that our sharing is more of a reality. However, the renewal is still weak because it is too superficial. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ transformed the world. We still have a long way to go to make:

- our solidarity, adoration,
- our conversion, hope,
- our denunciation, a proclamation of the Good News.

II. GOVERNMENT

Our government as the Central Team has been orientated towards the creation of a discerning community, with these goals in mind:

- to strengthen communion,
- to deepen co-responsibility,
- to awaken a sense of justice and a greater solidarity.

"If we live our lives in the light.... we are in union with one another." (I Jn. 1:7)

We have experienced a way of life that we also want to review and evaluate, with its strong and weak points. I shall begin with what we believe has been its strength: the progressive creation of a discerning community at the service of mission.

We proposed having a sisterly, honest relationship among ourselves, with long periods for prayer. This progressively opened out the way for us. The problems involved in integrating different personalities and temperaments, different cultures and distinct points of view, sometimes seemed insurmountable. Suffering and difficulties in relationships were not lacking. To do the truth in love required much asceticism, solitude and prayer, both personal and communal. We went ahead in our poverty, facing the reality of each day in prayer. What one of us was living inspired the others. This interaction strengthened us, and a "tender and sincere love" (Const., Sum. XIII) grew among us.

Accepted in faith, the difficulties themselves formed the basis of a real and sincere communication, and today we feel we can say affirmatively that discernment is the keystone of a government which desires to be at the service of the Kingdom. We thank our Lord for the road we have walked together.

For myself, conscious of my final responsibility, and ready to receive your pardon, I want to speak of some of my own frailties which may have prevented in one way or another the progress of the Society.

The third rule of the Superior General speaks of "a union and intimate familiarity with the Heart of Jesus" as the means and the hidden source of strength for facing and welcoming the relationships and the life which are required of her. I recognize that at times I have been either hard or defensive, self-sufficient, and lacking in the knowledge of how to handle our relations with the Sacred Congregation for Religious, above all in the beginning, in the sorrowful question of Florence. But God our Father, who with merciful direction teaches us throughout life, made me understand that only through

patience, through a searching that is humble and loving, can we reach a solution to this problem.

I also reproach myself for lacking "a spirit of wisdom and prudence which directs her in the choice and use of means". (Const. Pt. IV, I, iii) This spirit has been wanting many times through a failure to reflect on the situation of persons and of countries. Because of this, the specific means for action failed to achieve their end.

We can now evaluate the means which we as a Team adopted to achieve the following goals:

- to strengthen communion,
- to deepen our co-responsibility,
and to awaken our sense of justice.

The visits to the provinces were the chief means to attain these ends. We visited as a Team all the communities of the Society except Cuba. For us, this meant a direct, personal and community contact with all the members of the Society. A brief contact, it is true ... But despite this, we were able to grasp the life of the Society in its pluriformity, its complexity, and its richness. We are aware that the limitations of time did not allow us to know each country sufficiently, but these visits gave us a global vision of the Society and helped us to awaken a sense of co-responsibility along the lines of the 1970 Chapter.

In a more informal way, the visits to Rome of some of the Provincials and Provincial Teams contributed to the growth of communion and co-responsibility. Similarly, one or another of us, for a definite reason, and always with the sense of being part of a Team, visited the provinces of Australia, Canada, the Far East, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Chad, Zaire, Spain, France, Holland, Austria, Italy, Brazil, Egypt-Lebanon, Chile, Malta, India, New York, Mexico, and Poland. Nonetheless the stimulus given through these visits has a certain ambiguity:

- the expenses such journeys represented,
- the prolonged absence from the Center,
- the neglect of the administrative aspect,
- the lack of continuity in the stimulus given after the visit.

The Assemblies were another means:

The Assemblies of Provincials (Rome, 1972; Assisi, 1975), increased the co-responsibility of the Center and the Provinces in a special way. From these there came as well the initiative for greater contact among the Provinces themselves. The Pan-American meeting and that of the European Provincial Teams were the result.

We had greater difficulty in organizing the Assemblies of Delegates which had also been asked for by the Chapter, both because of a lack of time and of a definite purpose. Because of this, we have only had the Assembly for the *Responsables* and Formation persons of Africa and Europe in 1971.

On the other hand, the Regional Assemblies (by continent) seem to us to have achieved the important goal of participation by all the communities in the preparation of the Chapter. The results testify to this.

Relations with the different Teams:

Generally speaking, because of our long absences, the most important omission in our work with the *Financial* and *Communications Teams* at the Center has been a failure to give them enough time for reflection and careful, systematic evaluation of their work. This was a lack which they tried to supply, each in their own domain, unconditionally and with much abnegation and fidelity.

I am not going into detail because they themselves will give an account of their work, but I would like to point out with gratitude:

- The daily work of the Financial Team in the administration of our resources along the lines of the Options; and in the midst of this, the arrangements for the sale of Via Nomentana and the new installation. This was well directed, with patience, constancy, and a sense of their responsibility.
- The on-going work of the Communications Team to open up in a real and existential way, the "new mode of communicating and informing" asked for by the 1970 Chapter.

With the Formation Team, the dates and meetings were better programmed. We made gradual progress in the manner of sharing on different subjects. The visits to the Probations gave us very interesting and enriching contacts with the Probanists. There remains, however, one point that is obscure and ambiguous. How can it be made possible in practice for the Superior General to have the responsibility for admission to Profession as the Chapter required.

We have tried to follow the suggestion made at the Assembly of Provincials in 1972, to broaden our *contacts with other organizations*, by taking an active part in the meetings of the IUSG, SEDOS, Justice and Peace, and with other religious congregations and groups of young people.

