



**CONGREGAZIONE DELLE
SUORE MISSIONARIE DI SAN PIETRO CLAVER**

"La cosa più divina è cooperare alla salvezza delle anime"

PREPARATION FOR THE XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER

Theme: "CALLED TO BRING THE HOPE OF SALVATION IN TODAY'S WORLD"

"They set out at once and returned to Jerusalem" (Lk 24: 33).

Motto: *"The most divine of divine things is to cooperate in the salvation of souls"*

(Blessed Mary Teresa Ledóchowska).

Dear Sisters,

Greetings to you from the Generalate, Rome.

The Constitutions of our Congregation state that "preparation for the chapter begins one year beforehand with the sending of a questionnaire" (cf. Art. 87). In accordance with this article, the General Council in its meeting held on 21 October 2024, decided to send a questionnaire to all the communities of our Congregation to reflect on the theme: **"Called to bring the hope of salvation in today's world"**.

We decided on this theme with an intense process of discernment, prayer, and sharing, keeping in mind the suggestions that emerged in our International Congresses, listening to the reality of the Institute through the canonical visits, the journey of Consecrated Life in the Church, and particularly the theme for Jubilee 2025: *Pilgrims of Hope*, inviting everyone to an intense experience of the love of God that awakens in hearts the sure hope of salvation in Christ.

The Biblical inspiration for this theme is drawn from the Gospel of Luke: *"They set out at once and returned to Jerusalem"* (Lk 24:33). This passage is taken from the context where two of Jesus' disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, totally disheartened with a feeling of hopelessness. On the way, they encountered the Risen Lord, who opened their eyes by drawing their attention to the Scriptures and revealing himself in the breaking of the bread. No sooner did the disciples recognise the Lord, their lives were filled with hope once again, and they rushed back to Jerusalem to share their experience of having seen the Risen Lord, in turn bringing hope to others.

At times, we ourselves experience despair and feel discouraged when we encounter personal challenges, difficulties in our communities, issues in our apostolate and the problems posed by the ever-growing secularised individualistic and indifferent society around us. When facing these realities, this pericope about the disciples encountering Jesus on their way to Emmaus offers us a renewed spirit of hope and drives us to embark on a journey with our eyes opened, our hearts inflamed and our feet on the move.

The General Chapter is primarily a spiritual event aimed at discerning and realising God's plan for our Congregation. It involves being attuned to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, which will enable us to respond to the signs of the times by offering the gift of our charism in service of the Church. The main theme of the General Chapter emphasises the **need to be strengthened by our encounter with the Risen Lord**, much like the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We are called to allow Him to open our eyes, ignite our hearts, and inspire us to act as missionaries of salvific hope.

Over the coming days, we will be dedicating much time for the preparation of the General Chapter. However, what is most essential is to let all our deliberations be basked in the ever-abiding presence of God. Therefore, I ask each community to begin the Prayer attached herewith for the success of the XVIII General Chapter. Kindly also find the Logo, the procedures and the questionnaire.

May the Holy Spirit guide us as we journey together and bless our efforts of bringing hope of salvation to the world.

Wish you all a fruitful personal reflection and community deliberations.

Yours Sincerely,



Sr. Selin Karikkattil

Sr. Selin Karikkattil
Superior General

Rome, 1st November 2024

**PRAYER IN PREPARATION
FOR THE XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER**

Lord God,

we thank you for the gift of our Congregation
and for the call to be
witnesses of your hope in today's world.

We ask you to enlighten our hearts and minds
as we prepare for the XVIII General Chapter.
Grant that we may listen to your voice
and recognise the paths you show us.

Renew in us the desire for holiness,
the passion for the mission
and the urge to bring the salvation of Jesus Christ to all peoples.

Help us to be instruments of peace and love
capable of welcoming and accompanying
each person on their journey of faith,
our sisters in the complexity of our common vocation
and missionaries in their efforts,
difficulties and commitments.

