MANY TONGUES, ONE HEART AND MIND

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Rewriting Constitutions in an International Missionary Congregation of Women

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Nijmegen Institute for Mission Studies
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Foreword

Maureen McBride's Legacy and the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions

Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions across the world were shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden death of Maureen McBride on 26 November 2016 in France, not far from St Rambert-en-Bugey. Maureen was born in Nelson, New Zealand, on 8 November 1953, and made her first profession as an RNDM in December 1974. After her first profession Maureen initially studied for two years in Auckland where she graduated MA in French and German after which she began teaching at Sacred Heart College in Lower Hutt. Not only was Maureen a committed, talented and enthusiastic teacher, she also embraced the Church's call to be in solidarity with those struggling against injustice, whether they were living in New Zealand, South Africa or Vanuatu.

In 1986 Maureen began graduate studies at the Maryknoll Institute in New York where she completed a Masters in Social Theology, and on returning to New Zealand taught at the Catholic Institute of Theology which was the accredited provider of theology degrees for the Melbourne College of Divinity and The University of Auckland. However, her exposure to the reality of Colombia and Senegal where she had spent time during and after her studies at Maryknoll awakened in her a desire to work in an international mission. In 1992 she was named for the Philippines where she began teaching in Notre Dame University at Cotabato in Mindanao, before being appointed novice director. Her leadership qualities were soon recognised when she was named regional leader in the Philippines but her days in that region of the Congregation were not to last too long as in 2002, she was elected Congregation Leader and was re-elected in 2008.

During Maureen's time as Congregation Leader, much was achieved by the Congregation Leadership Team. This study is particularly concerned with the willingness of the 2008-2014 team to respond positively to the decision of the 2008 General Chapter to ensure that new Constitutions were written. Of course, Maureen was not solely responsible for this massive task but she ensured that the re-writing process involved all sisters no matter whether they were living and working in Peru or New Zealand.

The conclusion of her ministry as Congregation Leader did not spell the end of Maureen's passionate interest and enthusiasm for RNDM life. Maureen was fascinated by how congregational life was evolving given the changing demographics of the Congregation. No longer were the five 'old, western' provinces – France, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Ireland, Australia and Canada – numerically strong. Numbers had dropped significantly since Vatican II (1962-1965). For example, on the eve of Vatican II, there were almost three hundred sisters in New Zealand, and today there are around eighty. The reverse situation was

occurring in Asian provinces of the congregation where today 67% of RNDMs live and work. For Maureen the rapidly changing cultural and ethnic diversity of the Congregation was something that needed researching and analysing.

It was agreed that Maureen should devote more time to a study of the implication of changing congregational demographic and geographical realities at the Nijmegen Institute for Mission Studies, at Radboud University, in the Netherlands. Her study would involve her analysis and critique of the considerable documentation that the committee charged with rewriting the Constitutions had received from RNDMs throughout the world.

Maureen began her research with great enthusiasm and after a year her supervisor, recognizing the quality of her research, suggested that the work she was doing become the foundation for a PhD. The Congregation Leadership Team agreed to this and at the time of her death, Maureen was working on an early draft, and had indicated that she hoped to return to Nijmegen before too long to do further research and writing.

PhD research and writing are expected to explore areas that have not previously been the focus of sustained academic research. Doctoral students are not overly concerned with the 'big' picture. Rather they want to explore and examine more carefully particular concerns or interests. For example, Maureen, as we shall see later, spends some time looking at the different names RNDMs have used when speaking of their foundress Euphrasie Barbier (1829-1893). Names used include Very Reverend Mother Superior General, Our Venerated Mother Foundress, or Euphrasie Barbier. "What" asked Maureen, "lies behind the choices Sisters make in speaking of their foundress? What does it say about their understanding of community life? What does it say about the theologies in which such names are grounded?" Maureen's research indicated that she should concentrate on those areas which had emerged as really important for the sisters.

After Maureen's death, the Congregation Leadership Team recognising the importance of Maureen's work, decided to ensure that her research, even in its somewhat unfinished state, should eventually be made available to the wider congregation, and indeed to other congregations also engaged in the arduous task of rewriting their constitutions.

Susan Smith of the New Zealand Samoa province undertook to ensure that Maureen's research about the changing demographic and multi-cultural nature of the congregation be made accessible for RNDMs worldwide. In this work she was helped by Pauline Leonard, who was on the Congregation Leadership Team from 2008-2014 when Maureen was Congregation Leader. Pauline's time in international leadership meant she had a good grasp of how the 2014 Constitutions came to birth.

Dr Frans Wijsen, Professor of Mission Studies, Head of the Institute for Mission Studies, and Dean of the Faculty of Theology at Radboud University in the Netherlands, where Maureen had been researching, then asked about the possible publication of Maureen's research. In his communication, Dr Wijsen raised several points. First, Maureen's research was still at preliminary stage which did not alter its value or significance for both RNDMs and other religious congregations involved in the process of rewriting their constitutions. However, his second point was that this same preliminary character meant that considerable editing, redacting, and inclusion of new material would be required if Maureen's research were to be readied for publication for a wider audience. In particular, Maureen had provided virtually nothing in the way of a conclusion. Third, a more detailed account of the methodologies Maureen was using would be required. Fourth, there also needed to be more information regarding the context in which the 2014 Constitutions came to birth.

Dr Wijsen then suggested that rather than a posthumous publication of Maureen's research, and taking into account the points raised above, that Susan Smith be invited to assume responsibility for a publication in which Maureen's research would be foundational. This would honour Maureen's contribution to the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions. Such a publication would be a fine tribute to all that Maureen has meant for so many RNDMs, for other religious congregations, and for the wider church.

I am very grateful to Susan Smith who has undertaken the task of bringing Maureen's research to the point of publication. The congregation appreciates the work that Susan Smith has done to complete this task and the support and advice of RNDMs and academic colleagues who have assisted her in various ways. A publication requires the input and expertise of many people and I sincerely thank each one of you who has enabled Maureen's research to become a published work. May all those who read this work find insights which continue to deepen an understanding of religious missionary life as it is lived today in an increasingly inter-cultural and rapidly changing world.

Josephine Kane RNDM
Congregation Leader

Maureen McBride, RNDM Congregation Leader, 2002-2014

List of Abbreviations

AMOR	Asia-Oceania Meeting of Religious
APM	Archivio Padri Maristi
AG	*Ad Gentes*
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CICLSAL	Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
CLT	Congregation Leadership Team
DP	Discursive Practice
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGC	Enlarged General Council
ELF	English as *Lingua Franca*
EN	*Evangelii Nuntiandi*
ES	*Ecclesiae Sanctae*
ESL	English as Second Language
ET	*Evangelica Testificatio*
GS	*Gaudium et Spes*
LG	*Lumen Gentium*
PC	*Perfectae Caritatis*
PLT	Province Leadership Team
RLT	Region Leadership Team
RNDM	Religieuses de Notre Dame des Missions
SEDOS	Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission
SP	Social Practice
SSS	Solidarity with South Sudan
UISG	International Union of Superiors General

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Introduction

The charism, mission, guiding principles and common law of a religious congregation are outlined in its constitutions. The writing of a congregation's first constitutions was one of the primary tasks undertaken by nineteenth century founders of religious congregations, as they sought to capture their particular understanding of what religious life required of their young congregations. Given the dominance of neo-scholastic theology at that time, founders probably did not envisage their constitutions being changed – after all God was unchanging, the church was unchanging.

After 1945, political and socio-economic developments, notably the collapse of the British, French, Dutch and other European empires and the birth of new nation states, the glaring economic divisions both within and between countries, and a growing awareness of racism and sexism pointed to the need for change in the way society and church organized themselves. Vatican II mandated the Church, and by extension, religious life to embrace change. In the decade following Vatican II (1962-1965), religious congregations were challenged to return to their sources, the gospels and their founder's charism, and to renew their constitutions and adapt their customs and traditions in the light of conciliar teachings. Most embraced this challenge with enthusiasm. For many congregations the work of revision lasted for fifteen to twenty years, and most religious women and men expected that such work would not need to be redone for many years to come. However, in the fifty years since Vatican II, many congregations have experienced a paradigm shift that was not anticipated in their first post-Vatican II constitutions. Not only has the life-style of religious congregations changed dramatically and mission priorities been adapted to respond to emerging needs, but membership has also undergone cultural, geographical and generational shifts bringing with it a greater consciousness of diversity. Members, leaders and formators encounter new and unexpected challenges for which they often find little practical guidance in their constitutions.

As congregations in the west face diminishment, new structures were to emerge in response to these changing circumstances. For example, some congregations sharing the same founder or a similar spirit have merged; others have 'disappeared' and given birth to a new institute with another group of religious. In particular, international congregations with an increase in members in Africa, Asia and Latin America, have experienced significant demographic shifts, and their corollaries, ethnic and cultural shifts. In each of these situations, constitutions need to be reworked to meet the changed circumstances of the congregation. These changing circumstances include how to support members in aging provinces when there is no longer viable leadership within the province; how to offer a single candidate a holistic formation; how to address the excessive use of social media that takes a sister from relating to the members of her community or from being effective in ministry.

The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions and the rewriting of constitutions

With the exception of the Philippines and Taiwan, the Congregation's five Asian provinces, Bangladesh, India North-east, India Central, India South, Myanmar and Vietnam, were all established prior to Vatican II.[1] In these provinces, there have been significant changes: changing political realities since independence mean there are no foreign sisters working long-term in the three Indian provinces, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Vietnam; this diminishment has been more than compensated for by the significant numbers of young women in such countries embracing religious life, and who increasingly are the face of the Congregation in its various missions. In post-Vatican II foundations – Kenya, Samoa, Senegal, Latin America and the Philippines – the number of European RNDMs is rapidly diminishing. In these new foundations the numbers of locally-born young women seeking membership in the Congregation is not significant with perhaps the exception of Kenya. Identifying the reasons for this development warrants more serious research. For example, in Senegal and in Papua New Guinea (RNDMs withdrew from the latter country in 2012) local bishops asked RNDMs not to open international novitiates. They were keen for RNDMs to focus their energies on helping establish, or working with diocesan congregations which were under episcopal control.

American historian, Philip Jenkins writes about the growing strength and influence of Christianity in the South[2] but his work understandably pays scant attention to the impact of this development on contemporary Catholic religious life and the rewriting of constitutions. However, his insights and conclusions deserve attention from those engaged in rewriting their particular congregation's constitutions. In a pre-Vatican II church, constitutions were mainly the responsibility of a western-dominated general council. The constitutions they produced tended to be prescriptive, and reliant on Canon Law. Nowadays general councils, international formation teams, as well as general chapters, are much more diverse, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural in composition. An example of a congregation which reflects such diversity is the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions.

In 2008, delegates and *ex officio* members at the General Chapter of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions voted to rewrite the Constitutions that had been approved

[1] Today there are twelve provinces, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, France, India Central, India North-East, India South, Kenya, Myanmar, New Zealand and Samoa, United Kingdom and Ireland, and Vietnam. There are two regions, Philippines and Senegal. Usually the number of sisters living in a particular country determines whether a particular place enjoys provincial or regional status. Italy is home to the Rome-based Congregational Leadership Team and the Rome support community. These are responsible for the Davao-based RNDM International Formation Centre in the Philippines, for the Sisters working in Taiwan, and for the Sisters missioned to South Sudan to work with the USIG South Sudan Solidarity. Unless otherwise indicated, when there is a reference to Kenya, to France, or to the Philippines, this refers to the Kenyan or French province or the Senegalese region.

[2] See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2002.

by the Holy See in 1979. Responsibility for writing the 1979 Constitutions had been entrusted to Irish-born Anna Canning (Mary Fidelis) who was be directed in this task by Belgian canon lawyer, Father Jean Beyer, SJ, faculty member at the Gregorian University.[3] French-born Marie Bénédicte Ollivier, Superior General 1972-1984, was also involved and undertook to write "a series of articles to be sent at intervals to all the sisters. This she did. Each article helped to rediscover and deepen the charism of Euphrasie Barbier. When the series was complete, there was a cohesion among the articles, suggesting a single volume. Sister Marie Bénédicte combined these commentaries on aspects of RNDM spirituality into a book, *Straight is My Path*".[4]

However, little was done to ensure direct input from the wider congregation into the rewriting of the Constitutions. This partly reflected the euro-centric and more hierarchical nature of the Congregation at the time, but it also pointed to the harsh political realities faced by Asian provinces. The political upheaval that had followed the war of liberation in the newly-created nation state of Bangladesh, military dictatorship in Burma since 1966, and the civil war that was raging in Vietnam until that country's unification under a Communist government in 1975 meant communication with Bangladesh was difficult and virtually impossible with Burma after 1966, and with Vietnam after 1975. Therefore, even if it had been considered desirable, involvement of Sisters from those provinces in rewriting constitutions that reflected the teachings of Vatican II would have been extremely difficult.

However, when General Chapter met in early 2008, the situation was quite different. Although there were still some constraints on the movement and types of ministry which RNDMs could undertake in Myanmar and Vietnam, communication to and from the provinces, and movements of both foreign and local RNDMs in and out of both countries was much easier. This allowed for a much wider engagement of all members of the Congregation in the task of revisiting the 1979 Constitutions.

This present study is concerned with understanding how, or if, the present diverse composition of the Congregation is reflected in the Constitutions that were approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (hereafter CICLSAL)[5] in 2014. If someone were to narrate, analyse and critique its experience of rewriting its Constitutions, could such research offer insights into some of the key issues facing other international missionary congregations today? These issues could include:

1. the diminishing membership in the west, and corresponding growth in Asia, Africa and Latin America;

[3] See Roberta Morrissey, RNDM, "Constitutions with a Difference," (Rome: RNDM Archives), 1-7.
[4] See Marie Bénédicte Ollivier, *Straight Is My Path: Spirituality of Euphrasie Barbier, Foundress of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions*, (Rome: Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, 1978).
[5] CICLSAL is the higher authority to which pontifical right congregations refer. Diocesan congregations have as their higher author their local bishops.

2. the richness and struggles of intercultural communities;
3. the future viability of mission and ministry in western countries;
4. the inculturation of charism and spirituality;
5. relationships with the institutional church;
6. the call to leadership in challenging times.

Chapter One introduces the research design and offers definitions of key concepts related to the study. In particular, it identifies the commonalities and differences characteristic of apostolic religious congregations founded in the last two centuries. Chapter Two presents a brief overview of religious life from apostolic times to the present and includes the evolution of rules and constitutions in religious congregations. The two Congregations of the Holy See, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, both concerned with life and ministry of religious congregations, are introduced and their roles described. This chapter also outlines the emergence and eventual approval in the Church of Institutes of Simple Vows and traces the impact of the Second Vatican Council on religious congregations and the rewriting of their constitutions. Chapter Three offers the story of RNDMs as an example of a congregation that has recently rewritten its Constitutions. An historical overview identifies the challenges its founder, Euphrasie Barbier, experienced in seeking the approbation of the first Constitutions. After Vatican II, Euphrasie's Constitutions were replaced by the 1969 *Interim Constitutions and Directives*, which as the title suggests were never intended to be definitive but simply the first step of a long process whereby apostolic religious took up the Vatican II challenge of *aggiornamento*. The Congregation, following the mandate of Vatican II regarding the renewal of religious life, undertook to write new Constitutions in the early 1970s. It is probably true to say that most RNDMs would have regarded these Constitutions as destined for a long life.

But that did not happen. In the years from 1979 to 2008 dramatic changes have occurred within the Congregation, particularly in relation to the understanding of mission, formation of young religious, community life, and the experience of governance and leadership. Significant demographic shifts in the Congregation influenced the decision taken to rewrite the Constitutions, which were approved on 8 December, 2014, by CICLSAL. Chapter Four sets the scene for the rewriting of the Constitutions by examining the historical contexts in which the Congregation's different Constitutions came to birth, and some of the key players involved in this process. Chapter Five introduces the reader to Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter CDA) and its importance as a research tool for critically examining written reports received from provinces and regions concerning content of new constitutions. It critically analyses terminology that is significant for RNDMs, and through a careful use of intertextuality demonstrates important linguistic developments. Chapter Six examines how texts are produced, distributed and consumed, while Chapter Seven continues that work through its analysis of socio-cognitive processes relating to the

production, distribution and the subsequent reception of the Constitutions throughout the Congregation. In the light of such analysis, Chapter Eight encourages RNDMs to identify the shape of an unfolding future and praxis in the light of its changing demographics. Chapter Nine is focussed on exploring how the RNDM narrative offers insights not only to the Congregation's own members but also to members of other apostolic religious congregations as they move into an uncertain future.

Methodology

The importance of inductive methodologies for understanding rapid changes and developments in most religious congregations today cannot be under-estimated. CDA emerges as an important tool for analysing and critiquing key developments in the RNDM story of writing Constitutions. In particular, the work of English academic, Norman Fairclough is helpful.[6] Fairclough's methodology highlights the need for a critical analysis of the different written responses sent by individual RNDMs, by provinces, and regions to the committee charged with rewriting the Constitutions. What did their language say about the Sisters' relationships to one another, to their leadership teams, to the institutional church, to their founder, Euphrasie Barbier, and what did these different relationships demonstrate about existing power relations and conflicting interests, whether cultural, ethnic or generational in the Congregation?

In particular, Fairclough's insights into what is referred to as "hegemony of language" in the Congregation warrants careful examination. Hegemony is best understood as the authority, dominance or control of one social group over another, and exists in every social construct. Hegemony uses persuasion rather than force to influence and gain the consent of the less dominant group. Therefore, because the Church and religious congregations are social constructs, they too are hegemonic institutions. Fairclough identifies two types of power in discourse. First, "power in discourse" which is present when one or more participant controls the contribution of others. Second, "power behind discourse" which is defined as those processes that standardise language.[7] In 2014, the number of RNDMs for whom English was their first language was diminishing, (it stood at around 27%), while on the other hand, English was the 'official' language at all international gatherings and programmes. This could advantage those for whom English was their first language.

This work can be read as a type of case study. Although it tells the story behind one religious congregation's new constitutions, that story potentially reveals to other congregations, although in an imperfect manner what is involved in such a task. The

[6] See Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 3rd ed., (New York: Routledge, 2015); Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Norman Fairclough, "Introduction," in *Discourse and Contemporary Social Change*, ed. Norman Fairclough, Guiseppina Cortese, and Patrizia Ardizzone, Linguistic Insights (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007); Norman Fairclough, "The Contribution of Discourse Ananlysis to Research on Social Change," in *Discourse and Contemporary Social Change*, ed. Norman Fairclough, Guiseppina Cortese, and Patrizia Ardizzone, Linguistic Insights (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007).
[7] See Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 27.

RNDM story is diachronic in that it provides information on what has happened through time. It is also synchronic in that it details variations across the congregation at a single point in time. The RNDM story is a human story, and so it is a story that identifies the challenges and the weaknesses that emerge in the analysis of the congregational story. Sometimes diversity, whether ethnic, generational or cultural, has been, and will continue to be a source of pain and weakness. However, unity in diversity is also enriching, empowering and enlivening. It is that unity and diversity that the Constitutions urge RNDMs to strive for in their journey into an often uncertain future.

There are many people who have accompanied me as I worked with Maureen's research. Most importantly, I am grateful that Maureen and I had skyped and communicated by email quite regularly about her work prior to her sudden death. I have appreciated the memories of those conversations as I continued her research. I need to thank all those RNDMs living and working Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America, and Oceania, some of whom I have met and others whom I have to come know through reports from the different provinces. I am particularly grateful to province and region leaders and secretaries who responded so promptly to my emails seeking information as to how the process for writing reports operated in their different provinces and regions. Josephine Kane, our Congregation Leader, has always been supportive and encouraging particularly when the going got tough, and so too have CLT members, Lissy Sebastian and Crescencia Sun from India, Lucy Wambui from Kenya, and Thi Bich Quyen Ly from Vietnam. There are a number of RNDMs whose knowledge and wisdom I have appreciated. In particular I would like to thank Margaret McInerney (Kenya) and Shanti D'Rozario (Bangladesh) who served us all so well by actually writing the 2014 Constitutions, Joyce Peters, General Secretary, and Carmel Eberius, Congregation Archivist, Betty Iris Bartush (Canada) whose knowledge of Canon Law far surpasses my very rudimentary knowledge and who was happy to help me out a few times, Marie Bénédicte Ollivier (France) whose knowledge of the 1979 Constitutions and Euphrasie Barbier made her a very helpful source of information indeed, the 2018 St Rambert RNDM Renewal Programme participants who responded so generously to my questions as to how the conversations and writing of reports actually happened in their respective provinces, Jillian Cassidy whose careful proof-reading has served us RNDMs so well, Pauline Leonard who was a CLT member with Maureen and so present at some of the Constitutions meetings that took place between 2009 and 2012. I am most grateful to Professor Cindy Kiro and Tai Tokerau Campus Librarian Cherie Tautolo, of the University of Auckland for their help in enabling me to digitally access resources. Help from Kate Jones and Anne Puttnam with charts and diagrams has been more than generous. Dr Frans Wijsen of Radboud University in the Netherlands, Professor of Mission Studies, Head of the Institute for Mission Studies, and Dean of the Faculty of Theology, has been very supportive and constructive in his advice. Maureen McBride was fortunate that her supervisor at the Institute for Mission Studies, Nijmegen, Radboud University was Dr Frans Dokman, whose

support and expertise Maureen appreciated very much. Finally, I would to like to thank Mary Maitland RNDM with whom I live in Whangarei. I often turned to Mary when I needed to run my ideas past someone, and her generous support was always appreciated and welcome.

Susan Smith RNDM
Whangarei
18 January 2019

Chapter One Why International Religious Missionary Congregations Write New Constitutions

Women and men's religious congregations have always been key players in the missionary activity of the Church. The vowed life permitted an apostolic freedom that was not always there for married people, although that situation is changing quite rapidly in the post-modern era. How religious missionary women were involved in such missionary activity was determined by their constitutions in which founders outlined how their charism was to be understood and lived out in the world in which religious lived and ministered. This chapter is going to outline and critique the reasons that lay behind the decisions of international missionary congregations to rewrite their constitutions after Vatican II.

In this context, the expression "international missionary congregation" needs defining. From the sixteenth century onwards, religious women and men recognised that the monastic model of religious life was not meeting emerging needs characteristic of the modern era. Religious life particularly for men became more apostolically focussed. As European colonial powers extended their empires, mission was about moving beyond one's own country. By the nineteenth century, missionary activity was about a movement from north to south, from west to east. Religious, women and men, were for the most part, European or of European ancestry if they were born in North America, Australia or New Zealand.

That is not the case today. In their concern about working for a better world and proclaiming the good news, international religious missionary congregations are challenged by cultural and theological diversity not only in their ministry situations, but also within their own communities which are increasingly inter-cultural. That is why this study is exploring three related questions:

1. How is the rewriting of constitutions affected by the ethnic, cultural, lingual and theological diversity of the congregation?
2. How is the rewriting of constitutions influenced by the influence of CICLSAL?
3. How does the rewriting of constitutions affect relations between Sisters in an international missionary congregation?

Missionary congregations prior to Vatican II, despite limited ethnic and cultural diversity, were expected to conform to their founding norms in their daily lifestyle and prayer life. Formal visitations from the superior general included an examination of how individuals, communities and provinces, were living according to detailed congregational regulations. For example, community libraries may have been checked for books that were on the Church's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (List of Prohibited Books), or in the case of women's congregations, regulations around religious dress, "the habit", were checked to ensure conformity to regulations. The task of rewriting Constitutions as mandated by Vatican II would not be an easy task,

and would require close cooperation with canon lawyers from the Congregation for Religious, the Vatican office responsible for everything related to pontifical religious congregations[8], including granting official approval or approbation of constitutions.

Some of the major shifts in the relationships between congregations of religious women and the Holy See from the early councils of the Church until the present will be examined, noting particular decrees that significantly affected the nature and evolution of religious life for women. This chapter will outline in broad brush strokes the key elements of the three great Rules of Augustine, Benedict and Francis for religious life in the West and observe how these Rules affected monastic life and at the same time inhibited the development of apostolic religious life for women. It will explain the distinction between religious with solemn vows and those with simple vows. It will show that as religious life for men took on new and dynamic forms during the thirteenth century with the birth of mendicant orders, women were more rigidly confined to the cloister, and only in 1900 did Pope Leo XIII officially recognize women in apostolic institutes with simple vows as religious. Vatican II directed religious congregations to return to sources of Christian life in general, particularly the gospels, and their founder's spirit and particular understanding of religious life, and rewrite their constitutions blending inspirational texts with juridical norms.

The story of the RNDMs offers an example of a nineteenth century missionary congregation, which expanded rapidly into Oceania and Asia. The RNDM story demonstrates how religious women were affected in the expression of their charism and spirit by canon law and papal decrees. The study will also show how the documents of Vatican II offered congregations an opportunity to recover their founder's original charism. It then will point out the limitations that congregations experience today, some thirty or forty years after they last rewrote their constitutions, and the subsequent need for constitutions to be updated or rewritten in the light of contemporary experience of shifts in spirituality, ministry, community life, formation and governance, as well as demographic developments.

The study will not analyse in any significant way the approved 2014 RNDM Constitutions. Rather, drawing on minutes of meetings, individual and group responses to the various stages of the process used for rewriting the constitutions of an international congregation between 2010 and 2014, the study will explore key themes affecting the lives of a very diverse group of missionary women across five continents

[8] The Congregation for Religious was established by Pope Pius X in 1908. It was renamed by Paul VI in 1967 as the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, and by Pope John Paul II in 1988 as the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

Analysis of the problem

Vocations in many religious congregations founded in Europe and North America reached their zenith in the 1950s and early 1960s, as young people flocked to novitiates. On 28 October 1965, *Perfectae Caritatis,* the "Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life"[9] was promulgated by Vatican II and religious congregations undertook to revise their constitutions. In the Western world[10], religious congregations began initiating dramatic shifts in community life, prayer life, in the identification of new mission priorities, in formation of new members, and in governance. At the same time, religious life was being affected by the wider world with its extraordinary political and socio-economic and cultural shifts. Vatican II's call to discern "the signs of the times" resonated with many religious particularly in the West, where religious were increasingly aware of realities such as the rich/poor divide, the influence of feminism, the increasing secularization of society, and Cold War-generated military conflicts and tension.[11]

Today, some six decades later, many congregations are confronting diminishment and even extinction in the West. International congregations are experiencing a demographic shift as they continue to welcome new members in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Former mission-receiving territories are now mission-sending. International congregations' general councils and international formation teams are likely to be multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and share very different worldviews and spiritual traditions. Among RNDMs today, there are fewer than ten RNDMs who have French, the language of the founding members, as their first language. Constitutions that were written soon after Vatican II generally did not recognize such diversity, nor predict and allow for the extraordinary changes that would take place in the coming decades. Many congregations are therefore realizing the need to revise or rewrite their constitutions.

Concepts and definitions

Orders and Congregations

There are many different expressions of religious life in the Catholic Church, but the main two categories are contemplative, monastic orders such as the Carmelites and Benedictines, and apostolic congregations or institutes. With few exceptions, such

[9] See Austin Flannery, ed. *Perfectae Caritatis* ("Decree on the up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life"), *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations. A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (Northport, N.Y./Dublin: Costello Company/Dominican Publications, 1996). All citations from Vatican II documents will be from Flannery's publication, and after the first reference, will be cited in the text only using the Latin initials of the document, and where necessary, the paragraph number.

[10] In this work, "Western world" refers to Western Europe, North America and Australia and New Zealand, those parts of the world where RNDMs live and work.

[11] See Austin Flannery, ed. *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations. A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (Northport, N.Y./Dublin: Costello Company/Dominican Publications, 1996).

as the Daughters of Charity, founded in 1633, institutes of women were usually monastic until the nineteenth century.

From the sixteenth century onwards, founders of women's congregations tried to move beyond a monastic life style in their efforts to engage apostolically with people. They undertook works of charity – education, health care, social work – in Europe and the Americas. This became more marked when apostolic congregations increased dramatically during the nineteenth century as the French Church regained some of the prestige and power it had lost during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic years. The 1917 *Code of Canon Law*[12] reserved the name "religious order" for institutes in which the vows were solemn, and used the term "religious congregation" or simply "congregation" for apostolic institutes with simple vows, as distinct from the solemn vows of those in religious orders. Canon Law was revised in 1983[13], and the *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* explains the distinction between solemn and simple vows: “The older religious orders (monastic, canon regulars, mendicants, Jesuits) have perpetual solemn vows, and the more recent apostolic congregations have perpetual simple vows. The chief juridical difference between the two is that religious who profess a solemn vow of poverty renounce ownership of all their temporal goods, whereas religious who profess a simple vow of poverty have a right to retain ownership of their patrimony (an estate, endowment or anything inherited from one's parents or ancestors) but must give up its use and any revenue”.[14]

Congregations of Pontifical Right such as the RNDMs have been recognized and approved by a *Decretum Laudis,* or Decree of Praise, of the Holy See and its members are under the authority of the Pope. There are other religious congregations not of Pontifical Right, which are under the authority of the local bishop and referred to as "diocesan congregations".

Constitutions

Constitutions are the fundamental code of a religious institute. They contain the principles of religious life in general, and as understood and lived by a particular community, together with the basic norms by which the members are to put these principles into practice. Prior to Vatican II, constitutions were juridical texts largely devoid of theological, scriptural and spiritual inspiration. In a significant shift from previous norms regarding constitutions, *Perfectae Caritatis* #2 insisted that constitutions should also reflect the original charism of the founder or founding members, and the particular mission of the institute. In order to be valid, the

[12] The *Code of Canon Law* was promulgated on 27 May 1917 and came into effect on 19 May 1918.

[13] A new *Code of Canon Law* was promulgated on 25 January 1983 by Pope John Paul II, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/92870/canon-law/67236/The-new-Code-of-Canon-Law, (accessed 28 May 2015).

[14] See John P. Beal, James A. Coriden, and Thomas J. Green, eds., *The New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law: An Entirely New and Comprehensive Commentary by Canonists from North America and Europe, with a Revised English Translation of the Code* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2000).

constitutions of pontifical religious congregations needed approval from CICLSAL. Canon 595 gives this authority to the bishop for diocesan congregations working in his diocese. In addition to the fundamental provisions of the constitutions, religious congregations also have norms in the form of general statutes or directives which can be changed more readily with a two-thirds majority of delegates at a General Chapter.

General Chapter
Canon Law # 631, 632 and 633 define a general chapter as a collegial assembly representing the entire membership of the congregation. While in session it is the highest legislative authority and elects the superior general/congregation leader. Members are both elected and *ex-officio.* The latter have membership in virtue of their office and the former are elected according to the norms of proper law ensuring representation from the entire membership.

In most apostolic congregations, general chapters are held every five, six, seven or eight years, and *ex-officio* members usually include the superior general, general councillors and province leaders. *Ex-officio* members may include, depending on what particular constitutions prescribe, the general secretary, general bursar, formation director and former superior general. Usually the number of elected delegates must exceed the number of *ex-officio* members. All the members of a chapter, whether *ex-officio* or elected, have equal voice. A general chapter has three major tasks:

1. to review the life of the entire congregation and its fidelity to the spirit and mission of the institute;
2. to shape the vision and orientations of the congregation for the future;
3. to elect the supreme moderator and council members according to the constitutions of the institute.

Mission
All Christians, by virtue of their baptism, are called to mission,[15] that is, to share with others, their experience of God, and following Jesus, to proclaim in word and deed the reign of God. Today, Christians continue to live the mission of Jesus through the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit. In religious missionary congregations, mission has often meant “being sent” to live and work in a ministry of presence and service among peoples of a particular community, especially among the poor and disadvantaged, journeying with them as they strive to live with dignity and respect and take their rightful place in society.

[15] See Austin Flannery, ed. *Lumen Gentium,* (“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”), *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* (Northport, New York/Dublin: Costello Publising Company/Dominican Publications, 1996), #31.

For religious missionary congregations founded in Europe in the nineteenth century, mission often was understood as *missio ad extra,* that is, going beyond one's geographical boundaries to the foreign missions. Such religious generally spent the rest of their lives among the people among whom they were sent and were buried where they died. *Missio ad gentes* usually meant foreign missions but it could also refer to mission among different ethnic groups within one's country of origin. *Missio ad extra* and *missio ad gentes* carried the sense of bringing the gospel to peoples and groups who had not received it. Mission meant being sent to heathens, pagans and poor heretics with the goal of converting them to Catholicism and baptising them. But all too often, bishops, concerned about their ever-growing settler communities in mission territories, preferred sisters to be involved in education, health and social work ministries that focussed on migrant groups who may have been Irish, Polish, or French. More often than not, Irish immigrants were escaping oppressive nineteenth century British imperial rule, or Polish immigrant groups were leaving behind equally oppressive Prussian or Russian rule. Most Catholic migrants tended to come from the lower working or peasant class sectors of their country of birth. Missionary sisters may have thought they were leaving Europe to go "in search of a wilderness to tame, and savages to convert, [but thanks to episcopal directives] found that they could not get past the vices of baptized Christians."[16] Thus in New Zealand despite Euphrasie's wish that her young sisters work with Māori, bishops wanted teachers for settler children, although this did not prevent the first RNDMs in New Zealand from opening a school for Māori girls. Likewise, in Australia and Canada, the first RNDMs taught settler children, not Aboriginals or First Nations children.

Ad Gentes, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity"[17] teaches that mission originates in the Trinity – the sending of the Incarnate Word by the Father to redeem the human race, and the Holy Spirit sent by the Father and the Son into the world to bring about God's universal plan for salvation. Today living among other peoples with mutual respect, reverence, cultural and religious sensitivity is more demanding than was the case in the pre-Vatican II church, where euro-centric approaches to mission were the norm, and were not always complemented by cultural sensitivity. When mission was primarily a West-East or North-South movement, and often enough linked to the imperial task, cultural sensitivity was not prioritised as much as is the case today. Now mission is understood more as witnessing to the universal love of the Trinity revealed through creation, through people, their histories and traditions, including religious.

[16] Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 591.

[17] See Austin Flannery, ed. *Ad Gentes,* ("Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity)", *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declaration: A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (Northport, New York/Dublin: Costello Publishing Company/Dominican Publications, 1996), #1-2, 9.

Missio inter gentes is mission that occurs among peoples wherever the missionary lives and works, whether in her country of origin or elsewhere. *Missio inter gentes* recognises and honours cultural and religious diversity, and promotes respectful and reciprocal relationships, in a spirit of simplicity, empathy, dialogue and collaboration. Whereas before, missionary activity originated in Europe and other western countries and was directed to the periphery, today mission is multi-directional – from anywhere to everywhere.

A number of reasons lies behind these changes and there are at least four that are significant. First, Vatican II taught that all the baptised are called to be missionary (*LG* #31). To be called to mission was no longer the prerogative of ordained ministers, nor of those who had made religious profession. The call to mission flowed from baptism. Second, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries until Vatican II, mission was usually understood as going on the foreign missions, often enough as the cultural arm of the imperial power. This association of the missionary task with the imperial task tended to implode after World War II, as so many former colonies sought and gained political independence from British, French, Belgian, Dutch and other colonial rulers. Mission became more about being on the side of the colonized and poor rather than being part of the imperial adventure. Third, Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*[18] helped collapse the theological dualism characteristic of pre-Vatican II theologies. Mission understood as saving souls was increasingly complemented and indeed replaced by mission understood as liberating the human person from all that oppressed her. The arena of *missio Dei* was the world in which people lived, worked, suffered and died. God was active in human history. But despite the promise of Vatican II, in the West the number of people seeking admission into novitiates and seminaries began to dramatically fall, while at the same time, the reverse situation was occurring elsewhere particularly in some African and Asian countries. Missionary activity was no longer a West-East, North-South movement. Rather the reverse was happening particularly as the second millennium drew to a close.

Spirituality

Spirituality is a way of believing, being, seeing and acting. Originally, the word 'spirituality' was associated with the Judeo-Christian tradition, but now the term is used of all religious traditions. While there is still no generally accepted definition, spirituality is increasingly understood as a non-institutionalized or non-formalized set of values or principles by which a person directs her life. "Spirituality touches the core of human existence: the relationship with the Absolute"[19]. Missionary activity was and is always grounded in spirituality, and so just as the focus of missionary activity has changed in recent decades, so too has the spirituality in which that

[18] See Austin Flannery, ed. *Gaudium et Spes,* ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World"), *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* (Northport, New York/Dublin: Costello Publishing Company/Dominican Publications, 1996).

[19] Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2002), 1.

activity is grounded. For RNDMs this has above all involved them in reclaiming and revisioning Euphrasie's Trinitarian spirituality which is expressed today in a growing belief in the Spirit immanent in all creation, and in expressing in their daily interaction with others values such as mutuality, reciprocity and equality, values which reflect the inner life of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Leadership

Leadership in a religious institute refers to the legitimately elected superior general, today often referred to as congregation leader/ supreme moderator/congregation president acting with their council members. They form the General Council, referred to as the Congregation Leadership Team (hereafter CLT) by RNDMs. The General Bursar and General Secretary assist in the administration, and in some congregations may also be council members. While Canon Law currently requires that both positions are held by members of the congregation, in some circumstances, as for example in the case of the RNDMs, the General Secretary and General Bursar work as liaison personnel with suitable and professionally qualified lay people. Ultimate responsibility for the spirit, life, and mission of the Congregation belongs to the Congregation Leader. At province and region levels, leaders exercise their role in collaboration with the CLT.

Today many women's religious congregations are moving from a hierarchical model of leadership to one that is more participatory and recognizes the particular gifts and expertise of all members. Such a team model uses processes of personal and group spiritual discernment and works towards consensus in decision-making. It sees the exercise of their responsibility as servant-leadership or a service of love modelled on that of Jesus. In the past matters affecting the life of the Congregation would have been voted on, both at a general chapter and within general and provincial councils. Using a western parliamentary model, 50% plus one of the members was needed to support a proposal, either by secret ballot or by raising of hands, depending on the issue, before it could be enacted. Decision-making via discernment and consensus-building can take longer but it also means greater levels of support, commitment to, and ownership of a proposal. Leadership in a religious congregation has a threefold mission:

1. to be attentive and discern trends and movements in the Church and in society; to identify new areas of need; to be prophetic, to speak out against injustices and to take courageous, visionary steps into the future;
2. to be pastoral; to reach out to members, to listen, affirm and encourage them; to recognize their potential and involve them creatively in the life of the congregation; to empower them in ministry; to challenge them sensitively and compassionately if necessary; to console those who are suffering and to ensure the needs of the sick and elderly are met; to be a symbol of unity in the congregation;

3. to ensure the good administration and stewardship of the finances and patrimony of the congregation; to communicate well and make sure that organizational responsibilities are carried out efficiently and effectively.

Leadership in religious congregations is usually for a fixed period of time. At the conclusion of the mandate, the leader once again becomes a regular member of the community.

Canon Law

The Code of Canon Law is the official law that governs the Roman Catholic Church. It is a collection of rules, regulations and norms designed to ensure the well-being of the institutional Church. Canon Law describes the various offices, bodies and internal political structures of the Catholic Church. It presents the duties, responsibilities and qualifications for various offices and positions in the Church. The code that currently governs the Church, the new *Code of Canon Law*[20] was authorised in 1983 by Pope John Paul II. Religious congregations who are rewriting their constitutions must take into account canonical prescriptions around their way of life. Having said that, a congregation may ask that a particular canon be modified for them, and CICLSAL can approve such changes.[21] When a religious congregation decides to re-write or amend its constitutions, changes made must be confirmed by the CICSAL.

Research Method

The aim of this research is to investigate ways in which the rewriting of constitutions reflects the changing demographics of the Congregation, and how these changes affect relationships between and among members of the Congregation today.[22] To realise this aim, the written discourse or responses of RNDMs from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas and Oceania who live and work in intercultural, international, intergenerational and linguistically diverse communities, will be examined and critiqued.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as explained in the introduction, will allow the reader to see how aspects of RNDM spirituality are both influencing and being influenced by their missionary activity.

Through an investigation of the available documentation gathered over a four-year period from 2009 to 2012, this research will explore the implications of emerging developments in the Congregation, including the shift in energy and focus from West

[20] See Canon Law Society of Great Britain, ed. *The Code of Canon Law in English Translation and Ireland in Association with the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand and the Canadian Canon Law Society* (London/Grand Rapids, Mich.: Collins/ Eerdmans, 1983).

[21] For example, a congregation may ask that the province leader and her councillors be appointed by the general council, not elected by the members in the province.

[22] See Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 1.

to the East, from North to South. It will attempt to uncover the underlying meanings assigned to key words and concepts in order to ascertain the possibility of such a diverse group formulating, relating to and living out of, a shared, corporate vision. With the demographic shifts that are currently taking place in the Congregation, research will try to determine if there is a corresponding shift in hegemony in the Congregation, in identifying who exercises authority and how. Since the constitutions of religious congregations must receive the official approbation of the Holy See, research will also include an analysis of how the rewriting of constitutions affects relations between international missionary congregations of women and CICLSAL.

Why did RNDMs decide to rewrite their Constitutions?

The Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, was founded in France in 1861 and is an apostolic religious missionary congregation of Pontifical Right, whose members profess simple vows. Euphrasie Barbier (1829-1893) saw all missionary activity as a participation in the Divine Missions, in God's universal gift of love manifested in creation, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, and in the mission of the Spirit, outpoured at Pentecost. Her insight predates the concept of *Missio Dei*[23] as it was articulated in the early twentieth century by Karl Barth.

