

Provincial Meeting, November 26, 2011
Translation of Text of Jacqueline Boudreau
Opening Words

As we look back at the 2011 General Chapter session in July, we might ask ourselves what on earth the participants experienced that resulted in Chapter Acts expressed as a tale, a story, a legend, using symbols of fire, water and a bird.

We arrived in Cornwall with three themes which reflected the thoughts and the hopes of the whole congregation. We remembered that we had been “in Chapter” since 2009 and that our discussions had allowed us to identify the concerns of our province, our congregation, the Church and the world in which we live out our daily lives.

In one of her writings, Sister Mary Ellen Holohan said, “This Chapter had some unique characteristics. It was opened in 2009, and all Sisters and Associates were invited to be active participants in shaping the agenda. Thanks to the call of the 2006 Chapter for more representation of younger Sisters, we had broader participation from the global South.”

Coming from Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, the United States, Africa, Brazil, and Peru, each one brought the colour of her own challenges and the richness of her own spiritual, religious and apostolic commitments. Our round-table sharing and discussions were intergenerational, intercultural and international. We were already feeling, in the light of our diverse lived experiences, the importance of our bonds, of our solidarity, and of our interdependence both within the congregation and also in this world where everything is so interconnected.

Life develops throughout a General Chapter; the living dynamism of the assembly can lead to places we never expected. A thread begins to weave its way among the participants, similar insights converge, and ideas intersect projecting us into the future and opening up new paths. A Chapter is not just the summing up of all the previous statements. Something new happens. A General Chapter has a life of its own. It is an unpredictable experience with the Spirit leading us into the unknown.

It is difficult to relay an experience in which there is an intermingling of the dynamic of relationships between people and the content of Acts reflecting the orientations to be promoted for the next five years. However, we are convinced that you have shared the responsibility for this Chapter throughout its course and that you will continue to share that responsibility for its successful outcome. Throughout the whole process you have sent the Holy Spirit to lead us all along a new and destabilizing path, one open to a horizon not yet known.

To convey our Chapter experience, we had to find a way to express it that was relevant. What better way than a **story** to recount such a journey? Every culture has its own stories, its own tales, and, ever since human beings have sought to communicate their search for meaning, **stories** have been the oldest literary style used to describe the indescribable. "Stories," says Jacques Salomé in *Contes d'errance, contes d'espérance*, "take us outside of time. They seem to have no beginning and go far beyond the limitations which bind a life. Stories bring us into closer contact with our questions." For Jean-Pierre Denis, a movie director, "Stories are a way of getting people in touch with reality and leading them, little by little, to another dimension, a dimension in which people speak to one another differently, a dimension where events become signs." In your opinion, does this not bear a resemblance to a Gospel parable?

It is these signs that will call us, awaken us and in a way force us to listen to what is inexpressible within each of our stories. Today, we invite you to live this Chapter experience in which we are called to continue the story, to give it life and a new meaning, and to make it our own so as to expand it to the very horizons of our imagination. Again I borrow from Sister Mary Ellen Holohan's words: "It is a call to move beyond our comfort zones, to seek opportunities to join intergenerational, intercultural and international ventures, to risk with others and at the same time to be transformed within."

Together, let us enter into this adventure under the guidance of the Spirit, Breath of Life. Let us take a few moments for reflection.

Spirit of Newness

Come to awaken us, Spirit of Newness, God who makes all things supple and life-giving. Grant us the gift of adaptability.

For the walls of ancient borders, which can hinder us from changing, are high.

And yet, how can an eternal covenant be kept fresh and dynamic, unless we infuse it with newness, audacity and creativity?

Come, you who are always new, flood our hearts with new freedom and give us the courage to be transformed by your Spirit.

Come, God of endless creativity, and teach us to rejoice with great joy when an innovative story crosses our path.



Our Commitment



Challenged by the calls to interdependence woven through our Constitutions and the work of previous General Chapters, and convinced that the needs of our day call us to prophetic action, we choose to live our charism in a more tangible spirit of interdependence.

Interdependence for the common good requires us to collaborate with those who are working to eliminate all forms of oppression, act for a just world and foster fullness of life.



We claim our identity as an international congregation within the global community and hold as a common ministry our corporate stands in response to evolving situations.



In order to live our interdependence more deeply, we believe it is necessary to exercise more inclusive, participative leadership and decision-making.



As individuals we are called to a spirituality of presence to the other. This requires a willingness to be “stranger”, that is, to choose opportunities and experiences that stretch us beyond the familiar and the comfortable.

(Excerpts from the *Acts of the 33rd General Chapter*, July 2011)

<p>READING OF THE FABLE AND THE ACTS OF THE 33rd GENERAL CHAPTER</p>
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Readers: Liliane Chartier, Beverly Redmond, Lise Bluteau

Liliane: A long time ago, there was a great fire in the forests that covered the Earth. People and animals started to run, trying to escape the fire.

Beverly: A long time ago...

Lise:

We are mindful of the many issues that weigh heavily on our societies, including tensions over immigration and the influx of refugees, and the global crises of finance, food and climate change that have exacerbated the gap between the rich and the poor. (Acts, p. 6, 4th par.)

The owl, Tecototl, was running away but noticed a small bird hurrying back and forth between the nearest river and the fire.

A small bird hurrying back and forth...

We hear a new call to partner with immigrants, refugees, and indigenous peoples to resist racism, advocate for human rights, and create welcoming communities. (Acts, p. 8, 3^d par.)

Owl headed toward this small bird and noticed that it was the quetzal bird, running to the river, picking up small drops of water in its beak, then returning to the fire to throw that tiny bit of water on the flame.

To throw that tiny bit of water on the flame...

We have contributed to greater awareness of trafficking of persons, of the rights of all to water, and of our ecological responsibilities. (Acts, p. 5, last par.)

Owl approached quetzal bird and yelled, "What are you doing? Are you stupid? You are not going to achieve anything by doing that. You must run for your life."

What are you doing? Are you stupid ?...

Quetzal bird stopped for a moment, and then looked at the owl and answered, "I am doing the best I can with what I have."

"I am doing the best I can with what I have"...

We have been part of the commitment and creativity of many in our world who stand for justice and demand their rights as human beings created in the image of God. (Acts, p. 6, 1st par.)

At that, Owl went to the river and took up water into its beak. Others followed.

Others followed...

Persons in association with our congregational charism have brought great vitality. (Acts, p. 6, 2nd par.)

It is remembered by our grandparents that a long time ago the forests that covered our Earth were saved from a great fire by a small quetzal bird, by Owl, and by many other animals and people who got together to put out the flame.

It is remembered ...

Previous General Chapters have invited us, personally and communally, to 'widen our tents' and to commit to a liberating action that contributes to the full development of the person. Our responses to these mandates, like the drops of water that quell the great fire in the forest, have been promising. (Acts, p.5, 4th par.)

*Yet, we are mindful of the many issues that **presently** weigh heavily on our societies... (Acts, p.6, 3^d par.)*