In this time of reflection and discernment
we invoke the presence of Jesus
that his Word may open our eyes,
make our hearts burn with love and guide our steps.

Holy Spirit, empower us with wisdom and unity
that we may work together, supporting one another
to bring the hope and light of salvation
to the darkest places.

We ask you to bless each of us
that we may become bearers of hope,
be witnesses of your mercy
and builders of a world as you want it.
Amen.

Mary, Mother of Good Counsel - pray for us
Saint Peter Claver - pray for us
Blessed Maria Teresa Ledóchowska - pray for us.

LOGO



- The **Globe** symbolizes our mission without frontiers; mission to the peripheries of human existence, to free people from the bondage of human dysfunction and slavery to sin.
- The **Boat** represents the Church, signifying the community of believers journeying together through the inevitable ups and downs of life, of which we are an integral part.
- The **Waves** illustrate the challenges and uncertainties we need to encounter in life. These can encompass personal struggles, societal issues, or any form of adversity that individuals, communities or the Church needs to face.
- The **Cross** and the **Sails** recall our Congregation Logo; the white colour recalls our baptism, by virtue of which we are all missionaries (Cfr. Ad Gentes, n. 2); the red colour is Christ's saving blood through which we are redeemed. It is also symbolic of the resurrection of Christ and his expression of love through the gushing of blood and water from his heart, giving us hope of his ever-abiding presence with us and the gift of eternal life.
- The **Sisters** demonstrate that the journey is not an individual effort but a collective enterprise; they represent the two disciples of Emmaus, emphasizing the power of fraternity and their vital relationship with Jesus. Holding on to the cross is symbolic of contemplating Christ as Saviour and Redeemer in his Paschal Mystery and bringing this hope of salvation to others.
- The **Anchor**, a symbol of hope, steadfastness, and connection to one's roots that provides stability amid the ebb and flow of life's challenges.

PROCEDURES FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER

There are certain necessary protocols to be followed for the successful unfolding of a General Chapter. We must not merely consider it as an event which occurs every six years in keeping with our Constitutions; rather, remember that every General Chapter is an appeal to renew our fidelity to Jesus and our missionary mandate, so that our Religious Family may continue to serve the Church, bringing hope of Salvation to the world. Pope Francis says that *“Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out”* (Evangelii Gaudium, n. 20). Hence, we need to journey together in this process of preparation, beginning with a careful and serious personal reading; study of the theme proposed and with constructive dialogue at the community level.

It is also crucial to listen to the reality in which one lives, the emerging cultures, and the contemporary context and identify with the members of your community the most urgent challenges. We need to become aware of the resources that make the community capable of responding to the concerns identified and of the shortcomings and limitations that, on a personal and community level, block us in confronting the challenges. Remember that this coming together is also a time to ask forgiveness from God and from one another and above all, to give thanks for the gift of His mercy that transforms and regenerates us from our spiritual poverty.

You will find attached herewith a brief exposition of the theme and questions for the discussions in your communities. We encourage you to complete the questionnaire, giving sufficient time for deep reflection and prayer. The Local Superiors are requested to send the observation made by the members during the community meetings based on the questionnaire and send it to the following email address: sspc18cg@gmail.com by March 31, 2025. These reports will contribute towards the preparation of the final working paper for the General Chapter.

We entrust ourselves to Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, that she may help us to listen to what Jesus tells us, to transform the water of our daily life into the wine of fruitfulness.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire has been divided into three parts taking its cue and inspiration from the Sacred Scripture, specially laying an emphasis on three important aspects: *Perception, Conversion and Mission*.