The Congregation expanded into the predominantly British colonial areas of Oceania and Asia from 1865 onwards. Mission for RNDMs initially meant being sent to the "foreign missions" to work among "the most abandoned, among poor heretics and infidel nations"[24] in New Zealand and the Pacific, to educate women, poor children and indigenous people. The first mission was opened in Napier, New Zealand in 1865, and in 1870, a house was opened in Deal, England. From the beginning of its story, missionary activity understood as *missio ad gentes* was complemented by *missio inter gentes*, as RNDMs began caring for French soldiers wounded in the Franco-Prussian War (1870). Another early example of *missio inter gentes* occurred in 1873, with the opening of a house in Armentières, close to the French-Belgian border where RNDMs worked with poor and marginalised factory girls in the textile industry. Mission in Armentières also became a place of preparation for *missio ad gentes*. From 1883 onwards, RNDMs journeyed to Asia, with the Congregation's first Asian mission being established in Chittagong, then part of England's Indian Empire. Local vocations were welcomed, but the style of religious life was western, strongly influenced by French Catholic practices and rituals, and later by Irish Catholicism. This remained the case until the post-Vatican II era.

[23] The twentieth century concept of *Missio Dei* can be traced to the work of Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth who, in 1932, gave a paper at the Brandenburg Mission Conference stating that mission was not primarily the work of the Church, but of God himself. See Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 290.

[24] Euphrasie Barbier, "RNDM Constitutions", 1871, Preliminary Chapter, (Rome: RNDM Archives). Unless otherwise indicated, all RNDM documents cited in this research can be located in the RNDM Archives, Rome.

The opening of houses in both Deal and Armentières, and the sending of RNDMs meant that mission for the Congregation has always been both *missio ad gentes* and *missio inter gentes*. Prior to Vatican II, the provinces of France, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Ireland, Australia and Canada were mission-sending, while Asian provinces and from the late 1960s, African, Latin American and Oceanic regions, were mission-receiving. Although Sisters from Bangladesh, India and Myanmar were missioned to different RNDM communities in the Indian sub-continent from early years, the first Asian Sister to be missioned beyond these borders, was Renu D'Costa from Bangladesh who went to Samoa in 1984.

In the decades after Vatican II, there had been resistance from some provinces to centralized mission-sending by the Congregational Leadership Team. All too often, the CLT found that the availability of Sisters to support existing missions or to establish new missions was dependent on the "generosity" of the different provincial councils. This situation still exists to a certain extent in some parts of the Congregation, particularly in the Indian sub-continent with its socio-economic extremes of wealth and poverty, and concomitant need for dedicated women to minister to the victims of the subsequent inequality. In some countries because of political situations and/or visa restrictions, membership cannot be international. Nevertheless, because of cultural diversity that exists within the country, communities may be composed of sisters from different cultural groups. This requires that formation programmes for younger members develop attitudes and skills that allow RNDMs to live and work in intercultural and multicultural communities and situations.

Today, RNDMs working beyond their own countries are predominantly from Asia, although Kenyan, Samoan, Filipina and Latin American RNDMs are now involved in mission outside of their country. The multi-cultural reality of the Congregation is likewise discernible in the different formation teams that have lived and worked in Davao, where an international formation centre has been established. There are now Asian sisters serving as formation team personnel, but prior to that Canadian, English and New Zealand RNDMs had served in Davao. Sisters from Africa, Asia and Latin America undertake language, theological and professional studies in Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, France, New Zealand. More recently, Kenya, India Central, India North East and the Philippines have welcomed international students.

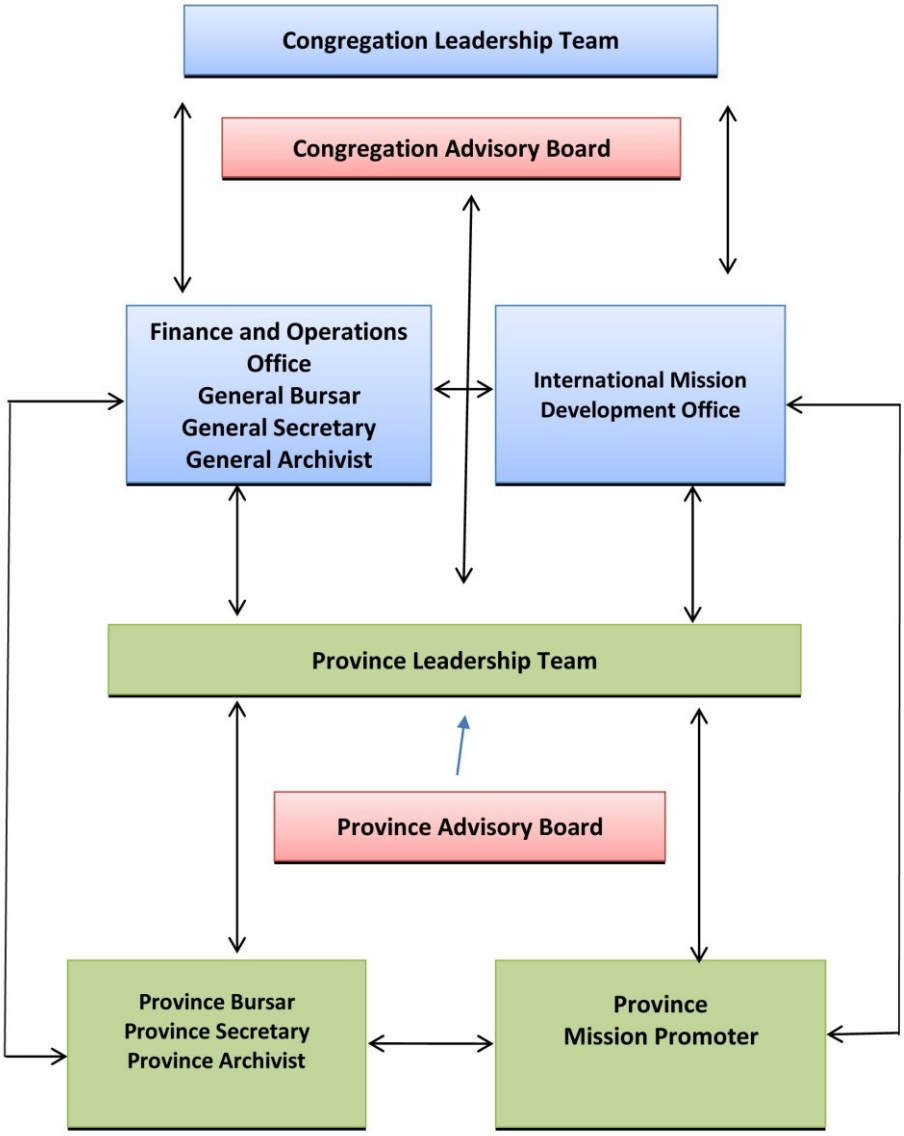
The structure of the Congregation includes provinces and regions, here listed in chronological order of their foundation – France, New Zealand (including Samoa), United Kingdom and Ireland, Bangladesh, Australia, Myanmar (including two sisters in Thailand), Canada, India North-East, Vietnam (including three sisters in Laos), India Central, India South, and Kenya. Regions which have fewer members than provinces include Latin America, Philippines and Senegal. A new foundation is a developing mission area in the Congregation. A new foundation was made in

Kazakhstan in 2011, although the RNDM presence there was ended in 2014. In 2010, two Vietnamese RNDMs went to Beijing to learn Chinese and to identify possible ministries there but after much discernment it was decided that a new mission in Taiwan would be a better option, given that many Vietnamese migrant workers were living in that country. Accordingly, in 2012, two Vietnamese RNDMs went to Taiwan and have since been joined by RNDMs from Bangladesh and India. A group of RNDMs are members of Solidarity with South Sudan (SSS), where they live and work in international and inter-congregational communities in Riimenze, Yambio and Juba.[25]

The five members of the present CLT which began its term in office in 2014, are Josephine Kane, Congregation Leader from New Zealand; Lissy Sebastian originally from India who spent twenty-one years in mission in the Philippines; Crescencia Sun from India; Lucy Wambui from Kenya and Maria Le Thi Bich Quyen from Vietnam. This is the first time in the history of the congregation that there is no sister from Europe on the Congregation Leadership Team.[26]

[25] Inspired by the 2004 Rome Congress on Consecrated Life, *Passion for Christ and Passion for Humanity,* Solidarity with South Sudan (SSS) was established by the International Union of Superiors' General (UISG) for women religious and the Union of Superiors General (USG) for male religious as a collaborative and inter-congregational response to the invitation of the Bishops of the Sudan to partner with them in responding to the needs of the people in education, health and pastoral care after decades of civil war.

[26] The General Council (referred to as the Congregation Leadership Team since 1996), has reflected greater diversity since the 1970s. The first Asian sister to be elected to the General Council in 1972 was Sister Mary John Bosco Shadap from Meghalaya, India. Bernadine Mullaveetil from Kerala, India was a General Councillor from 1990-1992, and Congregation Leader from 1996-2002; Reba D'Costa from Bangladesh served on the Council from 1996-2002 and Probha Mary Karmokar, also from Bangladesh, served from 2002-2008; Kim Phung Pham from Vietnam was Vicar of the Congregation from 2002-2014.



Leadership Structure in Congregation

The CLT members, the personnel staffing the International Mission Development Office, Province and Region Leaders and Mission Promoters are all RNDMs. Six years ago, the CLT began employing highly qualified and professional lay people to assist them in the financial and property management of the Congregation, and prior to that in 1998 had set up a Finance Management Group to advise the CLT in

matters financial. The Constitutions today mean it is possible to employ suitably qualified lay people as province bursars, province secretaries and province archivists. At the same time, the Constitutions also require that provinces set up Financial Advisory Boards to assist them in their decision-making around finance and property matters. Members of both the Finance Management Group and Province Advisory Boards offer their services in a voluntary capacity. Suitably qualified RNDMs are always part of such groups.

From 2002 to 2014, RNDMs were invited to participate in a process of reflection on the charism and spirituality of their founder, Euphrasie Barbier, as experienced and lived today. This enabled RNDMs to become more aware of the significant shifts that had taken place in the Congregation since the promulgation of the 1979 Constitutions, particularly in formation, community life, mission and governance, taking into consideration the cultural and linguistic diversity in the congregation and demographic changes. This study and reflection allowed the 2008 General Chapter to mandate the rewriting of the Constitutions.

From 2009 to 2012 the Congregation embarked on a four-year process of consultation and theological reflection of the 1979 Constitutions. This involved every member of the congregation. The challenge of this task is captured by CLT member, Kim Phung, who wrote: "Rewriting the Constitutions is a journey into the depth of our being and our reason for existence as RNDMs. We are being invited to explore the essence of our life and mission".[27]

Drawing on individual responses, written accounts and summaries of discussions at community, region and province level, this research aims to analyse the responses received from across the congregation for each stage of the rewriting process, in order to determine key issues and concerns facing an international missionary congregation of women today.

Strategy

This research concentrates on written texts, which include official reports, general chapter documents, minutes of meetings, responses from RNDMs in twenty-four countries, and guided reflections on 1979 Constitutions prepared by the Constitutions' Committee. Responses from the different stages will be selected for analysis because of the content they contained:

1. Lent 2010 study of the first incomplete draft of the Constitutions dealt mainly with the inspirational and spiritual nature of the congregation;
2. Advent 2010 study of the 1979 Constitutions Chapter entitled 'Unity and Charity', which related to governance and was more juridical in nature;

[27] Kim Phung, RNDM, "Rewriting the Constitutions", *Congregation Leadership Team Report, 2008-2014. Congregation Chapter, 17 January – 16 February*, (Rome: 2017), 10.

3. Lent 2012 study of the complete draft, which reflected the entire Constitutions, both inspirational and juridical.

Relevance of this study

Other international missionary congregations founded in Europe or North America have histories similar to that of the RNDMs. Faithful to the call of Vatican II, they rewrote their constitutions in the 1970s and early 1980s. Significant changes have since taken place in society, within the Church and religious life in the intervening years. Many congregations are experiencing a flourishing of vocations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, but welcome few if any, new members in Europe, North America, Australia or New Zealand. This shift in demographics in missionary congregations has major implications for the religious formation and professional education of new members, for community life, for mission preparation and leadership training. Questions related to the mission of the Congregation, and how the charism is interpreted, expressed and lived in different cultural contexts are critical for the future. Where there are international and intercultural communities, significant time and energy needs to be devoted to reflecting on the diversity within the group and identifying triggers that may potentially cause misunderstandings and even provoke tension or conflict.

Finally, one of the major concerns that has surfaced for many contemporary religious congregations, including the RNDMs, is language. While French, Spanish, German, Dutch, Italian or Portuguese may have been the language of the founder, this may not be the case today, and therefore the *lingua franca*, whether French or English, of its first members through until Vatican II, no longer enjoys its privileged status. This development will continue to challenge international missionary congregations. When a European language no longer is the dominant language of a particular congregation, thanks to its changing demographics, the re-writing of constitutions in language that speaks to the present membership becomes imperative. The narrative that follows can enable RNDMs, and possibly other religious, to better understand what their multi-cultural and multi-lingual reality asks of them.

Chapter Two Constitutions of Religious Institutes and their Evolution through History

Constitutions which govern members of a religious institute, no matter where they live, are a shared set of values and processes by which those members connect and communicate with each other. They express identity, offer inspiration to members and define the nature of the institute. As a text of law, they delineate rights, obligations, goals and purposes, and the structures needed to help attain its goals. Constitutions written since Vatican II combine both inspirational and juridical elements. Constitutions also produce and maintain power relations between groups within the institute. At certain designated times, or in critical socio-cultural moments, religious institutes develop strategies for a new form of organization. These strategies construct a certain view for the future that flows from past and present experiences. The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions was no exception to this and Vatican II was one such critical moment when RNDMs sought to chart a new direction themselves. The impact of changing demographics in the third millennium was another such moment. The different RNDM strategies at these times will be analysed through a consideration of congregational documentation.

This chapter focuses on the evolution of different forms of religious life, and how each form responded to the particular socio-economic and cultural contexts, and political and religious crises of the time. Representative strategies developed by the founders of religious institutes will be identified. In particular the stories of some representative women's orders and congregations will allow the reader to see how gender issues are now informing the writing of constitutions. The influence of Canon Law, magisterial and episcopal teachings on women's religious institutes will also be examined. Such a background is important as it was only in 1900 with Pope Leo XIII's Apostolic Constitution, *Conditae a Christo*[28], that institutes of religious with simple vows were formally approved by the Holy See and consequently other forms of religious life for women began to flourish. The *Normae* published by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and the Code of Canon Law[29] promulgated in 1917 established detailed juridical regulations for the formulation of constitutions of religious institutes.

Vatican II encouraged a spirit of openness in the life of the Church thanks to its universal call to *aggiornamento*, which literally means "bringing up to date" although the word "renewal" was and is used more frequently to describe the changes that many Catholics would embrace. Religious institutes were challenged to renew and adapt their lifestyle according to the signs of the times. They were instructed to

[28] Pope Leo XIII, "*Conditae a Christo: Sanctissimi Domini Nostri Leonis Divina Providentia Papae Xiii De Religiosorum Institutis Vota Simplicia Profitentium"*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana https://w2.vatican.va /content/leo-xiii/la/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_l-xiii_apc_19001208_conditae-a-christo.html (accessed 27 March 2018).

[29] Edward N. Peters, ed. *The 1917 or Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law: In English Translation with Extensive Scholarly Apparatus* (San Fransisco: Ignatius Press, 2001).

return to the founding inspiration of the institute and to ensure that juridical elements were completed by a contemporary interpretation of that founding charism. In 1983 an updated Code of Canon Law[30] was promulgated. This Code ensured the protection of the spiritual patrimony of religious institutes and gave greater autonomy in governance.

Brief Survey of Religious Life from the Apostolic Era to the Present

From apostolic times to the present, religious life has been a particular and radical way that women and men have chosen to follow Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. As the gospels and the seven letters authored by the apostle Paul demonstrate, women enthusiastically and courageously followed Jesus in his public ministry and were involved in diverse ministries of the early Church. During the persecution of the Church in pre-Constantinian times, women were among the earliest martyrs[31]. Following the Edict of Milan in AD 313 when Christianity was recognized by the Emperor Constantine (272-337),[32] new forms of radical witness to the Christian message developed. Devout men and women were drawn to a life of prayer and asceticism on the edges of towns and cities or in the deserts of North Africa and Asia Minor. Loose communities of eremitical women and men began to form. The desire for a more structured lifestyle that included a stronger sense of community support gradually evolved. Pachomius of Thebes, Egypt (c. 292-348) is credited with founding the first Christian cenobitic monastery and drew up the first known monastic rule.[33] His sister founded a monastery for women nearby. Monasteries quickly spread from Egypt to Palestine, the Judean desert, Syria, North Africa and Western Europe and monastic life became the normal way for both women and men to dedicate their lives to God. Monastic life for women also came to birth in some of the great houses of noble women in Rome where groups of widows and virgins gathered and formed ascetic communities.

Three rules for religious life have been attributed to Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and are commonly grouped together as the *Regula*. These rules associated with Augustine include *Ordo Monasterii*, *Regula ad Servos*, and *Epistula* 211, and slightly differing versions were soon being used in religious communities of women and men. Whether Augustine actually wrote these is the subject of scholarly discussion. Nevertheless, these texts describe regulations for the monastery, including

[30] Canon Law Society of Great Britain, ed. *The Code of Canon Law in English Translation and Ireland in Association with the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand and the Canadian Canon Law Society* (London/Grand Rapids, Mich.: Collins/ Eerdmans, 1983).
[31] See Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity: The First Thousand Years*, vol. 1, (Dublin: Columba Press, 2000).
[32] See *Early Church Texts*, http://ww.earlychurchtexts.com/public/edict_of_milan.htm, (accessed 29 May 2015).
[33] *The Rule of Pachomius*, Part 1, trans. Esmeralda Ramirez de Jennings, ed. Daniel R. Jennings, http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Pachomius_Rule_1.html, (accessed 29 May 2015).

schedules of work, discipline and correction, and restrictions on travel.[34] From the thirteenth century onward, numerous orders and congregations adopted what came to be called the Rule of St Augustine. Augustine's Rule was short, simple and inclusive of poor, rich, healthy, sick, educated and illiterate. Ponesse rightly noted that the Rule "and the various forms of monastic life for which it served as the foundation, should be seen perhaps as Augustine's most influential work".[35]

For Augustine, community life was crucial. Following Acts 4:32, Augustine urged monks and nuns to "be of one mind and heart on the way to God". The Rule of St Augustine, rather than being prescriptive, and concentrating on small details, offers an inspirational way of life based on the virtues. It contains eight chapters that cover the following areas:

1. common ownership as the basis and essential conditions of monastic life;
2. prayer;
3. food;
4. guarding of the senses and chastity; brotherly and sisterly correction;
5. use of possessions: clothes, books, baths, sickness;
6. communal relationships, forgiveness;
7. obedience and the superior;
8. observance of the precepts in a spirit of charity as men and women living in freedom under grace.

In "double" monasteries, those which combined separate communities of monks and nuns joined in one community, the rule for women was usually written by men, although the head of the monastery could be either male or female. This practice was more common in the East, although it was also found in Anglo-Saxon England and Gaul prior to the ninth century.

Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-547) wrote his Rule drawing on the writings of the Desert Fathers, Pachomius, Augustine, and an anonymous sixth century text, *Regula Magistri* ("Rule of the Master"), written some twenty years earlier. Benedict's Rule was noted for its spirit of moderation and offered spiritual wisdom and practical guidelines to achieving holiness. Monasteries throughout Europe soon adopted the Rule of Benedict, and as they increased in number, and became important centres of learning and spirituality, so too more structured lifestyles evolved along with a proliferation of monastic rules. The Church soon saw a need for controls to be put in place and the Second Lateran Council (1139) officially recognised three major Rules – those of Basil (used in Orthodox monasteries), Augustine and Benedict.

[34] See Matthew D. Ponesse, '*Regula*', *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine,* ed. Karla Pollman, vol. 1, 462-467, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[35] Ponesse, 466.

A new form of religious life began to develop from the early thirteenth century in response to dramatic social and cultural shifts taking place in the wider society. The eleventh and twelfth centuries had seen a marked growth in population and increasing urbanisation. Universities promoted a renewed interest in intellectual learning, philosophy and classical literature, as well as the development of science, medicine and technology. Commerce and trade expanded. Greater wealth also spawned increasing poverty. It was in this context that Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) was inspired to devote himself to a life of poverty and to preach repentance. With his group of followers, the *Fratres Minores* (Friars Minor), Francis established the first of the mendicant orders. The Rule of St Francis was radically different from monastic rules. It made explicit the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but the lifestyle it mandated opened up a new way for men to be religious in the world, responding to the needs of the poor in towns and cities.

Clare of Assisi (1194-1253), greatly inspired by the preaching of Francis, founded the Order of the Poor Ladies. She composed the first known monastic rule written by a woman, although she struggled to have it approved. It was only on her deathbed that Pope Innocent IV formally confirmed the rule. However, while Francis and the friars were free to travel and to preach in the city and beyond, Clare's sisters were strictly enclosed. The Papal Decree *Periculoso*[36] issued by Pope Boniface VIII in 1298 imposed a stricter monastic enclosure on women and they were denied the freedom of movement and ministry that the mendicant life permitted the friars.

Francis developed a third way of living an evangelical life, offering lay people a rule of life animated by the Franciscan spirit which was recognized by Pope Nicholas IV in 1289. Men and women who opted for the third Franciscan way were secular people living in their own homes and known as tertiaries. Some members began to form small communities and observe the three vows, but because they were not cloistered, the vows were not recognized officially by the Church. Other groups of committed lay people began to emerge in different parts of Europe. The Beguines in Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany and Northern Italy, and the Beata in Spain were two such groups of women.[37] Living as ascetics either singly or in small groups in towns and cities, these women organized their own spiritual lives seeking to imitate the life of Jesus through service to the poor. The Beguines did not usually make vows, although they made a promise of chastity as long as they lived as Beguines. They elected their own leaders but followed no rule of life. They engaged in manual work to support themselves and helped the poor by setting up hospitals and leprosy centres. They ministered to women in prison, preaching and teaching them skills so that they could support themselves after their release, and provided

[36] See Elizabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and Its Commentators, 1298-1545*, vol. 5, Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Canon Law, ed Kenneth Pennington, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 21-48.

[37] See Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, From 1000 to the Reformation,* vol. 2, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 124-149.

places to stay for women newly released from prison. Some Beatas went to Mexico as missionaries in the early part of the sixteenth century and established schools which were eventually taken over by cloistered nuns. The freer lifestyle of the Beguines and Beatas and other similar movements soon attracted the ire of the clergy. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) recognised the primitive rule of Francis of Assisi and decreed that any new monasteries or religious orders must adopt one of the four approved Rules.

Spanish-born Dominic de Guzman (1170-1221) also recognised the need for a new type of organisation in the Church to address the special needs of the growing cities and to combat the Cathar heresy which was strong in Southern Europe at the time. While he and his companions observed monastic rules of prayer and penance, Dominic recognised that a more flexible organisation was required to allow his friars to be itinerant preachers and to teach in universities. Dominic adopted the Rule of Saint Augustine and drew up accompanying Constitutions that defined more specifically the religious life of the Order. The Order of Preachers, often referred to as the Dominicans, was granted Papal approval in 1216.

In the sixteenth century, another Spaniard, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) founded an apostolic congregation whose members were not restricted by a monastic cloister, and whose subsequent mobility was for the sake of mission. Ignatian spirituality was apostolic and focused on mission in a way that was not possible for monastic and mendicant orders. Ignatius' Constitutions[38] included several unique aspects that opened up a new era in religious life. Because of its focus on mission, the rigorous monastic schedule of prayer was relaxed and Jesuits were formed to be contemplatives in action. There was no distinctive habit, and flexibility was encouraged in mission contexts so as to encourage a favourable adaptation to different cultures. The establishment of the Jesuits coincided with the discovery of the Americas by Christopher Columbus, and with significant developments of the Catholic Church in Europe as the Counter-Reformation got under way. The Jesuits made a special vow of obedience to the Pope, which soon saw them engaged in new missionary works, for example, in the Americas, and in those parts of Europe when the Protestant reformers were enjoying success. By virtue of their Constitutions, apostolic works such as the foreign missions, the education of youth of all classes, the instruction of the ignorant and poor, and ministry to the sick and to prisoners were embraced.

The founding of the Jesuits meant a new and dynamic movement in the Church free from monastic structures and constraints, yet monasticism continued to be seen as the only legitimate way for women to live religious life. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) reaffirmed the decree of *Periculoso,* reiterating the law of enclosure for nuns. Despite such church law, women religious made the long journey to the Americas

[38] See Jesuits, ed. *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

and Asia where monasteries for women were soon established. Spanish nuns arrived in Mexico in 1530 and took over the education of girls established earlier by the Beatas. The first monastery in Asia was that of Santa Clara Intramuros, Manila in 1621.[39] Cloistered Augustinian Portuguese nuns arrived in Goa, India, in 1627.

In 1521, Pope Leo X's instruction, *Inter Cetera*, attempted to bring some sort of order to the many different Franciscan tertiary communities. Theoretically, women in these tertiary groups were able like the Beguines earlier, to remain uncloistered and to minister, particularly to the poor. The same was also supposedly true for tertiary groups following rules other than that of Francis.[40] The Pope, concerned about the increasing monasticization of tertiary groups, sought in his instruction to allow a non-monastic way of life for these tertiary women. However, all too often his instruction was not communicated widely and even if it were, tended to be ignored.

Apostolic Religious Life for Women

Although canonically recognised religious life for women was confined to the monastic tradition, from the sixteenth century onwards, women sought to found communities that could minister to women and children, to the sick and the poor. The story of Angela de Merici (1474-1540) demonstrates the challenges facing women seeking an apostolic life. In 1535, Angela gathered together a group of lay women, who became known as the Company of St Ursula, in Brescia in Northern Italy. Angela identified the education of girls and young women as an apostolic priority. She transformed her home into a school. Her rule of life specified the practice of celibacy, poverty and obedience, but the members made no formal religious vows, wore no special habit and lived in their own homes. The rule was approved in 1544 by Pope Paul II, but church officials soon became uneasy about a group of consecrated women living independently and not subject to the direct authority of the clergy. This new category of religious communities with simple vows approved by Pope Leo X was rejected forty-five years later by Pope Pius V in 1566. In 1572 Charles Borremeo, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, insisted that the Ursulines conform and become enclosed religious. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) and Louise de Marillac (1591-1660) found a more successful way around church teaching confining women to monasteries. They established the Daughters of Charity in 1633 to care for the poor and sick. The Daughters who professed simple vows, which they renewed annually, did not call themselves religious which allowed them to maintain mobility and availability for ministry, living among those whom they served.

[39] On August 5 1621, a group of Poor Clares arrived in Intramuros, Manila, to establish the first convent in the Philippines, the *Convento de Santa Clara.* Because they were monastic, the nuns built a 30-foot window-less wall to ensure their observance of the cloister.

[40] See Alison More, "Unification and Regularization in the Sixteenth-Century Spiritual Climate", *Fictive Orders and Feminine Religious Identities, 1200-1600,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 135-156.

Mary Ward (1585-1645), an English woman inspired by the Jesuit missionary model and the spirituality in which it was grounded, felt called to active ministry as a religious sister. Despite clerical opposition to a non-cloistered lifestyle, Mary and her followers founded schools throughout Europe. Pope Urban VIII's Bull of Suppression, *Pastoralis Romani Pontificis* was imposed on her in 1631 and she was imprisoned in Munich in a Poor Clare convent for several months by the Inquisition as a heretic, rebel and schismatic.[41]

Institutes founded in the eighteenth century received commendation from Rome on account of their good works but did not receive official approbation because of official insistence on a cloistered life-style. The first documented institute of simple-vowed women to receive canonical approval from Rome was the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary in Ghent, Belgium, in 1816.

From the early nineteenth century onwards, religious life reformed in new ways. The growth of industrial cities created acute social problems in Western Europe and the United States, while Europe's relative peace encouraged imperial expansion. At the same time there was a renewed religious fervour developing. In response to this situation, many communities of women sought to overcome the apostolic challenges imposed by a cloistered lifestyle, and involve themselves in education, health care and other works of mercy at home and in the foreign missions.

Congregations of the Holy See and their Relationship with Religious Institutes

As the number of religious institutes of simple vows proliferated in Europe and sought either episcopal or papal approbation, there was clearly a need for structures to be put in place, and guidelines developed for the writing of constitutions. Before reviewing the historical developments that took place within the Sacred Congregations of the Holy See that dealt with religious institutes, it is helpful at this point to understand the particular roles of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in the nineteenth century.

The Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars has undergone several name changes since it was first established by Pope Sixtus V in 1588 under the title, Sacred Congregation for Consultations about Regulars. The papal decree *Immensa Aterna Dei* (22 January 1588) established permanent congregations of cardinals to advise the pope. In 1601 this Congregation was joined to the Congregation for

[41] See Clarence Gallagher, "The Church and Institute of Consecrated Life", 50, (1984) *The Way*, 3-15. In 1749 Pope Benedict XIV's *Quamvis Iusto,* recognised Mary Ward's followers, although it stated they could not be religious in the canonical sense. This document provided official approval for groups of active women in simple vows and it set a precedent for future legislation, http://www.theway.org.uk/Back /s050Gallagher.pdf, (accessed 15 May 2015). Two branches of Mary Ward's Institute continue to live her vision today, the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) and the Congregation of Jesus (CJ). Mary Ward's belief that religious women be apostolic mean that these two congregations today follow the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus.*

Consultations about Bishops and Other Prelates. Almost three hundred years later Pope Pius X, in *Sapienti Consilio* (29 June 1908) separated the two institutions again and, placing the Bishops under the Consistorial Congregation, made the Congregation for Religious autonomous. There were two more changes in name and shifts in focus in the twentieth century. In Pope Paul VI's *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae* (1967), renamed the Congregation for Religious as the Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes. Pope John Paul II's *Pastor Bonus* (28 June 1988) changed the title to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL).[42]

The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, often referred to as *Propaganda Fide* was established in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV to deal with the affairs of countries where the rulers were no longer Catholic, and of overseas countries regarded as foreign mission territory. In 1908 with the creation of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, *Propaganda Fide's* jurisdiction in regard to religious institutes became more limited. In 1988 the name was changed by Pope John Paul II to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Today the Congregation has responsibility for coordinating and guiding the Church's diverse missionary efforts and initiatives, including the promotion and formation of clergy and local hierarchies, encouraging new missionary institutes, and providing material assistance for the missionary activities of the Church. Because religious women have been such key players in the Church's mission, such changes also impacted their way of life.

The Development and Approval of Institutes of Simple Vows

Many religious congregations were founded during the nineteenth century in response to the contemporary social and political conditions in Europe. The Industrial Revolution meant the rapid expansion of cities, employment opportunities and economic growth particularly in Western Europe and the United States. At the same time, those moving into cities in search of work, struggled with low wages, long working hours, poor housing and lack of access to health and education services. European colonial expansion in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Oceania led to the establishment of many missionary congregations whose members voyaged to foreign lands to evangelize the indigenous and settler communities. Some, but not all congregations accepted indigenous vocations. Some religious congregations were also founded in these "new" territories. Bishops and popes began to recognise the usefulness and necessity of un-cloistered communities in post-revolution France, and more importantly so did anti-clerical French governments encourage the educational and social work on religious women in French colonies. As Veilleux notes: "While the law recognized as religious only those Orders with solemn vows and enclosure, the bishops and the Holy See throughout the nineteenth century

[42] See John Paul II, *Pastor Bonus*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988).

gave their approbation to dozens of religious congregations of simple vows. Care was always taken, however, to point out that they were not 'religious in the proper sense'."[43]

In France alone, more than four hundred congregations of women were founded between 1800 and 1880 to address educational, health and social needs, and the number of religious sisters grew from 13,000 to 130,000. With such a proliferation of new apostolic institutes in Europe, guidelines were needed for the approval of such institutes, as well as structures and standards for the preparation and presentation of constitutions to the Holy See. The Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Giuseppe Andrea Cardinal Bizzarri (1802-1877), developed procedures in 1854 for the approbation of religious institutes as well as guidelines for the writing of constitutions. Bizzarri's *Methodus* was first circulated to bishops in 1861 and was published in 1865 and again in 1885.[44] In order to gain pontifical approval of a new religious institute four steps of review were involved:

1. a decree approving the scope and purpose of the institute. A new institute initially received the approval of the local bishop in whose diocese the group was founded;
2. a Decree of Praise, or *Decretum Laudis.* This marked a critical step in the official recognition of a religious institute. Some congregations waited many years before receiving this Decree;
3. a decree of approval of the Institute;
4. a decree of approval of the constitutions.

The latter two steps monitored the continuing viability of the institute, allowing for adaptations and further developments. The process of obtaining definitive approval could take many years so that the constitutions could be tested by the lived experience of the members.[45]

Pope Leo XIII and the Approbation of Institutes with Simple Vows

Pope Leo XIII's 1909 Apostolic Constitution, *Conditae a Christo,* approved religious institutes of simple vows, recognizing their members as true religious. This Constitution formalized the norms and procedures previously outlined by Bizzarri in 1854, and the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars' 1901 *Normae*, general norms which gave detailed instructions on how a congregation should draw up its

[43] Armand Veilleux. "The Evolution of the Religious Life in Its Historical and Spiritual Context," *Cistercian Studies* 6, (1971): 8-34.
[44] Francis J. Callahan, *The Centralization of Government in Pontifical Institutes of Women with Simple Vows*, (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1948), citing Guiseppe Andrea Bizzarri, *Methodus quae a Sacra Congregatione Episcoporum et Regularium servature in approbandis novis institute votorum simplicium* included in *Collectanae* in Usum Secretariae SCEp et Reg. Romae, 1885, 45.
[45] See Callahan, 46.

constitutions if they were to obtain formal approval from the Holy See[46]. Models of approved constitutions were available for reference.[47] Along with several copies of the official text of the constitutions[48] written either in French, Latin or Italian, and signed by the superior general, the bursar and general secretary, several other documents had to be presented. These included the formal request to the Pope for the approbation of the institute, testimonial letters from Bishops in whose dioceses convents and works were established, a history of the institute, current state of personnel, discipline and finance, as well as information about the novitiate.[49] If the congregation were missionary the constitutions and accompanying documents had to be forwarded to the Pope by an intermediary from *Propaganda Fide.* The role of *Propaganda Fide* was to appoint a group of consultors who would examine the constitutions of the institute, propose corrections and vote on the approbation attesting that: "The above-mentioned commission witnesses that the constitutions presented for approval are faithful to the essential requirements and formulate the particular aim of the new institute."[50]

While the new legislation allowed for the full approval and recognition of congregations in simple vows and dedicated to the active apostolate, it also imposed restrictions on the development of individual institutes. In his *Directoire Canonique à l'Usage des Congrégations à Voeux Simples* ("Canonical Directory for the Use of Congregations of Simple Vows") Bastien outlined the requirements of the Holy See for submitting Constitutions for approval. Article 31 in Bastien's Directory stated that the Holy See allowed neither a preface, nor prologue, neither historical notes nor letters of recommendation or praise, no matter what the source, unless they were decrees of praise or of approbation issued by the Holy See. He observed that these secondary documents were neither laws nor rules proper to the institute. Only the decrees of the Holy See could be inserted or mentioned because they gave the institute its legal existence. A corresponding footnote indicated that this rule was included in Bizzarri's *Methodus.*[51] While Bastien's *Directory* was published some years after the death of Euphrasie, the norms were already in place when she was writing and revising her Constitutions. Any reference to scripture, extracts from the Councils of the Church, the Doctors of the Church, theologians, had to be excluded from the text of the constitutions. Bastien added his own observations: "These quotations lend no value to the constitutions which receive their strength from the

[46] *Normae* #9 stipulated a period ten to fifteen years' practical experience in living out Constitutions before they could be approved. See Pierre Bastien, *Directoire Canonique à l'Usage des Congrégation à Voeux Simples d'Après les Plus Récents Documents du Saint-Siège*, (Namur: Abbaye de Maredsous, 1904), 16.
[47] The Constitutions of the Good Shepherd Sisters, founded in 1835, was offered as a model to Euphrasie.
[48] Euphrasie Barbier sent thirty copies of her Constitutions to Rome in 1890.
[49] Bastien, 17-18.
[50] Bastien, 19.
[51] Bizzarri, #31.

official approval of the Holy See and furthermore have the serious drawback of lengthening the text of the constitutions and making them unclear".[52]

Constitutions were standardized so that they were juridical in content rather than spiritually inspirational or theologically grounded. In this way the Holy See could exercise considerable control over religious institutes: "The detailed prescriptions on how constitutions should be drawn up and on what they should and should not contain favoured uniformity and stifled individual inspiration. For example, constitutions were not to include non-juridical matter and so quotations from holy scripture or the writings of the saints including the foundress should be kept to a minimum".[53]

Many religious orders adopted a fourth vow to express the particularity of the spirit of the institute. The Council of Trent had approved of this custom. However, for institutes founded after 1860, the Holy See declared the inclusion of a fourth vow inadvisable. In 1900, Pope Leo XIII acknowledged institutes with a fourth vow in the general "Charter" for Religious Congregations in *Conditae a Christo*, but in 1901, the *Normae* issued by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, recommended simply the three substantial and ordinary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. No fourth vow was to be added, apparently to preclude a multiplication of obligations.

According to the norms, the constitutions of religious institutes must be a book of an almost exclusively juridical nature: "There is no place in the constitutions for ascetic instructions, openly spiritual exhortations, and mystical considerations, all things that are treated more adequately in ascetic books. The constitutions in fact, must contain only the constitutive laws of the congregation and the decisions of the acts of the community, both as to what refers to the government and what refers to the discipline and the norm of life".[54]
Conditae a Christo did safeguard the rights of the Superior General in relation to Bishops, particularly for diocesan congregations. Bishops could not intervene in internal congregational matters but were responsible for relationships between the religious institute and his diocese.[55]

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[52] Bastien, #22 "*Ces citations, outré quélles n'apportent aucune valeur aux constitutions qui recoivent leur force de l'approbation du Saint-Siège, ont le grave inconvenient d'allonger le texte des constitutions et de le rendre peu clair*."
[53] Gallagher, "The Church and Institutes of Consecrated Life", http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/consecrated.htm, (accessed 25 March 2015); see also Bastien, 22-25.
[54] Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, *Norms According to which the Sacred Congregation for Bishops Usually Proceeds in the Approval of New Institutes of Simple Vows,* (Rome, 1901), #33.
[55] See Elizabeth Cotter, *The General Chapter in a Religious Institute with Particular Reference to the IBVM Loreto Branch*, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2006).

1917 Code of Canon Law

In 1908 the newly-established Congregation of Religious, became autonomous from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. In 1917 the Code of Canon Law was promulgated and the provisions of the *Normae* were included in the Code. General Norms were reissued in 1921 and constitutions of religious institutes had to be revised in accordance with the norms and receive the approbation of the Holy See.

In a recent article in *Global Sisters Report*, Carol Coburn cites the essay of historian, Mary Ewens OP, entitled, "Removing the Veil". Evans wrote that the Code required "the application of its prescriptions to the minute details of daily life [that] became a science engaging a whole corps of priest experts". The vow of obedience was foremost and was exercised and enforced in rigidity, uniformity, regulation and following "the letter of the law".[56] Superiors General were required to provide five-yearly reports to the Sacred Congregation on how the new Code was being implemented and received.

Obstacles to Pontifical Recognition

Although Pope Leo XIII had officially recognised institutes with simple vows as religious, some foundations still encountered obstacles in achieving the approbation of the Holy See. For example, the Medical Mission Sisters founded by Austrian-born Anna Dengel in the United States in 1925, were unable to profess religious vows officially as Canon Law forbade religious to study medicine, human physiology, or to engage in obstetric work because of a "clerical suspicion that the intimacy of medical work was harmful to chastity".[57] It was only in 1936 when the Church changed its regulations and approved Sisters' working in medicine and all of its branches that the Medical Mission Sisters could make public, canonical vows. That Congregation received the *Decretum Laudis* in 1959, nearly thirty-five years after its foundation.[58]

Reforms of Pope Pius XII

In December 1950, Pope Pius XII convened the first International Congress of Religious in Rome. The Pope urged the participants of this historic gathering to engage in a renewal of religious life. He stressed the importance of theological and

[56] See Carol K. Coburn, "Uneasy Alliance: A Look Back at American Sisters and Clerical Authority", *Global Sisters Report,* 13 July 2015, citing Mary Ewens, "Removing the Veil: The Liberated American Nun in the Nineteenth Century", *Working Papers Series* (Spring 1978), http://globalsistersreport.org/column/trends/uneasy-alliance-look-back-american-sisters-and-clerical-authority-27881, (accessed 5 August 2015).

[57] Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia*, (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 626.

[58] See Godelieve Prové, *Becoming Human. A Story of Transformation through Conflict and Healing*, (Delft: Eburon Publishers, 2004). Prové, of the Society of Medical Mission Sisters, has worked as a doctor in many African and Asian countries, before being elected superior general of her congregation. *Becoming Human* details the challenges and crises facing one religious congregation in its pursuit of *aggiornomento.*

professional education of those teaching and doing other professional work. He also appealed to congregations to dispense with outdated customs, irrelevant traditions and clothing that isolated them from the people they served. The Congress also encouraged the collaboration of religious institutes at national levels to develop bonds of unity between religious congregations in order to address common concerns.[59]

Two years later in 1952 the pope convened the first World Congress of Mothers General in Rome to encourage the process of renewal. An official of the Congregation for Religious, Archbishop Arcadio Larraona Saralegui devoted an entire session to the practical areas of religious life that needed attentive revitalization. Saralegui observed that books of statutes and directives of religious congregations had become oppressive. He raised questions about the archaic habits worn by many communities. He urged the abolition of class distinctions within congregations in order to bring about "absolute equality of rights and obligations"[60], and encouraged the use of the vernacular rather than Latin, for praying the Office.[61] In response to the encouragement of Pope Pius XII, the Canadian Religious Congress was one of the first national conferences of religious to be established in 1954. The Conference of Major Superiors of Women (CMSW) was launched in the United States in 1956. The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) was established in Rome in 1965 at the close of Vatican II. Pope Pius XII's promotion of the renewal of religious life paved the way for the inspiration and challenges of the Second Vatican Council.