Decentralization has certainly been helpful to *co-responsibility with the Provincial Teams*. Especially since the Assembly of Provincials in 1972, many have faithfully kept us informed on the progress of their Province, by "using" the suggested formula or by other means, and this exchange has really helped us to follow in some measure the situation of the province.

Despite all this, a certain lack of exactness with regard to the responsibilities at each level has made it difficult for the Provincials to make decisions, to give account and to carry out their work.

It thus seems to us that we need to determine the channels of communication and to be more precise with regard to responsibilities, "to find simple and enabling structures" (Chicago), in order to have a stronger sense of being one Body-so necessary for giving reality to our common call. I think that our Holy Mother, who suffered so much to keep the *Cor Unum*, would urge us at this moment to unite and act together for justice, the pressing need of our times.

A point to which we are giving serious attention is that of *obedience* and *disponibility*; there is a connection with what we have just been considering. Perhaps dialogue has not yet been recognized at its true value nor found an appropriate channel, but we believe that the problem is often deeper than that of creating methods or structures for relating to one another. We must go with greater honesty to the roots of our obedience: "Union and conformity with the Lord who learned obedience by the

things he suffered", to do the Father's will and carry out his mission. Have we thought seriously that the strength of our common Mission depends upon the response of each one in obedience and disponibility to follow God's plan for us as a Society? And do we realize, as one province says so well, "We have delegated our autonomy in part to the charism of the congregation"? (Spain, North-B)

III. THE COMMUNITY IN ITS MISSION

The very fact of stating that we are a community with a Mission-which means sent for a purpose-shows that we understand that the community exists for the Mission (Puerto Rico) and that there is no Mission without a community that prays, deepens, lives and evaluates it. (Argentina-Uruguay)

We are beginning to look upon community as the place from which each sister is sent to her own mission. It is the place in which that sharing takes place wherein each one allows herself to be questioned about her mission, and assumes responsibility for that of others. And yet, in many communities, this conviction is rather an intuition for the future than a lived reality.

We are looking for the way of sharing, today, in the Mission of Jesus Christ. Let us look at some of the *sources of strength* which are beginning to move us, and let us also admit the *weaknesses* and *ambiguities* which scatter our forces.

- We are beginning to see more clearly the distinction between *Mission* and *Charism*, between Mission and things to be done. We see the latter rather as ways of putting the Mission into action; this requires by that very fact, a professional preparation. Sometimes, however, for lack of preparation or formation, or perhaps through excessive professionalism, we do not live according to the 'mystique' underlying such work.

We understand better that education in today's world is not only for a limited period of life, but is a dimension of life itself. It is with this in mind that we try to carry out the four principal means of which the Constitutions speak (Pt. III, Ch. III: IV, V, VI), and which answered the needs of the moment in history at which our Holy Mother lived:

- the private school
- the free school
- retreats for persons outside

- contacts with persons of the world.

We try to live them, open to the demands of society for forming men-for-others, and ready, as the Chapter of 1970 asked of us, for the transformations required by the needs of today's world. We must recognize that despite this, there has been a certain scattering of our forces in the concrete way of living our mission. We think that this is due to varied causes: the instability of some persons, individualism, a want of planning, and above all a lack of discernment and a certain confusion concerning our charism.

- We are beginning to become conscious that *social justice* is a dimension of our mission for communion and liberation. The conviction is unanimous. However, in the way of living this conviction, the stress is placed on different aspects:

- Some, in working for justice, concentrate on forming the consciences of the students in our schools and colleges, on forming 'agents for a change of structures' in view of a more just world. These run the risk of remaining in the domain of theory, if in some way or other, they do not have direct contact with the poor and oppressed.

- Others try to be in solidarity in a special way with the oppressed and to struggle with them in order to change their situation. These run the risk of

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losing sight of the true liberation of man, and of sowing hate rather than love.

- Others again stress their option for the poor and share their life with simplicity. These run the risk of neglecting their own personal formation and consequently that of others. Without such formation it is easy to foster passivity among the oppressed and to be naive in facing unjust situations which call for action and risk.

- Many religious recognize that *contact with the poor* must challenge our own way of life and ask of us greater simplicity and a more real sharing. We must know how to pay the price in our own flesh.

- We are more aware that the *promotion of woman* is a sign of the times to which we must be alert (San Francisco). We must confess, however, that we have not

awakened sufficiently to collaborate for this promotion according to the needs of each continent.

- We are more aware of the *problems of poor countries*, "Clarification is needed about the 'structural' aspect of interprovinciality in what concerns personnel on loan". (Uganda-Kenya-Chad)
- We want *government to be at the service of mission*, but we lack an opening upon the real needs which call out to us, and sometimes, too, as much at the level of the base as at that of authority, we are wanting in readiness to respond generously.
- In general we accept the Options as the historical expression of our charism today and the way of living our mission. We are aware, however, that "our lifestyle is not in harmony with our choices" (Far East). "We have not sufficiently interiorized them" (New York), and there are still tensions and justifications which prevent them from converging upon our only end: the Heart of Jesus.
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- We are more aware that *it is not a matter of living in ideal community situations* (which are often unreal), but of a life in common based upon charity, faith, pardon and "the acceptance of each one just as she is, with her good qualities, her weaknesses and her limits" (Chad). Despite this conviction and the effort made for sisterly relationships, there are some weak points:
 - Some persons and some communities feel marginalized.
 - We have not yet learned how to understand one another, and this attitude wounds the *Cor Unum*.
- In our efforts to build fraternal communities which have a sense of the Church and are attentive to the call of the world, we can pick our three sources of strength which may help us in the future:
 - the necessity for discernment,
 - the demands of evangelical radicalism,
 - the place of the Word. (Belgium)

Yes, we need to underline more strongly the "radical attitude needed to form communities: the explicit awareness that we are united in memory of Jesus to help one another so that our actions are in conformity with this. This calls for honesty and a lack of defensiveness". (Spain S.C.)

