

International Retreat

Reflection on our Mission Charism and its intrinsic connection to Mission in the World Today

To assist in responding to the mandate of the 2006 General Chapter, the Generalate Team invited a representative group of sisters from across the Institute to participate in a communal discernment retreat designed to lead the group in an in-depth reflection on our MFIC charism and its intrinsic connection to mission in the world today.

It was planned that the retreat would be followed by a workshop to focus on helping the participants to find concrete ways of sharing the fruits of this experience with the rest of the Institute.

The retreat/workshop experience took place at Le Centre Sophie Barat in the town of Joigny which is an hour's train ride from Paris. The choice of time and venue was made to avail participants of the skilful direction of Sr. Chantal De Jonghem rscj whose presence at our recent General Chapter added a very valuable dimension. Sister Chantal began the communal charism retreat with the words,

“God leads a group as he leads an individual. This retreat is a process which can only be entered into through a wholehearted response to an invitation. Each one's level of participation affects the quality of the retreat.”



In addition to the four members of the General Leadership Circle, there was accommodation for twenty sisters from across the Institute. Sisters from Australia, Canada, Latin America, Papua New Guinea and the United States accepted an invitation to be part of this experience with the members of the Generalate Team.

Some sisters were curious about the criteria for inviting individuals to participate in this retreat. The criteria used were for the choice of the totality of the group more than for individuals. Such a communal retreat requires a balanced group with all the variations of the whole. Thus there were some younger members, some older, some with international experience and some without, a multicultural and multilingual group, a variety of ministry experiences, in all a microcosm of the whole. It may have been possible to have arrived at a different group, but this is the group which surfaced through our communal discernment. From the start, the facilitators were pleased with the level of trust which enabled the group to work so well together.

For each participant Joigny was a graced time. There were lengthy periods of prayer followed by small group sharing. We spoke of our name of grace and our personal and communal shadows. A beautiful para-liturgical prayer of mercy conducted by the team was a wonderful corporate celebration and on May 6th we recommitted ourselves through renewal of vows. This was the first occasion for a community vow renewal on the feast of our Foundress as well as the first time to include her name in the vow formula.