The Impact of Vatican II on religious congregations and their constitutions

Constitutions of religious institutes of simple vows were largely characterized by their juridical content until Vatican II when conciliar documents addressed the state of religious life. *Lumen Gentium*[62] (hereafter *LG*) was key with its universal call to

[59] In 1965 Regina Mundi Institute was opened in Rome by the International Union of Superiors General to provide theological education for religious women. It was closed in 2006.

[60] The members of the RNDM General Chapter of 1947 voted to abolish the rank of Auxiliary/Lay Sisters as requested by the Vatican. The Superior General wrote that the Congregation be composed "of only one class of sisters, namely Choir Sisters, and that throughout the Congregation the existing Auxiliary Sisters be raised to the rank of Choir Sisters with equal right and privileges". In Asian provinces, a significant number of RNDMs were lay sisters, and therefore had not been able to be named as local or provincial superiors. The rapidly changing political situations in India and Vietnam meant that Indian and Vietnamese-born sisters might soon have responsibilities that had formerly been entrusted to European sisters. Mother Mary St Denis noted that "the charge of these houses [in Indo-china and India] would devolve on our native sisters in these regions". Letter to the Congregation of Margaret McSweeney, (Mary St Denis, Superior General), 24 November, 1947.

[61] Kelly Connors, "The Role of the Major Superior with Particular Reference to Apostolic Women's Religious Institutes in the United States", Doctoral Dissertation (Ottawa: St Paul University, 2011), citing Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, *The Transformation of American Catholic Sisters*, http://www.temple.edu /tempress/titles/814_reg.html, (accessed 15 May 2015).

[62] See *Lumen* Gentium, ("Dogmatic Constitution on the Church") in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations. A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language*, ed. Austin Flannery, 163-282, (Northport, N.Y./Dublin: Costello Publishing Company/Dominican Publications 1996).

holiness. Chapter VI specifically related to religious life, and the contemporary living of the evangelical counsels. In a major shift from the Norms promulgated by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in 1901, which, as we have seen, in many ways suppressed the particularity of religious institutes, *LG* not only made reference to the rules of religious institutes but encouraged their growth and flourishing according to the spirit of the founders: "The hierarchy, following with docility the prompting of the Holy Spirit, accepts the rules presented by outstanding men and women and authentically approves these rules after further adjustments. It also aids by its vigilant and safeguarding authority those institutes variously established for the building up of Christ's Body in order that these same institutes may grow and flourish according to the spirit of the founders" (*LG* #30).

Perfectae Caritatis[63] (hereafter *PC*) specifically called on religious institutes to engage in a process of renewal and adaptation by returning to their founding inspiration. It noted: "The adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time…it redounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore, let their founders' spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions – all of which make up the patrimony of each institute – be faithfully held in honour" (*PC* #2).

Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Letter, *Ecclesiae Sanctae* (hereafter *ES*) [64] published the following year, outlined new norms for the implementation of the conciliar decree and particularly the revision of constitutions. *ES* urged the careful study of the documents of Vatican II in order to promote a renewal of spirit and to put into effect the norms and teachings of the Council. Religious institutes were to ensure that members were fully and freely involved in the process of consultation regarding the preparation the Special General Chapter at which interim constitutions would be approved: "The general commission in preparing this Chapter should suitably provide for full and free consultation of the members and arrange the results of this consultation in time so that the work of the chapter may be helped and directed. It will be possible to accomplish this, for example, by consulting conventual and provincial chapters, by establishing commissions, by posing series of questions" (*ES* #4).

The apostolic letter also outlined the essential elements that should be included in new constitutions. The general laws of each institute (constitutions, rule, or whatever name they bear), should ordinarily include these two elements:

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[63] See *Perfectae Caritatis* ("Decree on the up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life"), in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations. A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language*, ed. Austin Flannery, 385-401, (Northport, N.Y./Dublin: Costello Publishing Company/Dominican Publications 1996).

[64] Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiae Sanctae, Norms for the Implementation of the Decree of the Second Vatican Council, Perfectae Caritatis*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19660806_ecclesiae-sanctae.html, (accessed 16 May 2015).

1. the evangelical and theological principles of the religious life and of its union with the Church, in suitable and clear words in which "the spirit of the founders and their specific aims and healthy traditions all of which constitute the patrimony of each institute are acknowledged and preserved";
2. the necessary juridical norms for defining clearly the character, purpose and means of the institute which norms should not be excessively multiplied but should always be presented in an adequate manner (*ES* #12).

The new directives insisted that both spiritual and juridical elements must be incorporated: "so that the principal codes of the institute have a stable foundation and that the true spirit and life-giving norm pervade them" (*ES* #13). At the same time, care should be taken to avoid a merely juridical or purely exhortatory text. Any matters which were obsolete should be deleted from the fundamental code of the institute (*ES* #14). Those norms however, which correspond with the needs of the present time, the physical and psychological conditions of the members, and particular circumstances should be set down in supplementary codes called "directories", "books of customs" or in books bearing similar titles.

The mandate issued to religious congregations at the close of Vatican II to adapt and renew were not options, and experimentation was encouraged.[65] Chapters were to be held within three years of the promulgation of *ES*: "This general chapter has the right to alter certain norms of the constitutions, or among Orientals the norms of the Typika, as an experiment, as long as the purpose, nature and character of the institute are preserved. Experiments contrary to the common law, provided they are to be undertaken prudently, will be willingly permitted by the Holy See as the occasions call for them. These experiments can be prolonged until the next Ordinary general chapter, which will have the faculty to continue them further but not beyond the chapter immediately following" (*ES* #6). Religious congregations took up the challenge with energy and enthusiasm. The 'experiments' referred to were intended to give reform a temporary or tentative character at first, to cautiously test each change in custom before making it permanent.

Following on Vatican II and *Perfectae Caritatis*, Pope Paul's 1971 Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelica Testificatio*[66]*,* urged religious congregations to return to the founding inspiration of their congregations and to rewrite their constitutions in the light of the teachings of Vatican II. The majority of religious congregations, female and male, responded to the call to renewal with a great sense of relief and major adaptations in religious life were introduced very quickly. Monastic structures and rhythms of life were adapted to suit apostolic religious; community prayer changed from Latin to the vernacular and from chanting to recitation; religious dress was

[65] See Barbara Thomas, "Canon Law and the Constitutions of Religious Congregations" *Supplement to the Way,* 50 (1984), 47-60.

[66] Pope Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations /documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19710629_evangelica-testificatio.html, (accessed 24 April 2015).

modified; there were new emphases on the spiritual, theological and professional education of members in preparation for ministry; the formation programmes for new members reflected the teachings of Vatican II. There was a greater emphasis on social justice and the option for the poor. Ministries began to shift from a focus on staffing congregational institutions to responding to the diverse needs of the poor in the wider community; some religious were challenged by the call to mission *ad gentes* in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Renewal programmes focusing on scripture studies and human development multiplied, while more participative structures for community life evolved. Women religious began to explore feminist thought and theologies. It was at this period however, that vocations to religious life began to decline. As new-found freedoms and structures developed and other life choices became more accessible, religious began to leave their congregations.[67] Following Vatican II, many congregations also experienced tensions, confusion and chaos as they responded to the call to renewal. For most Congregations the process of consultation with members and rewriting of Constitutions took several years. Interim Constitutions were prepared while they researched and worked closely on recovering their founding spirit. More definitive Constitutions were presented to the Holy See from the mid-1970s until the late 1980s.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law

In 1983, the Holy See ended the period of experimentation, thereby defining the fundamental norms for religious institutes in the Code of Canon Law[68] and in a document from the Sacred Congregation, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*.[69] Pope John Paul II stated that the Code of Canon Law to be the final document of Vatican II. It included the guiding principles of Church law as outlined in conciliar documents and *Ecclesiae Sanctae.* The Code denoted significant shifts in Canon Law since the 1917 Code. Canon 578 stresses fidelity to the patrimony of the Institute, affirming the unique charisms of each. Canon 587 lists what is to be included in Constitutions, including the identity of the Institute, the structure of governance, the content of the vows, discipline of its members, formation, and the rights of members. Seeking to balance control by the Church and allowing congregations freedom to be attentive to the Spirit, this canon also warns against the unnecessary multiplication of norms. Canon 606 specified that women and men religious should be treated equally: “Those things which are established for institutes of consecrated life and their members are equally valid in law for either sex, unless it

[67] In 1965 there were 179,954 women religious in the United States. By 1975 the number had decreased to 135,255; by 2001 to 78,095 and by 2014 to 49,883, see http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/rellife.html, (accessed 24 April 2017).

[68] *Code of Canon Law*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM, (accessed 24 April 2015).

[69] Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the* Apostolate, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccscrlife/documents/rc_con_ccscrlife_doc_31051983_magisterium-on-religious-life_en.html, 31 May 1983, (accessed 24 April 2015).

is otherwise evident from the context of the wording or the nature of the matter" (Canon 606). The Code recognises a measure of autonomy, especially in governance, for each Institute. It also ensures greater participation of members in the life and government of the institute and promotes the principle of subsidiarity. However, absent from the Code is a strong call for participation and personal responsibility.

Writing in 1984 soon after the publication of the Code, American Benedictine, Joan Chittister, acknowledged positive elements in the Code of Canon Law. She observed that some canons recognise the possibility of new needs in ministry, that authority is to be shared, that community is essential and that the Church is a body of adult believers with gifts. She welcomed emerging ideals of responsibility, community-building and discernment of gifts. However, she also critiqued the understanding of obedience and authority in the Code: "It does not do much to alter the hierarchical theology of obedience and authority … 'Superiors' are to govern their 'subjects' as 'children' of God, though in the spirit of service and for voluntary obedience (Canon 618)...The strong call for participation and personal responsibility, that might be accepted both from the Acts of the Apostles as well as Vatican II and contemporary culture, is absent from any discussion of authority in this Code. As a result, the emergence of team governments in religious institutes is denied, by virtue of the fact that authority is presumed to reside in a single person, a notion foreign both to the history of the early Church and the present culture…Decision-making in church governance is simply denied to the non-ordained, though participation in church ministry is encouraged".[70]

The importance of magisterial teachings on the writing and re-writing of constitutions by different religious congregations cannot be under-estimated and we will now turn to a closer examination of what such teachings have meant historically and contemporaneously for the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions.

[70] Joan Chittister, "The New Code and the Development of Religious Life", *Supplement to the Way*, 50 (1984), 113-121.

Chapter Three The Story of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions

The Congregation of Our Lady of the Mission offers a good example of a nineteenth century missionary congregation founded in France and which before the end of that century, had opened houses in Oceania, England and finally England's Indian Empire. Today the Congregation is present in Africa, Canada, Latin America, Asia, Europe and Oceania and the membership is very diverse in composition. The Western provinces, France, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Ireland, Australia and Canada, dominated the life of the Congregation until the last decades of the twentieth century but today Asian provinces and to a lesser extent, African and Latin American provinces and regions are assuming more importance as numbers decline in the older Western provinces.

In this chapter, the reader will be invited to see the historical developments that led to the re-writing of the 2014 Constitutions, developments that reflect the contemporary cultural and ethnic diversity of the Congregation. Then the importance of CICLSAL on Congregations rewriting their Constitutions will be examined. Finally, the study will also explore how the rewriting of Constitutions affects the interpersonal relations of ethnically and culturally diverse groups of Sisters. We will begin by considering how the impact of nineteenth century church law influenced Euphrasie's writing of Constitutions.

A Missionary Congregation is established

The Institute of Our Lady of the Missions is an international religious missionary congregation, founded in Lyon, France, in 1861, by Euphrasie Barbier, who was born in Caen, Normandy in 1829. She had previously sought membership in a newly established missionary congregation, the Sisters of Calvary in Cuves, Normandy, but political, historical and religious events in France meant the community, including Euphrasie, relocated to London. They hoped it would be possible to find in that great city, ministries that would ensure some financial remuneration. The Sisters began working under the direction of the priests of the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri, known as the Oratorians. However, Euphrasie soon experienced deep disquiet at the changing focus of the young Congregation as its attention shifted from preparing for foreign missions to supporting the Oratorian ministry in London. Euphrasie lamented the activism of the community and the lack of time for prayer and contemplation. When she learnt that the French Marist bishop of Wellington, New Zealand, Philippe Viard (1809-1872) was looking for religious sisters to teach in his diocese, Euphrasie responded positively to the opportunity presented to her. With the help of the Marist Fathers in France, she and a young English novice companion arrived in Lyon on the 15 August 1861, to prepare for mission in New Zealand. The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions came into being.

However, when Irish Mercy Sisters from Auckland arrived in Wellington in 1861, Euphrasie's Sisters were no longer required to teach there, and so the Lyon-based Marists saw an opportunity for Euphrasie to offer religious formation to French women, who were seeking to join the Marist missions in Oceania.[71] Louis-Jacques-Maurice Cardinal de Bonald (1787-1870) of Lyon approved the canonical erection of the novitiate and on 25 December 1861, Euphrasie and her companion began their novitiate. The new Congregation was registered with the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in Rome in 1862. Euphrasie made her perpetual vows on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, 3 June 1864. To an Act of Consecration to the Foreign Missions, and the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, Euphrasie added a fourth vow of zeal. On 18 August 1864, just three days after their first profession, four newly professed French RNDMs left France for their mission to New Zealand. They arrived in Napier on 25 February 1865, and quickly set up schools and training centres for children of European settler families and indigenous Maori.

During Euphrasie's life-time, ministries in New Zealand quickly expanded and houses were opened in several towns. Other new foundations were established in Deal, England (1870), in Armentières (1876), an industrial area in the north-east of France, and in Chittagong (1883), East Bengal. Despite opposition from Julien Favre, the Superior General of the Marist Fathers,[72] Euphrasie travelled extensively, often accompanying her new missionaries, visiting them, encouraging and challenging them, learning new languages with them and ensuring each foundation was established on a firm religious and spiritual foundation. During her second visit to Chittagong in 1886 she journeyed to Akyab, Burma, with a view to establishing a mission there in the near future. This happened in 1897, four years after Euphrasie's death.

Euphrasie always embraced diversity of nationality and novitiates were soon opened in New Zealand and Chittagong, India, to welcome local vocations. Euphrasie consciously sought to prepare her sisters for missionary life through a solid spiritual and religious formation, professional training in education and practical skills that would enable them to face the challenges of isolated missions. Manual labour was valued as integral to community life. Since a missionary should be able to turn her hand to many things, Euphrasie encouraged the Sisters to make their own shoes and furniture. The convent in Deal provided an environment where young Sisters from different parts of Europe could learn English in preparation for the foreign missions. In establishing the house in Armentières in 1876, Euphrasie saw the

[71] Marist women tertiaries from France were already involved in missions established by the Marist Fathers in Oceania. Most of these women eventually became the founding members of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, which was recognised as a Congregation of Pontifical Right in 1931.

[72] Julien Favre, letter to Euphrasie Barbier, 17 November 1868: "How many religious societies are there that work in the foreign missions, without their founders of Superiors General ever going there themselves? No doubt, it is necessary to be informed of the local customs and needs, but that can be done through people who are worthy of trust...If you maintain that it is absolutely necessary to see for yourself, you will be accused of having confidence only in yourself".

pastoral, educational and social ministries in which the Sisters were engaged in among factory workers as providing good training for those RNDMs who would be missioned to Oceania or Asia.

The First Constitutions

In accordance with the recommendation of the Holy See that new religious institutes should follow one of the major rules approved by the Church, Euphrasie adopted the Rule of Saint Augustine for her fledgling Congregation and as early as 1863[73] began to work on the first Constitutions of the Congregation with the help of Father Favre. Extracts of the first draft of the Constitutions were sent to the Marist tertiaries in the Pacific in 1864[74] inviting their observations. Although, the first draft was influenced by the Marist Constitutions, Euphrasie inserted her own imprint and particular insights into the Constitutions, in particular, her explanation of the name of the Congregation and the place of Mary, her understanding and expression of the Divine Missions, which differed from that of the Marists, as was her thinking around the necessary place of the cloister. Euphrasie also had copies of approved Constitutions from other Congregations for reference.[75]

The preliminary chapter of the first Constitutions included an explanation of the name of the Congregation and the place of Mary in relation to the Divine Missions: "In placing themselves under the patronage of Our Lady of the Missions, the Sisters desire to honour in a very particular way, the Divine Missions, which were the object of the ardent desires of Mary and which this Holy Virgin glorified by the most profound and loving adoration, by the most perfect fidelity and the most generous devotion".[76]

Decretum Laudis

Bruised and shaped by her experience with the Oratorians, Euphrasie was determined to safeguard the contemplative as well as the apostolic nature of her Congregation and was wary of being controlled by the Marist Fathers. She believed that missionary life needed to be balanced with a deeply contemplative spirit. Against the wishes of the Marist Superior General, she travelled to Rome to seek the approval of the Holy See for the Congregation. Favre wrote of his reservations to the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, Alessandro Cardinal Barnabò

[73] See Abbé Aimé Coulomb, *Notes*, quoted in Marie Bénédicte Ollivier, *Missionary Beyond Boundaries: Euphrasie Barbier, 1829-1893,* (Rome: Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, 2007), 155. Coulomb's ten books of handwritten notes, record summaries of his correspondence with Euphrasie Barbier. They are located in RNDM Archives, Rome.

[74] The eleven tertiaries then serving in the Pacific were invited to join the new Congregation and to follow a novitiate programme either in Lyon or in Sydney.

[75] Ollivier, *Missionary beyond Boundaries*, 186.

[76] Euphrasie Barbier, First Constitutions, 1869. This preliminary chapter was included in the printed version of the Constitutions in 1871 but was later removed following the directive of the Holy See, (see *Missionary beyond Boundaries*), 203.

(1801-1874), and expressed his frustration that Euphrasie had been encouraged in this by Cardinal de Bonald. He reminded Cardinal Barnabò that it was the Marists who had founded the institute.[77] In spite of Favre's objections, the *Decretum Laudis* was granted on 9 June 1869, recognizing the new Congregation as one of Pontifical Right. This decree established the Congregation as autonomous from the Marist Fathers. The approbation of the Constitutions was postponed to a later time. In the meantime, some animadversions or criticisms in the text required attention.

Conformity to Bizzarri's *Methodus*

Among the animadversions of the 1869 Constitutions prescribed by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and in conformity with Bizzarri's recently circulated *Methodus*, was the requirement that Euphrasie remove the Preface her explanation for her choice of name for the Congregation, Our Lady of the Missions. She was also required to delete the Act of Consecration for Mission that was made at the end of the first year of novitiate and the fourth vow of Zeal. Euphrasie received the Decree of Definitive Approbation[78] of the Congregation in on 1 October 1877 but was informed that the Constitutions would be approved at a later date.

Opposition from the Marist Superior General, Father Julien Favre SM

In a lengthy letter to Cardinal Barnabò,[79] outlining the history of the RNDM Congregation and his concerns, Favre highlighted the role he had played in the writing of the Constitutions.[80] On 19 October 1878, Favre also wrote to the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyon protesting a decision taken in 1877 by *Propaganda* in favour of Euphrasie in relation to the missions in Oceania.[81] Favre detailed the level of financial and moral support the Society of Mary offered to Euphrasie and her Sisters from the beginning of the foundation and over the years, including the work he and others did in writing the Constitutions, asserting again that the Marists had written the greater part.[82]

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[77] See Julien Favre, letter to Alessandro Cardinal Barnabò, Prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, 14 February 1869, (Rome: Archivio Padri Maristi).

[78] See Guiseppe Andrea Bizzarri, *Methodus quae a Sacra Congregatione Episcoporum et Regularium servature in approbandis novis institute votorum simplicium* included in *Collectanae* in Usum Secretariae SCEp et Reg. Romae, 1885, which details Bizzarri's procedures to ensure definitive approval of a religious institute of Pontifical Right.

[79] The Society of Mary and the Institute of Our Lady of the Missions were registered with *Propaganda Fide*. Euphrasie Barbier visited Rome seven times to obtain the approval of the Holy See for the Congregation and the Constitutions. In 1908 with the creation of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, *Propaganda's* jurisdiction in respect of religious institutes became more limited.

[80] See Julien Favre, letter to Cardinal Barnabò, 14 February 1869, (Rome: Archivio Padri Maristi).

[81] The decision related to a conflict over Euphrasie's insistence on safeguarding the contemplative aspect of the Congregation as prescribed in the Rule and Constitutions. Aloys Elloy SM (1829-1878) Bishop of the Navigators (Samoa and American Samoa) insisted that Euphrasie's demands were impractical in a mission context. *Propaganda* declared Euphrasie free from any blame in the matter but advised the withdrawal of the RNDMs in 1878.

[82] See Bernard Bourtot, ed., *Julien Favre: Second Supérieur Général De La Société De Marie: 1845-1885. Documents Pour L'étude Du Généralat Favre*, Vol. 2, Fontes Historici Societatis Mariae, (Rome: APM, 2012).

For Euphrasie, the Constitutions should be much more than a framework of rules and regulations. Her hope was that the Constitutions provide great clarity about the spirit of the Institute, which was both missionary and contemplative. For Euphrasie, the Constitutions would provide a strong and secure pathway, expressing the will of God for the members. They offered spiritual nourishment and support: "What is important is that we should be faithful to our Constitutions, Rules and customs and observe them with all our hearts for the love of God, swerving neither to the right nor to the left, but keeping a middle course which is perfection, without intermingling either our natural stiffness nor our lack of light, our character, strength or weakness which would make us give up one point of the Rule one time, another at another time, as soon as our virtue is put to the test".[83]

The Rule of Saint Augustine

As noted above, Euphrasie adopted the Rule of Saint Augustine. She reminded Father Bruno de Vinay, OFM Cap,[84] of the affiliation of the Congregation to the Augustinians: "Please remember that from the very beginning, that is, for about thirty years, we have always followed the Rule of Saint Augustine as well as the Constitutions, and that we are officially united to the Order of St Augustine by a two-fold tie – the first was granted to us some twenty years ago and the second, which is the closest link possible, was procured for us by Monsignor Sepiacci during our last visit (1887) to Rome".[85]

Euphrasie did not foresee a strict adherence to the ancient rule, for some aspects of it were impractical for a modern era: "If the application of one or other point of the Rule seems impossible, it is to the Constitutions that one must look to find out whether this particular point is practical or not."[86] It was the spirit of the Rule of St Augustine which attracted Euphrasie. For Augustine, friendship among members of the community and intimacy with God were central. The Rule of Saint Augustine embraced diversity, recognizing that members in the community reflected different backgrounds and experiences of life, and that each person had different needs. Frequently in her letters to the Sisters Euphrasie emphasized that the very reason for the community gathering together was to live in unity of spirit, having one soul and one heart entirely centred on God. Euphrasie was nothing if not practical. Concrete expression of the Rule's emphasis on "one soul and one heart entirely centred on God" (Rule #4) was demonstrated by Euphrasie's insistence on a 'common purse' whereby all was shared and each individual, community, region, or province received according to her or its need. In this way, community life should be an expression of love and respect for the other.

[83] Euphrasie Barbier, letter of 25 December 1887, to Mother Mary of the Seven Dolours, Nelson.
[84] Bruno de Vinay, OFM Cap., had been recently nominated by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to examine the Rule of Life of Religious Institutes. He was Euphrasie's spiritual director from 1869-1893.
[85] Euphrasie Barbier, letter of 22 May 1890 to Bruno de Vinay.
[86] Euphrasie Barbier, circular letter of 6 February 1888 to Superiors and Novices.

In pursuit of Definitive Approbation of the Constitutions

Euphrasie believed that the Constitutions were critical to fostering a spirit of unity in the Congregation whose members often lived in distant parts of the world. At the same time, Euphrasie was concerned that some of the Marists were undermining the significance of the Constitutions and trying to control the lives of the Sisters according to their own ends. Unsurprisingly, she wrote to the Archbishop of Lyon, Joseph-Alfred Cardinal Foulon (1823-1893), requesting him to lend his support for the approbation of the Constitutions: "It would be very helpful if, in your letter Your Eminence would stress once again the necessity and even urgency of a Final Approbation of the Constitutions of an Institute which, like ours, extends to the remote Missions and for this reason needs the protection and strength of its Constitutions to enlighten the Sisters, preserve unity, and the true Religious spirit among them".[87]

Euphrasie visited Rome for the last time in 1887 to present her report to *Propaganda Fide* on her visits to Chittagong and New Zealand, to submit her Constitutions to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and solicit definitive approbation. She entrusted de Vinay with the task of following up the approval. She lamented the fact that because the Constitutions had not yet been approved definitively, the Sisters were sometimes accorded little respect and were not taken seriously as either as religious or missionaries: "If all the steps we are taking and have been taking during the past five years in order to obtain this precious Definitive Decree, for which we have been asking from Rome for more than twenty-one years, result once more in a decree which is only provisional, the Institute will in fact, not have gained anything to strengthen and encourage it for the present and the future. Besides, Very Reverend Father, you have no idea how often in the missions, persons who should deal differently with us, treat us so lightly, and if I dare say so, treat with such little respect the Constitutions which have only a provisional approbation".[88]

In presenting her Constitutions for definitive approbation in 1887, Euphrasie again requested the approval of the fourth vow of zeal which had earlier been denied in 1869. Euphrasie added a note to the article of the Constitutions referring to this vow of zeal: "This is the fourth vow which we made right from the start (1861) but which in 1869 at the time of the first approval of the Constitutions and the Brief of Praise, we were told to keep simply as a virtue and to apply ourselves to practising it, and that later if we still wished to do so, we could repeat our petition anew and that this vow would probably be granted to us then. We are again expressing this wish, very humbly and filially…which is a particular character of our Institute".[89]

[87] Euphrasie Barbier, letter of June 1890 to Joseph-Alfred Cardinal Foulon, Lyon.
[88] Euphrasie Barbier, letter of 22 May 1890 to Bruno de Vinay.
[89] Note in Euphrasie's handwriting in the manuscript of the Constitutions she presented to Rome for definitive approval in 1888, inserted in the margin of article 136. Original accessed in CICLSAL Archives, 20 February 2015.

Explanation of Divine Missions

Euphrasie also elaborated her understanding of the Divine Missions and the Trinity as the source of all missionary activity. Her use of the term "Divine Missions" had been misinterpreted by the Sacred Congregation in their animadversions of the latest text of the Constitutions, concerned that she seemed to be referring to the Divine Mission of the Sisters. Euphrasie sent her explanation to de Vinay: "As for the expression 'Divine Missions', we have rewritten the article, adding two lines which, we hope, will give satisfaction, and show clearly that we, who are nothing, are not thinking of our poor missions, but only that of the Incarnate Word, sent by God, his Father, to redeem the human race and the divine mission of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son to bring about the sanctification of the Church of Christ, that is the most important reason for the existence of the Institute and its special form, as much for the interior as for the exterior".[90]

Suppression of theological and spiritual insights

In June 1890, de Vinay sent a copy of the Constitutions to Lyon "annotated by an experienced religious", advising that the preliminary chapter of the Constitutions had been suppressed entirely, the chapter on the virtues was transferred to the Directory and "any mention whatsoever of the vow of zeal is to be removed".[91] The flourishing of the distinctive spirit of the Congregation was obscured when all traces of Euphrasie's theological and spiritual insights into the Divine Missions, her desire for the sisters to take a fourth vow of zeal, and her explanation of the title of the Congregation were suppressed from the Constitutions. What remained was a largely a juridical text. Euphrasie made the necessary corrections and sent thirty copies back to de Vinay. She was greatly disappointed to learn that the Constitutions would be approved *ad septennium* (for seven years). De Vinay confirmed that this was required by the rules established by the Sacred Congregation for all religious families. The decree, he insisted, had the same value as definitive approbation. He tried to encourage Euphrasie to see the positive aspect of the decision: "The seven-year restriction is a very beneficial, simple way for perfecting what you will be able to judge, from experience, is useful. There is no difference in the intrinsic value of the approbation".[92]

Definitive Approbation of the Constitutions

It was several years after Euphrasie's death before the Constitutions were definitively approved by Pope Pius X on 6 July 1906. The suppression of Euphrasie's theological explanations and spiritual insights was consistent with the norms promulgated by the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars.

[90] Barbier, letter of 22 May 1890 to de Vinay.
[91] Cited in Ollivier, *Missionary beyond Boundaries*, 568.
[92] Bruno de Vinay, letter of 7 December 1890 to Euphrasie Barbier.

According to these norms, constitutions were to be documents of an almost exclusively juridical nature. Spiritual devotions, writings on the virtues and other characteristics could be included in another document such as a Directory. As noted in Chapter Two, the new Congregation for Religious was established by Pope Pius X and became autonomous from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in 1908. The 1917 Code of Canon Law included the provisions of the *Normae.* General Norms were reissued by the Sacred Congregation in 1921 and Constitutions had to be revised in accordance with them. The RNDM Constitutions were accordingly revised and approved in 1936. They remained virtually unchanged until the 1947 General Chapter made the important decision to remove the two-tiered system of lay and choir sisters in the congregation. That was the only significant change before 1969. The loss of Euphrasie's original insight into the Divine Missions as the source of all missionary activity, and its implications, are felt even to this day.

Early recognition of cultural diversity in the Congregation

During Euphrasie's lifetime the membership of the Congregation was already multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. Three novitiates had been established: Lyon, France (1861); Christchurch, New Zealand (1873); and Chittagong; East Bengal (1886). Women from different countries of Europe joined the novitiate in Lyon; Australian women joined the novitiate in Christchurch; and in Chittagong candidates were either European, Anglo-Indian, or representative of the different ethnic groups in East Bengal and Burma. Some of Euphrasie's letters indicated her awareness of culture shock experienced by her Sisters, and her subsequent willingness to make allowances for difference: "You tell me that everything seems strange to you, so strange that you cannot make head or tail of it. Well, my poor child, it is easy to see that everything is topsy-turvy".[93] She encouraged sisters to recognize that allowances must be made for cultural differences in community: “Be very attentive to this, for not being of the same disposition as your Prioress and not being familiar with English customs, but with those of your own country, it is inevitable that one thing or another will not be to your taste. I am not referring only to food, but to other things as well”.[94]

Although Euphrasie insisted on strict adherence to the Constitutions and could be intransigent in refusing to accommodate the demands of priests and bishops to change aspects of them, she made allowances for the Sisters who were living in challenging situations, particularly when their health was at stake. Having spent a total of nine months in Chittagong and experienced first-hand the conditions of the mission, she wrote encouragingly to the community members: “As regards the good Father who wants to see all of you at Mass every morning, it would be well for Mother Prioress and Mother Sub-Prioress to tell him politely and calmly that you also wish this very much, and that as soon as possible you and the Sisters will endeavour

[93] Euphrasie Barbier, letter of 13 April 1868 to Sister Mary of the Seven Sorrows, a young sister in Sydney.
[94] Euphrasie Barbier, letter of 27 July 1888 to Mother Marie de Chantal.

to be present, but just now the state of health of some among you leaves much to be desired, that you are suffering from the fatigue of the journey, and also from the climate and the work; that there is no abuse in this matter and that you assure Father that you will do better, as soon as you can. Perhaps it would help if you took some rest after dinner, especially those among you who are not well, in order not to be too exhausted in the afternoon. Then again, you could dispense one or other of the Sisters from the Night Office, or even the entire community, so as to glorify God first of all and then not to attract too much attention to your aches and pains, which men would not understand in any case".[95] In spite of these indications of different cultural contexts, Canon Law and the norms relating to religious life promoted uniformity rather than diversity and there was little recognition of cultural diversity in RNDM congregational documents until the 1979 Constitutions.

The impact of Vatican II and later Church teaching on RNDMs

After the RNDMs opened their first house in Vietnam in 1924 no new foundations were undertaken in the Congregation for over forty years, until Vatican II encouraged RNDMs to reclaim their founder's charism with its strong emphasis on mission, which RNDMs then interpreted as meaning sending Sisters on the foreign missions. From 1967 to 1971 new foundations were opened in Kenya by the United Kingdom and Ireland, in Peru by Canada, in Papua New Guinea by Australia, in Samoa by New Zealand, and in Senegal by France. With the exception of the foundation in Peru, the French, English, Australian and New Zealand provinces all opened houses in former colonies of their respective nations. The Asian provinces were not part of this missionary movement *ad extra,* although each province did open new missions *ad intra* among tribal and indigenous peoples within their countries. The political situation in both Burma and Vietnam made it impossible for these two provinces to even think of mission outside of their respective countries. Bangladesh too was recovering from the civil war that had culminated in the birth of a new nation state in 1971.

Responding to the mandate of *PC* and *ES,* the RNDMs convened a special General Chapter[96] in 1969 during which delegates studied the documents of the Second Vatican Council and prepared the first draft of *Interim Constitutions and Directives (ad experimentum)* which were accepted by the Nineteenth Special General Chapter in 1969 and amended twice in 1972 and 1975. Understandably earlier Constitutions had been written in French, although the 1936 edition of these had been translated

[95] Euphrasie Barbier, letter of 29 May 1888 to Mother Mary Ethelburga, Mother Marie de Chantal, and Mother Mary of the Nativity.

[96] Pope Paul VI's 1996 Apostolic Letter, *Ecclesiae Sanctae* required that "[a] special general chapter, ordinary or extraordinary, should be convened within two or at the most three years to promote the adaptation and renewal in each institute." See *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, Part II, "Norms for the Implementation of the Decree of the Second Vatican Council *Perfectae Caritatis*", #3, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19660806_ecclesiae-sanctae.html, (accessed 7 May 2014).

into English. The minutes of the special General Chapter of 1969 indicated that the language of the *Interim Constitutions* was an issue: “The matter of the Constitutions in French was raised and after some discussion, it was decided that the French Sisters would elect a committee which would translate the finalized English text into French. Before arriving at this decision, the Coordinator pointed out that there was to be one official text, an English one. The French would simply be a translation of it. Membership of the commission was also considered; initially it was felt that a French Sister should be included on such a commission but in view of the preceding decision, it was thought that this would not be necessary. The Assembly favoured three English-speaking Sisters on the Commission”.[97]

Discovery of suppressed documents

For the RNDMs, the research undertaken prior to rewriting the Constitutions, led to the exciting discovery in the archives of the Congregation of Religious and Secular Institutes, of what is believed to be the handwritten manuscript of the Constitutions submitted by Euphrasie to the Sacred Congregation in 1887.[98] The document contained a preliminary chapter which explained the meaning of the name and the spirit of the Institute. The spirituality of Euphrasie and her insight into the Divine Missions as the source of all missionary activity were also discussed in this manuscript. In 1978 a second significant document came to light in the archives of the Marist Fathers: a printed copy of the first Constitutions of 1871, which also included the preliminary chapter, indicating that from the very beginning, the Congregation was enriched by Euphrasie's insight into the Divine Missions and the role of Mary: “By placing themselves under the title of Our Lady of the Missions, the Sisters wish to honour in a very special way the Divine Missions which are the sole object of Mary’s deepest aspirations and which this Holy Virgin glorified by the intensity of her love and adoration, her perfect fidelity and unstinting devotedness”.[99] As previously noted, the prefaces of both the 1871 and 1890 versions of Euphrasie’s Constitutions had been suppressed by the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars.[100]

Appointment of Constitutions’ Commission

In 1975 the General Council nominated a special commission to work on the preparation of a new text of the Constitutions which would better reflect the original charism and spirituality of Euphrasie. *PC* stressed the importance of recognizing diverse realities and adapting the Constitutions of religious Congregations to different social, cultural and economic conditions: “The manner of living, praying and

[97] Minutes of the 1969 Special General Chapter, July-August 1969, Hastings, England.
[98] Roberta Morrissey RNDM, "Constitutions with a Difference", 16 June 2000, unpublished article. Canadian Roberta Morrissey was a General Councillor from 1972 to 1984.
[99] Extract from the preface of the Constitutions of Euphrasie Barbier submitted to the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars in 1869.
[100] Morrissey, "Constitutions with a Difference".

working should be suitably adapted everywhere, but especially in mission territories, to the modern physical and psychological circumstances of the members and also, as required by the nature of each institute, to the necessities of the apostolate, the demands of culture, and social and economic circumstance" (*PC* #3).

Membership of the Commission changed at different meetings, although it included RNDMs from France, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. One of the members of the General Council during this period came from North East India, but no other Asian sister, nor any sister with international missionary experience, was a member of the Commission. The writing of the 1979 Constitutions was entrusted to the Irish general councillor Anna Canning (Mary Fidelis), while the French Superior General Marie Bénédicte Ollivier, wrote an accompanying commentary intended to flesh out the spiritual and theological significance of the Constitutions.

While RNDMs from the Western provinces were somewhat involved in a process of consultation for the rewriting of both the *Interim Constitutions* and the 1979 Constitutions, the participation of Asian sisters was limited. Sisters in Burma were virtually cut off from the Congregation after the foreign missionaries were forced to leave in 1966.[101] The collapse of the American-backed government in South Vietnam, the end of the war there in 1975, and the ensuing social upheaval in the country, meant that Vietnamese sisters were also isolated from the rest of the Congregation.[102] A Bangladeshi sister recalls discussions on the Constitutions in her province, but said the work was mostly carried out by foreign sisters because English was still a struggle for the majority of Bengali Sisters. It is unclear how the sisters in India participated in the consultation. Although new foundations had recently been made in Kenya, Peru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Senegal, there were no local sisters in these countries at this time.

Approbation of the 1979 Constitutions

The 1979 Constitutions were strongly influenced by Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*[103] and were the fruit of ten years' study and reflection. The draft text was presented to the General Chapter of 1978 and received the official approbation of the Holy See on 8 December 1979. As the letter from the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes affirmed, these Constitutions captured the depth and beauty of Euphrasie's charism: "These

[101] The Superior General and a member of the Council were able to make a brief visit to Burma in 1973 and again in 1979 to introduce the new Constitutions to the Sisters. In 1980 the slight easing of restrictions on travel allowed Burmese one sister to travel to Rome for studies and three years later two sisters were permitted to join the General Chapter in Rome in 1984.

[102] In a personal communication, a Vietnamese sister informed Maureen McBride that the Sisters in Vietnam were not even aware that new Constitutions had been completed. The text of the approved Constitutions was surreptitiously brought into the country by friends of Rome-based RNDMs.

[103] Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* 8 December 1975, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html, (accessed 7 May 2014).

Constitutions are a well-balanced document in which the difficult task of blending the spiritual with the juridical has been harmoniously achieved. The theology seems sound. There is a marked sensitivity to Scripture and an exceptionally beautiful penetration of the Charism of the Institute. The Trinitarian and Marian spirituality of Euphrasie inspire the whole text and gives a strong sense of identity".[104]

The 1983 Code of Canon Law required the amendment of some articles of the 1979 Constitutions, particularly in relation to formation and governance. The 1979 Constitutions were promulgated in the Congregation until the approbation of the new Constitutions on 8 December 2014. In order to understand the reasons for rewriting the Constitutions it is helpful to examine the profile of the Congregation today.

Shifts in the Congregation Provoking a Re-examination of the 1979 Constitutions from the 1980s onwards

The 1980s and 1990s saw a paradigm shift take place in the Congregation. In many provinces, community life became less institutionalized as large communities were increasingly replaced by smaller groups of Sisters. Suddenly, former structures that were more suited to large communities responsible for institutional apostolates, e.g., owning, managing, and providing teachers for large schools and colleges, often with boarding hostels attached, particularly in the western provinces, were found wanting:

1. community members were more likely to be involved in diverse ministries which affected the long-established regular rhythm of prayer, meal times, recreation and meetings so more flexible schedules were introduced;
2. RNDMs in western provinces began to wear secular dress, and the congregational emblem, a cross on which RNDM was engraved, while in Asia some sisters adopted the dress of their country or state usually in uniform colours, for example Bangladesh and parts of India wore saris, apart from North East India where Khasi RNDMs adopted the *jainsem*; Burmese RNDMs wore the *htamein* or *longyi*, and Vietnamese RNDMs the *âo dài*;
3. in some western provinces some sisters began to live singly, generally for reasons of ministry or health;
4. community prayer was more varied and drew on a variety of inspirational texts and songs. In Asian provinces community prayer became more inculturated with the introduction of traditional musical instruments and songs to replace western hymns;
5. spiritual direction was encouraged and some RNDMs began to seek out women directors. Directed retreats were increasingly preferred to preached retreats;
6. involvement in collaborative ministries with other religious and lay people was fostered;

[104] Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, "Letter to the Superior General, 19 November 1979".

7. RNDMs became involved in justice and peace organizations, both church-based and secular;
8. relationships within the community and beyond the community, shifted. The role and responsibilities of the "superior" of a community of three or four members were now vastly different. Personal responsibility and accountability were emphasized. Personal allowances, albeit small, meant that some 'permissions' were no longer required and individuals could exercise greater decision-making in relation to personal needs and expenditure. In some provinces the superior of the community "disappeared" as the members shared responsibility for the life and mission of the community. Leadership and authority were no longer seen to be vested in one person, and more feminine models were adopted at congregational level and in some provinces and regions.

In post Vatican II foundations in Kenya, Peru, Senegal, Samoa, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines, the composition of communities became increasingly multi-cultural and multi-ethnic, particularly in Senegal where the mission had been founded from France by a Swiss, a Vietnamese and an English RNDM, and the Philippines, which was begun by an RNDM from Bangladesh and another from India. In the early 1990s when the Western provinces could no longer provide personnel for the regions they had founded after Vatican II, it was decided that responsibility for those regions and for any new mission initiatives should belong to the General Council not to provincial councils. This development effectively removed the older provinces from direct involvement in the governance of post-Vatican II foundations. From the 1980s, RNDM, like many other religious Congregations, saw a rapid decline in vocations in most western provinces, although they remained steady in Asian provinces, and looked promising in Kenya.

