

**The 36th General Chapter
Brothers of the Sacred Heart
From an American, first-timer's perspective
(continued...)**



Monday, May 7, 2018 (continued)



With all the excitement about preparing for election of our next Superior General, I forgot to mention the actions of our current Superior General who addressed us yesterday. Brother Jose Ignacio Carmona Ollo spent an entire morning session on Monday sharing with us his report on the state of the Institute. He was quite eloquent as he described the strengths and challenges facing us, a multi-national, multicultural, multi-generational, and multi-ethnic organization. His humility touched the entire Chapter as he described what he has learned and experienced as he has traveled the length and breadth of the Institute and spoken with every Brother of the Sacred Heart in the world. I was deeply moved, and I know I wasn't the only one. He received a standing ovation from the delegates. In typical fashion, he also stood and tried to get everyone else to sit down.



I also failed to mention that first thing yesterday afternoon Brother German Cuervo Herrera, provincial, and Brother Alfredo Julio Salgar, provincial counselor, addressed the Chapter on our mission in Colombia, South America. In short, they mentioned that we have 45 brothers in Colombia, 35 perpetually professed and 10 temporary professed. We also



**COLEGIO
CORAZONISTA**

have one novice and one aspirant. These brothers live in nine communities that are situated close to the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and in the center of the country. Their mascot, pictured here, is known as "Corachin," an animated version of our escutcheon. The



Brothers gave out stickers and post it notes with this character to each of the delegates. Their Columbian candy was also a hit!

Both presentations were quite powerful.

Tuesday, May 8, 2018

The Chapter turned its attention to a new topic today, “Appropriate Initial and Ongoing Formation.” Brother Charles Biagui, General Councilor, led us through the day.



To introduce the topic, Chapter members were given about an hour of reflection with the documents of Vatican II which pertained to religious life, namely excerpts from Vita Consecrata, and a second document from the Congregation of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL), entitled “Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium (2002). We were also reminded of the input from the various language assemblies containing the synthesis statements and describing the process. Breaking down into work groups after our period of reflection, we were to cull from the materials a main challenge affecting the Institute regarding Initial and Ongoing Formation. Brother Martin Chivige, delegate from Eastern and Southern Africa, led our workgroup today and Brother Mark Hilton served as secretary.

Our group came prepared and we jumped right in. Our challenge was to limit the number of challenges we identified from our printed materials. Mark did an excellent job reporting our consensus to the entire Chapter and a large group conversation brought us to lunch and siesta time.

We resumed our working sessions in “Plenary Committee (i.e. “Informal Session” of the entire body) at 3:30 PM, and Brother Charles prepared us to return to workgroups, this time with specific tasks associated with various aspects of the proposal.



I continue to be amazed at the richness of cultures and personalities around the room. While we all profess the same vows in the same Institute – all committed to carrying out Father Coindre’s mission – we each have quite different realities and have different appreciations for words and concepts. It takes quite a while to get on the same page. Words are important, and it takes time to choose the right ones – in three languages, no less! While our team – and I do mean team -- of translators, armed with dictionaries and thesauruses, are extremely efficient and effective, translations do matter. Getting a person who may be sitting next to you to understand not merely your words, but what you’re trying to say, can slow the speed at which things are done. Patience is often the order of the day. The spirit in the group is tremendous and the respect for each brother’s individual opinion and situation is quite amazing! We are making progress, slowly!

We ended the day still discussing major concepts on individual challenges found in Initial and Ongoing Formation, and we will resume our conversation on Thursday. Tomorrow we have elections for the Superior General and First and Second Councilors. You can sense the excitement in the house!

To take a break from reading and reflection, a number of people have taken up different past times. Some Brothers go out for walks in the evenings. After dishes, however, it’s almost 8:30 PM and the weather hasn’t been too cooperative. But, I continue to repeat the age-old adage: “It’s always time for gelato!” It doesn’t take too much arm twisting, AND it involves a good walk several blocks away. So, actually, it’s a form of exercise. You know how health conscious I am!

Many make a mad dash for the washing machine on the fourth floor, while others are either hanging up their clothes on the roof or taking them down – hopefully dry – in the evening.

Finally, after the news on TV, some Brothers turn on a good soccer game and others have put the hand to making puzzles. Below is just a sampling of the successes thus far.