- The **first part** has been dedicated to reflect on the importance of having our eyes open to be able to see the reality within and around us, basically to find an answer to ‘where am I?’ (**Perception**). This section will orient us to examine our individual lives as consecrated women and also our community life. It will help us to look at the reality around us, making us aware of the context we live in and the needs of our surroundings.
- The **second part** of the questionnaire will deal with our disposition to the analysed reality, primarily delving on ‘what am I to do to bring a positive change in my life and the life of my community?’ (**Conversion**). This section mainly focuses on making room for enlarging and expanding our hearts, specially by listening attentively to the Word of God and through active participation in the Holy Eucharist, to respond to the reality within and around us, which entails formative aspects aimed at the change of hearts.
- Finally, in the **third part**, we are helped to reflect on the question ‘How am I to act in this world?’ (**Mission**) This section will help us to consolidate the works that we are doing and look for new avenues to defuse our charism further.

Questions on the Main Theme

1. What does it mean “*To bring the hope of salvation to today’s world? How does hope in the Risen Lord transform your everyday life? What are your hopes for the next General Chapter?*”
2. *How can we live a more Gospel-centred life, making Jesus truly the centre of our life and apostolic activities?*”

PART I: PERCEPTION

Word of God: *While they were talking and debating together, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them. But their eyes were unable to recognize him. (...) then their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus (Luke 24:15,31).*

Blessed Mother Foundress: *Let us take heart, my child. The Lord knows our situation exactly and he does not send us more than we can bear. On the contrary, we must have a bigger and more trusting heart (Letter to Sr. Julia Falkenhayn, 17.01.1909).*

Reflection: Jesus himself drew near and accompanied the two disciples and by asking simple questions, he brought out the existential truth of the situation they were in. Jesus takes this initiative even today and walks with us to make us see and understand the truth. He continues his effort to open our eyes talking to us primarily through the Scriptures, the people who accompany us, the sisters and in the events of life. In this regard, it is good to note the insights offered by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life: *“Let us contemplate Christ, the Father’s missionary, in order to proclaim in his style (...). It is about entering into the dynamic of seeing, being moved and acting, attitudes that characterized the life and mission of Christ. To see means to be attentive to what is happening in the world, open to the reality around us, not out of mere curiosity but to discover God’s passage in history”* (Proclaim, n.15, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 2016).

(We suggest that you refer Chapters IV-IX of our Constitutions for this section).

1. Religious Consecration

- *What are the challenges to live consecrated chastity in the contemporary world? Discuss and discern how to use the energy of affective love in our daily life and apostolate.*
- *How do we understand poverty in a life increasingly becoming over dependent on material goods and worldly enticements? How can we ensure accountability and transparency in the use of personal and community goods?*
- *What challenges do members face in obeying competent superiors? How to orient ourselves to let it sink that obedience to the decisions of the superior leads to effective apostolate and good governance?*
- *How do changes in religious life affect you specially living in the context of today’s world?*

2. Fraternal Communion and Apostolate

- *What has died out and is no longer relevant to you in community life and apostolate?*
- *How do you perceive the world around you? What encourages your life and mission today?*
- *What hinders you or what scares you, given the context of outside reality?*
- *What are the challenges you face in community life? Try to suggest ways in which you can foster a greater sense of belongingness.*
- *What are the difficulties you face in the community in carrying out an apostolate or project? What are your suggestions for not falling into individualism and not getting absorbed by personal inhibitions?*
- *Describe what improvements and developments you have noticed in your personal and community life in the past six years.*

PART II: CONVERSION

Word of God: *“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures” (Lk 24:32).*

Blessed Mother Foundress: *“I can do all things in Him who comforts me” (Cf. Philip. 4:13) This we must say to ourselves to revive our confidence and hope in God’s grace in reference not only to our own person, our vocation but also in regard to our Institute (Cf. Conf. March 27.1904).*

Reflection: In response to the disciples’ needs, Jesus nourishes them first with his Word and then with the Bread of the Eucharist. In our daily encounter with the Lord, with his Word and in the Eucharist, we too will find strength to face the challenges that beset us. In this regard, we recall the words of Pope Benedict XVI: *“In our prayers, we must always remain open to hope and steadfast in our faith in God. Our history, though often marked by pain, uncertainty, and moments of crisis, tells a story of salvation and the restoration of fortunes. In Jesus, all our exiles end, and every tear is wiped away in the mystery of His Cross - death transformed into life, like the grain of wheat that breaks in the earth and becomes an ear of corn. For us, the discovery of Jesus Christ is the great joy of God’s affirmation and the restoration of our lives”* (Benedict XVI, General Audience, Wednesday, 12 October 2011). Pope Francis encourages us to recognize that *“Those who take up God’s Book will not encounter easy heroism, fierce campaigns of conquest. True hope never comes cheaply. It always undergoes defeat”*. (Pope Francis, General Audience, Wednesday, May 24, 2017).

