

CIRCULAR N ° 6

**CONVOCATION
OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2001**

Rev. David Joseph Fleming, S.M.
Superior General of the Society of Mary,
Missionary Apostolic

Rome

6 January 2000

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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 2001

Dear Brothers,

By this Circular, in accordance with article 94 of our *Rule of Life*, I convoke the Thirty-Second General Chapter of the Society of Mary, the first of the new millennium, to take place eighteen months from now. The Chapter will be held in Rome at Villa Aurelia (Generalate of the Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - Dehonians), beginning on the afternoon of Sunday, July 8, 2001. We expect that the Chapter will conclude on Sunday, July 29, 2001.

The *Rule of Life* 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”(art. 93). It has both legislative and evaluative functions, which are detailed in arts. 7.19 and 7.20. Every General Chapter is, in God’s Providence, a moment of special grace for each member of the Society, each community and Unit.

I invite all of you to begin already now reflecting, as individuals and in community, on topics and themes that you feel are important for the work of the Chapter of 2001. The Chapter will be another step in the process of grace and revitalization to which the Lord is inviting us. We will be celebrating this Chapter a short time after the beatification of our Founder, with a heightened consciousness of his holiness, his charism, and the gift which he offers to the whole Church. We seem to be living at a pivotal moment in our life as a Society, characterized by challenge and hope, fragility, humiliation, far-reaching transformations, a frequent sense of loss and sacrifice, and at the same time a number of promising new beginnings.

Sometimes with our conscious collaboration, sometimes despite our resistance, a new kind of Marianist life is taking shape. In recent years our General Chapters and other groups leading the Society have stressed various dimensions of this necessary transformation:

- the growth of the Marianist Family, and a close sharing among all the branches,
- spiritual renewal and corporate restructuring,
- a renewal of prayer in the Marianist spirit,
- new models of community life,
- new styles of ministry and a new urgency about mission,
- a new approach to our historic mission of education,
- partnership with laypeople,
- solidarity with the poor and with peace-makers,

- an incarnational stance in a greater variety of cultures,
- a new proposal of the Marianist religious vocation to the people of our time.

These elements remain essential and basic for us.

I hope that the coming General Chapter will be in continuity with those of the recent past, but will not simply repeat these themes. I hope it can come to a cogent analysis of contemporary challenges, a clear-sighted focus for our corporate mission, and a specific Action Plan for the Society, in particular for the General Administration, during the five years immediately ahead.

A good overarching perspective for the Chapter is provided by the phrase highlighted in *Vita Consecrata* no. 37, "Creative Fidelity." In this time marked by the beatification of our Founder, and by the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, we are invited to such "creative fidelity," marrying the wealth of our heritage with the courage to make the changes required by the times in which we live, the new difficulties and opportunities we face.

Attached to this Circular is an Appendix with information about Chapter membership, elections, and deadlines for each ballot. In April of this year, we will publish the complete list of members of the General Chapter.

The Chapter of 1996, in approving Proposition 44, called for a new method of forming the Preparatory Commission, asking for more involvement of the General Administration, calling for an early start in preparing for the Chapter, and seeking a balance between the work of elected delegates and the insights of the members of the General Administration and other men who have an extensive experience of Chapters.

The nucleus of a Preparatory Commission has already begun its work, meeting at our General Administration from December 28-30, 1999. Luis Casalá (Argentina) and James Fitz (Cincinnati), both men with much experience in General Chapters, generously agreed to serve the Society to begin the work of preparation, together with José María Arnaiz (liaison with the General Administration) and Frank Morrisey, O.M.I. (facilitator). In the coming spring, once the Chapter elections have been completed, two additional members will be chosen by the elected delegates for this Preparatory Commission.

This Preparatory Commission will very soon be sending you some materials to begin the process of reflection that will specify a theme and focus for the Chapter. The Commission will invite recommendations and reflections from each community and each Unit of the Society. Your contribution will help us as an entire Society to discern the next steps in the path the Lord wants us to take.

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 and the faithful presence of Mary in all aspects of the Chapter's work. I invite you to meditate on articles 7.8 and 7.18 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.

Faternally,

David Joseph Fleming, S.M.
Superior General

APPENDIX : INSTRUCTIONS
FOR THE PREPARATION
OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 2001

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” (art. 95).

“Each Region has one elected delegate” (art. 7.23).

“The General Chapter makes the following decision to amend the *Rule of Life* 7.22 to read as follows:

7.22 *Each Province elects delegates according to the following norms:*

- a) *There is an equal number of priest and lay delegates.*
- b) *Provinces having 100 members or less elect two delegates.*
- c) *Provinces having between 101 and 250 members elect four delegates.*
- d) *For each additional 150 members, or fraction of that number, a Province elects two additional delegates.” (Partners in Hope, no 38, p. 20)*

Paragraph 38 of *Partners in Hope*, decreed by the General Chapter of 1996, amends art. 7.22 and interprets art. 95. These provisions have been approved for the General Chapter of 2001 by the Sacred Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

It is to be noted that the last General Chapter thus intentionally eliminated the former provision that Provincials and Assistant-Provincials are members by right. They will not be delegates to the General Chapter of 2001 unless they are elected. Only the four members of the General Council will be members by right.

The total number of Capitulants, therefore, will be 45.

2. Ballotings for Elected Members of the General Chapter of 2001: (Rule of Life, art. 96, 7.65).

In each Province and Region of the Society of Mary, the Provincial or Regional Superior conducts two direct elections for delegate(s) from his Province or Region for the General Chapter of 2001. According to Article 96, all perpetually professed members may vote, as well as temporary professed with at least four years of religious profession. Canon Law directs that members who are exclaustated may not vote. All perpetually professed members, except those who are exclaustated, are eligible as delegates to the General Chapter.

The religious vote for candidates in the Province or Region to which they officially belong. Those belonging to a Dependent Region (Colombia, Congo-Ivory Coast, Eastern Africa,

India, Korea) vote to elect the delegate of their Region and do not vote for delegates in their Province of origin. A member is eligible for election as a delegate in the Province or Region in which he votes.

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 15, 2000**. 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 2001 (see Chart). The results of both first and second balloting are sent to the Superior General by **March 30, 2000**.

B. THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION

1. Guidelines for 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 2001. Once the Chapter actually begins and elects its Coordinating Committee, the Preparatory Commission will cease to exist.

2. Balloting for Members of the Preparatory Commission

The Superior General, using the list of Capitulants for 2001, 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 April 30, 2000.

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 20, 2000.

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

UNIT MEMBERSHIP AS OF 31 DECEMBER 1999

FOR DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF CHAPTER 2001 CAPITULANTS

