

Society of the Sacred Heart

see, I am doing something new



Special Chapter 2021

ENGLISH VERSION
CLOSING TALK
for Special Chapter 2021

2 DECEMBER 2021

Thank you, community of the Casa Grande and our sisters and friends in Mexico for sharing this Eucharistic celebration with all of us across the globe who are part of our Sacred Heart family. I feel like we are with you in your chapel, even though we are thousands of miles away! Thank you for welcoming us to your home.

Each time we gather to celebrate Eucharist as we have done today, we enter into the paschal mystery and remember that like Jesus, our lives are shaped by life, death and resurrection. The Eucharist is a moment to thank God and to be humbly grateful for God's constant love. It is a time for us to remember that we are called to live lives rooted in this same love, to make God's love incarnate, even when it is not easy. Ultimately this is the essence of the Special Chapter we have just completed.

I want to thank each one of you who have prayed for us through these days of the Special Chapter. We have felt the power of your prayer and experienced the power of the Spirit acting among us for the sake of the whole. This Chapter has been an AMAZING EXPERIENCE of COR UNUM and the coming together of the One Body that is the Society of the Sacred Heart.

I want to thank all of you who participated in the preparation for this Chapter – RSCJ and lay men and women who shared their hopes and dreams, their desires and their fears – who believe in our mission and took the time to pray and reflect together on how we can live this mission better because of doing what we do together within our local communities and as a global community. Your experience was an enriching part of this Chapter.

There are so many people who have made this Chapter possible – our facilitators and consultants who have walked and worked with us over many months, all the commissions and committees, each person who contributed their skills and gifts for the sake of the whole Society. Behind the scenes, so many people have been working carefully. Without our Technology Committee and our Communications Committee this meeting would not have been possible and certainly you would not have been able to participate and follow the workings of the Spirit during these last 24 days. Our secretarial and logistics team, our interpreters and translators have worked night and day to ensure that we receive the working papers and that despite our differences in languages and time zones, we could communicate with each other. The secretary of the Chapter with the help of the Minutes Committee and other assistance has made sure that we have a clear and accurate memory of all that has taken place during these days. The Liturgy Committee has been phenomenal in sensing how to place our work into the context of the essential – our relationship with God, the world, the past, the present and the future. And they have accompanied our global community in your prayer for this Chapter. I want to thank the community in Joigny, our sisters in Rome, and this community in Mexico for all the work that went into making a global celebration of the liturgy possible.



It definitely has taken a village to make this Chapter a successful and meaningful time.

At the opening of this Chapter I shared my hope and my prayer that God would give us the courage and the wisdom we need to enter into this moment of discernment, that we would have the freedom to let go of anything that would block the Spirit, that we would humbly acknowledge our need of each other and live this Special Chapter with a sense of sisterly love and fidelity to the Heart of Jesus. God answered my prayer and your prayer in very concrete and real ways.

This has been a chapter of discernment. And, like any discernment or retreat experience, when you go deep it is not always easy. Having this Chapter during this Covid pandemic and at the same time that world leaders met to address the urgent climate issues, has heightened our consciousness that no one can walk alone – we want and need to learn from each other and we need to pay attention to those who are most burdened by the injustices and inequities of our world. We have humbly and concretely recognized, in a new way, our need of each other as well as our need of our lay partners in mission in order to live our lives and mission with vitality. I particularly want to thank all the women and men who work with us, especially those who care for our sisters who are elderly and infirmed. You help all of us RSCJ to participate as fully as possible in life and to live our mission to the end.

It was very clear in this Special Chapter that we as a congregation are walking the same road together. I felt that we were in the same room, even though geographically we were all over the globe. One could feel the commitment of each one of us to our mission and to each other. This was tangible. I also felt that we were closer to our people and our realities during this online Chapter, living locally and connecting globally. In a very real way, the capitulants brought their people and their realities “into the room with them”.

So, did we create something new in this Chapter? The words of TS Eliot have returned to me over and over:

We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time...

I believe that the seeds of this Chapter have been germinating for a long time, certainly from the Chapter of 2016 but long before that. I experienced in this Chapter a depth of our commitment. I could see that we are imprinted with the spirit of Madeleine Sophie, with a passion to discover and make known God’s love in the best way we are able. Our foremothers, who are part of our communion of saints were also with us in the room. I could imagine Sophie and Philippine, talking, debating, probably with times of tension, when Philippine persisted in her vision and desire to do something new and Sophie perhaps a bit more cautious of this new undertaking. In many ways, we are like them – recognizing that we need to do something new but sometimes not sure that we are ready or have all the means we need to realize our hopes and vision. This Chapter is like a lighthouse that will



give us direction, help us to follow the star and save us from ending up in the wrong place or crashing into the rocks.

As One Body, we are already in the boat and we will move forward with something new, new ways of being in relationship with each other, discovering new ways to live our mission as educators, with the same passion and humility as Sophie. For those of you who are RSCJ and also our lay partners in mission, I want to share that the capitulants undertook their responsibility surrounded by you. Who we are, who we serve, what is most important to us, was in the background of each conversation. Sometimes the stretching our imaginations to create something new was painful, being sensitive to what is now and knowing that change is both necessary and hard.

There is a call for each one of us in all of this, not just the capitulants. In order to have new life, we must accept the pangs of giving birth. We are now entering into a time when all of us will need to let go of some things in order to have new life. My prayer now is that we can enter into the new phase on the journey towards the Chapter of 2024, trusting in God's desire for us that the Society carry on its mission with passion and vitality, willing to let go of what might hinder us and choosing to be women of hope.

The fate of the Society really is in our hands. All of us are being asked to become artisans of hope, adding our small piece to the mosaic of life. I learned a lot about myself and about RSCJ during this Special Chapter. Let us really believe that we can trust in the fidelity of God and the love of our sisters, that it is okay to not know everything, that it's good to ask for help and that all works of art, including ourselves and this little Society, have imperfections and still are much-loved works in progress.

It's not by chance that we end the Special Chapter and begin this next part of our journey in Advent, waiting, accompanied by Mary as we anticipate new birth – knowing that God is already with us and yet living in expectation, longing and hope of new life.

As we end this Chapter, I'd like to share the wisdom of Teilhard de Chardin who suffered because of his vision and yet persisted faithfully to the end.

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress

that it is made by passing through some stages of instability –

and that it may take a very long time.



*And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually – let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.*

*Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.*

Now Bozena as Secretary of the Chapter and I will sign the official MINUTES.

And with these words, we will close this Special Chapter of 2021. I send the capitulants to their home countries and provinces, to return to your ministries and your people, grateful for each one of you, knowing that we are together on this journey forward to live the charism and mission of the Society with passion and love for the sake of God's people and the well-being of our world.