- *After the encounter with the Risen Christ, how do we turn problems into opportunities?*
- *The hearts of the disciples on the way to Emmaus are rekindled only when they realize that even in the darkest and most desperate moments, the power of the Gospel breaks through. They come to understand that they are not alone, even when they are going in the wrong direction and all seems hopelessly lost. This realization prompts them to retrace their steps and go out to proclaim the good news. In life, when we face disappointments and sadness-both in our community life and in our apostolic work, how do we react? Do we let the Risen Lord walk with us in the darkness of trials?*

(We suggest that you refer Chapters X-XIII of our Constitutions for this section).

1. Vocation Animation

- *How can we create an atmosphere for religious vocations in which the idea of discerning a religious vocation is seen as a normal and valuable aspect of life?*
- *Should we consider promoting late vocations?*
- *How can we create an inclusive and welcoming environment for vocations in our communities?*
- *What other steps could we take to nurture vocations within our congregation?*

2. Initial Formation

- *How do we accompany young sisters in their discernment process during times of uncertainty and struggle?*
- *How does current formation practice address the challenges of a contemporary, multicultural, technology-driven society?*
- *What forms of formation do we take to transmit the charism and apostolate to new generations who come from a different geographical, political, and sociocultural context?*

3. Ongoing Formation

- *Are we women of prayer and are our communities such? How can we be consistent in remaining deeply rooted in our spiritual life? (Art. 9,1).*
- *Suggest some themes to be dealt with during our ongoing formation programmes?*
- *How to set up ongoing formation so that it enriches our identity and apostolate?*

PART III: MISSION

Word of God: *“They departed without delay and returned to Jerusalem” (Lk 24:33).*

Blessed Mother Foundress: *Oh, if we ourselves were convinced of our activity and were warmly enthusiastic about it! I have observed often enough in my lectures that only our own enthusiasm and conviction can attract. Where these are lacking, even the greatest persuasive speech remains without effect (Letter to the Promoters 1909, p. 40-41).*

Reflection: As soon as the disciples recognized Christ, they did not wait for daylight. They set out immediately to proclaim and witness this personal encounter with the Risen Lord. All our mission and activities stem from our encounter with the living Saviour. We draw from this source to sustain the evangelising mission in the universal Church and nurture the missionary spirit in the People of God with all possible means. In this regard Pope Francis states, *“Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour!”* (Evangelii Gaudium, n. 109).

The Pope while addressing the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS), said that *Those who allow themselves to be attracted by Christ’s love by becoming His disciples also feel the desire to bring to everyone the mercy and compassion that flow from His Heart. The vocation of the PMS is to be instruments for promoting responsibility for the missions on the part of all the baptized and for the support of new particular Churches. The Societies, therefore, are not a mere agency for the distribution of funds for those in need of help, but a reality called to support the mission of evangelization in the Church, both universal and local and to fostering the missionary spirit among the People of God. I urge you, therefore, to intensify even more, with the boldness and creativity of the Holy Spirit, the various activities directed to guiding, educating and forming the missionary spirit. I invite you to promote the missionary responsibility of the baptized (...). Please do not reduce the Societies to money! They certainly need money, which is a means, but do not reduce them to that, for they are bigger than money. I wish you always to burn with apostolic zeal and to be animated by a passion for evangelization. Bear the Gospel with joy, that it may spread throughout the world, and may Our Lady accompany you as a Mother! (Cfr. Pope Francis to the Pontifical Mission Societies, 2023).*

(This speech seems to be written just for us, let us try to re-read it by replacing PMS with SSPC and we have a definition of our apostolate).