- Before leaving the subject of the community in its mission, we want to indicate that the weakest point, and the cause of many other weaknesses, lies in *formation*, both initial and on-going, for it is not orientated enough towards what our mission calls for: "to know and to make known Jesus Christ throughout our whole life". (Letter on Formation. December, 1975) And "this continuous formation is urgent in order to live out our commitments with a communitarian dimension". (Poland) During this chapter, we must look to formation when we are treating other subjects.

And now we want to share with you the joy that has been ours in recognizing that the desire to rediscover the dynamism of our charism today, and that inner power from which our service springs, is very much alive in the Society. We all desire to deepen that original power of our common call, for "there must be a sufficiently common foundation for different life-styles". (Germany-Sweden)

The opening to the world, the effort to contemplate the Heart of Christ through the pierced heart of humanity, has made us more conscious of oppression, of injustice and of the suffering of our fellow men and women. At the same time, we feel more strongly than ever the weakness of our response to this challenge. That is why, after this acknowledgment, we *want to reaffirm, with fresh vigor the decision,*

- to put the love of Christ at the center of our lives,
- to look anew at his Heart open upon the cross, a symbol which expresses today as always, what it means to love humanity to the end.

This conviction is seen in the Provincial Chapters under diverse forms:

- Some Provinces affirm that this is what must give life to the whole Body: "The Paschal Mystery, dying and rising, is lived out not only in the life of each person, but in the community, the province, the whole Society". (Washington)
- Other Provinces share their own experience that "the contemplation of the Heart of Christ has orientated their mission, giving them a preference in their heart for the poor". (Chile)

- Others still have realized that "we are messengers of the love of Jesus, God-made-man for every man". (St. Louis)
- Some, in reflecting upon their task, have understood that to educate is "something to do with the heart of another, a call to fullness of life by loving and caring". (Australia-New Zealand)
- Several Provinces stress the importance of union and conformity with the Heart of Jesus for living our vows today, even if what is asked of us is different:
 - "Chastity is the transformation of all our feminine energies through the action of the Holy Spirit. And the greatest transformation is that taking place within our hearts, molded into Christ." (Ireland-Scotland)
 - "Our poverty must bear witness to Christ's standard of values in a secularized world; we have moved from a poverty of dependence to one of sharing." (Ireland-Scotland)
 - We need: "the mutual confidence and the heart-felt sincerity inspired by the contemplation of the obedient Christ." (France)
- The desire to give more space in our lives to adoration, praise and thanksgiving is also underlined: "Contemplation of the Heart of Christ in his life with the Father." (India)
- Others, finally, in treating of internationality which is so essential to our *Cor Unum* insist upon the need of being able "to discover more of the riches and values of our differences", (Zaire) and "to let each one express herself as she is". (Italy)

We all feel that the realization of this vision calls us to incarnate the strength and tenderness of the love of Jesus Christ. Without his compassion for suffering humanity, without his confidence and his submission to the plan of his Father, we cannot "share in his suffering nor believe in the power of his Resurrection" (Ph.3:10)

Let us ask Mary to be among us as a silent presence, unobtrusive but powerful, that we may "do what he tells us". We notice that only a few Provinces expressed the desire to find new forms of expressing our relation to her. Yet I dare say that her

presence is very real in the lives of many among us. And we can affirm by experience that we have felt her active presence in the growth of our faith, and that in critical, hard or happy moments, "she was there". She can help us at this moment in the life of the Society by her presence:

- as mother, she has a feeling for persons and their diversity,
- as woman, she has a refined sense of the practical and down-to-earth side of life. An Arab proverb says, "Men see the forest, women see the trees and the leaves".

She knows what it means to go forward as a pilgrim, in faith, to enter into the mysterious plan of God. She knew how to remain fully open to the action of God, empowered in freedom.

These are difficult times, and times of great hope as well. Let us keep on trusting in her presence which confirms us:

- in faith,
- in generous love,
- in the joy of a gift freely given.

"On the morning of Pentecost she presided in prayer over the beginning of evangelization under the Holy Spirit" (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 81. Paul VI, 1975). Each day of this Chapter, may she help us to live together:

- the experience of prayer and of work,
- in straight-forwardness and trust,
- with a heart that is poor, simple and ready,
- without fear or egoism

And may she, who lived so attentive to history, make us alive to the demands made upon us today:

- fidelity to the Spirit of the Lord Jesus,
- the incarnation of his love,
- in a solidarity with our brothers that is more actual and effective.

OUR LIFE FOR MISSION

INTRODUCTION

The 1967 Chapter, following on the Council, defined our Congregation as an “Apostolic Institute”. (1) By widening our field of apostolate (2) it opened us to pluriformity.

Chapter 1970 committed us, as an apostolic community, to live according to five fundamental choices which modified considerably our community living and our service in the world. We have experienced difficulty in unifying these five options, and by stressing one rather than another, we have sometimes caused division and weakened our service for mission.

Chapter 1976 has enabled us to experience unity at the level of charism, and has strengthened our call for mission. Far from discarding the five fundamental choices of Chapter 1970, we affirm them anew, more humbly, seeing them more as a whole.