Disjunction between 1979 Constitutions and the RNDM lived experience

As part of the preparation for the 1996 General Chapter, RNDMs everywhere were invited to share their reflections on the 1979 Constitutions in a congregational journal.[105] At the General Chapter of 1996 there was a strong desire from some provinces to rewrite the Constitutions because of their concerns about governance structures. No decision was taken by the delegates as it was felt that there had been no prior consultation at the wider congregational level. The question of rewriting was again discussed at the Enlarged General Council Meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2006. Here it was agreed to revise only the chapter on governance because it was felt that most of the changes that had taken effect in the Congregation were related to governance. However, this attempt quickly revealed the fact that if one chapter of the Constitutions were to be changed, all chapters were affected. Only a complete

[105] See "RNDM Reflections: Revisiting Our Constitutions", *RNDM Journal, January 1996.*

rewrite of the Constitutions could address the needs as they had been expressed by RNDMs.

The 2008 General Chapter's decision to rewrite the Constitutions was a response to the shifts that had taken place in the Congregation from 1978 to 2008. Governance was of particular concern since actual practice no longer reflected what was written in the Constitutions.[106] Another influence that lay behind the decision to rewrite the Constitutions, particularly the section on governance was feminism, that impulse that encouraged the empowerment of women, and movement beyond hierarchical structures. This influence was particularly characteristic of the older English-speaking provinces. Therefore, inclusive language should be adopted and more participatory and inclusive processes and structures included. It was considered that the chapter on mission needed to be redefined and the missionary identity of the Congregation expressed more clearly. With a burgeoning of vocations in Bangladesh, India and Vietnam, a small but steady number in Myanmar, a few women entering in the Philippines and Latin America, but very few entering in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, France, or the United Kingdom and Ireland, there were significant demographic shifts taking place and a greater plurality of languages and cultures represented in the Congregation. It was of vital importance that new Constitutions use simpler, clearer inspirational language to express key theological concepts and insights.

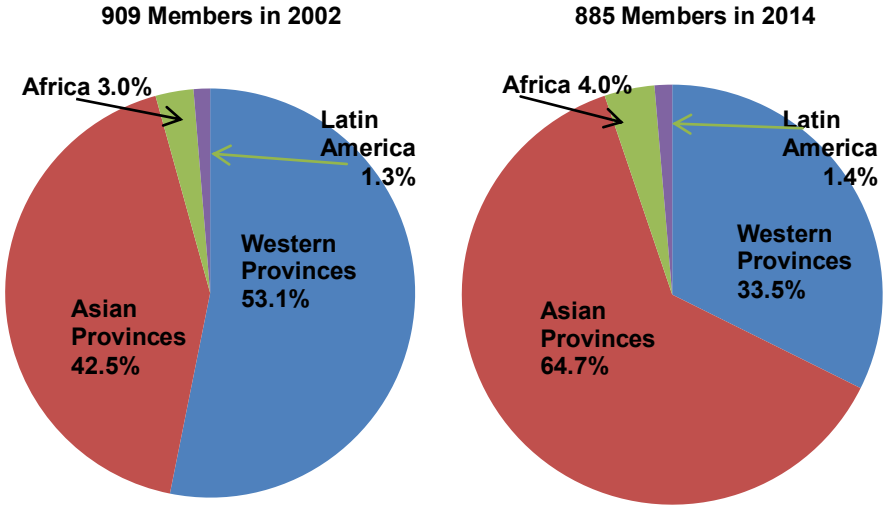
Present profile of the Congregation

Never a large Congregation, membership in the RNDM Congregation peaked in 1971 with 1270 sisters. After Vatican II, the subsequent reclaiming of Euphrasie's emphasis on foreign missions saw western provinces establish new foundations in Kenya in 1967, Papua New Guinea in 1968, Peru in 1968, Samoa in 1969 and Senegal in 1971. The provinces of Asia did not participate in this movement *ad extra* but opened new missions among tribal and-or economically deprived communities within their own countries. The first new foundation established by Asian Sisters was in the Philippines in 1987. In 2009 the CLT launched a new missionary endeavour in an effort to provide well-formed personnel for involvement in new missionary initiatives. More than fifty RNDMs participated in three successive mission preparation programmes in the Philippines, prior to new ministries being undertaken by Burmese Sisters in Thailand (2010) working in collaboration with Marist Fathers, Vietnamese Sisters in Laos (2010), and RNDMs from Vietnam and New Zealand in Kazakhstan (2011, closed 2015), and Taiwan (2012). The Bangladesh, Indian,

[106] For example, vice-provinces no longer existed and the existence of regions, their structures of governance and representation were not recognized in the 1979 Constitutions; province assemblies had replaced elective provincial chapters; meetings of the Enlarged General Council as a consultative body to the Congregation Leadership Team was not included in the 1979 Constitutions. Articles relating to Canon Law that had been previously located in the Directives needed to be transferred to the Constitutions. The establishment of Advisory Boards at congregation and province level was added to the 2014 Constitutions.

Burmese, Vietnamese, Kenyan and the United Kingdom and Ireland provinces also opened new missions within their countries from 2009 to 2014.

Today there are approximately 875 RNDMs present in twenty-four countries in Africa, Asia, North and South America, Europe and the Pacific. The profile of the Congregation embraces a great diversity of cultures, languages, traditions and experience. Generational diversity is a feature of Asian communities of more than six members with the youngest members often being in their early twenties, and the oldest members in their eighties or nineties. A similar generational diversity exists in Africa and Latin America, where the communities are generally small, and the few older members are missionaries from western countries. The Congregation is facing a moment of transition as it experiences a shift in energies with vocations declining in Western Provinces and increasing significantly in Asian Provinces and Regions.



The Changing Demographics for the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, 2002- 2014

However, membership continues to grow, particularly in Asia. A comparison of the statistics from 31 December 2002 and those of 31 December 2014 points to significant shifts. In 2002 there were 922 members of whom 266 (29%) were below the age of 40. There were 400 (43.4%) in Western Provinces and 475 (51.5%) in Asian Provinces and Regions. Of the remaining 46, 31 (3.4%) were in Africa and 15 (1.6% in Latin America.

On 31 December 2014, 272 sisters, 30% of the total number of professed sisters in the Congregation, were below the age of 40. There were 45 novices and 35 postulants. The Asian provinces, regions and new foundations had 526 (61%)

members with a median age of 47. As with many other religious congregations founded in Europe or North America, RNDMs in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom and Ireland, have not received new vocations for several years and membership is rapidly diminishing in these parts of the Congregation. The province that has decreased most rapidly in the ten years from 2004 to 2014 is the United Kingdom and Ireland. Numbers fell from 163 on 31 December 2004 to 100 on 31 December 2014, while Vietnam by contrast, has increased the most dramatically from 98 at the end of 2004 to 146 at the end of 2014. Over two-thirds of the Congregation is now present in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The median age of the Congregation in 2004 was 58.8 and by 2014 had lowered to 56.9. These figures highlight the diminishment of Western provinces, while growth has been most obvious in Asia, although this growth is not evenly spread. For example, there are few Filipina vocations while in India South so long blessed by vocations to religious life from Kerala is now experiencing a slight decline in numbers.

Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions
Changing demographics of RNDMs in provinces and regions as at March 2018

Province	25-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	61-70 years	71-80 years	81-90 years	91 years +	Sub-total	Median age
Aotearoa New Zealand & Samoa				3	4	38	28	9	**82**	**79.4**
Australia						10	5	1	**16**	**79.4**
Bangladesh	11	29	26	12	13	13	6	1	**111**	**48.2**
British Isles & Ireland		1	2	1	2	27	36	14	**83**	**81.7**
Canada		2		1	4	7	20	5	**39**	**79.2**
France		4	2	3	4	4	5	4	**26**	**69.7**
India Central	12	20	8	14	1	2	4		**61**	**44.3**
India North-east	12	21	14	11	7	8	4	2	**79**	**49.2**
India South	12	9	10	8	8	5			**52**	**47.0**
Kenya		7	13	3	1	1			**25**	**45.6**
Latin America		3	4	1	2	1			**11**	**49.7**
Myanmar & Thailand		13	20	14	6	10	4		**67**	**45.3**
Philippines		3	10	2	1				**16**	**50.7**
Rome			4	3		1			8	
Davao Philippines		1	1		1				3	
South Sudan			2		1	3			4	
Taiwan		2	2	1					5	
									20	**47.3**
Senegal		3	2	1		1			**7**	**??**
Vietnam	24	50	41	13	16	6	7	1	154	
Laos			2	1					3	
USA			1						1	
									158	**45.1**

Average age: 56.2 years
Median age: 56.3
Total number: 856

It is important to note too, that the mission in Papua New Guinea which was begun by the Australian province in 1969, closed in 2011. In Papua New Guinea, the American-born bishop in the Southern Highlands Province had required that RNDMs support his newly-established diocesan foundation rather than open their own novitiate, and episcopal policy was somewhat similar in Senegal although in more recent years one Senegalese woman has been accepted into RNDM formation programmes. This meant that if RNDM novitiates were never a possibility, and as the median age soared in the original sending provinces, maintaining an RNDM presence became more problematic in countries such as Papua New Guinea. Samoa, where RNDMs had returned in 1970, re-joined the New Zealand Province in 1998, partially because of declining numbers of Samoan sisters. Today there are four Samoan RNDMs. RNDMs went to Beijing and Kazakhstan in 2010 and 2011 respectively but have subsequently left both places. These changing demographics of both growth and decline will have major implications for the Congregation in the coming years.

It is perhaps useful at this to identify some of the reasons that lie behind the growth of the Congregation. First, the Congregation has a long history of missionary presence in the Indian sub-continent and the adaptations made around liturgy, ministry, life-style and dress after Vatican II perhaps spoke more to intending candidates' reality. This reason is not without its challenges as inculturation, particularly around the vexed question of religious habit, is sometimes seen as a factor that discourages intending candidates. Second, political factors have played a significant role as foreign missionaries left, and separate provinces had to be established in East Pakistan (Bangladesh today) and India in 1968. A novitiate had already been established in Shillong, India in 1964, although tension between the Indian and Chinese governments meant the novitiate was moved to Bengaluru (Bangalore) in 1972. Burma became a Vice-Province in 1969 with thirteen Burmese sisters remaining, after foreign missionaries had to leave, and a novitiate was opened in Pyay, Burma, in 1970, as it was impossible for Burmese sisters to move outside of their country. Third, as local sisters took up leadership and formation roles a few candidates joined the novitiates in each country, but by the year 2000 the numbers began to increase. India was divided into three Vice-Provinces in 1995 because of the vastness of the country and the lengthy journeys leaders were obliged to make to visit communities. While still relatively small in membership, these vice-provinces became canonically established as provinces in 2000 although there is one shared novitiate in Bengaluru. Numbers have increased in each province since. In Vietnam, the post-war years from 1975 into the 1990s were extremely difficult, but candidates were still welcomed and the novitiate programme was adapted to the circumstances. From the beginning of the new millennium, there have been around fifteen to twenty young women received as novices in Vietnam. Fourthly, poverty and a thirst for education attracted a number of aspirants to the Congregation, and some of those aspirants who gained pre-university qualifications while living with RNDM communities left before beginning a novitiate programme.

In Kenya, the number of young women seeking to join the Congregation has been greater than that of other post-Vatican II RNDM foundations, but it has not been dramatic. The province welcomed its first candidates in 1988 and today there are more than twenty Kenyan sisters coming from different ethnic groups, the majority coming from the Kamba tribe, who lived in and around Machakos, where the RNDMs first lived and worked. Kenyan sisters are serving in the Philippines, South Sudan and on the Congregation Leadership Team. The first Senegalese RNDM entered the Congregation in 2004 and made her novitiate in Kenya. Of the five foundations begun after Vatican II by England, Australia, France, New Zealand and Canada – Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, Samoa and Latin America – Kenya is undoubtedly the strongest number-wise and more research is required to explain the reasons for its growth.

It is apparent that the Congregation embraces considerable diversity, with RNDMs coming from different cultural, ethnic, socio-economic, religious and theological worlds. Most importantly there are differing levels of education and professional qualifications in all provinces, and often enough, younger sisters have received and are still receiving more education opportunities than older religious. This can be a source of inter-generational tension when older RNDMs remember how much they were asked to do with very little professional formation. With the youngest members of the Congregation in their early twenties and the oldest members over a hundred years, inter-generational differences are also a significant factor in proposing, understanding and articulating a common vision. Sisters are engaged in a wide variety of ministries depending on the country and the local needs. Despite such adversity, there is a common formation programme across the Congregation adapted to local situations, and young RNDMs preparing for perpetual vows join together for a six-month international programme in Davao, Philippines.[107]

The Decision to Rewrite the Constitutions

In 1978 the French Superior General Marie Bénédicte Ollivier RNDM elaborated the spirituality of Euphrasie Barbier in her seminal work, *Straight is My Path*,[108] which was intended to expand on the essence of Euphrasie's spirituality, in particular her understanding of Divine Missions. In 1982 at an Enlarged General Council meeting held in Bangalore India, Ollivier caught the imagination of the Congregation in her presentation of its missionary nature. Two key words, "internationality" and "mobility" generated great excitement and prompted a new missionary impetus in the Congregation. Nevertheless, there also remained a sense of confusion and tension

[107] Balay Euphrasie was opened in Davao, Philippines in 2006. One hundred and ninety RNDMs (in groups of between eighteen and twenty-five) have participated in the programmes of preparation for perpetual vows. Of the total number of participants two have left the Congregation after making their perpetual vows.

[108] See Marie Bénédicte Ollivier, *Straight is My Path: Spirituality of Euphrasie Barbier, Foundress of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions*, (Rome: Institute de Notre des Missions, 1978).

among some members as they struggled to understand the missionary identity of the Congregation.

In 1983 the Holy See promulgated the Code of Canon Law. As discussed in Chapter Two, there were significant changes in some of the Canons relating to religious life, which meant that the General Chapter of 1984 amended the Constitutions to conform to the 1983 Code. Subsequent General Chapters of 1990, 1996 and 2002 made further amendments to the Constitutions. However, changes reflecting the understanding of RNDM missionary identity that had been articulated in general chapter documents from 1984 onwards, were not incorporated into the Constitutions. In particular, the evolving reality of intercultural communities, the need for shorter and simpler Constitutions and the impact of feminist theologies particularly in the English-speaking world lay behind the call for new constitutions.

At the 1996 General Chapter the question of rewriting the Constitutions was raised formally for the first time, but no decision was then taken because it was felt that the Constitutions had only been approved seventeen years previously. In 2004 the Congregation marked twenty-five years since the approbation of the 1979 Constitutions. Therefore, in preparation for the Enlarged General Council scheduled to meet in St Rambert, France, October 2004, RNDMs were encouraged to read, reflect and pray with the Constitutions that had shaped their lives and ministries for over a quarter of a century. At the meeting, province and region leaders raised concerns about the chapter in the Constitutions relating to governance. From discussions that had taken place in the provinces and regions, Sisters recognized that much had changed in the way in which leadership was exercised at all levels in the Congregation, and that much of what was written in the chapter, "Unity in Charity" was no longer appropriate, and needed revision. While Sisters appreciated the depth of the theology and the evolving spirituality of the Congregation reflected in the 1979 Constitutions, some were unhappy about its theology of mission and hoped for a more contemporary understanding of Trinity and the Divine Missions that would reflect insights from feminist and liberation theologies and give more emphasize to the creative role of the Spirit in mission.[109] Some RNDMs felt there were still vestiges of a more monastic life-style that were inconsistent with apostolic religious life. Many RNDMs felt that the language was difficult for younger members to understand and there was a strong urge to have future Constitutions written in inclusive language.

In 2006 at the Enlarged General Council meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, a Canadian RNDM, canon lawyer Betty Iris Bartush was invited to address the meeting on the question of rewriting or revising Constitutions. Lengthy discussions resulted in an agreement to revise only the chapter on governance. An attempt to achieve this was aborted when it was soon evident that if one chapter were changed the entire Constitutions would be affected. Only a complete rewrite of the Constitutions could

[109] See Susan Smith, *Women in Mission, From the New Testament to Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007).

address the needs as they had been expressed by the members of the Congregation.[110]

In preparation for the general chapter of 2008 further discussions took place in provinces and regions regarding the 1979 Constitutions. At the 2008 General Chapter the question of rewriting the entire Constitutions was discussed at length, and as Bartush pointed out: "The new mandate in the 1983 Code of Canon Law regarding 'Common Life' was not fully developed in our thinking and living, and certainly not in our Constitutions. Nor did we fully understand at that time the revolutionary implications of implementing concepts like collegiality, participation, collaboration, subsidiarity into our system of governance".[111] She also observed that at every General Chapter from 1984 until 2008, some amendments to the 1979 Constitutions had to be made: "As we uncovered and deepened our understanding of our founding charism, we realized that the structures we had put in place in 1978 did not promote the life and mission of the Congregation. In fact, it hindered it. So, we amended, and then amended, and then amended the amendments. The result has been considerable confusion. It is generally the persons in leadership who experience this confusion because they are responsible for Governance".[112] When the decision was taken all but one delegate voted in favour of a complete rewrite of the Constitutions rather than a simple revision.

Reflecting the premise that law follows life, the 2008 General Chapter decision was a response to the shifts that had already taken place in the Congregation from 1978 to 2008. Of particular concern was the chapter on governance, as practice in the Congregation did not reflect what was written in the 1979 Constitutions. Furthermore, the chapter on mission needed to be redefined and the missionary identity of the Congregation expressed more clearly. Inclusive language should be adopted and more feminine processes and structures should be characteristic of a congregation committed to the care of women and children. Recognizing the demographic shifts that were taking place, and the plurality of languages and cultures represented in the Congregation, it was of vital importance that the new Constitutions use simple and clear language to express key theological concepts and insights. An additional factor, not referred to at the time, but which is particularly significant, is that almost 200 RNDMs (23% of the Congregation) were born after 1979. The 2014 Constitutions needed to be relevant to a post Vatican II generation.

[110] In her presentation, Betty Iris Bartush had proposed to the members of the EGC that a complete rewrite of the Constitutions was required rather than a piece-meal effort.

[111] Constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority of general chapter delegates and must be approved by CICLSAL.

[112] Betty Iris Bartush RNDM, "Possible Revision of Constitutions", paper presented to 2008 General Chapter, Pattaya, Thailand.

Chapter Mandate

The Chapter delegates outlined the mandate to the newly elected Congregation Leadership Team:

> The Congregation Chapter 2008 mandates a rewriting of the Constitutions and General Directives. This mandate is to be carried forward by the Congregation Leadership Team who will appoint a committee to:
>
> 1. develop and distribute material to prepare and aid the members for this work of faith;
> 2. employ persons with relevant expertise to companion the committee, e.g. canon lawyer, theologian, digital technologist;
> 3. choose at least two persons on the committee to write a preliminary draft of the Constitutions and general directives;
> 4. distribute the draft(s) to the membership with clear guidelines and direction for inviting responses;
> 5. prepare a final draft to be presented to the Congregation chapter 2014, or earlier if possible.
>
> The work of rewriting the Constitutions is a work of faith, and this committee will need to establish its rhythm of work and prayer. They are to be guided by the criteria approved by the Congregation chapter. The committee is directly responsible to the Congregation leadership team, who has the authority to make any necessary changes and/or additions to facilitate the work.
>
> The text will reflect the fundamental intuition of Euphrasie Barbier, and our on-going commitment and growing consciousness that "We are One, We are Love".[113]

In this chapter, the RNDM Congregation and its origins have been explained. The impact of church law on Euphrasie's first draft constitutions has been critiqued, and subsequent reductionist nature of the first Constitutions explained. Changes that have occurred in the Congregation since the writing of the 1979 Constitutions and the demographic shifts that have taken place, the important factors which led to the decision at the 2008 general chapter to rewrite the Constitutions have been identified. The next chapter will focus more on the actual process followed by the Congregation in rewriting its Constitutions.

[113] *RNDM Earth Community, We are One, We are Love*, General Chapter Paper, Pattaya, Thailand, 2008, 23.

Chapter Four Setting the Scene

The rewriting by a religious congregation of their constitutions is a challenging process, one which RNDMs entered into with both hope and some trepidation in 2009. Many RNDMs hoped that any new constitutions would recognise societal and theological changes around the role of women in society and church. Likewise, it was anticipated that an awareness of the growing ethnic and cultural shifts experienced in RNDM life since 1979 would be reflected in the language of new constitutions. But there was also an anxiety that much that had been, and still was significant in the shared RNDM traditions could be lost in any rewriting. There was also a concern that changing attitudes in some of the Western provinces around community life, and around the relationship of religious women to the institutional church, if included in new constitutions, could prove problematic for some Asian provinces.

The recently approved 2014 Constitutions (see Appendix) are the outcome of four years' consultation, reflection, and revisions of draft texts. Province and region reports demonstrated that those possible hopes and fears were part of the RNDM input to the CLT and Constitutions Committee. Fortunately, they were then addressed in ways that were theologically nuanced and pastorally sensitive. Subsequent chapters will show that unity and diversity are not in binary opposition. Rather unity in diversity is today an essential part of RNDM self-understanding as the Congregation farewells the euro-centrism of its pre-Vatican II story. The use of Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter CDA) methodology will allow the reader to appreciate both the origins and reality of diversity characteristic of contemporary RNDM life.

The ecclesial context in which RNDM Constitutions came to birth, 1867-2014

The impact of the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815) on the life of the French Church and French religious life cannot be under-estimated. The Revolution's leaders created a new and official religion that deified reason and identified French Catholicism as counter-revolutionary. Executions, voluntary and involuntary exile meant it was difficult for Catholics "to regard the Revolution as anything but the work of the devil".[114] The sufferings of so many perhaps explain the reasons for the sometimes "mindlessly reactionary policies of Catholics in nineteenth-century France"[115] and the Church's rejection of the social and intellectual changes that were emerging.

However, the Revolution did not mean the disappearance of the Church which flourished and expanded both at home and abroad from 1815 onwards. But it was a

[114] Ralph Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism 1789-1914*, ed. Hugh McLeod and Bob Scribner, Christianity and Society in the Modern World Series (London: Routledge, 1989), 53.
[115] Ibid., 52.

conservative church and "embraced Ultramontanism which promoted an emphasis on obedience to, and affirmation of centralized papal authority".[116] As Guiseppe Albergio wrote, the "universalist and unidimensional concept [of Ultramontanism] increases the centralization of the ecclesial organization, and at the same time, the horizontal dynamism of communion gives way to an authority descending from the top of the ecclesial pyramid toward the obedience of the rank and the file".[117] However, if Ultramontanism is recognized as "a reaction against eighteenth-century attempts by Europe's Catholic monarchs to limit the authority of the pope within their countries, it is easier to appreciate why many Catholics believed that loyalty to Rome safeguarded important rights and encouraged a more universalist outlook".[118] Pope Pius IX, whose papacy lasted from 1846-1878, was deeply conservative after the 1848 revolutions that impacted much of Western Europe. He was more than happy that Catholics understood the papacy as a centralized and centralizing spiritual power. This trend towards greater centralization of church life accelerated as the Church's papal states were absorbed into the emerging Italian nation state. Papal conservatism is apparent in the 1864 encyclical *Errorum Syllabus* (Syllabus of Errors) which condemned liberalism, modernism, separation of church and state, moral relativism and secularization, and in the dogma of papal infallibility promulgated at Vatican I (1869-1870). Pius IX's reign covered a period of time that was important for the newly-founded Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, and the conservative ecclesiology of the time undoubtedly influenced Euphrasie as she began to write the first Constitutions.

Euphrasie had begun this work in consultation with Father Julien Favre, Marist Superior General, as required by Louis Cardinal de Bonald, Archbishop of Lyon, who had asked Favre to guide the young community until Rome approved its Constitutions. Euphrasie also adopted the Rule of Saint Augustine, but as this Rule is very general, and by itself was insufficient, Euphrasie had begun on the arduous task of writing constitutions prior to her first profession as a Sister of Our Lady of the Missions. In this task she was aware of the situation of the Tertiaries in Oceania who were being invited to join her congregation, and she re-read and studied the Constitutions of the Sisters of Compassion. Above all, she was deeply influenced by the Constitutions of the Society of Mary and relied quite significantly on the advice of Father Favre and Father François Yardin, Procurator for the Marist Missions in Lyon. Euphrasie set about writing with enthusiasm and commitment, the actual task of writing always being preceded by long periods of prayer and rigorous penitential exercises. As was noted in Chapter Three, in 1869, the Congregation was granted a *Decretum Laudis* in 1869, a preliminary approval, and Definitive Approbation was granted in 1890.

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[116] Susan E. Smith, *Women in Mission: From the New Testament to Today*, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007), 122.
[117] Guiseppe Albergio, "Chrétienté Et Cultures Dans L'histoire De L'eglise.," in *Eglise Et Histoire De L'eglise En Afrique*, ed. Guiseppe Ruggieri, Actes Du Colloque De Bologne, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1988), xix-xx.
[118] Smith, *Women in Mission*, 122-123.

However, when it was time to write the 1969 *Interim Constitutions,* Vatican II's emphasis on collegiality, and hence more participatory decision-making meant that post-Vatican II constitutions were not the work of one or two persons only but the responsibility of the wider congregation in ways that were appropriate to the particular reality of the different provinces. Thus, both the 1969 *Interim Constitutions* and the 1979 *Constitutions* were the fruits of general chapter discussions and decisions, that in turn were grounded in input from the wider congregation. Much of the work done around the writing of these Constitutions belonged to the Western provinces who were more aware of the effects of Vatican II on church and religious life than were RNDMs in Asian provinces where often political and military tension and conflicts were of more immediate concern. In Myanmar for example, a military dictatorship had been established in 1964 and all foreign sisters had been forced to leave. This coincided with the closing days of Vatican II, and Burma was effectively cut off from the wider congregation, church and indeed world. Tension with China had meant that Indian province relocated the novitiate from Shillong to Bengaluru, while in Vietnam, civil war between Russian and Chinese-supported North Vietnamese troops and American-supported South Vietnamese forces meant there were more pressing concerns than the message of Vatican II. Burmese Sisters did not attend general chapters between 1964 and 1984, while Vietnamese Sisters were absent from 1972 to 1990.

By 2008 significant demographic shifts in the Congregation, most notably the rapidly declining numbers in Western provinces and the growth in Asian provinces meant that more ethnic groups would be involved in the work around writing new constitutions. Ensuring greater participation of by all Sisters was recognised by the 2008 General Chapter.[119]

Such wide-ranging participation by RNDMs world-wide meant that the Constitutions would become a consensus rather than a prophetic document. This perhaps explains why both the 2008 and 2014 General Chapter documents require that the different provinces and regions prepare a document, variously called "handbook", "directory" or "statutes" that would be required contain policies "relevant to the local situation".[120] Perhaps such documents could provide the prophetic or cutting-edge insights that would be more difficult to include in Constitutions for the wider congregation.

The Constitutions Committee appointed by the CLT was representative of the wider congregation and saw as important the involvement of all sisters in ways appropriate to each one's particular situation. Those involved in the Committee's work included RNDMs from Canada, United Kingdom and Ireland, Australia, India, Vietnam, New Zealand, Kenya, and Bangladesh. In consultation with the CLT it appointed

[119] See *RNDM Earth Community: We are One We are Love*, 23.
[120] Ibid., 15.

secretaries and liaison sisters in each province and region. Below is the process followed by RNDMs in all regions and provinces.[121]

Process for personal and community reflection on Constitutions
You are invited to take time to pray and reflect, using the prayer booklet and whatever you find helpful, before filling out the response sheet

First question: What do you love about this Chapter?
Go through each article with this question in mind.
Choose from the Chapter **two points** that you most love and note them on your reflection sheet.

Second question: What is no longer resonating with you in this Chapter?
Do not spend time re-writing or re-wording something which no longer resonates with you. It is not a question of proposing alternative wording. To do this, will be the task of the writers.
Simply make a note for yourself of the point or phrase or article which no longer resonate with you.

If there are more than two, reflect further and then choose **two** to write on the reflection sheet.

Third question: What would you love to see that is not there?
Simply note the point, without trying to offer a wording.
If there are more than two points, choose **two** and write them on your sheet.

Take time to write your responses to the following questions:

What do you love about each Chapter?
What no longer resonates with you?
What would you like to see that is not there?

Conclude your personal prayer, reflection and writing with your own prayer to the Trinity.

Please bring your completed questionnaire with you to the group meeting and give it to the secretary at the end of the sharing.

[121] Mary Wright, IBVM, former Superior General of the Loreto Sisters, and canon lawyer, worked with the Constitutions Committee in 2009. She shared with the Committee the process used by the Loreto Sisters in re-writing their Constitutions, and this was adapted by the CLT and Constitutions Committee for use by RNDMs.

After the responses from the personal reflections of the sisters were collected by the Secretary in a particular province, they were collated and sent to the Constitutions Committee. The Constitutions Committee then brought these provincial responses together and sent back to the provinces which, where possible, gathered in communities to offer their responses. To facilitate this, they were invited to respond to the following questions:

Share together

What do you love about this draft?
What does not resonate with you? Why?
What would you like to see that is not there?

Once again, the group responses were collated by the secretary and the provincial response sent to the Constitutions Committee. In some instances, second drafts could be returned to the provinces for a third or fourth round of discussion.

What needs noting about the process is the open-ended nature of the questions asked. Furthermore, although a small number of sisters chose to send their individual responses to either the province or regional secretary or the Constitutions Committee, most of the individual answers were collated at province or regional levels by the secretary and sent to the CLT. In other words, the reports sent to the CLT and Constitutions Committee were not so much from individuals but from provinces or regions. The process was not designed to elicit statistical information but rather to "get a feel" for what RNDMs saw as essential for new constitutions. The subsequent reports pointed to the great cultural and ethnic diversity now honoured and recognized in the Congregation.

Ethnic and cultural diversity of RNDMs and how this affected input for new constitutions

Before turning to selected CDA tools for analysing texts, it is helpful to identify the ethnic and language realities of the different provinces and regions to see if these would impact the written reports sent to the CLT and Constitutions Committee. This will allow the reader to understand one of the emerging concerns for McBride – "the hegemony of language". Following Fairclough, she understood that "the concept of hegemony gives us the means by which to analyse how discursive practice is part of a larger social practice involving power relations: discursive practice can be seen as an aspect of a hegemonic struggle that contributes to the reproduction and transformation of the order of discourse of which it is part (and consequently of the existing power relations). Discursive change takes place when discursive elements

are articulate in new ways".[122] In particular, it is legitimate to ask if those RNDMs who have English as their first language could be a dominant group at congregational meetings. Currently approximately 25% of Sisters have English as their first language, and until recently, Sisters in the older Western provinces have had more educational opportunities available to them.

1. four provinces are mono-lingual: Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam, United Kingdom and Ireland;
2. in Vietnam, Vietnamese is spoken in all communities, but all minutes and reports sent to the CLT have to be translated into English;
3. Canada is more bi-lingual than any other province as approximately 25% of the Sisters are fluent in both French and English;
4. the three Indian provinces use English as their *lingua franca*, and for most sisters English is their second or third language;
5. in Bangladesh, approximately 20% of the Sisters are tribal and so their tribal language is their first language. Almost one hundred of the Sisters have Bengali as their first language. Bengali is used at all province meetings but reports and minutes to the CLT are in English;
6. in Myanmar, the majority of Sisters are from the Chin tribal group and so their first language is Chin. All Sisters use Burmese as their *lingua franca* in their communities, but reports and minutes to the CLT are all translated into English;
7. those RNDMs who have French as their first language and who live in France, are now out-numbered by Bangladeshi, New Zealand and Vietnamese Sisters who are actively involved in the province's different ministries.

In those provinces and regions opened since 1967, there is even greater ethnic and linguistic diversity:

1. Kenyan Sisters themselves come from different tribes, so have their own tribal language, Swahili is their *lingua franca*. All school and tertiary education is English-medium and so Kenyan Sisters have English as their third language. Kenya was founded by the United Kingdom and Ireland Province in 1967, but in 2018, there was only one Sister, an Australian who has English as her first language working there. Sisters from Myanmar, Peru, Samoa and Vietnam now live and work in Kenya. English is *lingua franca* for RNDM communities;
2. Peru was founded by Sisters from the Canadian province in 1968, all of whom learnt Spanish, the *lingua franca.* Their different ministries in the *altiplano* involved them with Peru and Bolivia's indigenous peoples who had their own languages. As the number of European Sisters declined in

[122] Marianne W. Jörgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2002), 76.

Western provinces, Sisters from the different Asian provinces have been missioned to Latin America;

3. in 1970 Sisters from the New Zealand began working in Samoa in education and pastoral ministries. Even when they were joined by Samoan sisters, English was spoken in community. All education was English medium. In 1998, the rapidly declining numbers of both Samoan and New Zealand sisters available for ministry in Samoa meant that it became part of the New Zealand province;
4. the French Province opened a community in Senegal in 1971, and from its inception, the two communities in Senegal were multi-ethnic. Unsurprisingly, French was the required *lingua franca* of the first two communities although a knowledge of the local languages, for example Wolof and Serer, was necessary for ministry. Today, there is one French sister working in Senegal with several Asian RNDMs;
5. in 1987, the Rome-based General Council opened a house in the Philippines. For the first time in the Congregation's history, responsibility for this undertaking was entrusted to two Asian sisters, one from Bangladesh and one from Meghalaya, India. These Sisters were subsequently joined by Sisters first from the Western provinces, and later from other Asian provinces and from Kenya. There are always around five or six different nationalities represented among the RNDMs. Today the Philippines is a region of the Congregation;
6. in 2006, the CLT opened an international formation centre in Davao in the Mindanao province of the Philippines. Responsibility for personnel and finances belonged to the CLT. The first formation team included Indian, English and Vietnamese RNDMs, and subsequent teams have reflected a similar ethnic richness;
7. in 2008, the CLT decided to involve Sisters in the USIG Solidarity with South Sudan programme and again the Congregation's growing ethnic diversity was reflected in the Burmese, Kenyan, New Zealand, and Vietnamese personnel who are working or have worked in South Sudan. English is the main language used by the Sisters;
8. two Vietnamese sisters who had studied English in New Zealand subsequently went to Beijing to learn Mandarin Chinese before being sent to Taiwan in 2012. They have since been joined by Bangladeshi and Indian RNDMs;
9. there has also been an RNDM presence in Rome since 1968. The CLT is Rome-based although the nature of its responsibilities means that members are often away visiting and working in provinces and regions. The CLT is supported in its ministry by the Generalate Support Community whose members have responsibility for secretarial work, hospitality and assisting in financial management. Both the CLT and the Support Community demonstrate the growing ethnic diversity of the congregation.

Several points of interest emerge from this brief overview. First, and most obvious is the very few Western Sisters now involved in overseas ministry, and the corollary of this, the increasing number of RNDMs from the Asian, Latin American, and Kenyan provinces and regions are now living and working outside of their own countries of origin. This development is not peculiar to RNDMs but is an exciting and world-wide phenomenon. Second, it is important to remember that although Sisters may talk of a Kenyan province or a Filipino region, it should not be presumed that the Sisters there are all Kenyan-born or Filipina-born, as local Sisters can be a minority such places. Third, when the CLT was developing the process by which the Constitutions would be written, it appointed "a liaison person in each province and region whose was task was to ensure that the process of reflection on the constitutions was carried out within her province/region so that each Sister had a voice and responses were sent to the Generalate on the due dates".[123] Furthermore, secretaries were designated to prepare the synthesized responses from their particular provinces or regions before sending them to CLT. In almost every province or region where there will still ELF Sisters living, they were asked to assume secretarial responsibilities. While discussions and reflections in France were carried on in French, and the reports written up in French by a Swiss sister who had French as her mother tongue, the report sent to Rome was translated into English by a New Zealand RNDM living in France. Australian or New Zealand sisters were the final secretaries for ten of the eighteen provinces and regions. Such realities suggest that researchers ignore at their peril the fact that translation is never an objective work, it always includes an interpretative dimension.

After having briefly described the different contexts in which the writing and re-writing of constitutions occurred, CDA tools can now be utilised to see what reports indicated about changes in RNDM congregational life.

[123] Maureen McBride et al., "CLT Report 2008-2013," (Rome: Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, 2013), 12-13.

Chapter Five Critical Discourse Analysis and the 2014 Constitutions

What is Critical Discourse Analysis?

CDA is a methodology that seeks to demonstrate that spoken and written texts are written or produced, and read or received, in very complex social contexts.[124] CDA proposes that the ways in which we understand, talk and write about our world are historically and culturally specific, ongoing, and subject to change. CDA argues that historical and contemporary socio-economic-political contexts deeply influence the way in which any documents are written and received.[125] CDA is a highly integrated form of analysis that tries to unite different dimensions of discourse and show how they are interrelated. Not all the analytical tools identified by Fairclough have the same value for this research but the following will be helpful.

1. **Intertextuality**
   A central focus in CDA is investigating how change takes place.[126] Fairclough shows that language draws on previously established meanings, and that changes in meaning take place through the concept of inter-textuality, that is how an individual text draws on and is influenced by previous or historical texts: "Any given type of discursive practice is generated out of combinations of others and is defined by its relationship to others."[127] As Wijsen notes, "[i]intertextuality has horizontal and vertical dimensions. The horizontal dimension implies that texts are dialogical; the vertical dimension implies that texts are historical".[128]

   For the purpose of this study, six key words merit more detailed examination given RNDN awareness of their centrality to the charism and spirit of the Congregation. These all figure prominently in reports from the different provinces, regions, and communities attached to the Support Community in Rome, and there is evidence of the different positions taken by different Sisters, provinces and regions:[129]

   1. Euphrasie Barbier
   2. Divine Missions

[124] Marianne W. Jörgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002), 4.
[125] See Thomas N. Huckin, "Critical Discourse Analysis", in *Functional Approaches to Written Text*, ed., T. Miller, 78-92, (Washington: US Department of State, 1997).
[126] Jørgensen and Phillips, 7.
[127] See Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 128-129.
[128] Frans Wijsen, "Indonesian Muslim or World Citizen? Religious Identity in the Dutch Integration Discourse," in *Making Religion: Theory and Practice in the Discursive Study of Religion*, ed. F. Wijsen and K. Von Stuckrad (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016), 225-238.
[129] According to Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 193, repetition of words (over-wording) shows "intense preoccupation" pointing to the ideology of the group.

3. Language
4. Leadership
5. Church
6. Community[130]

Intertextuality will allow the reader to understand that changing meanings attached to these terms are historically conditioned. Understanding such changes requires appreciating the historical contexts that lie behind them.

2. **Linguistic Analysis**
   An analysis of the linguistic features of the text, including vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure. Such analysis is not without its challenges because in at least eight provinces or regions the secretaries may have had English as their second or third language and so reports sometimes lacked the fluency and cohesion characteristic of reports from English-as-first-language secretaries.

3. **Identification and discussion of the discursive practices**
   Discursive practice (hereafter DP) is the process through which texts are produced (created), distributed (made available) and consumed (received, read, and interpreted).

4. **The situation of the texts and analysis in relation to the wider social context**
   CDA points out features of a text from a critical perspective and typically draws attention to power imbalances and social inequities. Norman Fairclough contends that relationships between discursive practice, social and cultural change are not transparent for the people involved. Furthermore, he observes that context affects what is said or written. How it is interpreted varies from one discourse to another.[131] Fairclough adds the explanation that the adjective "critical" in CDA implies showing connections and causes which are hidden.[132]

5. **Hegemony of Language**
   In CDA, “discourse is an important form of social practice which both reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social relations including power relations, and at the same time is also shaped by other social practices and structures"[133] Fairclough draws on Gramsci's concept of

[130] Unless otherwise indicated, all documentation sent to the CLT and Constitutions Committee from provinces, regions, new foundations, the Rome Support Community, and individual RNDMs, is located in the RNDM Archives in Rome.
[131] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 47.
[132] Ibid., 9.
[133] Jørgensen and Phillips, 65.

hegemony[134] to describe and interpret how power relations are reflected and exercised in social groups and to understand the dominance of one particular perspective: “Discursive practice, the production, distribution, and consumption (including interpretation) of texts, is a facet of hegemonic struggle which contributes to the reproduction or transformation not only of the existing order of discourse (for example, through the ways prior texts and conventions are articulated in text production), but also through that of existing social and power relations.”[135]

CDA is interested in relationships of power between the centre and the periphery. The centre of power is not necessarily stable but can shift depending on the context. Drawing on Gramsci, Fairclough acknowledges that hegemony, that is the authority, dominance or control of one social group over another, exists in every social construct, in media, in education, in politics, and therefore in the Church and in religious life. Hegemony uses persuasion rather than force to influence and gain the consent of the less dominant group.

In CDA, “discourse is an important form of social practice which both reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social relations including power relations, and at the same time is also shaped by other social practices and structures"[136] Fairclough, following Gramsci's concept of hegemony, describes and interprets how power relations are reflected and exercised in social groups and so seeks to understand the dominance of one particular perspective: “Discursive practice, the production, distribution, and consumption (including interpretation) of texts, is a facet of hegemonic struggle which contributes to the reproduction or transformation not only of the existing order of discourse (for example, through the ways prior texts and conventions are articulated in text production), but also through that of existing social and power relations”.[137]

In this chapter, analysis will focus on common and frequently recurring words or concepts. It will investigate the meanings ascribed to such terms and concepts as "Euphrasie Barbier", "Divine Missions" "language", "leadership", "church" and "community". The reader will see how meanings differ according to cultural and linguistic contexts. Linguistic changes that have occurred between 2004 and 2014 will be identified. Questions asked and perhaps answered will include:

1. Whether a common vision emerged through rewriting of Constitutions?

[134] Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian Marxist theoretician and politician. He is well known for his theory of social and cultural hegemony or the domination of one class over another.
[135] Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 93.
[136] Jørgensen and Phillips, 65.
[137] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 93.

