



## Chapter Communique June 28, 2023

### Morning Session

Sister Katleen Sabatino opened the morning session by indicating that we had now reached the midpoint of the chapter. Even more significantly, we were meeting on a "sun-filled" day, in contrast to the rain that had accompanied our previous days! She also noted that in our prayers we would invoke Mother Mary Lange, of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, who had been raised to the level of *Venerable* by Pope Francis.

### Financial Matters and Voting

Sister Francis Finsterbusch initiated the meeting by responding to some questions that had arisen from the previous report on financial matters. Some sisters had asked for additional information concerning the finances of our missions in South America. Francis indicated that for many reasons, the finances of our South American missions have been held apart from the North American finances. Francis provided some history of our foundation of the missions in Peru and Chile but noted that IHM finances there were kept solely within the country to avoid any legal problems that might arise. The community was advised that it would be better to keep finances totally in Peru and to allow the money within that region to stay independent. The finances in Peru are handled by an accounting firm in that country.

Sister Francis then indicated briefly that delegates would be asked to vote on an issue concerning finances within local houses. A section within FW 112 currently reads:

- ... that the superior of a local convent will consult with the Regional Superior regarding household expenditures that exceed the total of \$350 *per* Sister in the local house.

Delegates would be asked to vote on raising that total to \$500. The change was approved by the delegates. Sister Francis noted, though, that this type of expenditure could be repeated if necessary.

### Response for Finance and Leadership Reports

Sisters Paula Buley, Anne Veronica, and Lorraine McGrew next provided a detailed response to the Finance and Leadership Reports, which had been delivered previously to the delegation, both orally and in printed form. While it would be virtually impossible to summarize the reports offered by each sister, some important points may be mentioned.

In her sections of the presentation, Sister Paula Buley scanned different points of acknowledgment, that the community, its members, or its associates had received during the past five years: e.g. the bestowal of the Fidelity Awards, the Companions in Prayers and Wisdom, and the Convocation. She also noted the role of Global Consciousness, which has impelled us to listen to the cry of the poor and to work with them, to support

immigrants, as well as those in the Vespertina. She concluded, our charism reminds us to go to the center and out to the peripheries.

Sister Anne Veronica considered important moments in our missions and ministries during the past five years. For example, she commented on our new movement in Peru in helping to construct the new school, *Escuela San Pablo* in Manchay, as well as our continued association with co-workers in Chile. She noted our work at the border, our literacy outreach, and our financial outreach to Haiti.

Sister Lorraine McGrew considered information on community life, vocations, and formation. Sister mentioned several significant community issues or achievements: for example, the Covid pandemic, which affected community life at Camilla, a shortage of staff, and increasing forms of medical care. On a more positive note, she mentioned the renovation of Camilla's chapel and the expansion of the pastoral care team. The construction of the new building in Stone Harbor was a definite highlight.

Sister Paula Buley considered information provided on government and stewardship. She recalled that Chapter 2018, which gave more latitude for the election of the General Administration, had provided recommendations. She recommended further that the present system continue to be evaluated. She also looked specifically at information concerning regional government and the delineation of responsibilities. She noted that some recommendations did not happen. She suggested that future administrations could continue to study and evaluate regional government. She also noted the ongoing hiring of lay workers to assist administrators at VMHS and Camilla.

Sister Anne Veronica affirmed that we seem to be financially sound and fully funded for the future of all retirement needs. However, she also noted that future needs might necessitate that we realign our finances. She supported the belief that our investments are aimed to impact social and environmental issues favorably.

Sister Paula concluded the presentation with the image of a schooner, noting that each sail has a function either to move the ship or to change course to miss a problem. She noted that "changing winds" have to be carefully watched! In the meantime, though, the ship seems secure!

### **Presentation of Draft Direction Statement**

Following a short break, the delegation began consideration of the Direction Statement for Chapter 2023. Sister Margaret Langer provided some background information about the proposed statement that had been distributed. Sister explained the roots of the present statement. The proposal emerged from earlier table conversations and responses that had been synthesized and collated by a writing committee.

Sister Margaret then provided verbal annotations for each part of the proposed statement, indicating reasons why the committee had chosen specific words and concepts. In some instances, the words related directly to the writings of Mother Theresa Maxis. In particular, she mentioned Mother Theresa's desire that we be guided by Divine Providence.

The proposed Direction Statement formed four specific areas of communal commitment: prayer, community life, the new vision of service, and commitment to present and future members of the community.

The morning session concluded, and the delegates joined in celebrating the liturgy. As usual, a delicious dinner followed, and the delegates enjoyed a few minutes of relaxation.

## **Afternoon Session**

During the afternoon session, members of the writing group offered their perspectives on the writing process for the Direction Statement. Members of the group agreed that something sacred happened when they came together. They started to see possibilities as they continued working together throughout several months of chapter preparation. They remained connected throughout the year and felt a true spirit of collaboration as they developed the statement. After the short presentation by the writing committee today, delegates took some time to re-discuss the Direction Statement. Following the discussion, most of the delegation affirmed the Direction Statement, but they also offered suggestions for emendations.

As the delegates enjoyed a brief break, the writing task force spent time making some suggested edits to the proposed Direction Statement. Sister Suzanne Mayer returned with the edited document and members of the delegation were asked to consider the revised version of the Direction Statement.

Sister Joanne asked the delegation if they were ready to affirm the statement. They agreed. The question was posed: "Do you affirm the Chapter 2023 Direction Statement?" One group asked for the inclusion of Mother Theresa Maxis' name in the document before the voting. Her name was added prior to the vote. The Direction Statement was wholeheartedly accepted with one-hundred sixty-four votes.

## **Additional Voting**

Changes to Faithful Witness and Faithful Servant:

FW 24.5 and FS 57: Both changes were affirmed. Visitation was made available "annually."

Meeting adjourned.