CHARISM

for unity,
continuity
and change.

During the 1976 Chapter we felt, in our own great diversity and that of our provinces, a unifying power. We recognized this power as that of our charism which is expressed in our Constitutions as “union and conformity with the Heart of Jesus” (3).

St. Madeleine Sophie, listening to the calls of her day, saw the Body of Christ “outraged” by “impiety” (4); today we contemplate the wounded Heart of Christ in his Body, torn apart by the injustice of the world (5); our charism urges us

to be one with men in their sufferings and in their quest for a more just and fraternal world.

This power brings us together; we all acknowledge that our Congregation has an ever-living call to contemplation and

communion that we may be witnesses to the love of God among men.

CONTEMPLATION

We are called to a contemplation which must permeate our whole life in the free gift of ourselves in a spirit of adoration. Christ is present in our world, and He draws us to discover Him, in his Word, in reality and within ourselves. Jesus within us enables us to share his drawing to the Father, and gives us a contemplative outlook on the world in which we live. We must let this life take hold of us, so that we may look upon the world and love it, with the look and the love of Christ himself. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (6). This means we must have a way of life in which prayer comes first, a way of life which enables us to seek God in our salvation history. As Mary received the Word of God become Life for the world, so from our contemplation, a power of conversion and transformation must spring up for the sake of mission.

COMMUNION

Our impelling call strengthens us for communion. We are called to live fraternally and to make our own the prayer of Jesus "that they all may be one" (7). Solidarity among ourselves and with others implies self-discipline, and the joy

of forgiving, trust, sharing: all of us, members of one body, learn to love and take responsibility for our different and complementary gifts which build up the body of Christ (8).

EDUCATIONAL DIMENSION OF OUR MISSION

As an international apostolic community, called to spread the Good News, we see that our service of the Church has always had an educational dimension. For a century and a half, we have given preference, among other means, to the education of youth. In today's world, new educational aspects of our mission have been opened to us, new ways of showing forth the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ (9).

JUSTICE

Caught up ourselves in a world which is unjust and dehumanizing, we feel the need to "embrace every means in our power" (10) to proclaim the Father's love. The educational dimension of our mission is in fact inseparable from the call to work for justice: in a world which does not reflect the demands of the Kingdom, where man is often used as a tool, disfigured, frustrated, either because he lacks even basic needs, or because his deepest longings are not satisfied, we pledge ourselves to seek solidarity with the poor, with those who do not "belong", and to work together for our mutual liberation which is growth in faith and love.

DISCERNMENT

To understand in everyday life the challenge of the world and to seek for ways of bringing the light of the Gospel into the situation, we need others: we are sent as communities of believers, and we respond to this call from within the Church. Community discernment at local, provincial and international level is indispensable for us if we are to be truly available for mission. We want to commit ourselves to it, so that we may live in dependence on the Spirit. Because of this, and through our search for communion and justice, our vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, lived for Christ and his mission, should proclaim the free gift of God's love in our lives.

- Our personal relationship with Christ urges us to the free and unconditional gift of ourselves to others, enabling us to risk joyfully the solitude of chastity.

- The world to which we are sent, whether it is deprived of, or saturated with material goods, challenges our poverty.
- The urgent call of mission impels us to greater availability, to obedience lived in a spirit of discernment, humbly seeking the common good.

SOME ATTITUDES IN VIEW OF MISSION

Thus we share in the dynamism of Christ's life: Christ made man who freely took on himself the human condition; Christ who, in his death, made relative everything that was absolute for us; Christ risen who proclaims and brings to fruition his Kingdom of universal love.

Looking at Him, we know that we are committing ourselves to a way of conversion which urges us to:

- Contemplate God's world anew because of our personal relationship with Christ.
- Become aware of the unjust situations to which we contribute, and to seek for justice with our brothers (11).
- Be of the Church, to belong to the local Church, to love each other and to build communion.
- Have a special love for the less privileged, the poor, the oppressed, those who do not "belong" (12).
- Live among men simply, without looking for privileges, learning from others the way of the Beatitudes.
- Work for the growth and freedom of the human person through personal relationships.
- Allow the international dimension of the Society to challenge and enrich us, with grateful hearts and a willingness to share.

We want government, finance, formation and communication to be at the service of mission, aware of our personal and common responsibility for using these means in our search for communion.

- (1) Special Chapter 1967 p.13
- (2) Cf. Chapter 1967 p.17
- (3) Cf. Constitutions p. 136 IX and many other passages.
Cf. also Chapter 1967 p. 11 and p. 15: Chapter 1970 p. 56
- (4) Cf. Constitutions p. 144 XV where St. Madeleine Sophie speaks of the outrages
which Christ received in the Eucharist.
Cf. also Abridged Plan page 1, par. 1.
- (5) Cf. Chapter 1967 p. 11: Chapter 1970 p. 56.
- (6) Phil. 2:5
- (7) John 17: 21

- (8) Cf. I Cor. 12 and Eph. 3: 6.
- (9) Chapter 1970 p. 11.
- (10) Cf. Constitutions p. 143 XIV.
- (11) Cf. the many calls of the Church: Vatican II, Populorum Progression, Medellin Documents, etc.
- (12) Cf. Constitutions p. 149 XXI and p. 41 VIII.

OUR COMMITMENTS FOR MISSION

The main lines of Chapter 1976 speak of a commitment to be taken together in fidelity to our mission. We see there certain exigencies to be lived out by all of us:

- to live the demands of contemplation
- to build communion with all that this implies
- to search for justice with the heart of an educator
- to share our goods in view of mission, not only among ourselves, but with those who are most in need
- to discern whether our choices are consistent with our contemplation
- to continue our formation as religious of the Sacred Heart, no matter what our age
- to use communication for mission, sharing, and internationality.