2. Whose vision was dominant in the process by asking who was at the centre, and who was at the periphery?
3. Has the process of rewriting Constitutions made a difference in the Congregation?

Selection of Documents for Analysis

The process of rewriting the Constitutions generated numerous documents from across the Congregation. The volume of material attests to the efforts to consult and involve all members of the Congregation in the process. Related documents include minutes of meetings of the CLT, the EGC Meetings in Nairobi in 2006, Davao in 2009, and Thu Duc in 2012, and the report of the CLT to the 2014 General Chapter as well as meetings of the Constitutions Committee, and of canon lawyers from CICLSAL. Letters from the Congregation Leader outlined the reasons for rewriting the Constitutions, encouraged the participation of members, and provided regular updates on the work of the Constitutions Committee and the progress of the writers. Communications from the two writers to the Congregation explained reasons for including or excluding some material from the draft texts of the Constitutions. Individual members and groups also wrote to the Constitutions Committee expressing concerns and/or appreciation of the work being undertaken. A logo was designed to capture the essence of the work involved and was included in every communication from the committee. The following points about the reports received need to be noted:

1. while a variety of documents will be examined, three sets of documents from each of the twelve Provinces and two Regions, the staff of the International Formation Centre in Davao, Philippines, six RNDMs who are members of Solidarity with South Sudan (SSS), and those of the Generalate Support Community in Rome will be analysed more closely;
2. responses to the first incomplete draft of the new Constitutions, which relate to the spirit and life of the Congregation, mission, consecrated life and community life tend to more inspirational rather than juridical (November 2010);
3. responses to Stage IV related to the chapter in the 1979 Constitutions entitled “Unity in Charity”, and dealt with more juridical matters relating to governance in the Congregation (November 2011);
4. responses to the first complete draft of the new Constitutions considered the responses received to every stage of the process and sought to combine both the inspirational and juridical elements required of constitutions since Vatican II.

Rather than selecting responses from just four or five provinces or regions which could be analysed in depth, representative extracts from across the Congregation will be analysed. These extracts offer a broader perspective of responses and reflect

the inter-cultural and inter-generational diversity of the Congregation, and the different backgrounds in education, theological perspective and experience in ministry of respondents. It should be pointed out that since the reports are either a synthesis or collation of several group reports, the extracts cited do not necessarily reflect the views of the entire province or region.

Fairclough argues that words and meanings are part of an ongoing and dynamic process, and may change in different historical, cultural or social contexts. He contends that differences in meaning may indicate whether relationships are complementary or hierarchical.[138] In 2015, the Congregation had been in existence for 154 years. Over the decades, meanings attributed to key words have shifted. Moreover, in a culturally, linguistically and generationally diverse group like the RNDMs, the meaning potential for key words to differ according to context is considerable as will be demonstrated in the analysis below.[139]

Linguistic analysis of selected words and expressions

Euphrasie Barbier

An analysis and discussion of the name "Euphrasie Barbier", the founder of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, is important for this study. Euphrasie's Constitutions, definitively approved in 1877, were the rule of life followed by RNDMs through to 1969. Throughout the documents received by the CLT from 2009 onwards, her name is used in relation to the charism and spirit of the RNDMs and her particular insights into the Divine Missions. References to Euphrasie can be found in almost every document studied. A small number of Provinces and Regions continue to use the term "Foundress", or the more traditional terms, "Mother Foundress" and "Mother Euphrasie".

We would like to see Mother Euphrasie's message… Some more of Mother Founder's spirit should be evident. (Bangladesh, first draft)	Divine Missions was the GIFT OF GOD to Euphrasie; we are called to share the gift of Euphrasie's dream in our own time. (Kenya, complete draft)	It is a real challenge to be a disciple of Jesus, the daughter of Euphrasie and to be sisters/mothers to the people in our mission – community. (Rome, complete draft)

[138] Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 186.

[139] Unless otherwise indicated, all documentation sent to the Constitutions Committee from provinces, regions, new foundations, the Rome Support Community, and individual RNDMs, is located in the RNDM Archives in Rome.

The baptismal name of the founder was Euphrasie Barbier, and her religious name was Mère Marie du Coeur de Jésu, (Mother Mary of the Heart of Jesus). However, during her lifetime and until recent years she would have more commonly been addressed or referred to by the title reserved for the Superior General, "Très Révérende Mère" (Very Reverend Mother), rather than by her religious or her baptismal name.

The first official biography[140] of Euphrasie Barbier written by L'Abbé Aimé Coulomb in 1902, nine years after Euphrasie's death, refers to her as Sister Marie when Euphrasie was a member of the Congregation of Calvary but once she had left that community to found her own in Lyon, Coulomb refers to her variously as "the Reverend Mother", "Reverend Mother Marie of the Heart of Jesus", the "Venerated Mother", the "Servant of God", the "Superior General". French Jesuit Charles Couturier, author of the second officially mandated biography,[141] prioritizes "Mother Marie of the Heart of Jesus".

In the English translation of her 1978 publication,[142], Marie Bénédicte Ollivier refers to Euphrasie as "Mother Mary" or "Mother Mary of the Heart of Jesus", although interestingly this religious name does not appear in the book's title. In 2007, Ollivier was commissioned to write another official biography[143] of Euphrasie Barbier as part of the documentation required to progress the beatification of the founder. Here, Euphrasie is referred to as "Euphrasie Barbier", "Euphrasie", and "Superior General". Given the plethora of names in these four publications, it is not surprising that a similar variety appeared in reports sent from provinces and regions to the CLT.

An initial observation in the recent documents is the recurring use of the baptismal name, Euphrasie Barbier. The founder is referred to in most of the selected documents either as "Euphrasie", or "Euphrasie Barbier". Just occasionally, as in the response from Bangladesh, we find reference to "Mother Founder", "our Founder", or "Mother Euphrasie". India North East also uses "Mother Founder", but the title appears interchangeably with "Euphrasie Barbier". Kenya uses only "Euphrasie" throughout their three sets of responses. The Rome community combines images of

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[140] See L'Abbé A. Coulomb, *Life of the Very Reverend Mother Marie Du Coeur De Jesus, Née Euphrasie Barbier, Foundress and First Superioress General of the Institute of the Daughters of Notre Dames Des Missions*, trans., a Daughter of Notre Dame des Mission (Paris: Institute de Notre Dame des Missions, 1902). The French title was *Vie de la Très Révérende Mère Marie du Cœur-de-Jésu, née Euphrasie Barbier, Fondatrice et Premier Superieure Generale de l'Institut de Filles de Notre Dame des Mission.*

[141] See Charles Couturier, *Unswerving Journey: The Life of Mother Mary of the Heart of Jesus, Foundress of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions*, trans., Rosemary Sheed (Toulouse: Prière et Vie, 1966). The French title was *Droit et Mon Chemin: Marie du Cœur de Jésu, Fondatrice des Filles de Notre-Dame des Missions*. There is no information as to who translated these texts from French to English.

[142] See Marie Bénédicte Ollivier, *Straight Is My Path: Spirituality of Euphrasie Barbier, Foundress of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions* (Rome: Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, 1978). No information available regarding translator of this publication.

[143] See Marie Bénédicte Ollivier, *Missionary Beyond Boundaries: Euphrasie Barbier 1829-1893*, trans., Beverley Grounds (Rome: Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, 2007).

discipleship with Jesus and a filial relationship with Euphrasie.[144] In its first draft, Australia sees the frequent mention of Euphrasie in the text as offering a sense of her living presence.

How can these shifts in the titles and names given to the founder be best explained? It is possible to argue that citizens of former colonies of Australia, Canada and New Zealand historically and contemporaneously have had a greater commitment to an egalitarian ethos as the first European settlers were all too often seeking refuge from class and religious oppression in their countries of origin. That settlers had little difficulty in moving beyond hierarchical structures is demonstrated by New Zealand's 1893 landmark legislation, whereby it became the first self-governing country in the world in which all women had the right to vote in parliamentary elections. Furthermore, different cultures have quite different perceptions around the names that are given to people and the use of titles. Contemporary English favours an informality that is not always considered desirable by other cultures. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Asian and African RNDMs tend to be more focused on the possible beatification of their founder than is true of older Western provinces. This could well explain their greater enthusiasm for using titles that highlight her founding role when speaking of Euphrasie.[145]

Divine Missions[146]

Euphrasie founded her congregation at a time when theology and popular spirituality were likely to be Christologically and/or Mariologically focussed, rather than Trinitarian. It is important therefore to try to understand how Euphrasie understood that the source of mission was the Trinity. Pre-religious life experiences emerge as formative. In Caen where she lived before entering the Sisters of Calvary, she lived in the neighbourhood of the Abbey and Abbey Church of the Sainte-Trinité. Father Philipin de Rivières, who directed the Sisters of Calvary, emphasised in his teaching the centrality of the mystery of the Triune God, while Euphrasie nourished her spiritual life through her reading of the mystical treatises of Saint Bonaventure, and authors of the French School of Spirituality, developed by Pierre Cardinal Bérulle in the seventeenth century.

In her 1890 letter to Father Bruno de Vinay, Euphrasie wrote: "As for the expression, 'Divine Missions' [which first appears in Augustine's treatise, *De Trinitate*], we have

[144] Members of the Rome community included both CLT members who often were not present for Rome-based meetings, and the Generalate Support Community.
[145] Bangladesh PLT letter to the Sisters of the Bangladesh Province, dated 27 July 2018, reads "it was wonderful experience indeed at St. Scholastica's community where we were blessed to be connected with our Mother Foundress Euphrasie Barbier before taking our new responsibility in the province…With God's direction, wisdom and blessings of our mother Euphrasie Barbier and with your loving support, we start our new drive with our unassuming and dedicated humble service towards our province, Bangladesh from today, for three years". It is interesting to see the variety of ways in which they refer to Euphrasie Barbier.
[146] See Ollivier, 608-611.

drafted a new version of the article by adding two lines to it which we hope will give satisfaction, by showing clearly that we are not thinking of our own poor missions, we who are nothing, but only that of the Incarnate Word, sent by his Father to redeem humankind, and the divine mission of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son to carry out the sanctification of Christ's Church; that is the reason for the Institute's existence and its special form, as much for interior as for the exterior".[147]

While Euphrasie was able to elaborate what she understood by this term in her letters to the Sisters and others, conformity to the Holy See's norms, obliged her to remove any reference to the Divine Missions from the Constitutions. Loss of Euphrasie's Trinitarian understanding of divine missions, meant that RNDM spirituality became more devotional, and centred around "zeal for the kingdom of God" and the practice of the virtues of humility, simplicity, modesty and charity as exemplified in Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The presumed loss of the Marian dimension in draft versions of the Constitutions concerned at least one community. In their responses the Generalate Support Community repeatedly raises a concern that reference to the virtues was missing from the first draft, "nothing much is said about our charism: if no charism (humility, modesty, simplicity, charity), what is the basis of our existence as RNDM women?" While not proposing the virtues as central to the charism, India South also wish to see humility, modesty and charity included with simplicity, which they see as over-emphasized in the first draft.

Today, the majority of RNDMs understand and honour the Divine Missions as the source of all missionary activity. Most provinces and regions refer to the communion, contemplation and mission of the Trinity as fundamental to the charism and spirituality of RNDMs. Discussion and comments related to the Divine Missions take up a considerable portion of the responses, both in the first draft, and in the complete draft. The theological term, "Divine Missions" is used in conjunction with other words and phrases such as "Trinity", "communion, contemplation and mission", "Mary", "charism", "fundamental intuition", "zeal", "St Augustine", "universality" and "cosmic spirituality". Analysis will demonstrate how the term is used in the texts. The common or diverse understandings of the term, possible reasons for different understandings, and related texts will be discussed in the next chapter "Discursive Practice", while the implications of differing understandings will be explored in the third dimension of the discourse, social practice. Extracts are selected to indicate the interrelationship of these concepts.

Trinity is sometimes used interchangeably with Divine Missions as we see in this extract from the Philippines: "We are convinced and confirmed that our source of missionary activity is the Trinity (Divine Missions). This is concretely and profoundly

[147] Euphrasie Barbier, letter to Bruno de Vinay, OFM Cap, 22 May 1890.

reflected here as the unique and most significant motivation of our RNDM foundation. So, we are strongly united to do our mission with God, in God, and for God. It is like a thread going through the whole Constitutions".

This first sentence is positive and assertive in its use of active voice, first person plural pronouns, and the compounding of verbs, "convinced and confirmed". The second sentence shifts to passive voice. The adverbs "concretely and profoundly" have a persuasive tone that urges the reader to recognize the implication of the statement. "Unique" is followed by the use of the superlative, "the most significant". The third sentence reverts to the first person plural and to active voice. "Strongly united" evokes the image of cohesion, strength and mutual support. The understanding of "our mission" is taken for granted, while the expression "with God, in God, and for God" echoes the doxology of the Eucharistic canons. The simile, "like a thread" is also mentioned by New Zealand and Samoa, Australia and Canada. The United Kingdom and Ireland as well as India Central amplify the expression with the adjective "like a golden thread".

Several provinces, including Australia, France and New Zealand, express concern that there is confusion and inconsistency surrounding the use of the term, "Divine Missions". In the first document from the Philippines, one member tries to articulate her personal struggle and confusion in differentiating the different theological terms: "Mission of the Trinity/Divine Mission of the Trinity (just because I am not sure about the difference between *Missio Dei*, Divine Missions and Mission of the Trinity, of the Incarnate Word and Mission of God)".

The use of the various terms to describe the Trinity indicates an awareness of some of the language associated today with trinitarian theology and missiology, but clarity in understanding is lacking. In the same document the Philippines offers both a critique and a partial solution to addressing the confusion by distinguishing between mission and ministry: "Sounds inadequate, there is mixing of words and ideas. Divine Missions or Divine Mission of the Trinity, if we want to refer to Euphrasie's inspiration, better to use "Divine Missions". When we use mission to mean ministry, there is confusion".

It is apparent that there are diverse theologies of Trinity across the Congregation and within provinces. The small group of four sisters that comprise the international formation team in Davao expressed unease at the theological expression of the Divine Missions in the first draft. They questioned if it was necessary to rewrite the entire Constitutions and felt the essence of Euphrasie's charism was better expressed in the 1979 Constitutions, which retained a more classical theological base. An extract from France offers a similar critique:

We are all agreed that this text, overall, lacks inspiration, élan and depth. In general, the articles are good but the whole lacks coherence; there is a lot of repetition. The theology is not up to scratch. In brief, **all the members of our group prefer the text of our present Constitutions** which is so inspiring, which is immersed in Trinitarian theology, and where the link with Mary is expressed, in each chapter appropriately, simply and with great depth. (France, first draft)	Euphrasie's insight that the Trinity is not somewhere up there but we are participants in the mission of the Trinity, contemplative in action; there is integration of relationships with God and our life's endeavours." (Philippines, first draft)	Art. 9 Emphasizing "sent" relationships stresses a patriarchal and hierarchical relationship in God and in the Congregation. Does not acknowledge mutuality/ reciprocity – giving and receiving in mission: invitation and response. (New Zealand, first draft)	There are glimpses of our Trinitarian Theology being expanded to make space for the Theology of Creation. (Now that excites me) (Philippines, complete draft)

The excerpt from France demonstrates little enthusiasm for the draft text with its perceived shortcomings twice introduced by the verb "lacks" (inspiration and coherence). The responses were originally written in French and translated into English, with an obvious French touch in the use of a word that lacks adequate translation, *élan*. The use of the colloquialism in the sentence, "the theology is not up to scratch", indicates that the translator is a first language English speaker, in this instance, New Zealand-born. The second half of the paragraph contrasts the "present Constitutions" meaning the 1979 text, as "so inspiring" emphasizing the disappointment they find in the new text.

The Philippines' excerpt suggests that a transcendent theology of Trinity is a remote and vague entity, uninterested in and removed from human activity and instead insists Trinity is "not somewhere up there". The sentence is charged with strong persuasive nouns and noun phrases including "Euphrasie", "insight", "Trinity", "participants", "mission", "contemplative in action", "integration", "relationships", "God", "life's endeavours", that denote passion, strength, energy and commitment. "Contemplative in action" is spiritual discourse that speaks of immanence, engagement and commitment in the present. In the final statement, the relationship with God is not separated from life, and stands in contrast to "somewhere up there". The phrase, "our life's endeavours" denotes effort, striving for purpose and meaning.

The excerpt from New Zealand refers to Article 9 of the first draft which read: “We share one mission – the mission of the Incarnate Word sent by God to set free the entire creation and the mission of the Holy Spirit sent to bring the fullness of life, love, liberty and freedom to all.” New Zealand critiques this understanding of the Trinity as patriarchal and hierarchical and asks for an interpretation that is more consistent with a feminist theology of mutuality in mission. Canada expressed a similar concern about hierarchical and patriarchal interpretations of Trinity: “While they are biblical/relational terms, the traditional language for Trinity evokes a patriarchal reality for many; this coupled with some of the images of Mary, as well as terms such as “Major Superior” supports a hierarchical interpretation of ourselves”.

Three RNDMs in New Zealand express their regret that feminist concepts and understandings have not been included in the complete draft, which "fails to capture any of the insights of feminist theologians such as Elizabeth Johnson on the Trinity". In particular the word “send” was a source of concern. RNDM use of “send” originates in the missionary command of the Risen Jesus to his disciples in John 20:21-23: “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.”[148] The use of the verb “send” can suggest a certain hierarchy and raises question around the relationship of the sender to the sent. Is this a relationship of superior to subject? American feminist theologian, Elizabeth Johnson, on the other hand, suggests that the first human experience of the transcendent and divine is mediated through the experience of the Spirit which the Christian understands as the Holy Spirit, one of the three persons of the Trinity. The Spirit as immanent is integral to Johnson’s theology of the Trinity. Although Johnson does not discuss the missiological questions raised by such theological positions, it has significance for understanding the relationship of inculturation or inter-religious dialogue to mission understood as evangelisation.[149]

Again, in the excerpt from the Philippines, the word "glimpses" indicates that a contemporary eco-theology does not fully penetrate the text, but it is recognisable. The reference to "our Trinitarian Theology" implies an understanding of Trinity that is specific to RNDMs.[150] "Being expanded" and "to make space" are synonymic, although "being expanded" offers an image of infiniteness, whereas "to make space for" implies boundaries. The bracketed comment, "now that excites me" denotes personal passion for and engagement with emerging creation theologies. Other diverse expressions of Trinity include recognizing the mutuality of relationships

[148] Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotes are from Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds., *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
[149] See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 124-149.
[150] Eco-theology is an integral feature of the 2008 General Chapter document, *RNDM Earth Community: We are One, We are Love*, and its importance is reaffirmed in the 2014 General Chapter document, “I am doing something new”. The Constitutions Committee was advised that presumed topical concerns and issues should not feature in the more traditional language required in Constitutions.

reflected in structures as observed by the response from the United Kingdom and Ireland which states: "Relationships and love in the Trinity, which is experienced in our mutual relationships and structures, is expressed very clearly."

In their reflections on Trinity and the Divine Missions, Myanmar and Senegal stress the centrality of the poor and marginalised at the heart of Trinitarian mission, echoing their lived experience of ministry inserted among the poor. A concern that there is an insular focus in the Constitutions is captured by the observations of two members from South Sudan: "Somehow at times it feels inward looking, not always challenged by the Trinity present in the poor, calling us out, calling us to be surprised, to find God everywhere, out there, in here…"

India South has another perspective on the Divine Missions and presents an image of an expanding outward movement: "The universal character of our Congregation: Intercultural, International and connected around creation, ecology and all the universe are good orientations." "Universal character" is explained by the choice of adjectives and nouns which all contain breadth and diversity of meaning: "inter-cultural", "international", "connected", "creation", "ecology", and the "universe". Each of the metaphors enlarges the understanding conveyed in the previous image.

Language

One of the aims in rewriting the Constitutions was to recognize that today approximately a quarter of RNDMs have English as their first language or *lingua franca* (ELF). With an extraordinary diversity of first languages spoken in the Congregation, it was important to ensure that the language used in the new Constitutions expressed "clarity, simplicity and beauty of language that can be pondered and savoured".[151] It is apparent that there are a variety of issues related to language, translation and different ways of interpreting words and concepts for contemporary RNDMs.

Language Metaphors
A group from Bangladesh offered an unexpected metaphor to depict a major difference between the 1979 Constitutions and the first draft of the new Constitutions seen here in their words below:

[151] Minutes of Constitutions Committee, September 2009.

Our present Constitutions is in Angels' language – poetic; and the new Draft is in human language. (Bangladesh, first draft)	The language is simple, clear and understandable. In speaking of the Congregation it addresses us as human persons. (Senegal, first draft)	A little soft in language and on detail: … need for simple, concise, clear, strong, direct language (no ifs, buts, maybes) No flowery stuff, no padding. (Rome, complete draft)

At the heart of Bangladesh's objection is a spiritual concern. The group feels that the language of the 1979 Constitutions was not only inspirational, but also prayerful, implying that the use of poetic "Angels' language" mediated a relationship with God. Images of communication reaching beyond speech towards an inspirational and spiritual realm are evoked. The "human language" of the new draft represents an unconscious irony in the suggestion that the new Constitutions could lack an inspirational spiritual connection. Ownership of the 1979 text is evident in the use of the first person plural possessive pronoun "our", while "the new Draft" is objectified and the capitalization of "Draft" has a distancing effect. By way of contrast, Senegal recognizes the simplicity of the language used in the text and appreciates the directness and inclusion that "human language" provides.

The Rome community found the complete draft to be “a little soft in language and on detail” preferring more juridical, rational language. "Soft" is an adjectival metaphor for lacking vigour and precision. "No ifs, buts or maybes" is an idiom meaning no doubts or excuses. Similarly, "no flowery stuff, no padding" are colloquialisms referring to the use of hyperbole, something added unnecessarily. "Flowery stuff" in reference to language generally refers to complicated words with elevated meanings.

The Philippines prefers the use of classical language for the Constitutions and connects this with poetry, mystery, inspiration and vision. The capitalizing of "Mystery" links the statement to the Divine: "Classical language is longer lasting, has a deeper meaning and a wider interpretation available. Preservation of the poetic language of the Constitutions; poetry is the language that takes us to the realm of Mystery, gives us inspiration, vision."

The Philippines is also concerned that trying to achieve simplicity of language can have the undesirable effect of diluting the meaning. They develop an image of "savouring" language which contrasts with Rome's preference: "What seems missing is the ongoing grappling with the text, “unpacking it”, “chewing it”, discovering and reflecting on the deeper meanings, insights, linking what unfolds and expands for us

with the passing of time, in the same way as in scriptures, while acknowledging the inadequacy of language to convey God mystery."

The language of the Constitutions should not convey superficial meanings. "Ongoing grappling" conveys the notion that the text should provoke a certain level of tension, implying not only serious reflection but also rigorous discussion. The image of “unpacking” extends the idea of "grappling" and suggests a sense of analysing, delving deeper, going beyond the spoken or written word, and suggests several layers of meaning. The metaphor of “chewing” expresses one of the aims of rewriting the Constitutions: that of presenting the charism in simple but inspirational language that can be pondered contemplatively. "Chewing" is a reflective act which takes time. The sense is further communicated in the structure, content and length of the sentence. Verbs such as “unfolds” and “expands” as well as the idiom, “passing of time” all contribute to the image of unpacking and chewing the language. “For us” is a referent not only to the group present, but also to those who share the same sense of belonging to the Congregation. Finally, the sentence equates the "unpacking", "chewing", "discovering" and "reflecting" on the Constitutions, with a spiritual approach to the scriptures. As language is inadequate to express the mystery of God, so too, the language of the Constitutions should also convey the spiritual realm of mystery. Implicit in the statement is the preference to retain the 1979 Constitutions.

One sister from Latin America also uses imagery in the first draft to express her desire in relation to the language used in the Constitutions: “I would like to see the life-giving expression of the heart accompanying the clear ideas of the head in the final writing of the Constitutions so that the Sisters will find the spirit that sets aflame their hearts and entire being with a profound desire to live fully their RNDM calling”.

The imagery of heart and head evoke emotion and inspiration together with clarity and rationality. In the second part of the sentence the writer suddenly distances herself from her personal desire by referring to "the Sisters" and of "their hearts…" The image of "the spirit setting aflame their hearts and entire being" develops the intuitive rather than the rational level. As rendered here the metaphor is possibly a direct translation from the original Spanish. In the final phrase, “their RNDM calling,” the pronoun “their” creates further detachment.

Language and Meaning in a Diverse Linguistic Context

Canada was affirming of the language in the complete text, whereas Myanmar continues to struggle with language. New Zealand on the other hands sees the importance of language being able to reach a diverse linguistic audience:

More clarity, conciseness, and brevity that is pithy, capturing the essence without excessive wordiness. (Canada, first draft)	Would love to see: Footnote explanation for big words (Myanmar, first draft)	The language is accessible and in the light of our multicultural and diverse Congregation where the majority have English as a second language, it is a relief to know that this will be understood. (New Zealand, complete draft)

Canada's comment is replete with synonyms that include three nouns: "clarity", "conciseness", "brevity" and three metaphors which all carry the same meaning: "pithy", "capturing the essence", and "without excessive wordiness". The desire for clarity and conciseness in language is generally a western concern. Here, however, Canada achieves the opposite as their description of the language is verbose, the antithesis of what they are praising in the text. Myanmar's request for footnotes to explain "big words" indicates that the goal of "simplicity and clarity of language" has not been completely achieved in the first draft. In the complete draft, however, they appear to value the efforts made to further simplify the language and appreciate their own and the participation of other sisters in producing the text. New Zealand comments favourably on the ease and suitability of the language given the diverse linguistic realities of the Congregation. In any international group of people, the potential for significant words to hold diverse meanings is high. We see this expressed in an extract from Bangladesh, "we don't feel satisfied with some words like – partners, engagement".

The reference to “partners” in the first draft of the Constitutions was in relation to “cooperating with interfaith partners in action towards global peace, justice and the integrity of creation", whereas “engagement” is found in Chapter Three under the heading, Consecration for Mission: “… we look to the example of Mary's single-hearted commitment to her God and her passionate engagement in the mission of Jesus”. Bangladesh appears to associate both words with human relationships of intimacy.

Australia requests an alternative to the word "humble", which they believe has a negative connotation in the English language today. New Zealand has a similar concern about the word "asceticism": "Some question the word "asceticism" and what it could imply in the future especially with the current movement in the Church of going back to the old days!!!"

Language and Inclusion
Kenya commented on the sense of ownership that was evident in the first draft, with the use of personal pronouns. Many provinces and regions, including Bangladesh and Kenya, expressed their appreciation of the use of inclusive language in both texts. India North East, however, recognizes the power of language to both unite and alienate, as they cite an extract from the 2008 General Chapter document that they wish to see included in the new Constitutions: "We will let go of language that categorizes and divides us". This comment, which also uses personal pronouns and relates to inclusion, will be discussed in the discursive analysis and social practice.

Leadership

Leadership and community life in the Congregation prior to Vatican II was hierarchical. Everyone was ranked according to their status, age and seniority, and according to whether or not they were choir or lay sisters. A chapter in Euphrasie's Constitutions was devoted to what was called "Members of the Institute and their Order of Rank", while later in the same Constitutions there are detailed role descriptions for provincial and local superiors, the portress, sacristan and infirmarian.[152] Later conciliar values associated with subsidiarity, collegiality, participatory decision-making, discernment processes were not characteristic of pre-Vatican II RNDM life.

There also seemed to be a certain reluctance to appoint Asian Sisters to positions of leadership not only in the pre-Vatican II congregation, but even in the two decades that followed. Although India and Pakistan became independent nations in 1947, and Burma in 1948, indigenous sisters were not appointed to positions of responsibility in such provinces until the mid-1960s and even then, such appointments were often driven by external political tension and conflicts. In Vietnam, a Vietnamese Sister was appointed as Provincial Superior in 1950 when war between Vietnamese nationalists and the French colonial power was raging in North Vietnam where all RNDMs were then located. She was replaced by in 1952, by French woman, Marie Jean Théophane, and foreign-born Sisters were appointed as Provincial Superiors until 1969 when conflict in South Vietnam suggested the imminent departure of foreign-born RNDMs. This led to a Vietnamese sister being appointed as provincial superior in 1969. Attitudes of cultural superiority and even covert racism on the part of Western Sisters seem to have been behind a reluctance on the part of General Councils to appoint Asian Sisters to positions of responsibility. Memories of such attitudes probably informed some of the responses on leadership.

This is why responses to the first draft and the complete draft prove useful in examining RNDM attitudes and approaches to leadership. The documents selected are from Stage IV of the process whereby the Constitutions Committee directed

[152] See Euphrasie Barbier, *Constitutions of the Daughters of Notre Dame Des Missions* (Hastings: Institute de Notre Dame des Missions, 1936), 18-20, 114-121.

members to study the chapter "Unity and Charity" of the 1979 Constitutions. As has been previously mentioned, issues related to governance in the Congregation were one of the main reasons for the rewriting of the Constitutions as the lived reality did not match what was in the Constitutions. The relationship between leaders and members, between the centre and the periphery emerges as an important concern.

The responses to the guided questions reveal a range of terminology associated with leadership. Words such as "authority", "superior", "power", "superior general", "warning", "hierarchy", that were used in the 1979 Constitutions' chapter on governance, "Unity and Charity", no longer resonated with the majority of Sisters. New Zealand interprets the term "superior" as having an underlying inference that others are "inferior" and "submissive". South Sudan drew attention to the military connotations associated with the title "Superior General".

> The chapter “Unity in Charity” uses unfriendly, legalistic language, and exclusive, hierarchical words, such as “superior” and “fraternal” no longer resonate with us. The pyramidical structuring of leadership is problematic; the “Superior General” is imaged as an overall boss, and provincial and local “superiors” are similarly represented. Numerous details are focused on the titled, individual leader, and little is said about membership and the Sisters' necessary responsibility for living the charism, right relationships, fidelity to mission, etc.
>
> (Philippines, Unity and Charity)

> We love the way that described all power came from the Father through Christ and from Christ to the Church and from the Church to the legitimate superiors. This required the superiors to govern the Congregation in fidelity to the mission confided to it.
>
> (Vietnam, Unity and Charity)

The Philippines highlights the concepts of leadership they believe are inconsistent with RNDM life. The expressions, "legalistic language", "exclusive", "hierarchical", "superior", "fraternal", "pyramidical structuring", "Superior General", "overall boss", "titled leader" are presented negatively and represent relationships of power over others. The group wishes to see greater elaboration of the responsibilities of membership for living the charism, developing right relationships, and ensuring fidelity to mission, although this hope is mentioned only briefly. Vietnam on the other hand, is the only province that makes no reference to hierarchical terminology. On the contrary, they not only affirm but greatly appreciate the model of leadership presented in the 1979 Constitutions.

The Philippines region then presents an alternative to the hierarchical model of leadership and elaborates on what relationships of mutuality would require, as well as the roles and responsibilities of both leaders and members: “We would love to see leadership and membership equally valued and an inclusion of their respective roles and responsibilities. Members need to be challenged to be present, responsible persons, willing to engage in dialogue in truth and love. Leadership style

and practice needs to be empowering, compassionate, and unifying. A healthy level of consultation with and among Sisters is important. Membership needs to be affirming, supportive and cooperative with leadership".

Bangladesh offered a somewhat different cultural perspective on the use of hierarchical language and the unequal power relations it creates with their reference to the class system: "The terms we don't like – General, Provincial and Superior – they create comparisons and class systems".

France, on the other hand, recognizes the complexity of language and cultural diversities in relation to leadership, particularly in titles, and proposes a way of satisfying congregational sensibilities at the same time retaining traditional titles for use in relation to civil authorities: "We spoke about the difficulties – e.g., the subtleties of language and the cultural sensitivity of each country – of choosing a title which can be applied to all the sisters in leadership in the Congregation. We suggest two solutions: 1) we use the title of "Animator" which at the same time denotes the role of the person as well as avoiding the connotation of "power" which can come with the use of the word "superior"; 2) we keep the title of "superior" for official outside documents and within the Congregation we use the sister's name without specifying her role."

There was consensus across the Congregation that the new Constitutions should employ words and concepts such as "team", "membership", "Congregation leader, "councillor", "administration", "governance", "dialogue", "mutuality", "shared responsibility", "collaboration", "discernment'.

In its report on what model of leadership best served contemporary RNDM needs, Senegal recognizes the disjunction between the 1979 Constitutions and lived reality. They point to a vision for leadership that they believe RNDMs are trying to live, a model of "mutuality, dialogue and shared responsibility". The hierarchical model of the 1979 Constitutions may prevent this. Senegal also observes the lack of a uniform approach to leadership across the Congregation: "Sense of a "hierarchical" model, whereas we see ourselves as struggling to live more truly in a model of mutuality, dialogue and shared responsibility. (It was noted that different parts of the Congregation are at different "places" in attempts to move to live according to another model)".

The bracketed note acknowledges that the Congregation is in a process of moving towards a different model of leadership but implies that the desired goal of "mutuality, dialogue and shared responsibility", has not been fully achieved. The Philippines Region and Australia acknowledge the diversity in approaches to leadership in the Congregation.

Familial, cultural, political and social issues color our experience and exercise of leadership, as well as our understandings of power and of service. This chapter in our Constitutions needs a Trinitarian, Gospel foundation calling us to a spirituality of servant leadership that is relational and feminine. It should continue to reflect the dynamic of our charism, balancing mission, communion and contemplation. We would also love to see implications for membership and leadership from our growing understanding of ourselves as part of the Earth community included.

(Philippines Region, Unity and Charity)

Only what is absolutely required by Canon Law ought to be in this Chapter. Then, because of the great diversity across the Congregation in terms of leadership styles influenced by cultural factors, can be respected. Each Province/region would have its own accompanying book of Directives which would include whatever specifications of the basic law are appropriate for its reality.

(Australia, Unity and Charity)

The Philippines region offers a rationale for this diversity asserting that the interplay of nature (family, ethnicity) and nurture (culture, political and social issues) shape both experience and behaviour in relation to leadership. They propose a way forward to embrace the diversity by relating leadership to the RNDM Trinitarian charism and a spirituality of servant leadership. The excerpt articulates the interconnectedness of a Trinitarian theology of mission, communion and contemplation with the gospel values of servant leadership, emphasizing relational and feminine principles. It also alludes to the relationship between Trinitarian Theology, Creation Theology and the exercise of leadership and membership. The use of personal pronouns "our", "us" "we", "ourselves", throughout the extract is inclusive of all RNDMs. Australia recognizes the same diversity but proposes a structural way of presenting with this by including only the canonical requirements related to leadership in the Constitutions and then outlining their own model of leadership in province or region directives.

Diverse generational concerns are reflected in comments from Kenya and India North East:

Initiation of the younger sisters about General Chapters and assemblies in order for them to have some taste of leadership and running of the Congregation for further formation knowledge.

(Kenya, Unity and Charity)

Would like to see: 30 years changed into 40 years; 35 years changed into 45 years; 10 years of commitment changed into 20 years; confidentiality, trust, relationship, relaxation.

(India North East, Unity and Charity)

Kenya notes the importance of preparing Sisters for leadership positions in the future as integral to the process of formation. India North East on the other hand, indicates that positions of leadership should lie with older rather than with younger RNDMs as

they address the question of increasing the minimum age for all appointments to positions of responsibility in the Congregation by ten years. There is an underlying implication that older women have more authority by virtue of their age, and can more easily maintain virtues of confidentiality, trust and good relationships. At the same time, there is a hint that an older person in these positions is perhaps more able to relax and is less likely to be stressed. It also points to a cultural context which respects and honours the elderly, something that is no longer so true of some Western cultures. Vietnam does not propose ages but wants to ensure that all those appointed to leadership positions, including community leaders, have a minimum of four years of perpetual vows. Formators should have three years of perpetual vows and experience of mission in community. They want these details to be included in the new Constitutions.

Without explicitly stating it, Kenya focuses attention on the integral relationship between leadership, membership and obedience. They situate the vow of obedience in the context of discipleship with Jesus, the true model of obedience: "Jesus is our model of obedience" should be placed at the beginning of the chapter on evangelical obedience. This is the way we follow Jesus when we live the vow of obedience. We should form clear and detailed criteria on obedience in order to help members to live the vow of obedience correctly as much as the vow concerns". Forming "clear and detailed criteria on obedience" is an indication that there may be some areas related to obedience that are not well understood or are confusing for some members. Clear and detailed criteria related to obedience would provide a measure by which the individual, the members and the group could measure each other on. Myanmar acknowledges that generally speaking the Sisters there were not familiar with the chapter on Unity and Charity, believing the chapter was applicable for leaders rather than members: "We came to see that we have neglected these Chapters as we think that they are only for the Leadership."

A perennial concern for RNDMs is the relationship of the provinces and regions to the CLT.
India North East and the Generalate Support community are concerned about a presumed centralisation, particularly in respect of decision-making around missioning of personnel and financial management. India North East perceives that this centralisation could mean even more hierarchical structures than previously, while Rome contests the role of the "Superior General" in missioning sisters at perpetual vows: "Final Vows – Missioning at Final Vows: Superior General, structures, centralisation; particular mission, General and Provincial; Provincial authority diminished, pattern of functioning in this doesn't fit – practice at the moment, confusion – two realities Superior General, missioning – confusion, don't belong in Constitutions".

Rome's comments are in note format rather than structured sentences. The reference is to the 'Superior General', rather than 'Congregation Leader', which has

been the official term in the Congregation since 2002. In stating that the authority of the province leader is diminished if the Superior General missions Sisters at Final Vows, the group suggests that the authority of the 'provincial' is above that of the 'Superior General' and implies this creates confusion. The punctuation (dashes and semi-colons), lack of pronouns and note genre of the text perhaps suggest a distancing and a hesitation to own the observations being made.

Issues relating to representation at general chapters are sensitive, as are discernment processes in provinces for appointing new leaders, including who has the right to vote and what weighting voting carries.[153]

At the last Chapter a province of 120 sisters had only 3 or 4 delegates while another country, made up of 3 provinces, had few sisters in total, yet had 9 delegates. That is not fair! (France, Unity and Charity)	While spending 3-4 years to study theology and English to prepare for Davao programme, TPs [temporary vowed sisters] are being confined in their own environment, they didn't have enough contact with the sisters in Community and didn't have the overview of the Province to vote for the Leadership Team. That's why the result of the Vote of the PLT might be deviated. (Vietnam, complete draft)

France expresses concern about what it perceives as an unjust allocation of delegates to the 2008 General Chapter. The information regarding numbers is inexact, but the emotional content of the statement is clear. While figures are quoted for one province, a vague estimate is applied to three provinces which "had few sisters in total". "Country" is mentioned in place of province(s).[154]

Vietnam raises a related but different concern about the participation of sisters in temporary vows in processes of discernment and consultative voting for leaders. It observes that in provinces with a significant percentage of temporary professed young sisters, who are not yet full members of the Congregation, active voting by all professed sisters can be problematic.

[153] Direct voting by chapter members to the Congregation Leadership Team was amended in the 2014 Constitutions. Though these had not yet been approved by CICLSAL when chapter members gathered in January 2014, it was decided to anticipate what CICLSAL later approved as the chapter members, following the draft Constitution 111 voted for the Congregation Leader and two general councillors. These three, acting collegially elected the two remaining councillors. RNDMs all have active voting rights in electing delegates to a general chapter. Sisters are consulted by the CLT about their preferences for province and region leadership personnel.

[154] In 1995, the Indian province which stretched from Tamil Nadu in the south, to Assam in the north, was re-structured as three vice-provinces. In 2000, three vice-provinces were canonically established as three provinces. In March 2018, there were 61 RNDMs in India Central, 79 in India North-East, and 52 in India South, a combined total of 165 RNDMs, this is more than twice the combined number of RNDMs in the two biggest Western provinces, United Kingdom and Ireland, and New Zealand.

Several other provinces refer to discernment processes that they find unsatisfactory, preferring that the province or region has greater determination over the appointment of leaders. India Central points out the confusion in the appointment process for the leadership team. Bangladesh prefers a discernment process among all the sisters, followed by a secret vote. New Zealand wants to select its own leaders. Canada wishes to achieve unity-in-diversity through a variety of structures and models of leadership (e.g. more circular, participatory models of governance) that truly reflect RNDM lived reality.

Church

As indicated in the preceding chapter, Euphrasie founded her congregation during a conservative and indeed reactionary time in the Church's history. The Church of Euphrasie was one that prioritised obedience and loyalty to the pope, that understood the missionary role of religious women as ancillary to that of the ordained priest, and that uncritically accepted hierarchical structures in church, religious life and society. In the Constitutions, she wrote that her Sisters "accept likewise, but with the consent of the General Council, other works of charity such as work-rooms, orphanages, refuges, etc., under the direction of their Lordships the Bishops, or Vicars-Apostolic in order to assist them in their apostleship".[155] Such an article demonstrates that religious women's contribution to mission was very much ancillary.

On the other hand, Euphrasie withdrew her Sisters from Oceania in 1878 as she could not accept the decision of Bishop Louis Elloy, SM, Apostolic Administrator of Samoa, that the cloistered life style, and black religious habit favoured by Euphrasie were not suitable for a tropical climate. The Congregation was also involved in a lengthy court hearing with the parish priest of New Plymouth, New Zealand, in 1885, over the building costs for the new convent there. Her earlier experiences as a Sister of Calvary, and the role of Oratorian Fathers in the life of that congregation, and the later role of the Marist Fathers in both Sydney and New Zealand, convinced her that her young congregation should be established as a pontifical institute, not as a diocesan congregation. Only this would allow her the autonomy at governance level that she considered necessary.

Euphrasie could not have foreseen the impact that secular feminism would later have on RNDM self-understanding of women's role in the Church. This changing self-understanding accelerated as more RNDMs were exposed to the theologies of Catholic feminist theologians.[156] RNDMs began to recognise that religious women

[155] Barbier, #3.

