

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



Tuesday, May 15, 2018

Given our topic for the week, “A Meaningful Presence to the Young,” Brother Chris Sweeney, prayer leader for the day, invited the English-speaking members of the Chapter to reflect on young people in need who have touched their lives in a significant way either recently or over the years. Several brothers shared their experiences with these youth in the context of our morning prayer. This simple, but profound sharing took almost all of our prayer time this morning. We lifted all of them to the Lord by singing a simple Taizé chant. Immediately afterwards, we prayed the Lord’s Prayer for all young people whose need has touched our heart and the heart of the Institute.

Our Spanish brothers did another terrific job preparing the Eucharistic celebration. The singing, especially a closing song to Mary, was quite harmonious and beautiful.

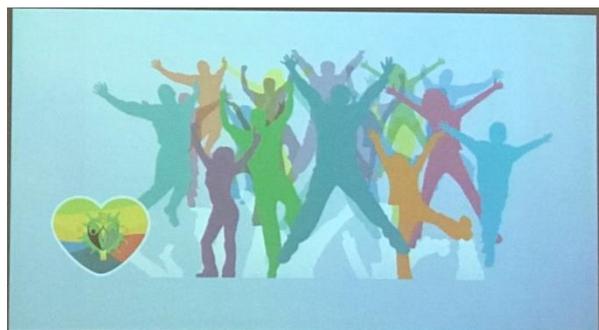
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Brother Denis Plourde Caron, the General Councilor who recently and generously accepted election to a third term, had the delegates jump into the third theme of the Chapter, “A Meaningful Presence to Young People.” Denis began by asking the assembly three somewhat rhetorical questions:

1. What can we say about the reality of our relationships with the Lord and with young people? How dynamic are these relationships (Rule 158)?
2. How do we balance our apostolic and our communal/religious responsibilities (Rule 159)?
3. Do we truly have a team spirit in our approach towards the apostolate and in our presence to young people (Rule 49)?

He went on to explain what the General Council witnessed in their visits around the Institute. Rather than dwelling on the challenges, he focused our attention on young people and our call to reach out to them. To be successful in our outreach, however, he invited us to explore the culture of young people and our experience with them.



First, he shared with us that the culture of young people is quite E.P.I.C.:

E – experiential. He shared how young people desire to have emotional experiences, especially to participate in social events that help them discover and explore what they like and don't like; to see how they are accepted or not; to find in their experiences opportunities to see who they are in comparison to and in relationship with others.

P – participation. They want to participate and get involved in things, but only in what's most appealing and seemingly fulfilling, interactive; where they can get involved.

I – image. They want to express themselves through images which are more expressive and all-encompassing, not words. They'd rather flip through pages of emojis and images to find one that expresses themselves, rather than a dictionary of words. Drawings, images, etc., have no barriers or limits to what they may express; words do.

C – connected. They want to stay connected to family, not necessarily blood family, e.g. Instagram, Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc. Here everything is allowed, accepted, especially within the group, circle of "friends," etc.

He made lots of sense.



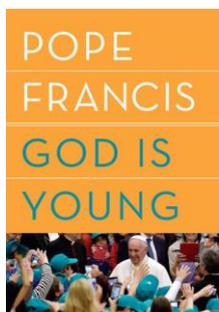
in his recent book, "God is Young," religious to make room in our lives for an with young people. In traveling the Denis shared with us that we must take to challenge, too, especially as an Institute the young. Might there be room for them spiritual lives, too?

He brought forward a Peruvian "Rain Stick" or "Palo de Lluvia," i.e. a hollow stick filled with some objects that when turned upside down, the sound of the moving objects resembles that of rushing water. It was quite pleasant, soothing. Water is also precious, sacred, and its movement is also melodious. As we heard the sound of moving water in the Rain Stick, we were invited to reflect on our relationship with young people. Do they find a place of contentment, consolation, and healing in their encounters with us? How do we challenge ourselves and all who partner with us in Coindre's mission to such an evangelizing

Brother Denis then invited the delegates to reflect on which word each of us would use to define the culture of young people. In addition to sharing the word with the assembly, we were each to write the first letter of the word on a baton on a central table. There were to be no explanations. Only one word. Once everyone had an opportunity to come forward and speak, we were asked to explain our word choice.



Pope Francis, challenges encounter Institute, heart this dedicated to in our



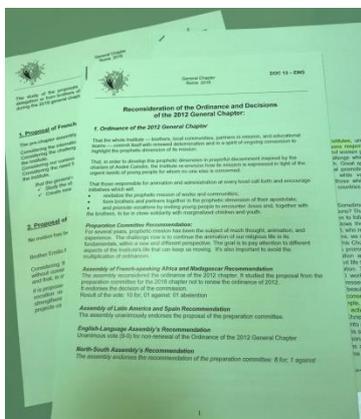
presence among the young?

Denis then divided us into working language groups to review the results of the other Pre-Chapter Assemblies and to review our assembly's work. We had to choose one challenge from each group to affirm, and then decide to either endorse one or the other or somehow re-write the concepts found in each into one challenge for the entire Institute over the next six years. Our group dug into this assignment with much passion and energy.

We broke for lunch after our assignment was completed. Brother Eduardo Escuril, a brother serving as a delegate from the Philippines, led us through this discussion, served as secretary, and gave our group's report.

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The afternoon sessions saw us considering several different pieces of legislation. It was a nice change of pace from conversations and reflections on more global matters.



First, we revisited three pieces of legislation from the 2012 General Chapter to vote on whether to keep them in force for the next six years (2018-2024).

[Much of this type of work became clearer to me yesterday afternoon. As I now see it, delegates to a General Chapter are elected to set direction for the Institute for the next six years – not beyond that. Any legislation that was previously passed, no matter how great it was, must be renewed every six years if it is to be continually implemented or if we want it to be a major driving force in the Institute over the upcoming mandate. The only way around this is to place the concept in the Rule of Life.

This last approach, of course, is much more difficult.]

All three of these items passed the Chapter with no substantive changes.

Next, a proposal that had been discussed for quite some time made it back to the floor of the assembly. Conversations were getting quite lively until our new Superior General intervened after a break to clarify some misconceptions. Once everyone understood the intent of the proposal and how the new General Council felt this new legislation would help in their ministry to us, it passed quite easily.

The last motion of the day was a proposal put forth by the Anglophones that had not been debated very long in Pre-Chapter Assembly but which made great financial sense from our perspective. We unanimously recommended our proposal to the General Chapter. Again, I have learned much in these short two and one-half weeks. We do things differently and what makes perfect sense and would be considered standard operating procedure in most of our institutions and businesses was obviously coming across differently after passing through translators. Some Chapter members didn't understand some concepts that we, Americans, take for granted. But, the same could be said for some of their proposals, too!



I am happy to say that we were able to come to a meeting of the minds, and our proposal ultimately passed with flying colors. We do come from varied cultures, and “our” solid practices – found in each culture – are different. Fortunately, we have each worked hard to explain ourselves to each other; and our Institute will be the better for it.

A very busy late afternoon and evening followed an already full day. No gelato this evening, but it was still a day filled with some awesome experiences!