This is expressed in the following aims:

1. We want to respond seriously to the call to *contemplation* by being open and welcoming to the mystery of God's gift; we want to seek and find Christ's presence in his Word, in events and situations, in ourselves and others; we want to let ourselves be moved and transformed by this Word and this presence at the heart of the world.
2. We want to build *communion* together, in trustfulness, in togetherness, in forgiveness and in sharing; we want to open ourselves to be challenged and changed by others; we want *as a body* to accept responsibility for the apostolic choices of other provinces and communities, so as to show forth the mystery of God's love.
3. As an international apostolic community, the *educational dimension* of our mission is inseparable from the call to work for *justice*. In a world where man is often frustrated either because he lacks even basic needs, or because his deepest longings are not satisfied, we want to work for justice and collaborate in the growth and freedom of man, having a special concern for the poor and those who do not "belong".

4. Through *discernment* we want to seek the will of God in order to respond realistically for mission, and to test whether our choices are consistent with our life of contemplation.
5. As an international community we want to build communion and to put our goods at the service of mission, we want to *share* these resources among ourselves and with those who have the greatest need; we want to seek together how to live our poverty more prophetically.
6. If we truly want to respond to the living charism of the Society, we must take seriously our responsibility for *on-going formation* at every age.
7. We want to give priority to those means of *communication* which can help us to share and strengthen the vitality of the Society, in conformity with the six aims of the Chapter.

GOVERNMENT FOR MISSION

I. A LOOK AT THE PAST AND CONTINUITY

1. “In order to follow the guidelines given by the Church and to make an effective response to the needs of the world today”, the 1967 Special Chapter introduced into our government principles which showed a fundamental change, and which have since become an integral part of the life of the Society: *decentralisation* (subsidiarity) and *co-responsibility* (participation).
2. The 1970 Chapter chose a *new line of government* based on a deeper understanding of these same principles, of which we now have a small measure of lived experience. Moreover, the 1970 Chapter expressed in its documents *two new intuitions*, which we are perhaps, only just beginning to grasp in depth and in reality.
 - a) the call made to the Society by the world of today to live out our mission and our charism according to the guidelines expressed in the *5 options* and
 - b) deeper understanding of the real meaning of *responsibility* (or co-responsibility), realising that all our religious are responsible for “fulfilling the Society’s mission in the Church in living fidelity to her charism” (p. 35). It is the living out of this responsibility wherever we are, in the truth of our hearts and of our lives, which *makes us members* of the Society, and which builds up the Society as a body.
3. The 1976 Chapter has reached a deeper understanding of the charism and of the mission of the Society, and has seen the necessity of formulating this mission, so as to give to our service of the Church a common impetus, and the strength which comes from union of minds and hearts.

II. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. Mission: commitments and aims

The *mission* of the Society “to make known the love of God made man”, and the *charism* of the Society with its demands for contemplation and communion, require of us today that we should be attentive to reality, both in our daily living and as an exigency of our call to contemplation; and that we should respond to the

demands of this reality by building communion. Today we have a renewed vision of Mission and Charism. Therefore one of the tasks of this Chapter is to express simply and clearly the aims to which we, as a body, now commit ourselves in order to respond to the Gospel demands of justice and the integral development of man. One of the advantages of setting out these aims will be to clarify and unify the life and efforts of the whole Society, to give us all a common direction and make accountability possible.

2. Responsibility – Obedience

Each religious has a basic responsibility which she can never abdicate and which no one can take over for her: that of living in the truth of her heart and her life, wherever she may be, the charism of St. Madeleine Sophie.

3. Obedience – Authority

For the sake of our corporate mission, we accept freely and in faith, the service of an evangelical authority. Thus obedience is lived as a search for the will of God, in dialogue with others, and in the free gift of ourselves which makes us available for the Kingdom.

4. Authority – Government

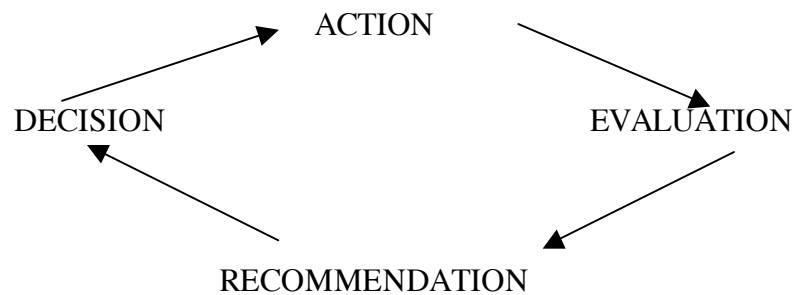
For the sake of mission, we, the Society of the Sacred Heart, as a body recognised by the Church, designate one person as Superior General so as to entrust to her the authority which comes from God. This choice is confirmed by the Church.

The Superior General shares the exercise of her authority with a team, who together with her, assume responsibility with regard to the charism and the mission of the whole body, in line with the aims and commitments of the General Chapter.

Together with her team she appoints the Provincial Superior, who has the authority at provincial level; with her team the Provincial Superior assumes the responsibility for determining the concrete ways in which the province, each community and each person lives out these commitments.