[156] See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992); Sandra M. Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure. Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, Religious Life in a New Millennium, vol. 1 (New York:

were not required to be ‘handmaids’ of the priest or bishop, but ideally were to be collaborators with them and lay people in *Missio Dei.* Furthermore, province and congregation leadership teams were insisting that Sisters receive, somewhat belatedly, a sound theological and professional education that would better prepare them for ministry in the contemporary world. Better education also meant the possibility of better employment opportunities.

Such developments represented a significant shift for RNDMs, who like other religious, pronounce their vows publicly within the Church. Ministries that religious have traditionally been involved in such as education, health care, pastoral and social works, have for the most part been directly related to the church community, either at parish, diocesan or national level. However, this reality has changed in some countries, particularly where RNDM sisters no longer own or administer institutions. Today RNDMs in Australia, Canada, England, Ireland and New Zealand can be involved in ministries that are not church related.

The framing of questions for each stage of the process did not specifically direct respondents to comment on church, and references to "church" do not appear that frequently. However, the variety of ways in which “church” is understood is worth a closer examination. New Zealand makes a distinction first, between those who make up the church, the "people of God", and are involved in the mission of the church, and second, the Magisterium. They suggest that “‘church’ only be used when referring to the Magisterium. They report that: “We need to see a broader perspective than ‘Church’ – need to see a perspective that reaches out to other denominations, other religions, our world”.

The response from New Zealand to the complete draft has 4446 words, but "church" is mentioned just eight times. Bangladesh's complete draft has 1103 words and mentions "church" twice. Davao's response to the complete draft, however, has 1706 words and refers to church eleven times. The majority of references that appear in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the Philippines, are in relation to church hierarchy, rather than to church as the community of believers, the people of God. RNDMs in these provinces and regions appear to associate the Pope and hierarchy to Church with a capital "C", and the wider community of church with a small "c". Other words associated with Church include "Vatican", "Holy See", "Rome", "male dominated", "Magisterium", "CICLSAL", "Canon Law". There are a few references to "prayer of the Church" or to "Eucharist". An extract from Australia summarizes concerns expressed by other provinces: “It's a challenge in the present climate to offer obedience to the Pope, the Church, a male-dominated organization that has little genuine regard and respect for religious women and their contribution in building the kingdom”.

Paulist Press, 2000). Not that all RNDMs were reading such literature, but many were attending renewal programmes that put them in touch with the ideas generated by such authors.

"The present climate" is a metaphor which the speaker/writer presumes the reader will understand. The Church is equated with the institutional papacy and is described as "a male-dominated organization". The excerpt directs attention to the relationship between the hierarchical church and religious women, a relationship identified as marginal. Other provinces and regions raise the question of the necessity of "offering obedience to the Pope". Canada equates the Pope, Church and hierarchy: "References to 'the Church, the Pope' that imply their hierarchical nature which is not life-giving". While it is not explicitly stated, the inference is that the hierarchical nature of the Church is not life-giving for women because they are excluded from positions of leadership and responsibility, and decision-making processes.

One Sister from New Zealand comments favourably on the style of writing of the new Constitutions but doubts that this will gain the approval of "Rome": "The style of writing is easy and flowing for those with English as a first language. However, I am not sure that Rome will approve. It may not be legalistic enough! The Vow of Poverty is well done. It gives the spirit of Euphrasie for our time. Vow of Chastity Art. 12. It seems to give all the right nods to the Church (Rome) without offending the members of the Congregation too much".

Here "Rome" refers to CICLSAL which is responsible for approving Constitutions of religious institutes. "Rome" is associated with legalism, perhaps suggesting that the Constitutions will be a juridical document. The use of the modality "may," combined with the negative "not be legalistic" and the adverb "enough" contributes to the expression of doubt. In the final sentence, the speaker again uses a modal verb to soften the statement. "To give all the right nods" is a colloquialism meaning "to give due deference". There is an intimation that deference is given in order to assure official approbation of the new Constitutions. Once again here the "Church" and "Rome" are synonymous. Two further extracts from New Zealand indicate a certain preoccupation with possible controls from Rome. The unstated taken for granted reference is to CICLSAL: "Art 105, "Major Superiors" disturbed us (14 RNDMs), but this may be because of Canon Law".

"Major Superiors" in this context refers to province and region leaders who are recognized by the local church and civil authorities as having responsibility for leadership. The fear or concern expressed in the previous statement is borne out in a subsequent extract from the same document relating to the reflection question, "What is missing from the complete draft?": "What is missing is the realisation that this is not a good time to be presenting Constitutions to the Vatican – we could easily end up with so much compromise that it is not worth the effort or we could be worse off than we are now."

The implication that "what is missing" is not content but rather insight. The writer suggests a futility in the effort that has been involved in the work on the Constitutions over a period of several years because of inopportune timing. "This is not a good

time" implies that there may in the future be a better time. The "Vatican" is cited rather than "Rome", the "Holy See" or "the Church" as in previous excerpts. The repetition three times of the personal pronoun, "we" is intended to be inclusive of all RNDMs. "Compromise" is seen as something negative and undesirable in Constitutions, and presumes the possible relinquishing of deeply held RNDM values and beliefs that might be in conflict with CICLSAL.

Extracts from New Zealand and Davao[157] indicate diverse perspectives on feminism and its impact in the Congregation. In particular, there is a concern around the perceived patriarchal and hierarchical character of the Church:

Art. 86 Trinitarian understanding of authority and leadership – how can we have a clue after 2000 years of patriarchy and hierarchy? We are so wounded as women I note it is difficult for us to claim truly and clearly our authority.	We appreciate the growing stance of the feminine [sic] church. At the same time we feel that the influence of the feminine theology has both positive and negative impacts in the Congregation. From our experience some sisters are affected negatively by the priests' role/hierarchal structure in the church and therefore they do not go for mass. As a consequence they lose the essence and central of our life as RNDMs. In the draft Constitutions there is little mention of Eucharistic celebration. This seems to undermine the importance of holy mass in our life as RNDMs. It has been noticed that some older sisters encourage or support young sisters who show little interest in participating in the Eucharistic celebration.
(New Zealand, complete draft)	(Davao, complete draft)

The excerpt from one New Zealand sister expresses pain and anguish at the effects of patriarchy and hierarchy on women in the church and in society. Art. 86 refers to an article in the complete draft which situates the source of authority in the mystery of the Trinity. The speaker reacts with a strong emotional statement, "how can we have a clue?" While the sentence begins with an interrogative pronoun, without the question mark as punctuation, the "question" is presented as a statement of fact, suggesting that women have experienced or known nothing different. Two thousand years is an implied reference to the Christian tradition. In the statement, "we are so wounded as women", the speaker includes not only RNDM women, but women in general. "I note" personalizes the statement, but then the speaker again refers to "us" and "our". The use of the adverb, "so" to describe "wounded" adds emphasis to the experience of suffering. "[T]o claim … our authority" indicates that this would require effort and struggle.

[157] In the report from Davao, written by a Sister with English as her second language, “feminine” appears to have been used as synonym for “feminist”.

In Davao the members of the international formation team in 2012 were from Vietnam, India and Kenya. They express their concerns about the impact of feminist theology on the attitude of some sisters towards church. The excerpt begins with a statement of appreciation of aspects of feminism. The pronouns "we" and "our" usually refer to the members of the small group, except for two references to "our life as RNDMs". Others are referred to alternatively as "some sisters", "some older sisters" "young sisters" and "they". As in the previous extract, attention is drawn to personal and group authority, "from our experience". The use of the definite article in "the influence of the feminine theology" has the function of objectifying and disassociating the self from feminine theology. Sentences shift from active to passive voice: "Some sisters are affected negatively" distancing the speaker/s from the statement. The hierarchical structure of the church is noted and accepted. Opposition to the observations is conveyed by the negatives, "do not go", "they lose", "little mention", "undermine", "little interest". "It has been noticed" denotes disapproval.

Community

Community is yet another area of RNDM life that has undergone significant changes, particularly in the Western Provinces. As has already been suggested the hierarchical nature of institutional church life was reflected and mirrored in RNDM community life prior to 1969's *Interim Constitutions*. Large communities were often enough the norm, as the Sisters living in them were responsible for staffing large educational institutions which often had boarding schools and orphanages attached. Other Sisters were working as domestic staff looking after both Sisters and students.

The 1969 *Interim Constitutions* affirmed that community living has its origins in the trinitarian life of Father, Son and Spirit, and also in the life of Mary who has gathered with the first Christian community in the upper room at Pentecost. Here too are found the beginnings of a greater affirmation of the individual Sister with her own gifts. Article 40 reads: "The unique contribution of each is appreciated by all the more since diversity of gifts contributes to the richness of community life".[158] There is also an emphasis on the role of superior: "At the centre of the community is the superior who as leader is responsible with the sisters for the common good" (# 43).[159] The 1979 Constitutions also affirm the trinitarian origins of all community life, and again highlight the role of the superior "to whom is entrusted the care of all. Placed at the centre of community the superior is called above all to be the living principle of unity" (# 70).[160]

[158] Chapter of Renewal, ed. *Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions: Interim Constitutions and Directives, December 8, 1969* (Hastings: Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, 1969), #40.
[159] Ibid., #43.
[160] *Constitutions,* (Rome: Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, 1979), #70.

But all this would begin to change when de-institutionalisation began shaking the foundations of religious life in Western provinces after Vatican II. There were a number of reasons for this. First, and unexpectedly given the hope that Vatican II engendered for many religious congregations, vocations began to decline quite rapidly, and hence the number of religious working in congregationally-owned institutions also declined. Second, the impact of Catholic Social Teaching and liberation theology, the latter with its emphasis on option for the poor, persuaded religious that they could more meaningfully engage in mission through ministries among the poor and oppressed than through in teaching in middle-class schools. This often involved moving out of larger communities to small homes typical of the people among the sisters worked. Thus the 1984 General Chapter in its Statutes encouraged "a more radical presence among the poor...[and] the establishment of a community of real insertion among the poor".[161]Third, as communities became smaller, and indeed as single living became increasingly common in the Western provinces, particularly in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, the presumed need for local superiors diminished somewhat.

In Asia, communities in rural villages have always been smaller, while in the cities where there are large schools, communities would usually have between eight to fifteen members, most of whom would be involved in the education ministry. In Africa and Latin America, communities are small. References to community appear very frequently in each of the responses studied, but attitudes differ significantly. Words and concepts associated with community include, "communion", "communion with the church", "friends", "friendship", "internationality", "culture", "cultural sensitivity", "mutual respect", "unity and diversity", "single living", "gap between East and West", "care of the elderly", "common purse", or "simple life-style". From the responses two key issues will be explored: "single living" and "intercultural communities".

"Living singly" as opposed to "living in community" was raised by several provinces. "Living singly" is a development characteristic of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and to a lesser extent, United Kingdom and Ireland. In New Zealand society, close to 13% of the population live alone, something that is more likely to happen in countries where better social welfare and social security structures are in place, and in provinces where there has been more de-institutionalisation. Vietnam signalled their disquiet with the issue by returning to it several times in their response to the first draft: "#51: In response to missionary needs, some sisters may live separately for mission. This does not fit with Canon Law 607 and 608. Beside the directive of the Church, RNDMs are called to live the three dimensions: Contemplation, communion, mission and the communion is expressed especially through the Community life (response of five sisters)".

[161] Twenty-second General Chapter of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, *Witnessing to the Gospel: Beyond All Frontiers* (Rome: Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, 1984), 12.

The excerpt begins by quoting a sentence from #51, which pertains to sisters living separately for mission. The five Vietnamese RNDMs refer to Canon 607 to demonstrate that single living is not in conformity with established norms and directives of the Church concerning religious life. In the next sentence, the group adds to the earlier statement by reference to three dimensions of RNDM life: "contemplation, communion, mission". In the extract below the authority of "most of RNDMs", is invoked, although the bracket (55 sisters) indicating the number of sisters agreeing with the statement, is actually less than half the total members of the province: “Most of RNDMs in Vietnam consider the Community life is very important in RNDM Missionary call. For that reason, it is not appropriate to insist ‘some sisters may live separately for mission’ in the Constitutions, because it might be over-used. Obviously, there will be some exceptions, this phrase can be in the Directive of the Congregation or of the Province (55 sisters)”.

The likely meaning in this context is, "we should not write…" The reason for the objection to single living, "it might be over-used" indicates a concern or fear that when something is written in the Constitutions, it has the effect of law, permission to live singly is implicit and some may abuse this. "Obviously" denotes reasonableness. The statement recognizes exceptions to the law can be granted. Including a reference to single living in the "Directives" rather than sanctioning it in the Constitutions, is a possible solution.

India South notes that living separately for mission is not in keeping with the RNDM charism, while Central India is confused that the issue should even be raised:

Some sisters may live separately for mission”: **This sentence is confusing**. We are called to live in community …? Are we giving priority to the mission that undermines the importance of community life? How often a sister who lives separately connects with the community? How could we express that our communities are for Mission? (India Central, first draft)	What does not resonate with you? Inferences to monastic calling rather than our call to an apostolic missionary life; and the term "living in community", implies the four monastic walls – prefer the expression "to live community". (Canada, first draft)

India Central's comment, "this sentence is confusing" is highlighted, and indicates their concern about living singly. The statement, "we are called to live in community" is a matter of fact. Through a series of four statements that are posed as questions, the speakers/writers argue that there is no confusion, because there is no other way to live. The questions serve to underscore the importance of relationships and interpersonal connections. Community life is the support system that enables mission. For India Central, living in community cannot be optional but is integral to religious life. Canada, however, challenges the statement "living in community" inferring that it pre-supposes a monastic life-style that is not consistent with apostolic

religious and missionary life. The alternative expression "to live community" implies a greater flexibility.

Sisters in the United Kingdom and Ireland have diverse opinions on living singly. One group implies that depriving others of community is a statement about relationships. Another group asks if living singly is going to be permanent or optional. There is concern from yet another group that the statement about single living has been removed from the complete draft: "We...wondered why it is not mentioned or recognized so that no norms are prescribed for it, e.g. the various reasons which make it desirable, and how accountability (essential to the concept of obedience) is managed".

This group is not opposed to "living singly" but recognizes there needs to be corresponding norms outlining the reasons why sisters might choose to live singly, as well as defining means of accountability, which the group admits, is an essential component of religious obedience. Kenya similarly underscores the question of accountability: "Single living is a reality in the Congregation at the present time but this is not reflected in the draft. How do you cater for this in connection with the Common Purse and our reality for mission?"

Kenya signals another discomfort with the concept of living singly by raising the question of finance. The understanding of the "Common Purse" is taken for granted and is a reference to the sharing of finances across the Congregation. The underlying questions which are implied but not stated, relate firstly to personal responsibility and accountability, and to the increased costs that single living involves as opposed to those of a group living in community. Single living is connected with both finance and mission. Living a common life, contributing to and receiving from a common purse, have always been integral dimensions of religious life as both the Rule of St Augustine, and Euphrasie's Constitutions indicate.[162]

Several provinces and regions commented on the diversity of the Congregation as experienced in intercultural and international communities. Kenya, a province which is both intercultural and international in composition, appreciates the clarity around international and intercultural identity in the draft Constitutions: "Our international and intercultural identity are clear. Frequent reference to internationality, God present in all peoples and cultures. … Unique in our calling but without borders in our outlook." For Kenya, inclusivity widens to embrace universality with the concepts, "all peoples and cultures", "without borders" and "our outlook".

India Central uses a series of adjectives that are somewhat synonymous, first, by expanding "international" and "intercultural" to include "pluralistic"; second, by combining communities and societies, and thirdly using "stressed" and

[162] See Barbier, *Constitutions,* "Rule of Saint Augustine, Chapter 8, Common Life", 9-10, and "Vow and Virtue of Poverty", 60-62, where the importance of the common life and common purse are emphasised.

"emphasizes". They highlight the importance of the relational values of human dignity, the common good, and protection of the vulnerable: “The values of living international, intercultural and pluralistic communities and societies are stressed, and emphasizes the dignity of the human person, the importance of the common good, the value of human life and the protection of the weakest”.

In response to the complete draft they point out that embracing diversity is challenging, but it is also a gift: "#37: Call to mutual respect, cultural sensitivity demands great courage and openness while we understand diversity is a gift".

Latin America relates internationality to the dream of Euphrasie and being pushed beyond one's personal limits. The speaker experiences diversity as accepting other ways of doing things. For her, diversity and unity are integral to being RNDM: "To make true the dreams of Euphrasie going beyond my boundaries learning to renounce and accept other things or ways of doing things, loving the diversity and unity as an RNDM".

The United Kingdom and Ireland call for self-awareness of attitudes and prejudices, while France remarks on the challenges of overcoming culture shock in international communities. India Central observes that positive changes in power relationships that have taken place within the Congregation: "The gap between East and West seems to be bridged by the developments and changes that are taking place". There is an adaptation of the idiom "bridging the gap", which with its political and cultural connotations, recognizes differences in worldview and experience. The expression means forging a connection between two people or groups who share little in common with one another.

In Chapter Five, the excerpts that have been studied allow the reader to recognize the diverse and sometimes divergent opinions that exist in the Congregation, and the congregational story that backgrounds them. It is apparent how much culture, socio-economic contexts, and feminism have affected the reports from the different units that make up the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions today. In the next chapter, the discursive practice implicit in the texts will be examined.

Chapter Six Discursive Practice and the 2014 Constitutions

Discursive practice (hereafter DP) refers to the process of production, distribution and consumption of texts. DP is an important form of social practice which contributes to the organization of the social world, including social identities and social relations.[163] DP is another key element of Fairclough's CDA. This chapter will examine the processes relating to the production, consumption and interpretation of the documents:

1. the nature of the texts being studied and whether they were produced by an individual or group, or if the text is a synthesis of several responses;
2. the redaction of particular texts;
3. cultural and linguistic differences in responses;
4. cultural meanings derived from responses of selected groups;
5. intertextuality will identify different layers of texts and the influence of previous texts into the discourse, showing the relationship of primary texts to other discourses;
6. interdiscursivity will show how different genres have also influenced the text;
7. the relationship between the complete draft and the responses received from diverse social and cultural contexts.

In analysing institutional discourse, Fairclough recognizes that social practice is something which people actively produce and make sense of, on the basis of shared common-sense procedures.[164] Part of the task of CDA is to try and understand how members of social communities produce their "orderly" or "accountable" worlds.[165] Fairclough argues that “In so producing their world, members' practices are shaped in ways of which they are usually unaware by social structures, relations of power, and the nature of the social practice they are engaged in whose stakes always go beyond producing meanings. Thus, their procedures and practices may be politically and ideologically invested, and they may be positioned as subjects (and ‘members’) by them”.[166]

The discussion on DP will begin by surfacing early concerns and anxieties regarding the 2008 General Chapter decision to rewrite the Constitutions. Then the production, distribution and reception of the texts will be examined, and some of the historical influences that are reflected in the extracts from the key words studied above discussed. The analytical tool of interdiscursivity, which examines the mixing of different genres in a single text, and the linking of discourses to other topics or

[163] Jørgensen and Phillips, 61.
[164] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 72.
[165] Ibid., 72.
[166] Ibid., 72.

subtopics will be used. Fairclough contends that interdiscursivity has important implications for social change.

Prior to the process of rewriting the Constitutions, some RNDMs were concerned for two notable reasons. First, Sisters from France, the Philippines and the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as members of the International Formation Team in Davao, expressed unease. Their apprehension related to the possible loss of depth, beauty and inspiration they believed had permeated the 1979 Constitutions. Second, other RNDMs were concerned about the relationship of the Holy See to religious congregations of women, and the control that CICLSAL might exercise over the final text of the Constitutions. The facilitator engaged to work with the Constitutions Committee, also expressed hesitation about the eventual outcome of the new Constitutions and how they might be received by CICLSAL. The anxieties were not without foundation as the 2009 announcement of an apostolic visitation of American religious women by the Prefect of CICLSAL, Franc Cardinal Rodé, indicated.

The concerns relating to the rewriting of the Constitutions were discussed at the 2009 EGC meeting. The CLT reported on a meeting with a CICLSAL canon lawyer, who had outlined some of the norms related to the writing of Constitutions. Inclusive language was accepted as long as God was not referred to in feminine form as "she" or "mother". A reference to "team" could not be used in the Constitutions, because Canon Law recognizes authority invested in one person, the leader. A focus on cosmic spirituality would not be accepted because it is considered a new theology that has not stood the test of time. New questions surfaced at the 2009 EGC:

1. Whose needs are being met in the decision to rewrite the Constitutions?
2. If the God language cannot be changed is there any point in proceeding?
3. How are key concepts effectively translated into other languages? Do they retain their original meaning?
4. Almost one third of the Congregation has been born since 1978. How will they be represented in this process?[167]

Alternatives to rewriting the entire Constitutions were proposed:

1. Could the General Chapter decision be revisited?
2. Could there simply be a revision of the articles of the Constitutions that were no longer relevant?
3. Could the present Constitutions simply be rewritten using inclusive language, without changing the content?
4. Could a commentary be written to supplement the present Constitutions?[168]

[167] Minutes of EGC Meeting, Davao, Philippines, 23 February 2009.
[168] EGC Minutes, 23 February 2009.

Eventually it was confirmed that the 2008 mandate to rewrite the Constitutions would go ahead. But there were still reservations. Some Sisters wanted to include in any new constitutions a reference to the 2008 General Chapter mandate that RNDMs become more actively involved in care of creation. However, others warned that CICLSAL was wary of the inclusion of what it regarded as new theologies that had not been sufficiently tested. Eco-theology was one such matter that needed to be treated with caution, although probably that position has been subverted by Pope Francis *Laudato Si'.* Others felt that a contemporary understanding of the Divine Missions and the Trinity needed to be elaborated. It was agreed that religious life and the lived expression of the vows had also changed dramatically over the years and this would require intense study, reflection and new articulation. All RNDMS were convinced that the changing demographics of the Congregation meant it was important that all Sisters should contribute to rewriting the Constitutions. If this task were delayed there was a risk that the voices of the declining western provinces would be missing.[169] The facilitator drew attention to the fact that just as the global society was on the cusp of transition with the east rising and the west diminishing so too the Congregation was experiencing the same transition.

Rewriting Constitutions as Discursive Practice

To initiate a process of consultation for the rewriting of Constitutions, the CLT convened a RNDM Constitutions Committee of Sisters from Australia, Canada, South India, United Kingdom and Ireland; and two writers, Margaret McInerney from Australia, serving in Kenya; and Shanti D'Rozario from Bangladesh, then serving in Davao. The CLT was represented by Kim Phung Pham from Vietnam, and Maureen McBride from New Zealand. The Committee was responsible for the production of the initial texts. At the first meeting of the Constitutions Committee in September 2009, the group explored its hopes and identified key areas that needed to be addressed in the new Constitutions:

1. a clear articulation of the heart and spirit of the Congregation;
2. a solid, contemporary, theological foundation;
3. the depth and beauty of the expression of RNDM charism and spirituality;
4. the missionary nature of the Congregation and the call to mission for all sisters, the expression of RNDM missionary zeal;
5. a careful rewriting of the chapter on governance to reflect the roles and responsibilities of leadership and membership today;
6. a contemporary understanding of the vows;
7. use of inclusive language as far as possible;
8. clarity, simplicity and beauty of language that can be pondered and savoured.[170]

[169] EGC Minutes, 23 February 2009.
[170] Minutes of Constitutions Committee, September 2009.

The Committee met annually from 2009 through to 2012. They sought the advice of a canon lawyer in order to understand the scope and limitations of writing Constitutions, to clarify the interpretation of specific canons related to religious life, and to be aware of terminology and theological positions that might be unacceptable in Constitutions. It was the responsibility of the Congregation Leader and the Constitutions Committee to ensure all members of the Congregation were consulted. Together with the facilitator, the Committee devised a process of reflection and discussion on the 1979 Constitutions to be followed in the provinces and regions over the four-year period. Several sisters in each province and region were involved in producing the texts as coordinators, synthesizers, group leaders or secretaries. Some provinces and regions needed RNDMs to act as translators.[171] The roles of group secretary, province or region synthesizer and translators, were critical to the whole process as the documents produced were dependent on their skills and objectivity. Instructions from the Committee to synthesize the material from the various groups in the provinces were not always easily understood in all provinces and regions. Although an explanation of what synthesis entailed was provided, the quality of the response sent to the two writers depended on the understanding and skills of the Sister concerned. In larger provinces with many groups, several layers of redaction were needed to produce a single document, whereas smaller units of the Congregation[172] were able to present their responses directly, with minimal editing. In some provinces and regions membership was very multicultural and the age-range could span several decades whereas groups in other parts of the Congregation were more homogeneous.

November and February were the two months of the year chosen for intense work across the Congregation. These months corresponded to the liturgical rhythms of prayer leading towards Lent and the great feast of Easter, and Advent leading up to Christmas. The process of rewriting tried to honour the first Constitutions written by Euphrasie Barbier in 1869, and drew strength from the 1979 Constitutions, so that it was a work in which the membership could treasure the past and shape the future.[173] The Committee prepared materials for reflection, which included a prayer ritual for the gathering as well as extracts from scripture and the writings of Euphrasie Barbier. As noted in Chapter Four, guidelines and questions for group discussion directed to each chapter of the 1979 Constitutions to facilitate the process of group sharing:

[171] Reports from France and Senegal had to be translated from French into English, reports from Bangladesh from Bengali to English, reports from Latin America from Spanish to English, reports from Vietnam from Vietnamese to English and reports from Myanmar from Burmese to English.

[172] This was true of places with fewer than ten RNDMs, e.g., Senegal, Davao, Taiwan, South Sudan, Kazakhstan and Rome. The small group of Sisters in both Kazakhstan and Taiwan responded only to the complete draft as these new foundations were made in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

[173] The image of *"Treasuring the past and shaping the future"* was taken from the 2008 General Chapter Document, *RNDM Earth Community: We are One, We are Love*, and was the theme adopted for the sesquicentennial celebrations across the Congregation in 2011-2012.

1. What do you love about this chapter?
2. What no longer resonates with you?
3. What is not there that you would like to see added?

A few sisters felt that the questions were too simple and open-ended, but the questions were designed that way in order to engage every sister and to elicit clear responses. Some responses were lengthier than others. Some adhered strictly to guidelines requesting that responses be kept brief. Several were submitted in note format while others were more eloquent, especially when members felt strongly about a particular issue or article of the Constitutions. It was clear that there are diverse opinions within provinces as well as between provinces and regions.

The two writers consulted regularly with canon lawyers, theologians and scripture scholars and discussed their work with the two RNDMs who had been responsible for the 1979 Constitutions. They held in balance the aims of the Congregation in mandating the rewrite and the norms of Canon Law. They were attentive to all responses at each of the five stages of reflection in order to find the essence of diverse opinions and expressions of RNDM life, spirit and mission. The first draft evoked some negative reactions from different parts of the Congregation. In all, the Congregation studied three amended versions of the draft Constitutions. The final draft was presented to the General Chapter in 2014.

The influence of the secretary emerges as more visible in reports from smaller groups such as the international formation team in Davao and the Rome community. In the first two sets of responses from Davao, the secretary has English as her first language and has completed studies in the history and spirituality of the Congregation. The content of the statement is historically informative, analytical and persuasive: “The spiritual/theological basis of our RNDM call is something that Euphrasie struggled for, something that was lost and has been reclaimed again, something that is essential to the life and spirit of the Congregation. In comparing Constitutions inter-congregationally, the theological/spiritual expressions contained in our Constitutions always impress. It would be a pity to lose this again”.

In the third set of responses the secretary is from Kenya, and while fluent in English, it is her third language. The statement borrows from the text of the draft Constitutions, but then makes a descriptive and emotive observation: "Euphrasie Barbier received a special gift to understand that the Trinity is the source of all missionary activity and her heart is full of divine missions."

The reports from the secretary of the Rome community indicate some knowledge or background in law: “Need for language to have direction and strength, to be direct, specific; the way the Constitutions are written gives an option: I may do, I may not do, the choice is mine, the Constitutions do not require this of me. Concerned about the number of handbooks: better to have one handbook; how much weight, how

essential to have these? Are handbooks as binding as Constitutions? Why the change for "formal" to "lawful": "lawful" in what sense – canon or civil law?"

Each time materials were distributed in the Congregation they were accompanied by a letter from the Congregation Leader situating the work on the Constitutions as a moment of renewal, outlining the progress made, and encouraging members to engage in the next step through personal prayer and reflection by way of preparation for the group sharing. Since the year 2011-2012 marked the sesquicentennial year of the foundation of the Congregation, the rewriting of the Constitutions was a timely opportunity for the entire Congregation to engage in a moment of spiritual and theological reflection and renewal on the core elements of the life and mission of the Congregation. In the reference to the 150th celebration, the extract presents an example of interdiscursivity, introducing a spiritual genre and referencing the 150 years of foundation into a persuasive narrative: "The process of rewriting Constitutions is the responsibility of each one of us. As we journey towards the celebration of our 150 years of foundation as a Congregation, this task of reflecting on the Constitutions is an invitation to rekindle our zeal for mission and our love for the Congregation. It is a moment of grace as we touch the deepest core of our being, reflecting on our experience of profound communion with our God, with one another and the earth, and discover afresh the essential elements of our contemplative missionary identity".[174]

The members of the Constitutions Committee also wrote to outline the next stage. Prayer rituals were prepared to accompany the first draft when it was sent to the Congregation in 2010 and the complete draft in 2012. A second complete draft was presented to the EGC meeting in Vietnam in November 2012. This was an opportunity for the leaders of the Congregation to discuss the text together rather than to begin amending it. It was also partly seen as a prelude to the General Chapter in 2014 to detect where areas of difference and difficulties might arise. Following the EGC, the draft was once again forwarded to all the members of the Congregation. A slightly amended draft was presented to the delegates of the General Chapter in Thailand in February 2014 where each chapter of the text was discussed. The presence of Father Frank Morrisey, OMI, Canadian canon lawyer, meant individual articles of the Constitutions were clarified and the text was unanimously approved on 16 February 2014. The document was then submitted to CICLSAL to seek official approbation. The final text of the Constitutions was then prepared for publication and distribution to each member of the Congregation. In bringing together the voices and critique of all the members of a very diverse Congregation, the final text is itself an example of interdiscursivity.

The four-year process of theological reflection involved the entire Congregation. Approximately nine hundred women from many different cultural backgrounds, levels

[174] Maureen McBride, "Letter to All the Sisters in the Congregation", 28 August 2009.

of education, life experience, ministry and positions of responsibility engaged in the process with great seriousness, energy and passion. As in any human process, there were moments of uncertainty, conflict and crisis, but the level of engagement and commitment to continuing the work is seen in the quality and quantity of responses received. In the first set of documents, all responses without exception expressed appreciation for the simplicity of language. Although older members had been involved in minimal ways in the consultation prior to the writing of the 1979 Constitutions, a minority confessed to finding the new process confusing.

Upon the reception of the first draft, several provinces and regions expressed their apprehension or disappointment and sometimes even dismay, shock or anger that the essence or heart of the RNDM charism as they understood it, could be lost in the rewriting of Constitutions. There was concern that much of what had been treasured in the 1979 Constitutions was in danger of being lost through the simplification of language and what was perceived as a "watering down" of theological concepts. Echoing concerns from the EGC, several expressed regrets at the decision to rewrite rather than simply to revise parts of the Constitutions. Others felt a contemporary understanding of the vows was lacking, and that feminist insights were missing. Some – Canada, France, Davao, Philippines – lacked confidence in the process. They asked for greater authenticity, professionalism and the inclusion of contemporary theological concepts in the text and felt that the Constitutions Committee needed greater access to, and involvement of theological, scriptural and canonical experts.

It is possible to track a significant shift in attitudes from the responses to the first draft and those of the complete draft. Members recognized that the writers had been attentive and had incorporated recommendations and amendments into each new draft of the text. As successive stages of the process were followed in the provinces and regions, sisters became familiar and more at ease with what was expected, although France indicated that they would have preferred a different set of questions each time.

After their earlier objections that “Angels' language" was being replaced by human language, Bangladesh acknowledged the shifts that had taken place in crafting the complete draft. A recognition of the place of biblical and theological insight in the complete draft marked a greater degree of confidence in the expertise of the writers than the province had indicated on receiving the first draft.

Many RNDMs appreciated that the reports on the Constitutions demonstrated respect for the diversity of cultures and mission as well as the openness to other faith traditions. For the United Kingdom and Ireland, the experience of reflecting on the proposed draft Constitutions was a rediscovery of the spirit and charism of the Congregation: "The draft has made me rethink, rediscover the depths, beauty and spirituality of our Congregation. The draft has also reopened the Constitutions for me

so that I can see them with new eyes and make them realise their importance in my life".

It has been noted earlier that the RNDMs in Myanmar were not able to participate in the consultation for the rewriting of Constitutions in 1979. These Sisters, for whom Burmese is their second language and English their third, were very positive about the experience of working on Constitutions. After receiving the first draft they wrote: "Proud of being members of RNDM Earth Community because the Congregation is aware of the current needs of the world and the Church and rewrite the Constitutions without changing our charism and spirituality"

Following their discussions of the complete draft, Burmese RNDMs reflected on the corporate nature of the process of theological reflection, contrasting the work undertaken by the whole Congregation with the effort of Euphrasie Barbier in writing the first Constitutions: "In the past at the beginning of the founding of the Congregation Euphrasie Barbier alone wrote the Constitutions but today all members are involved." Reflecting on their lack of involvement in the consultation for the Interim Constitutions and the approbation of the 1979 Constitutions, they added: "In 1979, the Constitutions was done by a single sister...but this time the Constitutions are rewritten with our own words". Similarly, ownership of the new Constitutions was also important for Australia: "a sense of gratitude at being part of the process. Our input was valued. When we receive the finished document, we will feel a sense of ownership knowing that we were part of its evolution".
Diverse opinions are also seen even within provinces and regions:

I am disappointed that the 1979 Constitutions have been swept away and replaced by some-thing which could be anyone's Constitutions were it not for the inclusion of Euphrasie's quotes and words. (UK & Ireland, complete draft)	A general sense of relief on the part of the five of us on reading and reflecting on this draft. We feel able to embrace and identify with it. Text easy to read – heart warming, uplifting. We feel at home in this Congregation – absence of anything dictatorial. (UK & Ireland, complete draft)	Sisters in the group felt that the method used put responsibility on themselves, on us and how we live our lives. There were no rules "handed down from on high", but a sincere questioning of what we think. (UK & Ireland, complete draft)

The first excerpt above expresses one voice from the United Kingdom and Ireland, and articulates not only disappointment, but the pain and sense of loss experienced in receiving the complete draft. The adjective "disappointed" appears to minimalize the feeling which is conveyed more strongly in the metaphor "swept away". The second excerpt shows that a group of five recounted a different experience in pondering the new draft: Several "feeling" words and phrases in the extract, "sense

of relief"; "able to embrace and identify with it"; "heart-warming"; "uplifting"; "feel at home", convey appreciation of the text. Feeling "at home" is equated with "absence of anything dictatorial" and implies that members of the group may in the past have experienced the opposite in spoken or written discourse. Another group of nine sisters in final excerpt expressed their appreciation of the process, particularly in relation to the personal responsibility that was entrusted to each individual to fully participate in the process.

Following the unanimous approval of the new Constitutions by the delegates to the 2014 General Chapter, the final draft of the Constitutions was submitted to CICLSAL on 28 March of that same year with an accompanying explanation about the reasons for rewriting the Constitutions and outlining the changes that had been made. On 14 July 2014, CICLSAL wrote to request an additional copy of the new Constitutions wherein the original provisions, alterations and reasons behind the changes would be presented on the same page to facilitate the correction and eventual approval. The new format was prepared and the Constitutions resubmitted on 27 October 2014. Within a week CICLSAL responded indicating their approval subject to a few corrections and recommendations. Among the fourteen observations, six related to nuances of difference between what was written in the Constitutions and the provisions of Canon Law, four were recommendations that were left to the discretion of the Congregation Leader, and four were typographical errors. Exactly thirty-five years after the 1979 Constitutions were approved CICLSAL granted the final approbation on 8 December 2014: "After an attentive study of the amended document, with the present decree, this Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life approves and confirms the changes made for the reasons set forth. May the generous living of these Constitutions impel all the members of the Institute, "who are sent as disciples of Jesus to share their lives in the service of love seeking the fullness of life for the whole of creation", (CC 3) to live more fully their charism in the Church, under the inspiration of their Foundress, Sister Euphrasie Barbier".[175] Having discussed the production, reception and consumption of the various texts related to the drafting of the Constitutions, the tools of discursive practice will now be applied to the six key expressions identified significant to RNDMs today.

Euphrasie Barbier

An analysis of the use of the baptismal name of the founder indicates that a significant shift has taken place in the Congregation over the last forty years. In 1972, Euphrasie Barbier was generally referred to by RNDMs in a reverential manner as "Mother Foundress" or "the Foundress", titles which also implied distance and detachment and a filial mother-daughter relationship. Some older RNDMs, who entered the Congregation prior to Vatican II, have spoken of an earlier under-

[175] *Congregation Pro Institutis Vitae Consecratae et Societatibus Vitae Apostolicae*: Decree of Approbation. Prot. N. L.29b-1/2014, 8 December 2014.

standing of the founder as heroic, courageous and determined, but also as a rather austere and uncompromising woman. Some New Zealand RNDMs observed that in the 1979 Constitutions Euphrasie Barbier is referred to as “our Foundress” and never by her religious or baptismal name. Since the writing of the 1979 Constitutions, much research has been done into the life of the founder, her voluminous letters have been studied and her theology and spirituality of the Divine Missions have been elaborated by Marie Bénédicte Ollivier.[176] A well-researched biography of Euphrasie Barbier was published in 2007, also by Ollivier.[177] Other writings in the intervening years by RNDMs have also depicted a warmer, more relational woman, who showed great personal concern for her sisters. The more familiar use of her first name in the extracts denote a closer and more comfortable relationship with the foundress than may have been experienced or expressed in the past.

In Bangladesh a shift occurred between their responses to the first draft where the reference is to “our Foundress” and “Mother Euphrasie” to the complete draft where "Euphrasie" and "Euphrasie Barbier" are used. Study materials provided by the Constitutions Committee for the study of the complete draft posed a different set of questions for personal and group reflection, asking directly: "How is Euphrasie's fundamental intuition into the Divine Missions reflected in this first complete draft?" Perhaps the framing of the question influenced Bangladeshi RNDMs' use of Euphrasie. Rome's filial reference to being the "daughters of Euphrasie" is a step removed from Kenya's more familiar relationship as "sisters" of Euphrasie who "share in her dream".

Divine Missions

The 2002 General Chapter Document acknowledged diverse understandings of the Trinity in the Congregation: "Part of our reality is that we lack a deep understanding of Euphrasie Barbier's insight that the Trinity itself is a source of all missionary life”.[178] That Chapter urged the newly-elected CLT to address this lack. References to the Divine Missions and Trinity occur very frequently in all the reports, pointed to RNDM enthusiasm for a more developed understanding of the term “divine missions”. From the promulgation of the 1979 Constitutions a great effort was made to help RNDMs develop their knowledge and lived experience of the charism and to deepen their understanding of the Divine Missions. Books and articles were

[176] See Ollivier, *Straight is My Path*. Marie Bénédicte Ollivier preferred the term "fundamental intuition" rather than "charism" to describe Euphrasie Barber's insight into the Divine Missions, although "charism" is used in *Perfectae Caritatis*. In their responses to the first draft of the Constitutions, several provinces indicated their preference for "charism".
[177] See Ollivier, *Missionary Beyond Boundaries*.
[178] *If You Knew the Gift of God,* General Chapter Document, Thailand, 2002, 4.

written,[179] renewal programmes were held in different parts of the Congregation and courses provided for formators.

In 2006 an international formation centre was opened in Davao, Philippines, for Sisters preparing for perpetual vows. Other congregational programmes have also been offered at Davao. An integral aspect of each programme is a section on the RNDM charism. Some younger Sisters from Africa, Asia and Latin America have had opportunities for advanced studies in theology.[180] All these possibilities for reading, reflection and study within province and regions and in international groupings, provide a rich intertextual context for the extracts that have been analysed. Nevertheless, it is clear from some of the responses that there remains some confusion in understanding the terminology, and that this ambiguity was also reflected in the first draft of the Constitutions. It is also obvious that diverse theologies exist in the Congregation in relation to the Divine Missions and Trinity. Some provinces prefer to retain a more classical elaboration of Trinity as we saw in France's first draft: "We are all agreed that this text, overall, lacks inspiration, élan and depth…"

Intertextuality is evident in the references to the 1979 Constitutions, which offered a strong articulation and interplay of communion, contemplation and mission in the Trinity. The understanding that RNDMs participate in the mission of the Trinity has been illuminated in the writings on the charism and spirituality of Euphrasie Barbier and its expression today.[181] There is a clear association of sending on mission with the vow of obedience: The 1979 Constitutions stated: "In our Congregation obedience has the special connotation of being 'sent' on mission, a mission received immediately from our superiors but essentially from Christ the one sent by the Father and himself authorized to send in the Father's name" (#41).

RNDMs in the Philippines understand the Trinity as immanent and intimately engaged in human endeavour and identify their relationship with the Trinity and their participation in its mission. The Trinity is not a transcendent reality far removed from human life, but is rooted in human context. Such understandings also explain why New Zealand RNDMs introduce a more explicitly feminist interpretation of the mission of the Trinity: "Emphasising a 'sent' relationship stresses a patriarchal and hierarchical relationship in God and in the Congregation". This understanding is developed further in another excerpt from New Zealand: "A more consistent understanding of Trinity that believes in and is expressed as mutuality, equality of

[179] Books written include: Susan Smith, *Women and Mission from the New Testament to Today*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007); Susan Smith, *Call to Mission: The Story of the Mission Sisters of Aotearoa New Zealand and Samoa* (Auckland, David, 2010); Susan Smith, ed., *Zeal for Mission: The Story of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions 1861-2011*, (David Ling, Auckland 2012).