(We suggest that you refer Chapters I-III of our Constitutions for this section).

- *“We are not a society only for collecting money” (Blessed Mary Teresa Ledóchowska). Are we aware of this, or do we measure animation by how much money we receive?*
- *How can we concretely live out our charism and apostolate in the country we are in? What new ways can we try? How do we transmit the fire for mission to others?*
- *In his Message for World Mission Sunday 2023, Pope Francis stressed the urgency of missionary action within the universal Church. He pointed out that this requires “an ever-closer missionary cooperation of all its members at every level.” How do we involve the laity in our apostolate to make them an integral part of our mission?*
- *What possibilities are there at grass root level of collaboration with our communities and other organizations (e.g., Pontifical Mission Societies)?*
- *How to develop digital missionary animation? What strategies and steps should we take to achieve this?*
- *“To do missionary animation, it is essential that we ourselves burn with love for missions” (Fidelity to the Charism, Document of the XII General Chapter, SSPC, 1989). How to do missionary animation within our communities?*
- *What difficulties prevent us from doing missionary animation in the country we are in and what ways do we need to adapt to overcome these challenges?*
- *If the Holy Spirit is the essence of our apostolate, why do we sometimes hesitate to let go of our plans? Why are we reluctant to embrace new opportunities that could lead to more positive results for our mission and God’s glory? In what ways can we overcome our limitations to reach out to others? Are we always willing and eager to engage, to put our talents and gifts at the service of our apostolate and the common good of the community?*
- *To echo the voice of the Synod, how do we foster the mutual trust necessary to walk together and exercise our responsibility, taking on the burden and joy of our apostolate?*
- *Synodality is in itself missionary, and vice versa, mission is always synodal. What does the phrase “mission is always synodal” mean for us and how do we put it into practice?*
- *How can we restore warmth to our cold hearts? How do we restart our weary feet driven only by the desire for security? How do we rekindle enthusiasm for our daily activities?*

Other

- *What are the important issues you would like to bring to the attention of the General Chapter?*

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

The **Word of God** and the **Constitutions** accompany the whole journey of reflection on the Chapter theme.

We also suggest referring to the following documents of the Church and of our Institute.

Documents of the Church

POPE FRANCIS, “Spes non confundit”, “Hope does not disappoint”, Bull of indiction of the ordinary jubilee of the year 2025.

-----, Apostolic Letter to all consecrated persons on the occasion of the year of consecrated life, 2014.

-----, Apostolic Exhortation “Evangelii Gaudium” on the Proclamation of the Gospel in the present world, 2013.

JOHN PAUL II, “Vita Consecrata”, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 1996.

-----, “Redemptoris Missio”, Encyclical, 1990.

CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, “New wine in New Wineskins”, Consecrated life and its ongoing challenges since Vatican II, 2017.

-----, Letter “Proclaim”, 2016.

-----, Three letters for the religious: “Rejoice”, “Watch”, “Contemplate”, 2015.

-----, The service of authority and obedience, 2008.

-----, Starting afresh from Christ, 2002.

-----, Fraternal life in community, 1994.

Documents of the Institute

- Writings of our Mother Foundress: Ascetic and Missionary Conference and Conference on the Sodality.
- Final Document of the Online International Online Meetings of the Local Superiors, 2020.
- Final Document of the International Congress 2024.

These are also significant for the chapter theme:

POPE FRANCIS, Cycle of Catechesis on Vices and Virtues - Hope, 8 May 2024.

-----, Message for World Mission Day 2023 - “Hearts on fire, feet on the move (cf. Lk 24:13-35)”, 6 January 2023.

-----, To the Participants in the General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies, 3 June 2023.

-----, Christian Hope - Emmaus, the path to Hope, 24 May 2017.