5. The Links between responsibility – obedience – authority – discernment - government

An evangelical authority is always at the service of others, of mission. Decision taking is an important aspect of this authority. For a government rooted in discernment, and built on subsidiarity and participation, the exercise of authority also requires evaluation and the sharing of it, recommendation (1), and action as a dynamic, creative force.



III. PLAN OF GOVERNMENT

- Government is at the service of mission as expressed in the commitments and aims of the General Chapter.
- The Superior General and her team have the responsibility and the authority to "watch without ceasing...over the advancement" of the mission expressed in the aims decided upon by the Chapter.
- The Provincial and her team have the responsibility and the authority to determine with the province, the practical applications which will enable each religious, each community
- and the province as a whole to strive towards these aims.

Thus the lines of authority and responsibility are clear. They enable us to be both pluriform and united, and to be a prophetic sign in today's world.

(1) Recommendation preceding a decision.

STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT FOR THE WHOLE BODY

It is the entire international body, that is to say, all the religious throughout the world in provincial communities, and forming together one great international community, which is called to live the charism and the mission of the society in dynamic fidelity. According to the times and the needs of the world, the charism and mission will take on different facets. The function of government is to keep the dynamism of mission alive, and to seek the manner of living it which is suited to the times.

THE GENERAL CHAPTER

It is the legislative body of the Society:
it ensures the union of the Society in one spirit
and one mission in today's world.

It determines commitments or aims for the whole body at a given moment in the history of the Society. For this purpose:

- It studies and evaluates, through preparatory work, and through reports presented to the Chapter, in what way the aims determined by the preceding Chapter have been achieved.
- It evaluates the mode of government since the preceding Chapter and makes any necessary changes.
- Aware of the calls and needs of the Church and the world, it draws up for the whole Society some aims which lead to appropriate action in line with the mission.
- It elects the Superior General.

Composition ex-officio members
Elected members (the number is determined by the Central Team after appropriate consultation).

Convocation by the Superior General.

Frequency every six years.

In exceptional circumstances it can be convened

- on the initiative of the Central Team
- at the request of 2/3 of the Provincials.
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THE CENTRAL TEAM

Composition The Superior General and 4 Councillors chosen by, and forming with her, a discerning community for the union of the Society at the service of mission.

The Superior General represents the Society and has final authority over its members and its goods. She shares with her Councillors the exercise of her authority and the *responsibilities* of government:

- Above all to make sure that each one takes her full responsibility with regard to the charism and the mission of the Society.
- To establish a general policy to ensure that the aims decided on by the Chapter are put into effect by the Society as a whole, taking into consideration, in a spirit of discernment, the reality of the provinces and the needs of the church and the world.
- To establish an overall plan and practical means which will enable each province to collaborate actively in the sharing of personnel and finance, in order to respond to the needs of the whole body and to the calls which it receives.
- To make a regular evaluation of policy.
- To receive recommendations from Provincials and to make decisions accordingly.
- To establish or modify provinces or vice-provinces after having consulted them.
- To name the Provincials after consultation with the province, and to support them in their service.
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- To maintain communication with the provinces and the Provincial Teams in a spirit of communion and service, in order to understand their situations, needs and aspirations, and to help the Provincial Teams in their work of animation of the province.

For this end they shall:

- take care that the policy and decision-making of the provinces take into account the aims determined by the Chapter and the general policy,
- take care that the structures decided on by the provinces allow authority to be exercised in a spirit of discernment, and allow each community or person to collaborate actively in the mission,
- give approval to the general outlines for formation in each province,

- admit candidates to final profession, after ratifying the recommendations made by the Provincials,
 - approve the setting up or the suppression of institutions on the responsibility of the Provincial,
 - receive the reports of the provinces and respond with appropriate recommendations.
- To foster internationality for mission: by every possible means to encourage communion and co-responsibility between individuals and nations and especially between provinces.

For this end:

- to convene assemblies of Provincials according to need, and to specify their purpose,
 - to convene international assemblies according to need,
 - to facilitate exchange of information on the manner in which each province is living the mission of the Society,
 - to set up whatever structures are necessary for the service of the Society as a whole,
 - to name the Treasurer General and the Secretary General,
 - to decide with the Treasurer General what areas of responsibility will be hers and in which areas she will give recommendations,
 - to assume her responsibility for the administration of the goods of the Society.
- To summon the General Chapter and decide the number of delegates.
- To delegate her powers.
- To replace a member of the Central Team in the event of her resignation, illness or death.
- To exercise the powers granted by the decree “Religionum Laicalium” of May 30th, 1966 and by the decree of November 27th, 1969.

The Superior General has the ultimate responsibility vis-à-vis the Church and towards the Society.

**Length of the mandate
of the Superior General**

6 years with the possibility
of one re-election.

In the event of the death of the Superior General, the Central Team must inform the Society, and choose one of its members to govern the Society in the interim period. It will convene a Chapter of Election within six months. In the event of the resignation of the Superior General, the Sacred Congregation for Religious will be consulted as regards the procedure to be followed.

**Length of the mandate
of the members of the Central Team**

3 years
plus 3 years

They all give in their resignation at the time of the election of the Superior General.

STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT FOR THE PROVINCE

The aims of the General Chapter must be put into practice by each province in such a way that the mission of the Society, lived in the *provincial* community, is embodied in the particular country or region.

Each province will have means of consultation (Provincial Assemblies or others) which will ensure full participation. Their functions will be defined by each province.

It is in the *local community* that the mission takes root, is incarnated and lived in dynamic fidelity to the charism. The communities are responsible for their share in provincial and Society discernment in the way they perceive, live, and make known what God wants of them. Their response to mission is ratified by the Provincial. For the community to live out this mission as part of the Society, authority must be exercised in each community.