[180] From 2002 to 2014 approximately fifty young sisters from Africa, Asia and Latin America have completed Masters Degrees in Theological Studies, Scripture, Ecology and Spirituality, Leadership in Christian Communities, Human Development, in the Philippines, Kenya, India, Rome, Ireland, the United States, Canada and Australia.

[181] Ollivier, *Straight is My Path*.

Persons. That moves beyond the masculine to more inclusive descriptions that emphasise the immanence of God-Spirit within all creation".

Susan Smith has critiqued the insight of Euphrasie Barbier into the Divine Missions from a contemporary feminist perspective: "A gospel text dear to Euphrasie was John 20:21-22 (Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you'. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'). Euphrasie readily recognised the Trinitarian significance of this text for mission. However, the Johannine missionary command could lend itself to hierarchical interpretations, which in turn meant that mission-sending appeared to be a hierarchical exercise: the Father sends the Son, the Son sends the Spirit, the Spirit is with popes, bishops and priests in the exercise of their mission, and they in turn involve women in a subordinate capacity".[182]

India Central wanted the concept of 'being sent'" to be included in the final text, and the 2014 Constitutions continue to speak of RNDMs being "sent" on mission. However, there is an emerging understanding of the immanence of the Spirit in all creation, which needs further study by contemporary RNDMs as they deepen their understanding of trinitarian mission. Canada notes that in the complete draft: "The understanding of the gift of sharing in the Divine Missions is larger, more inclusive, more vibrant than the notion of 'mission' by itself".

Vietnam recognised this shift in the expression of role of the Spirit from the 1979 Constitutions and the complete draft of the new Constitutions and requested an explanation for the change: "To be called to the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions is to receive from the Spirit the gift of sharing in the Divine Missions. While in the old Constitutions, to be called … is to receive from the Father…Why this difference?"

The theology of American theologian, Elizabeth Johnson was suggested to the writers as a source of inspiration for the development of the Constitutions relating to the Divine Missions. In several of her works, Johnson articulates a fresh understanding of Trinity, describing the mystery of Trinity as divine relationality.[183]

Language

In exploring the discursive practice of extracts related to language several significant observations can be made that will help us to understand social relationships within the RNDM Congregation. Although the Congregation is of French origin, it is now apparent that there is a hegemony or dominance of the English language. Members of western provinces, with the exception of France, clearly have an advantage when

[182] Smith, *Call to Mission,* 276.
[183] See Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Discourse*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992).

it comes to fluency and facility with English. These RNDMs are more likely to use a range of metaphors and synonyms to convey meaning and unconsciously to exert influence. Though reports from France to the CLT and Constitutions Committee had to be translated into English, this task was the responsibility of a New Zealand-born RNDM who had English as her first language.

The provinces of Canada and New Zealand, as well as the Rome community, frequently use "over-wording", stringing a series of synonymic words and metaphors for emphasis and persuasion, as can be seen in the following from the Rome community: “need for simple, concise, clear strong, direct language”. Asian, African and Latin Americans are more likely to use complex sentence structures and different linguistic devices to express their opinions. There are a few English Lingua Franca (EFL) speakers in Asia, Africa and Latin America, but there are fluent English Second Language (ESL) RNDMs in these provinces and regions. Where there was misuse of tenses, spelling and grammar mistakes in reports, these usually originated in the work of those using English as a second or even third language.

Use of colloquialisms is relatively rare. When such expressions are found, they are most often from New Zealanders, and usually have a negative connotation. An example is "hackneyed", meaning "overused" in reaction to the use of the phrase, "Will of God" in the draft Constitutions.

The Rome community expresses a dislike for "flowery stuff" in language. Bangladesh's preference for "Angels' language" as opposed to "human language" infers that the Constitutions are not an ordinary document, but rather should hold a special and elevated place in the lives of RNDMs. Senegal, by way of contrast, shows the "human" language as including the speakers/writers in the life of the Congregation, rather than removed from it. Trying to achieve a balance between "Angels' language", "human language" and "no flowery stuff" posed a significant challenge to the writers in the production of the complete draft. However, the Vatican II document, *Perfectae Caritatis,* mandated the integration of both inspirational language and juridical language in the writing of Constitutions, which is what is implied in reports about what language is desirable in constitutions. With very few exceptions, Sisters across the Congregation believed the writers had achieved this integration.

Comments from Canada, Myanmar and New Zealand respectively, indicate the level of consciousness across the Congregation of the need for simplicity and clarity of language, which Canada and New Zealand believe has been achieved, but Myanmar was evidently not totally satisfied that this was achieved.

While India North East's responses are on the whole sparse, they are usually direct and pertinent. Their reference to "language that categorizes and divides us" is

borrowed from the 2008 Chapter Document,[184] and is a statement that obviously holds significant meaning and hope for the group.

The Davao preference for "classical language" in Constitutions was echoed by the CICLSAL canon lawyer who reminded the committee and writers that: "Constitutions need to reflect more classical language".[185] She elaborated by explaining that CICLSAL does not favour inclusion of the latest theological trends in Constitutions and advised against including too many references to creation theology.

Leadership

Canada's call for those with particular competency in the area of governance to be involved in writing up the relevant chapter included a reference to "books" other than the Constitutions. Introducing another genre is a clear example of interdiscursivity. Those who have some familiarity with Canon Law understand that not all legislation needs to be contained in the Constitutions and can be contained in 'other books' related to finance and administration, formation, or mission. While very important for the organisation of the Congregation, such additional books do not require the approval of CICLSAL, nor do they need to be approved by a general chapter, thus they can be amended more easily according to new and changing circumstances.[186]

RNDMs throughout the Congregation have strong opinions on leadership, and object to anything that suggests hierarchy, dominance or power over others, whether this relates to the CLT, the different PLTs or RLTs, or leadership in local communities. During the 1978 General Chapter when the previous Constitutions were discussed, a Plan for Action in the Congregation was drawn up. The observations in the section headed "Government and Administration" reflect the confusion that existed in the Congregation at the time:

1. we are confused in our understanding of authority and obedience in religious life;
2. we do not understand the type of government appropriate to a missionary Congregation.

Causes:

1. we do not share a clear understanding of the meaning of authority in relation to obedience;
2. we are influenced by the models of government in our society;

[184] *RNDM Earth Community: We are One, We are Love,* 20.
[185] Minutes of Meeting of Constitutions Committee with CICLSAL Canon Lawyer, Mary Wright, IBVM, September 2010.
[186] The CLT is responsible for writing documents pertaining to governance, financial administration, initial and ongoing formation, and mission.

3. we are using simultaneously both a pyramidical and collegial method of exercising authority;
4. our understanding of the theology of the vow of obedience has not kept pace with the changing pattern in the exercise of authority.[187]

Regrettably the 1978 Chapter failed to propose clear steps to resolve the confusion. This confusion was reflected in the 1979 Constitutions chapter on Unity and Charity. Reports from the different members of the Congregation from 2009 onwards, demonstrated a critical appraisal of the 1979 text and a wish to reject the model of leadership located in those Constitutions.

Australia highlighted a servant model of leadership, which was already hinted at in the Vatican II's *Perfectae Caritatis.*[188] Servant leadership is integral to the Christian tradition and there are many references in the gospels where Jesus, who washed the disciples' feet at the Last Supper, presents the image of the leader as servant (see John 13:1-16; Luke 22:27). Servant leadership is also proposed as a model of leadership in some parts of the secular and business world. Robert Greenleaf coined the term in 1970 in his essay, "The Servant as Leader". Greenleaf stressed that a servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. The objective of servant leadership is to enhance the growth of individuals or members in an organisation, thereby increasing teamwork and personal involvement. Servant leadership emphasises collaboration, trust, empathy and the ethical use of power.[189]

Interdiscursivity is also seen in the references from several provinces and regions to militaristic terminology, such as "superior", "general", "general chapter". These terms were strongly rejected by the majority of members throughout the Congregation, yet they would have been common terminology in most parts of the Congregation until 1996 when the elected Congregation leader, Indian-born Bernadine Mullaveetil, was introduced to the Chapter as "the first among equals".

Kelly Connors in her exploration of the role of Major Superiors in Apostolic Women's Congregations in the United States offers an explanation for the resistance to the term 'superior', indicating that such opposition is not limited to RNDMs: "Because of negative experiences revolving around words of power and authority, many religious institutes began to change their language during the period of renewal. The term 'superior' is a relational term and implies that those who are not 'superior' are, then, in fact, inferior. Preferring to define their offices by role, rather than relation, many institutes incorporated some use of 'leader' to name those that hold office –

[187] "Plan for Action", 1978 General Chapter Document, 21st General Chapter of Our Lady of the Missions.
[188] "Superiors, as those who are to give an account of the souls entrusted to them (see Heb 13:17), should fulfil their office in a way responsive to God's will. They should exercise their authority out of a spirit of service to the brethren, expressing in this way the love with which God loves their subjects" (*PC* #14).
[189] See Robert Greenleaf, "The Servant Leader", https://greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/, (accessed 1 August 2014).

Congregation leader, or provincial, or local leader, for example. Those who held these titles were 'in leadership'. Other officeholders, such as councillors or vicars, and perhaps even treasurers and secretaries, were part of the 'leadership team'".[190]

In meetings with the canon lawyer from CICLSAL the Constitutions Committee and writers learnt that "team" is not a canonical term, and so it is not acceptable in Constitutions. Canon Law upholds the authority invested in the leader. RNDM canon lawyer, Betty Iris Bartush pointed out that the sharing of responsibility and delegation of authority are strong canonical principles and that of operating as a "team" is neither mandated nor denied for province and congregation leadership teams.[191]

Intertextuality also occurs in the way in which provinces and regions propose how leadership should be exercised in the Congregation. Chapter documents since 1984 include reflections on leadership and how authority could be exercised in more inclusive and dialogical ways. "In adopting and trying to live a model that we call 'shared leadership' we find ourselves in a state of confusion and crisis, lacking clear guidelines in theory and practice, and struggling to be in right relationships".[192]

From 2002 onwards, the rights and responsibilities of leaders and members received much more focused attention throughout the Congregation. For example, in 2004 the CLT convened a standing committee of sisters from different age groups, cultural backgrounds, experience in leadership and formation, and expertise in theology and scripture, to explore the RNDM understanding of leadership. Their findings were circulated in the Congregation, and in 2006 the CLT, drawing on the earlier documents, presented a paper on leadership to the EGC meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2006.[193] The paper was discussed, amended and disseminated throughout the Congregation. Other reflections and critiques of leadership were included in the CLT report to the Congregation in 2008 and again in 2014.

In their contributions on proposed new Constitutions, the Philippines and Australia, both recognise diverse approaches to leadership, and also indicate how the understanding and experience of leadership in the Congregation has developed since 1979 when Congregation documents registered confusion and crisis in leadership. Their responses reflect the positive attitude of many RNDMs towards leadership, membership, authority and responsibility today.

The desire of India North East to increase the minimum age of sisters appointed to positions of responsibility reflects a cultural value that respects older people and that perhaps demonstrates a lack of confidence in younger RNDMs taking up leadership

[190] Kelly Connors, "The Role of the Major Superior with Particular Reference to Apostolic Women's Religious Institutes in the United States", https://www.ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/20559/1/Connors_Kelly_2011_thesis.pdf, (accessed 18 May 2015).
[191] Betty Iris Bartush in personal correspondence to author, 8 August 2015, see Canons 633 and 578.
[192] *If You Knew the Gift of God*, 2002 General Chapter Document, 8.
[193] "RNDM Leadership Today and Tomorrow," EGC Document, 2006.

responsibilities. 47% of the sisters in North East India are below the age of forty.[194] Their comments are a counterpoint to the urging from Kenya to introduce younger members to different experiences of leadership. This same concern to prepare young RNDMs for future leadership had been expressed by Euphrasie Barbier in 1886 in the one letter she wrote from Akyab. In the letter Euphrasie urges leaders to nurture the young in order to prepare them for the future: "Look after one another and help our young Sisters to acquire a genuine religious spirit. Their turn to take the lead will come before twenty years are passed."[195]

France had earlier expressed its concern about the CLT deciding how many delegates there should be from each province and suggests a need for more discussion around this matter at an EGC meeting. Vietnam too had concerns around representation at general chapters. In particular, it was concerned about active voting rights for sisters still in temporary vows, a development approved at the 1968 General Chapter: “All professed sisters, even those of temporary vows may have the right of electing and of being elected to the Provincial Chapter. The sisters of temporary vows may have the right of electing sisters to the general chapter, but may not themselves be elected”.[196]

This suggested that sisters in temporary vows had the same right to a consultative vote for the province leader and council. For Vietnam the question is a partly generational one because of the large numbers of sisters in temporary vows and a concern at the undue weighting their voice might carry in the province. This concern arises from the presumed limited knowledge and experience young sisters have of RNDM life.

Questions related to the appointment of PLTs and RLTs are not limited to Vietnam. Bangladesh, Canada, India Central and New Zealand refer to unsatisfactory consultation processes that preceded the appointment of leaders. The underlying issues are unstated but relate to a method of appointing leaders that is consultative only. Following consultation with the Sisters of a particular province or region, leaders are then appointed by the CLT. The preference of these provinces, however, is to determine their leaders through deliberative voting. The underlying issue seems to be an uncertainty as to how much weighting is given by the CLT to the names suggested by provinces and regions.

[194] Statistics of 31 December 2014.
[195] Euphrasie Barbier, letter of December 1886 to the Prioress of Christchurch, quoted in Maureen McBride's Pentecost letter to the Congregation, 21 May 2010.
[196] Minutes of General Chapter, 22 October 1968. See first Constitutions, where Euphrasie wrote that all Choir sisters had active voting rights but only those of perpetual vows could be elected to General and Provincial Chapters (#335).

Church

In reports received by the Constitutions Committee, references to Vatican II's ecclesiology of 'church' as the 'People of God' were relatively few. However, most RNDMs recognise the ecclesial significance of their relationship to the Church. Some RNDMs see themselves as loyal daughters of the Church while others are more inclined to see their role as that of a loyal opposition, whose responsibility is to critique and question decisions of the hierarchy. Since most of the questions in the study guidelines were open-ended, there was no specific question related to church. Bangladesh pointed out that religious vows are made publicly within the church community. Davao's response to the final draft expressed concern that feminist theology was influencing the way some RNDMs were distancing themselves from the institutional church and that this was affecting younger RNDMs. They also lamented the fact that traditional devotions such as prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and praying the rosary, seemed to be weakening in some parts of the Congregation.

In responses from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the Philippines, and to a lesser extent from France, the United Kingdom and Ireland, "Church" was most often mentioned interchangeably with "Rome", "the Vatican", "the Holy See", "the Magisterium", "CICLSAL", "Canon Law", "patriarchy" and "hierarchy". New Zealand made several references to its belief that the draft Constitutions would not be approved by CICLSAL. In forming this conviction, the provinces and regions cited were strongly influenced by two announcements from Rome that would directly affect women religious in the United States, but which would also have ramifications on congregations of women religious across the globe. In January 2009 CICLSAL announced an Apostolic Visitation of Congregations of Apostolic Women Religious in the United States to examine their quality of life. Just a few months later in April 2009, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) announced a separate Doctrinal Investigation of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in the United States.[197]

The two announcements provoked concern among many, as religious and lay people tried to fathom the reasons for the Apostolic Visitation and the Doctrinal Investigation and to assess the impact they would likely have on religious women. RNDMs in western countries felt most affronted by the announcements, wondering if their countries would also be subjected to a similar visitation. A perception among many religious was that the Visitation and the Investigation would result in disciplinary measures against women religious. The actions were seen as further examples of the marginalization of women in the Church. Many women religious believed that the Apostolic Visitation in the United States and the Doctrinal Investigation of the LCWR were smoke screens to avoid the real scandals rocking

[197] The final report on the Doctrinal Investigation was presented on 16 April 2015. This report was presented two years earlier than anticipated.

the Church – the sex abuse scandal that was snowballing in countries like Ireland, Australia and the United States, and the alleged financial corruption and mis-management associated with Vatican finances. The latter concern was probably driven by awareness of the initial questionnaire sent to leaders of American Congregations as this requested detailed information about Congregational finances. This prompted a protest amidst suspicion that the finances of women's Congregations could be tapped to fund dioceses responding to multiple lawsuits in the abuse scandals. This section of the questionnaire was removed by CICLSAL.

While some RNDMs particularly those in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines also indicate strong feminist positions, other provinces or regions expressed concern about negative effects of a feminist stance among younger RNDMs and their spiritual practices, including their participation in the Eucharist.

Community

Two significant issues were raised in relation to community: first, the question of RNDMs living singly and how congruent this life-style is with the aims of religious life; second, the experience of living in intercultural and intergenerational communities. It has been noted that some RNDMs in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Ireland live alone for purposes of ministry or health. Sisters in this situation are full members of the Congregation, are responsible to the Province Leader, are in regular contact with their nearest local community and participate in meetings in their local area, province or region. Some Sisters live in individual apartments that are clustered in close geographical proximity. When Sandra Schneiders discusses the evolution of what she describes as ministerial religious life as opposed to the monastic lifestyle that had paradoxically characterized apostolic religious life for decades, she comments on the changes that have taken place in community life since Vatican II: “Living singly, inter-congregationally, or in small mobile groups in function of the ministries in which they were involved furthered the dismantling of the monastic lifestyle. Ministerial Religious were no longer enclosed monastics following a horarium that demanded their prolonged presence in the convent several times a day…New ways of being and living community have had to be developed in place of ‘living in’ community geographically and physically which any who have lived this way know is no guarantee of genuine affective and effective sharing of life”.[198]

Ten years ago, the number of Sisters living alone in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Ireland was reasonably significant, however, today,

[198] Sandra Schneiders IHM, "Discerning Ministerial Religious Life Today", *National Catholic Reporter*, 11 September 2009, http://ncronline.org/news/discerning-ministerial-religious-life-today, (accessed 19 May 2015).

fewer Sisters live alone.[199] Sisters in Asia, Africa and Latin America find it difficult to conceive of a situation where religious would live alone. The concern has been raised and discussed at international meetings over several years.

Diversity in community life has long been a feature of RNDM life, whether referring to small, medium or large communities, intergenerational or intercultural living.[200] With the expansion of cross-cultural missioning in the 1980s, and the missioning of sisters from Asia, Africa and Latin America beyond geographical borders from the 1990s onwards, intercultural communities became more common in some parts of the Congregation. All reports indicated that RNDMs respect the cultural diversity and sensitivities apparent in many Congregational documents. The 1984 Chapter Document, *Witnessing to the Gospel: Beyond All Frontiers*, speaks to the gift of diversity in international communities and refers to a deeper sense of belonging to the wider Congregation: "At a time when we are rediscovering the universal dimension of our mission of evangelization, the international character of our Congregation lived in the concrete reality of our provinces and communities takes on a new value. More than an instrument of apostolic effectiveness, we consider our internationality as a gift, a richness which helps us to go beyond the narrow confines of community, province, local church, in order to open us to the universal church, to the service of the world of today and tomorrow. A new sense of belonging to the Congregation is being born. Moreover, we realize that each intercultural community, by our lived witness to communion, can become in our divided world a sign that true international harmony is possible".[201]

Twenty-four years later, the 2008 General Chapter document takes intercultural communities for granted: "As 'friends in search of God' we celebrate life and share mission together. We joyfully nurture relationships that are life-giving and based on a spirit of trust, cultural sensitivity, mutual respect, and appreciation and encouragement".[202]

Several decades of experience of intercultural communities have also brought some realism around the blessings and struggles of such diversity. This is reflected in the responses received from several provinces and regions. The 2008 General Chapter also drew attention to the need to confront attitudes and practices that militate

[199] In 2014, twenty-two of the forty-three Sisters in the Province of Canada were living singly; in Australia, ten out of twenty; in New Zealand thirty-nine out of one hundred sisters, while in the United Kingdom and Ireland seven sisters out of one hundred living singly. One Sister in France lives in a lay community which has been her locus of ministry for many years. There are no RNDM Sisters living singly in Asia, Africa or Latin America.

[200] In most provinces prior to Vatican II, apart from the United Kingdom and Ireland, a significant number of communities tended to be smaller and mission-oriented, although the provincial house and the formation communities tended to be larger. In response to the anti-clerical laws enacted in France in 1901, the Superior General and Council took the decision to transfer the Motherhouse to England. Although RNDMs returned to France in 1921, the Generalate remained in England until 1968 when it was transferred to Rome.

[201] *Witnessing to the Gospel: Beyond All Boundaries*, 1984 General Chapter Document, 3.

[202] *RNDM Earth Community: We are One, We are Love*", 10.

against healthy community living when it stated: “With grief and repentance, we courageously name the pain that still exists among us in the form of racism, prejudice, the effects of colonialism and the misuse of the power of money. All of these result in forms of oppression, manipulation and control which have no place in our RNDM earth community”.[203]

New Zealand wished to see the new Constitutions: "naming our pain from racism, prejudice, anger and jealousies. This is an important character of reconciliation”. In the Guidelines for Action included in the 2008 Chapter document, RNDMs are challenged to promote healing and reconciliation, a point that was picked up by India North East: “We will let go of language that categorizes and divides us. Workshops on issues of prejudice, discrimination and the effects of colonialism both within our Congregation and in the wider society will be offered at Congregational formation programmes and within all Provinces and Regions”.[204]

In the next chapter, the social practices of RNDMs extrapolated from the extracts studied in the two preceding chapters on linguistic analysis and discursive practice will be examined.

[203] *RNDM Earth Community*, 12.
[204] *RNDM Earth Community*, 10.

Chapter Seven Social Practice and the 2014 Constitutions

Social Practice (hereafter SP) is another important dimension in Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. One of the aims of CDA is to explore the connections between language and social practice, showing that society and discourse are in dialectical relationship. SP analyses socio-cognitive processes relating to the production, distribution and reception of the Constitutions from the CLT and from the provinces and regions. For example, SP can examine who was involved in the production of the texts; the timing and distribution of successive drafts of the text critical to the eventual unanimous approval at the General Chapter; what prompted or provoked the responses received; how reflection and discussion questions were framed; and how relationships, including power relations, affected the production of the text. Significant issues for RNDMs include:

1. the interpretation of charism in different social and cultural contexts;
2. the use of language;
3. cultural approaches to leadership;
4. power relations between leadership and members;
5. the expression of cultural, linguistic, generational and spiritual diversity.

Fairclough explains the relationship between the three dimensions of CDA: "In seeing language as discourse and as social practice, one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, not just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes and their social conditions, both the immediate conditioning of the situational contexts and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures".[205]

CDA helps the reader to understand how social order both is maintained and changed. Social reality is not static but is shaped by discourse and in turn creates new discourse. Discourse is both historical and contextual. CDA is particularly interested in power structures and the relationship between the centre and the periphery. Fairclough develops Gramsci's concept of hegemony as power relations between social groups. Hegemony is the achievement of social consensus and cohesion without recourse to violence or coercion, and can occur within many domains of social life: "Power relations are not reducible to class relations. There are power relations between social groupings in institutions and power relations between women and men, between ethnic groupings, between young and old, which are not specific to particular institutions".[206]

CDA recognizes that within discourses there is a struggle for dominance. Different actors try to promote different ways of organizing society.[207] This struggle for

[205] Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power,* 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 58.
[206] Ibid., 65.
[207] Jørgensen and Phillips, 36.

dominance means that different groups compete to define as to what should be considered true within the social world they inhabit. Hegemony succeeds when one particular way of being, or discourse is considered as "normal". For example, one hegemonic discourse, Euro-centric in the case of RNDMs, can appear so natural that RNDMS, either those who belong to the dominant hegemonic group, the ELF speakers, or those who are outside of that group, the ESL and EFL speakers.

Laclau and Mouffe point out that hegemony is not only dominance, but it is also a process of negotiation out of which emerges a consensus around meaning.[208] The understanding of hegemony has particular relevance for understanding relationships in the Congregation, specifically, how the rewriting of the RNDM Constitutions is affected by the diversity of the membership, how it is affected by its relationship with CICLSAL, and how the rewriting of the Constitutions affects relations within this international missionary congregation. In the discussion of this third dimension of CDA, social practice, to what degree hegemony was experienced as dominance and to what extent consensus was achieved, will be explored.

General Observations

RNDMs committed themselves to engage in the process of rewriting the Constitutions, and the quality and volume of material in the responses over a four-year period indicates high levels of participation. Responses point to critical, spirited and passionate discussions, especially in relation to issues such as leadership, church, community and single living. While RNDMs recognized that the 1979 Constitutions captured the spirit of Vatican II and articulated Euphrasie's charism, the significant changes that have taken place within the Congregation since 1979, particularly relating to the formation of new members, mission and ministries, community life and governance, meant that many articles of the Constitutions were no longer relevant and needed to be changed. The language of any new constitutions should not only reflect the lived reality but also shape new ways for RNDMs being in relationship with each other.

All provinces and regions wanted the new Constitutions to be written in language that was simple, clear and inclusive. Members believed that the use of expressions or words such as “man”, “mankind”, or masculine pronouns, was not only inappropriate but inexcusable in a document that was intended for religious women. The desire for inclusivity was seen not only in relation to the elimination of "male-oriented" language and processes, but it recognized that simplicity of language was itself a tool for inclusivity, particularly for RNDMs who have English as a second or third language. Reactions to the first draft recognized that simplicity and inclusivity had been achieved, but some Sisters regretted the perceived loss of depth of expression of the RNDM charism and spirituality. Most members were satisfied with

[208] See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (London/New York: Verso Publications, 1985).

the complete draft, although individuals and small groups continued to express dissatisfaction with some articles.

When they studied the 1979 chapter "Unity and Charity", every province and region rejected what they perceived as hierarchical and militaristic language and processes related to leadership. They considered that the use of such language actually serves to create hierarchies. RNDMs want to avoid a situation of "we" (members) and "they" (leaders), and to recognize and affirm both the role and responsibilities of all. Feminist models and processes of leadership are preferred along with discernment and consensus decision-making, but provinces and regions differed in the degree to which they insisted on the changes they hoped for in the new Constitutions.

Generally, provinces and regions with a significant percentage of members below the age of forty were more concerned with matters related to interpersonal relationships, the quality of community life, the formation of young RNDMs, inter-culturality, and ministry. Sisters in western provinces were more likely to present issues and reflections related to current theological concerns, predominantly concerning the marginalization of women in the Church and proposing more feminist models of leadership, believing that this would demonstrate greater emphasis on values such as inclusivity, participatory decision-making and mutuality. In connection with this, and in a document that was part of their preparation for the 2008 General Chapter, Myanmar raised a very significant question that remains to be further explored: "How and when can the Asian sisters articulate the documents according to the Asian spirituality, theology and mentality?"

Members in western provinces were conscious of certain risks involved in rewriting Constitutions. Some feared that the essence of the RNDM charism and spirituality found in the 1979 Constitutions would be lost if the language were simplified. Initially, it had been proposed that only the chapter on governance should be revised and that articles related to the vows be updated, or alternatively that the Constitutions remain untouched but that a commentary be written as a companion document to the Constitutions. Other RNDMs felt that the 'conservative climate' at CICLSAL was not favourably disposed towards more liberal congregations of apostolic women religious. They believed that the RNDMs would be subject to restrictive controls and feared that some aspects of religious life espoused by the RNDMs would not be acceptable. When the social practice of RNDMs is critically examined, significant shifts related to diverse cultures, inter-generationality, the demography of the Congregation, external social, political and economic influences that have occurred since 1979 are discernible.

Euphrasie Barbier – A Shift from Title to Name

The use of 'Euphrasie Barbier', to speak of the founder points to other shifts in relationships that are taking place among RNDMs. Distance of time, space and

culture are transcended by the familiar, sisterly form of address so that 'Euphrasie Barbier' becomes a unifying symbol for the Congregation today rather than a remote figure from the past to be revered. While Euphrasie Barbier is a model of spiritual depth and missionary zeal, through the imprinting of her first name she has become more accessible to RNDMs as a sister like us, rather than the foundress from the nineteenth century. This familiarity is also reflected in interpersonal and intercultural relationships between Sisters across the Congregation, relationships which have developed and deepened through international missioning, international programmes, such as those held in Davao and at congregational meetings.

Some historical reasons can be attributed to the attachment of Bangladesh to the respectful and traditional title. Bangladeshi Sisters treasure and take great pride in the memory of Euphrasie Barbier accompanying the first RNDMs to Chittagong in 1883. Not only did she spend a total of ten months over two visits to the port city, but she also began to learn Bengali and Hindi during her first visit, and her letters show a very keen interest in the development of the mission. Because of this, Chittagong is sometimes spoken of as the 'Motherhouse' of RNDMs in Asia. The shift that was observed in Bangladeshi responses from Mother Foundress/Mother Euphrasie to Euphrasie Barbier denotes a cultural shift at least among younger RNDMs, from the deferential title to familiarity of the name, embracing what appears to have become the norm. In Western countries as well as parts of the Congregation that were founded within the last fifty years, the founder is usually spoken with affection as 'Euphrasie' or 'Euphrasie Barbier.

Changes from titles to names have affect and continue to affect interpersonal relationships between RNDMs both within provinces and across the Congregation. Prior to Vatican II at the ceremony of reception into the novitiate, RNDMs received a religious name of a male or female saint.[209] Sandra Schneiders observes that the taking of saints' names was symbolic of the radically egalitarian nature of religious life: "Nobility and reputation of any kind is renounced upon entrance. That was one of the purposes of suppressing personal names and taking new ones that relate each individual to the communion of saints in the equality of grace rather than to the family of origin and ancestral privilege or even to one's previous secular identity and achievements".[210] A new name reflected a new way of life for young sister.

When young women entered the Congregation in the early 1970s the usual form of address for another RNDM was the formal title 'Sister'. Sisters professed more than twenty-five years had the title 'Mother'. This practice changed, particularly in Western provinces, and very soon many RNDMs, especially younger women, used first names rather than the title.

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[209] In some provinces this practice continued for some years into the 1970s. The majority of RNDM sisters have since reverted to their baptismal name.

[210] Sandra Schneiders, *Buying the Field: Catholic Religious Life in Mission to the World*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2013), 57.

Cultural differences are also observed in the various forms of address used among RNDMs. Traditionally the French use the informal form of address, *tu* for family members, close friends and children, whereas the formal *vous* is used for other relationships, including in religious communities. Today, however, the use of *tu* is more widespread, especially among the young. This evolution is generally attributed to the influence of English, where there is just the one pronoun "you" for both informal and formal dialogue. French Sisters usually address each other *vous*, whereas members from other cultures living in France generally use *tu* among themselves. RNDMs in Senegal, the majority of whom are not French, use the more familiar *tu*, when speaking to each other. In Peru and Bolivia, the Spanish informal *tú* is used in conversation between two sisters, while *ustedes* is used in a larger group. If a Sister were to engage in conversation with someone considered her superior, she would use the more formal *usted.* The use of *tu* and *tú* signify friendship, intimacy, equality and mutuality in relationships, while *vous* and *ustedes* can suggest formality, distance and hidden power.

Fairclough explores the shift that has taken place in French society in the use of *tu* and *vous* and makes some interesting observations. He locates his analysis in his discussion on "power in discourse" and "power behind discourse". He explains that power in discourse is to do with unequal relationships where powerful participants control and constrain the contributions of non-powerful participants,[211] such as in the teacher-student relationship, or in situations where non-powerful people have cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from those of powerful people and where the possibilities for miscommunication are significant.[212] "Power behind discourse", on the other hand, is seen as a hidden effect of power in social conventions.[213] Fairclough relates a shift in the use of *tu* and *vous* to "power behind discourse" noting that the difference between the two French pronouns *tu* and *vous* was previously one of power, with *tu* being used to address subordinates and *vous* used to address superiors. Either form of address, depending on the class of the speakers, could be used reciprocally between social equals. He observes that more recently there has been a shift towards a system based on *solidarity* rather than power with *tu* being used to address people one is close to in some way (friends, relations, co-workers, etc.), and *vous* is used when there is social distance. Fairclough adds that the evolution of power-based system towards the solidarity-based system seems to be in line with long-term developments away from the explicit marking of power relations in different institutions. However, he questions whether this trend signals that unequal power relations are on the decline because of power inequalities in the distribution of wealth, access to health care, education, housing and employment. He argues that it is quite possible for the expression of

[211] Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 76.
[212] Ibid., 77.
[213] Ibid., 83-84.

power relationships to be played down as a tactic for the continued possession and exercise of power.[214]

New Zealanders, Australians and Canadians have traditionally prided themselves on an ethos of egalitarianism,[215] a value which continues to have an impact on the wider Congregation. This ethos can affect younger Asian RNDMs studying in these provinces, as in many Asian countries given names are rarely used, but family members and friends are addressed in a relational manner as "older brother" or "older sister" or by their "pet name". Until very recently it would be unthinkable for a younger RNDM in Asia to address the superior of the community, the novice directress, or the province leader by her first name. In Vietnam "BTTQ" is the abbreviation of *Bề Trên Tổng Quyền* which translates as "Superior General". The abbreviation is used in the written form. Sisters would refer to the leader by the full title, *Bề Trên Tổng Quyền*. However, if they are speaking to her directly, they will use the polite form of address, "Sister" along with the more informal first name. The province leader, who is Vietnamese, will usually be addressed *Soeur Bề Trên Giám Tỉnh*, "Sister Provincial". Many Asian Sisters have made a significant cultural adjustment in addressing RNDMs from western countries by their given name. Today use of first names is more common among peers in Asia, though still not so common in addressing older people or those in positions of authority.

Divine Missions – A Shift from Devotional Spirituality to a Biblically-grounded Understanding of Mission

Throughout the process of rewriting the Constitutions, diverse understandings and expressions of theology, spirituality and ecclesiology were evident in the different provinces and regions. This diversity was already observed as far back as 1984: “It is important to be realistic and to be able to admit that within the same province or region, even within the same community, there exist side by side modes of living the RNDM religious life which are divergent if not opposing: different hierarchies of value, different sensitivity to political, social and ecclesial events, different challenges from the Scriptures, different understandings of mission”.[216]

Thus, members of the Rome community were concerned that "the particular expression" of the RNDM charism, namely the virtues of humility, modesty, charity and simplicity which had always been attributed to Mary by RNDMs, were missing from both the first and the complete draft of the Constitutions. Perhaps their concern reflects the fact that the majority of the members of this group entered in the years

[214] See Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 96-97.

[215] The egalitarianism is a legacy perhaps of colonial ancestors escaping nineteenth century European classism, and in the case of the Irish, the anti-Catholicism of the English ruling classes. See, for example, Donald Harman Akenson, *Half the World from Home: Perspectives on the Irish in New Zealand 1860-1959* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990).

[216] Marie Bénédicte Ollivier, "Superior General's Address and Report to the Delegates of the 1984 General Chapter”.

prior to Vatican II. In the absence of a clear theology of mission their religious formation is likely to have stressed the importance of spiritual devotions and the practice of these virtues.[217] The retrieval of Euphrasie's understanding of the Divine Missions occurred only in the mid-1970s and was incorporated into documents from 1978 onwards.

Reports from the French Province reflect a particular attachment to the 1979 Constitutions. A French RNDM was superior general at the time the Constitutions were written and was key in their production. Since the Congregation was founded in Lyon, France is also referred to as the "cradle" of the congregation, and although today the province is very international and comprised of members from France, Switzerland, Vietnam, Bangladesh and New Zealand, there is a strong sense in which France is recognized as the "keeper" of the tradition. In response to changing congregational demographics, the French voice came under pressure when work on writing new constitutions began.

Today the formal study of theology and scripture is an integral part of the formation of young RNDM Sisters. Most Sisters follow at least a one-year course in theology, spirituality and human development before making perpetual vows and several have the opportunity to pursue higher studies in theology, scripture and mission studies. The international programme of preparation for final vows held annually in Davao is an opportunity for young RNDMs to experience international community living but it is particularly seen as a vehicle for helping participants to deepen their understanding of RNDM charism, spirituality and zeal for mission. Many of the one hundred and ninety-nine women who have joined the international formation programme since the opening of Balay Euphrasie in 2006, were born after the 1979 Constitutions were approved and do not have the same emotional attachment to these Constitutions as some older members. Their subsequent involvement in the process of shaping the new Constitutions has deepened their understanding of the RNDM charism, and therefore their ownership of the 2014 Constitutions. This is reflected in a comment from RNDMs in the Philippines who see that the complete draft is "a hope-creating document to shape our future." The responses from the Philippines provide input from a significant multi-cultural group of young RNDMs from nine different countries. While one sister struggled with understanding the differences between the terminology of Divine Missions, Trinity, and *Missio Dei*, several were able to make connections with their academic studies and articulate a breadth of understanding of the Divine Missions as the source of all missionary activity, focusing on the immanence, and relationality of the Trinity.

These younger RNDMs have made a shift from simply understanding the Trinity as the source of all missionary activity, to seeing their own missionary activity as

[217] See Barbier, *Constitutions of the Daughters of Notre Dame Des Missions*, #31, which reads "Holy zeal for God's greater glory was the soul of the life of Mary…In the same way, the Sisters' zeal should assume a special characteristic of humility, modesty, simplicity and charity".

participation in the mission of the Trinity. There is no dualism between "contemplation" and "action", but rather an understanding of mission as "contemplative in action". RNDMs in the Philippines see the integration of relationship between God and human endeavour as critical and they observe that the complete draft has captured this experience: “Our participation in Divine Missions has been given emphasis throughout the draft as profoundly connected to our way of life. We partake in this great mystery which is the source of our existence”.

New Zealand connects theology and praxis, and in their critique of a transcendent theology of Trinity, observe that “emphasizing a 'sent' relationship stresses patriarchal and hierarchical relationships not found in God and in the Trinity”. The implication is that this hierarchical understanding of God and Trinity is also reflected in the practice of leadership and governance in the Congregation. This is consistent with several observations New Zealand made in each of their three responses, for example: "There are two theologies/ideologies around leadership and authority, the language and ideas are military, hierarchical and patriarchal, as are some structures”.

For New Zealand, the complete draft has not fully resolved the problems around different theologies of leadership, authority and structures. They imply that the theology in the complete draft is not consistent with the goal of mutuality of relationships and the reciprocity of mission. Senegal, South Sudan and Myanmar situate the poor at the heart of the Trinity, thus focusing their understanding of Trinity in relation to mission rather than governance. The Philippines embraces creation theology as integral to a theology of the Trinity and sees echoes of this in the complete draft. The caution from CICLSAL to avoid the language of cosmic theology in the new Constitutions constrained the writers from developing this concept more fully.

Language – A Shift from French to English to Diverse Languages

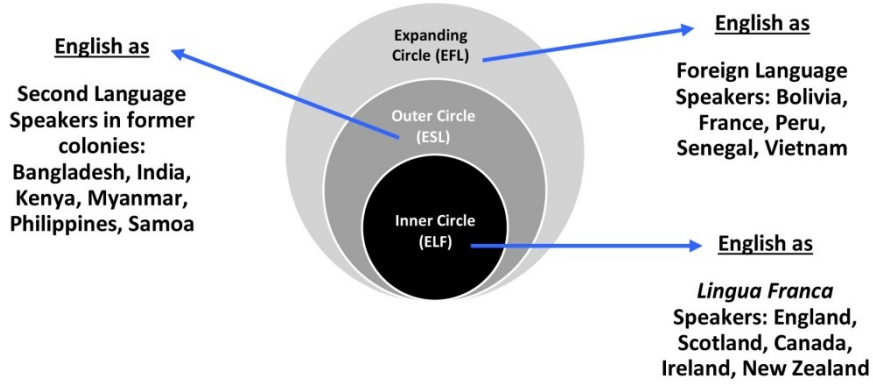
Hegemony as power and dominance can be seen perhaps in the use of English as the *lingua franca* of the Congregation. Euphrasie's Constitutions were written in French, as were the revised Constitutions of 1936. French is now spoken as a first language by a small group of French, Swiss and Canadian sisters.[218] The 1969 *Interim Constitutions,* the 1979 and 2014 Constitutions were written in English. Today, as we have noted, English is spoken as a first language in four provinces of the Congregation, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and Ireland (in 2009, RNDMs in these provinces were 29.5% of the Congregation) so that more than two-thirds of RNDMs speak and write English as a second or third language. In Kenya and the Philippines, English is an official language and is generally the medium of instruction in educational institutions which contributes to greater fluency

[218] A small group of Canadian Sisters speak French as their first language. Two Vietnamese sisters who emigrated to Canada in the 1980s have French as their second language. The majority of sisters in Senegal speak French as their second or third language.

in English. In India, Hindi, English and the vernacular, depending on the State, are official languages. In India Central and South RNDMs come from many different linguistic groups and so English is the language spoken in community. India South also notes the importance of learning the language of the people where they are in ministry, highlighting the linguistic diversity and complexity of the province. The same is true in India Central. RNDMs in India North East use both Khasi and English in community.

Lack of fluency and the necessity for translation in some provinces and regions constrained the full participation of some groups and potentially marginalized some Sisters in France, Senegal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Peru, Bolivia and Vietnam. France commented on the burden of translation at busy times of the year. In Vietnam a group of sisters include as part of their ministry, the translation of documents to the province and the Congregation. Consistent with their request for footnotes to explain big words, Myanmar noted in their response to the complete draft: "We also see the need of Constitutions to be translated into Burmese to be able to read and understand more clearly".