THE PROVINCIAL TEAM

Composition

The Provincial and her Councillors; they discern together at the service of mission and for the union of the province.

The Provincial Superior represents the province and has the final authority. She shares with the members of her team the exercise of her authority and her *responsibilities* towards the province and the Society:

- To be attentive to the desires, needs, initiatives and possibilities of the provincial community and above all, encourage the living of charism and mission.
- In the exercise of these responsibilities, to draw out the creativity of the province as much as possible, so that there may be effective participation, either directly or through representatives.
- With and for the province to express in practical terms the aims of the General Chapter.
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- To establish the necessary and appropriate policy to ensure that each person and each community in the province may achieve these aims, taking into account the reality of the province and the needs of the local Church and the country.
- To make co-responsibility possible, by facilitating the exchange of information on the way in which the aims of the province are being lived out, and by setting up the appropriate channels.
- To make the decisions needed for putting into practice the policy of the province and that of the Central Team.
- To allow to local Superiors, to teams, committees or other bodies, the authority which they need in order to fulfil their functions; to receive their recommendations and reports, and take the appropriate decisions.
- To organise personnel, discerning any individual calls, while taking into account overall planning at provincial and central levels, according to the aims of the Chapter; to give mandate for mission.
- To help persons and communities to harmonise their apostolic commitments and their life styles with the aims of the province, by means of evaluation, animation, participation, discernment and accountability.
- To discern with each community in what way authority will be exercised before appointing the person who will exercise this authority; so that community life may be lived according to the charism of the Society and for mission.
- To evaluate regularly the policy of the province and the mode of government, and to give an account to the province and to the Central Team.
- Each year to present to the Central Government the overall plan of the province or its adjustment, for approval.

- To act according to the recommendations of the Central Team.
- To offer recommendations to the Central Team regarding their policy, based on the reality of the province.
- To assume responsibility with regard to other provinces of the Society.
- To ensure the on-going formation of the religious, and to encourage, initiative and communication between the communities, in this area.
- To assume responsibility for initial formation with the person or team in charge of formation; and to submit general outlines, and the choice of the person in charge, to the Central Team.
- To admit candidates to the first stages of religious life or to dismiss them,
- To decide when a candidate is ready for final profession and to recommend her admission to the Superior General.
- To present to the Central Government, after having consulted the province, and the persons concerned, and having been helped by the advice of competent people, the advisability of establishing or suppressing institutions.
- To decide with the Provincial Bursar the area of her delegated authority, what areas of recommendation shall be hers, and what help should be given her.
- To assume responsibility for the administration of the material goods of the province.
- To convene the Provincial Chapter in preparation for the General Chapter and to decide the mode of choosing delegates.

Nomination of the Provincial by the Superior General, after consultation with the province. Nominations are sent directly to the Central Team.

Length of her mandate

3 years with the possibility

of a further 3 years.

The manner of nomination and the length of the mandate of Provincial Councillors is decided by each province.

SOME DECISIONS OF THE 1976 CHAPTER

- I. The Chapter affirms that we want to share our resources with the other provinces; negotiation will be made through the Centre.
- II. That each province make its overall plan, however simple, for the years ahead, so that needs and resources may be evaluated.
- III. That we do not want to increase or to preserve our capital unnecessarily.
- IV. That a post-capitular commission be set up to study the question of the renunciation of goods. The Chapter entrusts the setting up of this commission to the Central Team, and asks that the work be completed in twelve months.
- V. That certain international priorities be determined along the lines of the Chapter, concerning the need for personnel. This implies planning. The Central Team should determine these priorities, helped by a commission if necessary.

FINANCE AT THE SERVICE OF MISSION

God has called all men to build a world of brothers, and for that purpose he has freely given us the life of his Son, and all the goods of creation. We, the Society of the Sacred Heart, moved by love of the poor Christ, want to walk in the way of this *openheartedness* by placing at the service of mission, our work and all the goods that we have, and of which we are only stewards.

Because we are a community that wants to build communion, *sharing* is essential for us; at every level of the Society, goods must circulate with flexibility, so as to be at the service of our mission. The more the building of a just and fraternal world becomes a reality among us, the greater will be the obligation of sharing our efforts and our goods with others.

As regards mission, all of us are *co-responsible*. Government teams and bursars should promote adequate formation for all in the area of finance, so that our commitment to the Gospel, with a realistic attitude towards justice and prudence, may be made possible.

It is not easy to administer our finances in this perspective, because of the influence of the economic systems in which we live: from this comes an ambiguity which we feel very strongly; for that reason our adherence to Christ poor demands that we seek, in solidarity, ways in which to live poverty more prophetically.

THE CENTRAL LEVEL

The Superior General with her team has authority over the goods of the Society for mission, according to the directives of the Church and of the General Chapter, and in conformity with Civil Law.

The Superior General and her team will decide with the Treasurer General:

- a) for which financial responsibilities they should delegate authority to the Treasurer General and her team,

- b) in which areas of responsibility the Finance Team will make recommendations.

Responsibilities

1. To keep up to date with the development of theology, Canon Law and the economic systems of the different countries; to share this information with the provinces.
2. To inspire and foster the evangelical use of money:
 - among the Provincial Bursars: the Treasurer General can hold meetings with them from time to time.
 - in the provinces: the Treasurer General should be familiar with the situation in each province.
3. To establish financial policy for the central level and communicate this to the Society.
4. To establish a scheme for provincial planning so that information can be shared internationally and an overall plan can be set up.
5. Where this is needed, to help provinces with their planning.
6. To establish a plan for the sharing of the financial resources of the whole Society, according to the priorities established for mission.
7. To review annually the provincial planning and to revise at the Centre the overall planning.
8. To verify that the annual budgets of the Central Administration and of the provinces, and their financial statements (drawn up by an auditor) are in accord with their planning.
9. To approve (or not) provincial recommendations for the sale of property, or the contraction of a long-term loan, when the sums involved exceed those authorised.
10. To decide, after dialogue with the province, its contribution to the Central Administration.
11. Taking into account its implications for social justice, to establish investment policy.

THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL

The Provincial with her team, has authority for the use of the goods of the Society in the province, for mission, according to the directives of the Church, of the General Chapter, and in conformity with the Civil Law of the country.

The Provincial and her team decide with the Provincial Bursar:

- a) for which areas of financial responsibility they should delegate their authority to the Provincial Bursar,
- b) in which areas of responsibility the Provincial Bursar will make recommendations,
- c) how the Provincial Bursar can be helped by other persons (teams, committees etc.), and the manner in which she will render an account to the Provincial Team.

Responsibilities

1. To inspire and foster in the province the evangelical use of money and the sharing of goods, as members of an international body.
2. To ensure to persons and communities the formation necessary for them to be co-responsible in financial matters.
3. To decide, with the participation of the province, provincial priorities regarding finance.
4. To help local bursars to be clear about their responsibilities to the community:
 - to draw up the budget together with the community,
 - to use this budget effectively,
 - to collaborate with the local Superior,
 - to render an account to the Provincial Bursar.
5. To inform the communities of the financial state of the province.
6. With the help of appropriate commissions, to draw up the financial implications of provincial planning.
7. To submit this plan to the Central Administration.
8. Each year to review and revise provincial planning and to submit it to the Central Administration.
9. To check that the annual budget and the end of year accounts are in accord with the planning, and send them to the Central Administration.

10. To make sure that the title deeds of property, and the Instruments of Government of schools, colleges and other organisations, safeguard the right of the Society to use its resources for mission.
 11. At regular intervals to bring up to date the insurance policies on property.
 12. To ask for the approbation of the Central Administration for any project concerning the sale of property, or for a long-term loan if the sum in question exceeds that authorised, and to keep the Central Administration informed of the development of the project.
 13. To keep the Central Administration informed of projects (works, buildings, etc.) which international organisations have offered to subsidise.
 14. Taking into account its implications for social justice, to establish investment policy.
 15. To make sure that the act of renunciation of goods made by the religious of the province is valid according to the laws of the country.
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EXTRACT FROM SISTER CAMACHO'S LETTER dated 14th November 1976

Dear Sisters,

My heart feels full of joy because today the real Chapter begins and my hope is that it will be very good. I know that I can count on you at this moment in our history.

I am not going to tell you much about the Chapter which finished today. The Provincials and the delegates will do this when they arrive home. They will tell you what we have been searching for together during these days of prayer and communion, with their moments of suffering and of great joy.

We have lived the experience of listening to one another in depth; we have lived the risk of entering into the long and obscure process of discernment. We have grown in mutual trust and have felt very deeply the joy of the "Cor Unum". This profound and constant union showed itself particularly in each evening's Eucharist and at many important moments.

We have found unanimity about that charism which we have rediscovered to be the vital force which unifies and unites us: "union and conformity with the Heart of Jesus". We have rediscovered it as the innermost point of our vocation with its exigencies of contemplation and communion.

I am sure that the seeds of justice which God has sown in the hearts of all men will grow in ours, and that we will help them to grow, too, within the hearts of others. In a seed there is always a secret force, despite its insignificance; it is a new life which pulses there. But it must also draw from the earth surrounding it, it is receptive, it takes life and assimilates it. It cannot control the secret of life dwelling within it...such a secret life is greater than ourselves, stronger than our weaknesses. "If he sleeps or wakes, night or day, the seed germinates and develops, he knows not how." (Mk. 4: 27).

The unity which is the very root of our lives and the awareness of a world suffering oppression and injustice will be the creative force which will help us to find an educative response in pluriformity.

Your representatives will bring you some very simple texts, which will I hope, help everyone to move forward. I ask you to receive them open-heartedly, despite their imperfections, limits or gaps.

In particular, I would like to refer to the text entitled: "Our Life for Mission". It sums up the main lines of the Chapter. It seems to us that the five options of the 1970

Chapter are unified in it, indicating a way in which they can be integrated: we commit ourselves to live contemplation in truth, to building communion among ourselves and our fellow men, to working for justice with the heart of an educator in a world torn apart by suffering, to discerning together so as to hear the will of God.

We have tried to make this text reflect our desire to live centred on Jesus Christ, to learn from others the way of the Beatitudes, to bind ourselves to the mission so as to show the love of God, to bring about what St. Madeleine Sophie understood by the expression “the glory of the Heart of Jesus”.

I know that for many among you this expression is a source of preoccupation. For some perhaps this is a question of theological imprecision. Others perhaps, turn it into a flag for defending personal interests. All, however, wish to rediscover its deepest meaning. We need to go beyond words and find the force and meaning which gave birth to our congregation. In reality, only the Father can glorify his Son: “Father, glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you” (Jn. 17:1). But we can continue the incarnation of Jesus Christ in the world; we can let the Father glorify his Son in us, in our lives. To glorify means to incarnate love in the world: a love which will enable the Father to glorify himself and to glorify the Son in us. We can incarnate those attitudes which will enable God to show himself...

C. Camacho, rscj