Suresh Canagarajah in his article, "Postmodernism and Intercultural Discourse: World Englishes" refers to Indian linguist Braj Kachru's "three circles" of English, the inner circle, which has English as mother tongue, the outer circle, which is made up of former colonies where English is a second language, and the expanding circle, where English is learnt as a foreign language:



Kachu's "three circles" of English language

Canagarajah observes that the centrality of inner-circle communities is increasingly being questioned. He points out that the statistics of Graddol (1999) show that the number of English speakers outside the inner circle is now greater than those within. This is certainly true for RNDMs. Canagarajah also notes Graddol's evidence that

English is more commonly used in multinational contexts by multilingual speakers than in homogeneous contexts by monolingual speakers.[219]

When RNDMs gather for formal and informal gatherings, ELF speakers can easily dominate in plenary sessions at international meetings. Groups will often request the ELF speaker to be secretary and to give the oral report. Their fluency in English, their use of imagery and powers of persuasion mean they are more readily heard. However, if they use too many synonyms, they can create confusion. ESL speakers, though fluent and grammatically correct, may be less precise, more circular in their speech and take longer to get to the point, sometimes creating frustration in ELF speakers. EFL speakers, unless they have spent many years learning and speaking English, can struggle to express themselves clearly in large group situations. They can lack fluency and grammatical correctness, take longer to formulate their thoughts, and their accent may be difficult for some to follow. Thus, their contribution in international meetings and interpersonal encounters can be lost or dismissed. Among RNDMs ethnic diversity within provinces like Bangladesh is significant. By 2009, only one foreign sister, an Irish woman remained there but the number of tribal sisters was increasing. For these RNDMs, Bengali is already a second language and there is the risk that these sisters can be marginalized because Bengali is not their first language. A similar situation exists for Adivasi minorities in India. English for them is not a second language but a third of fourth.

Canagarajah demonstrates that English is spoken in many different ways, and because of this, he questions if one can speak of standard English today? What is needed, he contends, are not norms for grammar, syntax, pronunciation and meaning, but rather effective strategies to negotiate differences in spoken and written English. For those responsible for planning international gatherings it is vitally important that facilitators are aware of the cultural and linguistic composition of the participants and therefore ensure processes and strategies that will enable all to participate and contribute effectively. In written documents that are intended to reach a diverse audience, producers of the text need to keep language simple and clear.

ELF speakers are often described as being very direct and clear in their speech and behaviour, although this can also be dependent on personality. The facility and fluency of language, use of imagery, including extended synonyms and metaphors, can appear verbose and for someone with English as a second language, such discourse can be confusing. Facility with language also equips speakers to make

[219] See Suresh Canagarajah, "Postmodernism and Intercultural Discourse: World Englishes", in *The Handbook of Intercultural Discourse and Communication*, ed. Christina Bratt Paulston, Scott F. Kiesling and Elizabeth S. Rangel, 110-132, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). See David Graddol, Tom MCarthur, David Flack, Julian Amery, "L'anglais dans le monde", in *English in a Changing World: L'anglais dans un monde changeant*", 3-18, (Guilford: Aila, 1999); Betsy Hu Xiaoqiong and Jiang Xianxing. "Kachru's Three Concentric Circles and English Teaching Fallacies in EFL and ESL Contexts" in *Changing English - Studies in Culture and Education* 18, no. 2 (2011): 219-228; David Graddol, *The Future of English? A Guide to Forecasting the Popularity of the English Language in the 21st Century*, (London: British Council, 1997).

connections quickly and to speak into gaps. Second and third language speakers often need time to think and when they have formulated a response the moment can be lost.

Cross-cultural communication is always a challenge, because words and meanings contain different values in different cultures, particularly when translation is involved. Since words are vehicles of cultural transfer, having to express oneself in another language means learning to adopt someone else's frame of reference. An example of this cultural transfer is seen in the request from Bangladesh not to include the words “partners” and “engagement” in the new text because in their context the references are connected with relationships of intimacy. Historical shifts in the meaning of language is also noted in the desire of Australia to find an alternative word for "humble" and in New Zealand's questioning of "asceticism" because of its connotations of the Church going back to "the old days".

When asked the question, “What do you want to see included in the text that is not there?” India North East asked for something that diminishes the power of "language that categorizes and divides".[220] They hereby not only drew attention to the divisive power of language, but also proposed that it was important that this insight be included in Constitutions. The use of language to categorize, isolate, and cause division, occurs within communities and cultures and between different language groups. Two-thirds of the RNDMs in India North East come from tribal communities, predominantly Khasi, while the remaining third are from India South or India Central provinces. In these two latter provinces, and in the wider Congregation, tribal sisters are a minority, except in Myanmar and India North East. The statement “language that categorizes and challenges” should provoke RNDMs to consider forces that can provoke dissension, distrust and intolerance.

India North East's comment suggests RNDMs there have experienced language being used to categorize and divide, perhaps along ethnic or cultural lines. Such comments direct attention to an important development across the Congregation as RNDMs from different ethnicities and tribal groups are increasingly living and working together. How does multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-tribal living in community impact positively and negatively on RNDM life? What evidence is there that the members are growing in greater inclusivity in community living? Historically and contemporaneously, wars and conflicts have had their roots in cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic differences. In Asia, tribal peoples living on the hilly margins of different nation states were and are often regarded as inferior by the plains dwelling people. In addition to ethnic and cultural differences, another reason for such situations perhaps is that lowland Asians, whether Bengali, Burmese, Thai, or Vietnamese, come from cultures with great literary religious traditions, unlike tribal peoples whose religious traditions were oral, and therefore considered inferior.

[220] RNDM Chapter Document 2008, *RNDM Earth Community*, 20.

Throughout the great African continent, tribal conflicts occur too frequently to be ignored, while in Latin America too there can be tension between indigenous peoples, descendants of fifteenth and sixteenth century Spanish and Portuguese conquistadores and settlers, and descendants of African slaves. Skills for living inter-culturally probably need to be addressed theoretically and experientially even more in RNDM initial formation programmes.

Leadership – A Shift from Hierarchical Models to Discernment and Consensus-Building

One of the research questions deals with the relationship between CICLSAL and the Congregation: "How is the rewriting of Constitutions affected by the Congregation for Institutes of Apostolic Life and Societies of Secular Life?" CICLSAL's role vis-à-vis religious in general, and the RNDMs in particular, will now be critiqued.

The study of 1979 Constitutions on governance provoked strong reactions among most RNDMs. All provinces and regions, with the exception of Vietnam, indicated that the use of hierarchical, even militaristic terminology and titles creates categories and divisions that have no place in a congregation of women religious today. RNDMs wanted the new Constitutions to reflect values of mutuality, dialogue, shared responsibility, feminist structures and processes that have already been implemented in different parts of the Congregation for several years. Several provinces and regions stressed the role and responsibilities of members as well as leaders and made concrete suggestions as to how this might be reflected in the new text.

The terms, "Congregation Leadership Team" and "Province" or "Region Leadership Team" have been used by RNDMs since the late 1980s, a process that began in the New Zealand province. While Canon Law does not recognize the concept of "team" in Constitutions, it is in fact a team model that some provinces have tried to put in place, whereby a group of leaders enjoys equal status, rather than authority being invested in one person. In such a more participatory model, a team of leaders share responsibility for the different aspects of leadership according to their particular skills, experience and interest. In some cultures which are traditionally more hierarchical, and where respect for the elder and the leader is a very important value, as in Vietnam, embracing egalitarian values can be challenging. Nor has Vietnam experienced democratic government. After French colonial rule, the Vietnamese people experienced Communist rule in the north, and in the south American-backed military government in the south until 1975 when the country was unified under a Communist government. It is important to remember that a model of governance that emphasises democratic values can create tensions and difficulties in countries and groups with little lived experience of democracy.

Canon Law safeguards the particular role of the leader, referred to as the superior. In Canon Law, the leader is the symbol of unity and has ultimate responsibility for the life, spirit and mission of the Congregation, for membership, formation and administration. Responsibility does not reside equally in a team of four or five. The responsibilities of the leader must be clearly elaborated in Constitutions. At the same time, Canon Law sees the role of leader as one of service exercised in love, with the leader fostering a spirit of collaboration and team-work among members of the council.[221] For the CLT, decision-making is generally achieved through discernment and consensus rather than by voting, so that each member is able to exercise her voice. On the rare occasions where positions become polarized normally the majority opinion will prevail. There are some situations however, where according to Canon Law, a vote must be taken, such as accepting sisters for perpetual vows, the appointment of province and region leaders and formators, or in matters related to the purchase or alienation of property. The term of office of the RNDM Congregation Leader and council is six years. They may be re-elected for a second term of six years. The term of office of leaders at province and region level is three years. Province and region leaders can serve a second term of three years, but a special indult from the Holy See must be obtained for a third mandate.

In some provinces, such as New Zealand, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada and Vietnam, the members of the leadership teams come from the dominant culture, whereas the team in the United Kingdom and Ireland is currently made up of Scottish, English and Irish Sisters[222]; in the three provinces of India, the leadership teams are comprised of RNDMs from different ethnic groups. The CLT, Kenya, Latin America, Senegal and the Philippines have the most culturally diverse leadership teams.

CDA reminds us that power relations are always relations of struggle in the process where social groupings with different interests engage with one another. We have seen above that Canon Law has one approach to leadership and many RNDMs another. Ultimately in a situation of serious dispute that is not able to be resolved within the Congregation, a religious has recourse to CICLSAL. Thus, power resides in the highest authority, although there is also flexibility within the interpretation of the law.

Among RNDMs, power relations exist between the CLT and PLTs and RLTs. India North East and Rome made a reference to centralization within the Congregation, hinting at a potential tension between CLT and PLTs or RLTs. An example of centralising moves at work can be identified in the 2014 Constitutions in relation to

[221] See Canons 619, 622, 628.

[222] Having said this, it is important to remember that all have a common language, and that currently many sisters born in Scotland are descended from the Irish escaping the harshness of English colonial rule in the nineteenth century. The situation of such Sisters has little in common with that of Sisters of very different ethnicities in a leadership team in provinces or regions founded after Vatican II.

temporal goods. Since the 1980s, successive CLTs have tried to ensure that financial resources are pooled into a virtual "common purse" to ensure that all provinces and regions have their basic needs met. In the past, western provinces have been more financially viable than other provinces and regions. However, in recent years income and investments in some of these provinces have diminished while medical treatment and the costs of the care of the elderly have risen dramatically. Some Asian provinces are able to contribute to the common purse. Other provinces and regions are working towards sustainability but are partially dependent on financial support from the centre. Most RNDMs recognize the benefits of the common purse, but some would prefer to see greater autonomy and less centralization in this area. According to both the 1979 Constitutions and the 2014 Constitutions, provinces and regions must seek the approval of the CLT for major financial transactions, such as the purchase or alienation of property.

A second area where there has been some resistance to centralization by the CLT is in the missioning of sisters at perpetual vows. A meeting of formators and leaders held in Manila, Philippines, 2000, affirmed that an RNDM made her profession in the Congregation, rather than in a province or region, signalling her availability for mission anywhere. This distinction was accepted at the 2002 General Chapter and accordingly an amendment was made to the Constitutions at that time, however, it is not always understood.[223] While the CLT has an overview of the needs of the entire Congregation, there can be tension between the CLT and a particular PLT whose members not only sees the local needs, but who can also be pressurized by bishops to provide personnel for particular ministries or to open new missions. Sometimes this places the CLT and PLT in a position of "competing" for personnel. Today's congregational demographics show the strength of young RNDMs in Asia and Africa, with fewer Sisters in Latin America. Until recently, if the PLT opposed the missioning of a Sister to another province or region, the Congregation Leader was in the invidious position of being powerless to insist. The Constitutions recognize the role of the Leader in missioning Sisters when they make their perpetual vows, and in other situations of need. No missioning takes place without dialogue between the Sister, her local leaders, the CLT and the leaders in the place of missioning.

A third contentious issue is the appointment of province and region leaders and formators. Three provinces, Bangladesh, New Zealand and Vietnam, made reference to this in their responses. According to the 1979 and 2014 Constitutions after a process of consultation with province or region members, the Congregation Leader with the consent of the General Council appoints leaders and formators. Some provinces have strongly objected to consultative process and wish to choose their own leaders, who would be confirmed by the CLT. One apparent danger of following this path is that it could lead to the development of a federation of

[223] The 2002 General Chapter Document, *If You Knew the Gift of God* states: "We call on CLT to mission formally each sister at Final Commitment to a mission either at home or abroad. This will be preceded by due consultation with the PLT/RLT and the sister concerned", 7.

provinces rather than a missionary congregation united around a central leadership. Despite a four-year process of consultation for the rewriting of the Constitutions, and the unanimous approval of these Constitutions at the 2014 General Chapter, not all members are yet convinced of the CLT's over-riding role in the appointment of local leaders and formators.

Another issue indicative of power relationships, revolves around the number of delegates elected to a general chapter. Delegates to a general chapter are elected by a province or region, but the CLT determines how many delegates a particular province or region can elect. Because the General Chapter, when in session, is the highest legislative body in the Congregation, all parts of the Congregation must be represented. At the 2014 General Chapter, changing demographics meant that France and Australia each had only one elected delegate. Earlier, France had raised the question of justice in the allocation of delegates to the 2008 chapter. The Province asked if its reduced representation was just, since France, as the birthplace of the Congregation, was the country from which missionaries were sent to New Zealand, Oceania, England, India, Australia, Canada, Vietnam and later Senegal?

Vietnam's concern is also indicative of the changing demographics of the Congregation. Founded in 1924, it is today the largest and fastest growing province. Vietnamese RNDMs expressed concern about the presumed influence of votes of sisters in temporary vows, since their percentage of the total number of sisters in the province is high at 33%. The issue is one of inclusion and belongingness. Constitutions have safeguarded the right of sisters in temporary vows to exercise an active voice as Euphrasie made clear when she indicated that Sisters in temporary vows had active voting rights. While hierarchies, pyramidal structures, terminologies and behaviour that place some sisters "above" others are eschewed by most RNDMS, there are in fact diverse approaches to leadership. Some provinces have asked that rather than insisting on one leadership model for the whole Congregation, the Constitutions be flexible enough to allow for cultural diversity.

The 2014 Constitutions reflect the significant changes that have already taken place in governance structures over the past thirty-five years. They clarify the roles and responsibilities of both leadership and members and propose more feminist structures and processes. However, by not modifying the role of the CLT in the appointment of new province and region leaders and formators, they do not go as far as some provinces would have wished. The 2014 Constitutions reiterate that international missioning is the responsibility of the CLT, and that the CLT is responsible for overall financial management of congregational resources to ensure that the needs of poorer parts of the Congregation are also met and that planning in these provinces and regions can also be effective.

The exercise of leadership and the relationship between leaders and members is inextricably related to the vow of obedience. Though the understanding and living of

the vows has changed significantly for many religious since Vatican II, ongoing conversations around the role of the CLT and its relationship to PLTs and RLTs, suggest that important issues have not yet been resolved.

Church – A Shift from "People of God" to Diverse Ecclesiologies

RNDMs, particularly in the West, had responded to the vision and spirit of Vatican II with great enthusiasm. The image of church as the "people of God" participating fully in the life and work of the Church in a rapidly changing world resonated deeply with religious and laity alike. Conciliar emphasis on ministry to the poor, social justice, pastoral ministries, collaboration of laity and priests, involvement in parish councils both challenged and inspired. A conservative, traditionalist church seemed suddenly to be forward-looking, dynamic and hope-filled. Basic Christian Communities flourished in parts of Latin America and the Philippines and had a strong influence in other countries. The Church in African countries grew in strength and vibrancy. Inculturation, interreligious dialogue, and the preferential option for the poor brought new energy and focus for mission.

But that was to change. Under the papacy of Pope John Paul II (1978-2005), conservatism, often referred to as “restorationism”, or a reversal of key elements of Vatican II teaching, crept back into the Church as more traditionalist bishops were appointed to dioceses that previously had been considered progressive. Thus, in Peru and other Latin American countries, bishops who were influenced by liberation theology were replaced by more conservative bishops, sometimes members of Opus Dei. In western countries the feminist movement which has highlighted the marginalization of women in society and the role of women in the Church also came under scrutiny, as did other liberationist theologies. Women's experiences and feelings of alienation from the hierarchical Church increased. For example, during the 1980s there was sometimes a sense of alienation about the emphasis on daily Mass in the life of RNDMs. Smith discusses the diverse attitudes to Eucharist that arose in the New Zealand province: “In 1988 the Provincial Leadership Team organized a seminar in Hamilton at which the Auckland diocesan priest and theologian, Neil Darragh explained some of the contemporary shifts in Eucharistic theologies. His input created animated conversation and caused unease for some of the Sisters, and what the 2002 General Chapter identified as ‘our different theologies and experiences of Eucharist’ continues to be a source of concern for some Sisters.”[224]

The Davao community wonders if Eucharist has become a source of division and is concerned about the infrequent mention of Eucharist in the final draft of the new Constitutions. Their comment points to the presumed influence of older [probably Western] sisters in this regard: "It has been noticed that some older sisters

[224] Smith, *Call to Mission*, 306.

encourage or support young sisters who show little interest in participating in Eucharistic celebration".

The 1979 Constitutions refer to Eucharist four times, but do not insist on daily Eucharist. By the late 1970s some RNDMs were already living in situations very remote from parish centres, as in the Altiplano of Peru where RNDM Sisters conducted Eucharistic liturgies in many village chapels. The priest came to celebrate mass once every few months. With fewer priests in western countries and an increasing number of parishes combining or functioning with a non-resident priest, the opportunities for participation in daily Eucharist were more limited than in 1979.

In the 2014 Constitutions, Eucharist is specifically mentioned in two separate articles, one of which emphasizes the centrality of Eucharist, but also recognizes that it may not be possible for Sisters to participate in daily Eucharist: "We celebrate, daily where possible, the central prayer of our religious missionary lives, the Eucharist, through which the mystery of Christ's passion, death and resurrection is made present in our midst. One with Christ we give our lives for one another, for humanity and for the whole of creation".[225]

It is helpful to look now at some of the requirements of CICLSAL with regard to Constitutions. Reference to obedience to the Pope must be included in Constitutions. Canon 590 states: "Institutes of consecrated life, since they are dedicated in a special way to the service of God and the whole Church, are in a particular manner subject to its supreme authority. The individual members are bound to obey the Supreme Pontiff as their highest superior, by reasons of their sacred bond of obedience".[226]

Mary Ellen Sheenan acknowledges that this canon is substantially the same as Canon 499.1 of the 1917 Code but observes that the new Code requires that it is explicitly inserted into revised Constitutions as a condition of their approval by CICLSAL.[227] Although the statement was already included in the 1979 Constitutions, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the Philippines questioned its inclusion in the new Constitutions. However, when a congregation is embarking on a process of rewriting Constitutions, CICLSAL provides a list of canonical matters that need to be included, and RNDMs were not exempt from this prescription. Generally speaking, the Constitutions Committee and the two writers appreciated the advice they received from CICLSAL consultors and from other canon lawyers as to how the different canons could and should be understood.

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[225] 2014 *Constitutions*, #46.

[226] James Coriden et al, eds: *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

[227] Mary Ellen Sheehan, "Institutional Relationships: Religious Life in the Church", http://www.theway.org.uk ?Back/s065Sheehan.pdf, (accessed 21 April 2015).

Community – A Shift from a Semi-monastic Lifestyle to Apostolic Flexibility

"Community" is the final key word analysed in this study of SP. Community is an integral part of the life of consecrated religious and the quality of community life is crucial for the well-being of both the individual and the group. In recent years, RNDMs have drawn on their understanding of Trinitarian theology and spirituality to help them live their community life. This allows them to see that it is in contemplating the communion of the Trinity that members understand their own call to live unity in diversity. However, there are differences in attitudes towards community and experiences of living in community. While not everyone is necessarily comfortable with it, or would chose it for themselves, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and Ireland recognize single living as a valid way to live religious consecration, citing the expression, "community without walls" whereby sisters within a geographical area live alone but meet together on a regular basis for prayer, reflection and celebrations. While accepting of this, the United Kingdom and Ireland believe it raise questions of accountability that need more conversation.

Kenya reluctantly recognises the need for living singly and asks about the financial implications. For provinces or regions that are not financially self-sufficient, the question is a valid one. India South, Vietnam and India Central are strongly opposed, and express their discomfort, distress and opposition to the idea of sisters living singly because they believe the concept is contrary to the fundamental nature of religious life. Morrissey addressed the thorny question religious living singly at the 2014 General Chapter: "In addition, there are local communities. When referring to such local groups in revised Constitutions, it would be good to keep in mind that the Holy See has implicitly recognized the concept of the "community without walls", which focuses more on the members than on the building where they reside. This can open the door for at least three types of local communities: 1) established houses; 2) constituted communities; and 3) district communities, not related to one particular address."[228] While the concept of single living is a contradiction for many RNDMs, it is also true that it is possible to live a very individualistic and rather selfish life in a large community.

At the 1978 General Chapter, the superior general, French-born Marie Bénédicte Ollivier reported that the previous year there were 1142 sisters in ten provinces, including two provinces in New Zealand and a total of one hundred and eleven communities.[229] The median age was fifty-five. The majority of communities at that time had more than ten members. The reality of RNDM community living has changed substantially since 1978 with a shift from a more monastic institutional lifestyle to small communities for mission in an ordinary house in the suburbs or a small house in the village. The shift has brought a corresponding demand for

[228] Frank Morrissey, OMI, "Contemporary Issues Relating to Constitutions and Other Parts of the Proper Law of Religious Institutes", paper presented to the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, February 2014.
[229] Ollivier, "Report to 1978 General Chapter".

flexibility. The 2014 Constitutions avoid rigorous prescriptions about how RNDMs live community life, given the diversity that exists around this throughout the Congregation. As Vietnam noted, the 2014 Directives recognize diverse arrangements for community life: “A community is defined as a group of sisters living in one house, sub-groups in a larger house, or sisters living in separate places coming together according to province policies. Each community has an appointed leader”.[230]

In some provinces, communities are culturally diverse. The provinces where diversity in intercultural and intergenerational community is a lived reality, point to the richness and stretching of minds and hearts that such diversity brings. Kenya spoke of being "unique in our calling, but without borders in our outlook”. Every community in Central India is multicultural with sisters coming from different Indian cultures and ethnic groups. They observed that the call to mutual respect and cultural sensitivity demand great courage and openness. Latin America also commented that international communities involved going "beyond boundaries" and learning to accept other ways of doing things. As well as embracing the gift of diversity, there was also a strong awareness that cultural prejudice exists and must be addressed by the individual, within communities and at province level. Reconciliation and forgiveness are an essential ingredient in community life.

There is a strong focus from the Asian and African provinces and regions on inclusion, on relationships that promote human dignity and the protection of the weak and vulnerable. India Central noted that that "the gap between West and East seems to be bridged by the developments and changes that are taking place". The opportunities for sisters to come together in international groups can foster a greater appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity, which helps in bridging the gap.

In Chapter Five, CDA tools were utilised to investigate the linguistic features of different reports related to the rewriting of the RNDM Constitutions. In Chapter Six, there was an analysis of the discursive practices associated with the production, distribution and consumption of the Constitutions. Finally, in this chapter, there is a critique of the social practices of RNDMs implicit in the reports and feedback to the Constitutions Committee. The diverse opinions and beliefs in relation to each of the six key words are apparent. The significance of the demographic shifts that have taken place over the past four decades have been examined, and the differences between provinces founded in western countries, those established in Asia, and the more recent foundations in Africa, Asia and Latin America are reviewed. What this means for the Congregation will be further critiqued and analysed in the next chapter.

[230] 2014 Directives, #40.

Chapter Eight Dances in Discourse – Making Connections

This study has raised some significant issues around the rewriting of Constitutions, for example, examining whether or not the rewriting of Constitutions was affected by diversity in the Congregation; understanding the role of the CICLSAL in the process of rewriting Constitutions; and, investigating how the rewriting of Constitutions could impact on RNDM relationships between the CLT, and provinces and regions. Chapter Eight will focus on the correlation between the theory of Constitutions, the experience and practice of the Congregation, and the theory and application of CDA. This should help the reader to recognize relationships of power between centres and margins. Such examination as to what shaped the rewriting of the 2014 Constitutions will allow RNDMs to identify the shape of an unfolding future and praxis. This will be followed by a review of the six key words and concepts in the light of the historical evolution of Constitutions. The continuity, interconnection and expansion of these words and concepts both from an historical perspective and contemporaneously in the lived experience of the Congregation, will enable some of key learnings gained from this research to be identified.

Tiptoeing Through Ecclesial Straitjackets – Founders of Religious Communities

While there is little reference to Euphrasie in Chapter Two which outlines the development of religious life in the West, there are connections that can be made with her story. From apostolic times women and men were drawn to follow Jesus, and through history charismatic, prophetic women and men founded, adapted and structured a style of religious life to meet changing social, political and ecclesial contexts and needs.

As noted, women religious were much more constrained than monks and friars in respect of missionary activity. The papal decree *Periculoso* (1298) and Tridentine teachings which obliged women to observe strict monastic enclosure, explains the actions of founders such as Angela de Merici, or Mary Ward, who tiptoed through and around ecclesial straitjackets to find innovative ways for women to exercise ministry. It was only at the dawn of the twentieth century that apostolic religious life and institutes with simple vows were officially recognized by the Church. Even more significant were the teachings of Vatican II which allowed women's apostolic congregations to free themselves from remaining vestiges of monastic life.

Euphrasie Barbier was a founder who sought to have her congregation recognized by the Vatican as a pontifical institute. Such a move on Euphrasie's part ensured an autonomy from what Euphrasie perceived as interference by certain Marist priests in the life of the young institute and its Sisters. Today, RNDMs recognise that following Euphrasie requires them to actively believe in their shared humanity and sisterhood,

a belief demonstrated in their willing embrace of values such as mutuality and inclusivity in their community and apostolic lives.

Learnings:

1. Euphrasie Barbier was a strong, resolute woman, whose life and story has attracted culturally and ethnically diverse, resolute women across the globe;
2. the use of titles, names and even pronouns, e.g., *tu* and *vous* in the French province, *tú*, *usted*, and *ustedes* in Peru and Bolivia can express not only respect, but also point to different relationships of power/authority and obedience/subordination;
3. young RNDMs through exposure to different cultural values, particularly in western countries, have learnt, and are learning, to respect norms within their own culture and negotiate diverse cultural expectations in other cultures.

Divine Missions – *De Trinitate*

In Chapter Two, readers are referred to the Rule of St Augustine, one of the four 'Great Rules' approved by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The Rule of St Augustine is not so much a theological exposition, but rather a spiritual and practical guide based on key scriptural passages. It focuses on relationships in community, common and personal prayer, and the role of the superior. Augustine wrote extensively on the Trinity and his Treatise *De Trinitate* stressed the equality of the three persons and the mission of the Trinity, and this would have informed his theology of community: "As, therefore, the Father begot, the Son is begotten; so, the Father sent, the Son was sent. But in like manner as He who begot and He who was begotten, so both He who sent and He who was sent, are one, since the Father and the Son are one. So also, the Holy Spirit is one with them, since these three are one. For as to be born, in respect to the Son, means to be from the Father; so to be sent, in respect to the Son, means to be known to be from the Father. And as to be the gift of God in respect to the Holy Spirit, means to proceed from the Father; so to be sent, is to be known to proceed from the Father. Neither can we say that the Holy Spirit does not also proceed from the Son, for the same Spirit is not without reason said to be the Spirit both of the Father and of the Son. Nor do I see what else He intended to signify, when He breathed on the face of the disciples, and said: Receive the Holy Ghost. For that bodily breathing, proceeding from the body with the feeling of bodily touching, was not the substance of the Holy Spirit, but a declaration by a fitting sign, that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son".[231]

Ollivier reminds RNDMs that Euphrasie was formed from the beginning of her religious life in the school of St Augustine and was deeply influenced by the

[231] New Advent, ed., Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate*, Book IV, 29, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130104.htm, accessed 30 July 2015.

seventeenth century French school of Spirituality.[232] Ollivier also explains that while Euphrasie Barbier was inspired by the theological approach of the French school, one cannot expect to find in her writings a doctrinal statement structured on the theology of the "Divine Missions".

Loss and Retrieval

With the proliferation of apostolic religious congregations founded in Europe in the nineteenth century, the Holy See saw the need to formulate norms to guide Vatican congregations and local bishops responsible for the approval of congregations and their constitutions. In 1854 Archbishop Bizzarri, secretary to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, proposed four steps that needed to be followed to secure definitive approval. Guidelines were also put in place for the writing of Constitutions and these stressed the juridical nature of these documents. Pious and spiritual tracts, scripture passages and extracts from the Doctors of the Church, and theological insights had no place in constitutions. However, when Vatican II mandated the renewal of religious life, it insisted that religious congregations return to their sources and rewrite their constitutions according to their founder's charism, the insights and teachings of Vatican II and Church teaching.

In Chapter Three, it was noted that Euphrasie's explanation of the Divine Missions was suppressed from the Constitutions she submitted in 1869 and again when she submitted her amended version in 1890. Thus, the distinctive spirit of the Congregation was lost for many decades. The rediscovery of these documents in the 1970s brought excitement and new energy and introduced a solid theological foundation for mission. While the religious virtues of humility, charity, modesty and simplicity were much easier to comprehend than the Mystery of the Divine Missions, nevertheless the insight that the Trinity is the source of all missionary activity is a reaffirmation of the original vision of Euphrasie Barbier and the missionary nature of the Congregation. Since receiving the 1979 Constitutions, RNDMs have been 'living into' and developing an understanding and theology of the Divine Missions.

Evolving Theological Perspectives

Since the 1970s, many RNDMs in western provinces have been influenced by liberation and feminist theologies both formally and informally. In 1971 Gustavo Gutiérrez published his *Teologia de Liberación* (*Theology of Liberation*).[233] It was translated into English in 1973. That same year, Mary Daly, recognized as a significant modern feminist philosopher, published *Beyond God the Father: Towards*

[232] The founders the French School of the seventeenth century were Pierre Cardinal de Bérulle, Jean-Jacques Olier, founder of the Society of St Sulpice, Charles de Condren, an early disciple of de Bérulle, and John Eudes.

[233] See Gustavo Gutiérrez, A *Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, trans. Cadrid Inda and John Eagleson, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973).

a Philosophy of Women's Liberation.[234] Rosemary Radford Ruether[235] and Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza[236] both published important feminist theological works in 1983, while in 1986 American theologian Joan Chittister, OSB, published *Winds of Change: Women Challenge the Church*.[237] More recently, RNDMs have been influenced by eco-theologies and eco-spiritualities.

My use of CDA has indicated that while some RNDMs are still exploring the understanding and implications of classical trinitarian theologies, others are proposing feminist and eco-theological interpretations of Trinity, believing this will better allow them to address contemporary global realities. Some RNDMs from New Zealand, Canada and the Philippines object to what they perceive as hierarchical relationships in the Trinity imaged in the sequential 'sending' of the Son and Spirit, which is inconsistent with the mutuality and equality of the Trinity. In so doing they recognize the power of theological language to both reflect and shape RNDM structures and actions. The question of whose theology is dominant, whose theology counts in religious congregations is critical for the task of creating and owning new structures and processes. How do theological understandings affect people and provinces/regions at the margins of the Congregation? As former province leader of Myanmar, Noreen Htun, writes: "[v]ery often I thought of doing the correspondence study with our RNDM wisdom sisters on the Spirituality of our Congregation – the charism and the Divine Missions while reading whatever we have in hand. For me, whatever is written in the Constitutions is good, based on the sound theology. However, I feel I will understand better and more deeply with concrete images and realities in our own context and will be able to share with others better. What I mean is we need to reflect the theology and spirituality in Asian ways".[238] Her comments suggest that the question of doing theology and spirituality from different cultural perspectives is currently being pondered by RNDMs everywhere.

Given the key role that theology plays in RNDM self-understanding, relationships and structures, it is crucial that RNDMs from Asia, Africa and Latin America continue to study theology and scripture, and that reflection on culture and charism, continue to be explored and articulated.

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[234] See Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).
[235] See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983).
[236] See Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).
[237] See Joan Chittister, *Winds of Change. Women Challenge the Church*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1986).
[238] Noreen Htun RNDM, email to Maureen McBride, 17 July 2015.

Learnings:

1. The role of theology in shaping relationships and structures requires on-going study. This is required so that RNDMs better appreciate the different trinitarian theologies important to them;
2. How will expanded and diverse theologies of Trinity impact the Congregation in the next ten or twenty years? Will "sending" trinitarian theologies triumph over those associated with feminist theologies, and thus continue to mandate hierarchical structures?

Language

Constitutions which provide a shared set of meanings through which members connect and communicate with each other, are a form of literary discourse. The language and content of constitutions for apostolic Congregations were formalized and standardized by Rome in the nineteenth century with an emphasis on their juridical content.

Euphrasie Barbier lived and taught in London for ten years from 1851-1861 and so had a reasonable command of English. Some of her letters are written in English. But this was never easy for her as a letter to Father Euloge Reignier SM, in Napier, New Zealand, demonstrates. She refers to her struggle in learning the language, at the same time as she defends the right of Maori children to speak their own language: "With regard to the advice you gave us not to allow the children to speak Maori, I can assure you that the Sisters are complying with it; however, I will make the observation you wish for. You must not be surprised, Reverend Father, if it happens that some of these poor children, especially those who have not a natural ability, not knowing a word of English, not having the slightest notion of grammar, nor of how to read or write, and knowing absolutely nothing, cannot carry on a conversation on any subject at all, in a language as difficult for foreigners as is the English language. We ourselves have experienced this difficulty in studying this language".[239]

Euphrasie insisted that Sisters learn the languages of the peoples to whom they were sent. She wrote to the Sisters at the Maori Providence in Napier on a number of occasions urging them to learn Maori and to teach the children hymns and prayers in Maori. In Chittagong she took classes in Bengali and Hindi along with the RNDMs whom she had accompanied to the new mission. Novices in Lyon learnt sign language as part of their preparation for future ministry. Sisters preparing to go to

[239] Euphrasie Barbier's letter of 1 October 1873 to Euloge Reignier SM. The New Zealand Native Schools Act of 1867 required schools to instruct in English "as far as practicable". See Background Note, Briefing Service for Members of Parliament: Te Reo Maori – The Maori Language, http://www.parliament.nz/resource /0000000292, (accessed 31 July 2015).

New Zealand, Oceania or Chittagong were first sent to Deal in England to learn English.

One of the challenges for RNDMs around the question of language is that prior to Vatican II, European sisters who were sent to New Zealand, Australia, Canada and India, including present day Bangladesh and Myanmar, were involved primarily in teaching English either to children of settlers or to the indigenous people, or in the case of Vietnam, French. Teaching the language of the colonial governments was something that the colonising powers saw as essential to further their own aims. As Maori academic, Ranginui Walker wrote regarding New Zealand, "Catholic bishop Pompallier thought that Maori were infidel New Zealanders" and that "driven by such attitudes, the missionaries were the [cultural] advance party of such [imperial] invasion".[240] He argues that Catholic schools were party to such invasion. All too often rather than European missionaries learning the language/s of the countries to which they were sent, the onus was on the indigenous peoples and later indigenous sisters to learn English or French.

The end of colonial saw formerly colonies reclaiming their indigenous languages. Bangladesh is one such province that takes great pride in the Bengali language having resisted the imposition of Urdu by West Pakistan in 1952. Following independence from Pakistan in 1971, the Bangladeshi government placed a greater emphasis on Bengali as the medium of instruction in schools and tertiary institutions. In Burma, all schools were nationalized in 1962 after a coup d'état. Burmese replaced English as the medium of instruction at universities in 1965 which led to a rapid decline in English proficiency among Burmese RNDMs. While the English of older RNDMs in Bangladesh and Myanmar is reasonably good, young women struggle, particularly with written English. In 1975 French was replaced by Chinese and Russian in the Vietnamese education system. An ever-decreasing number of older Vietnamese sisters are fluent in French, whereas younger members now learn English as a second language. With foundations established in Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Peru and Senegal soon after Vatican II, the Philippines in 1987 and more recently in other countries of Asia, the language heritage and diversity of the Congregation are very rich.

In Chapter Seven the reader learnt that discourse is shaped by and in turn shapes social practice. Since World War II, English enjoyed has hegemony over other languages, and those who speak English as their *lingua franca* have advantages over ESL and EFL speakers. ELF speakers' fluency, use of imagery and thought patterns give them a linguistic dominance over others which can limit or inhibit the contribution of ESL and EFL speakers. The call from across the Congregation for the use of inclusive language in the new Constitutions actually came to involve a lot more than the use of feminine pronouns for the Holy Spirit and feminist processes.

[240] Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle without End* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1990), 85.

Learnings:

1. awareness and sensitivity towards the issue of languages across the Congregation;
2. language both reflects and shapes relationships and structures;
3. ELF speakers need to be sensitive to the different levels of influence at congregational meetings, aware of their potential to have an unacceptable influence at such gatherings.

Leadership

In the monastic tradition the title "Abbot" originated from the Aramaic, *Abba*, meaning "father". "Abbess" is derived from the Latin feminine, *Abbatissa*. The titles were used in the ancient monasteries of Egypt and Syria and came into general use in the monasteries of Europe. The authority of the abbot or abbess was paternal/maternal and absolute. The pathway to perfection was in the exercise of obedience. The term "superior" appears to have been used from the fifteenth century onwards.

The Rule of Saint Augustine does not refer to the superior[241] as "Abbess" but as *praeposita*, the one who stands before you. For Augustine the role is not one of dominance but of loving service. The Rule outlines the responsibilities of both superiors and sisters. It does not prescribe uniformity but recognizes that the background and needs of individuals are diverse. While common prayer is prescribed, time for personal prayer is also to be respected. Emulating the early Christian community described in the Acts of the Apostles 4:32, the superior is to provide food and clothing for sisters not equally, but each according to her need. Chapter VII of the Rule deals with governance and obedience and contains just four articles. While governance is hierarchical and maternalistic it is also a role of service. The superior is to be obeyed as a mother. Her role is to correct those who are negligent, to care for sisters with love, and to set a good example. She is to "restrain the restless, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, be patient towards all". Greater responsibility brings greater accountability. Through their obedience, sisters show compassion not only to themselves, but also to the superior "for the higher position held among you the greater the peril of her who holds it."[242] Some of the tasks of leadership are shared with those who have responsibility for the store-room, the clothes and the library.

Ignatius of Loyola instituted a hierarchical structure of governance that aimed to free members of his company for mission in Asia and Latin America. Ignatius' Constitutions insisted on strict obedience and included a fourth vow of obedience to

[241] "The Rule of Saint Augustine" which prefaces the 2014 Constitutions, is a translation of the *Praeceptum* based on the critical edition of Luc Vereijen, OSA, 1967. It does not use the word "leader", but "superior".
[242] See Luc Vereijen, ed. *The Rule of Saint Augustine* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1967), #4.

the Pope. Angela de Merici, a contemporary of Ignatius, who also responded to mission needs in a local context, had loose structures of governance free of the direct authority of the clergy, although this situation had been reversed by 1572. In that year, Charles Borromeo revised the rule of Angela's followers, and "in effect he remoulded Angela's original company into a religious order called the Ursulines, an order quite distinct from the Brescian Company".[243]

Chapter Two demonstrated that Constitutions also delineate rights, obligations, procedures and structures needed to attain its goals. In the language of CDA, Constitutions produce and maintain power relations between groups within the Congregation. The 1917 Code of Canon Law recognized the right of the Superior General to govern the institute, thus protecting religious congregations from controls and whims of bishops. This intention was already in place when Euphrasie first presented her Constitutions. The Sacred Congregation acted in her favour on several occasions, not only in relation to the Marist Fathers, but also in her conflicts with clergy in New Zealand and in Oceania.

It was Pope Pius XII who initiated the path towards renewal in religious congregations by calling together the first World Congress of Mothers' General in 1952, and who urged the theological and professional education of religious. In 1954 Arcadio María Cardinal Larraona Saralegui, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Religious condemned the oppressive nature of statutes and directives of religious congregations that had found their way into congregational documents following the promulgation of the 1917 Code of Canon Law. Vatican II mandated that consultative processes be put in place prior to special general chapters which would lead Congregations into the process of renewal. New constitutions that harmonized the founding spirit, inspirational exhortations and juridical norms, were to be formulated. Almost twenty years after the close of the Second Vatican Council, the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* ensured greater participation of members in the life and governance of religious institutes and called for greater subsidiarity so that decisions affecting members would be taken at the appropriate level.

Chapter Three demonstrated that in the post-Vatican II era and the years following the departure of most foreign missionaries from Asia, significant growth in membership took place in these provinces. Up until this time the prevailing colonial mentalities existing in the wider society were also reflected in the Euro-centric model of religious life with its hierarchical and maternalistic structures. Province leaders and formators were French, Irish, English, New Zealand, Australian or Canadian.

Many religious congregations, both male and female, had different ranks or classes of members. Choir members in female congregations had full active and passive voting rights and were involved in apostolic ministries. Normally they brought a

[243] Patricia Raft, *Women and the Religious Life in Premodern Europe*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996), 106.

dowry to the Congregation. They usually prayed the Office in Latin. Lay or auxiliary members usually took care of domestic work in the community. They were not required to pray the Office but joined the choir sisters for devotional practices. They did not enjoy the right to vote. [244] In Chittagong, the majority of local young women were accepted into the Congregation as Auxiliary Sisters rather than as Choir Sisters until 1947 when the General Chapter voted to discontinue the practice of this two-tiered system of religious life. Local sisters were appointed as formators and leaders in the 1960s. The first Vietnamese Sister, Marie Monique Nguyen Thi Vy, was appointed provincial superior in 1964. In Burma following the departure of the European sisters, the first Burmese Regional Superior, Mary Agnes Thein Mye, was appointed in 1966. Bangladesh became a province in 1968. It was eighty-five years after the foundation of the mission in Chittagong and sixty-one years after the first Anglo-Indian sisters made profession in 1907, that an Anglo-Indian who had been accepted into the Congregation as a Choir Sister, Mary Imelda of Jesus D'Cruz, was named province leader. The first Bengali sister, Mary Thecla Gomes, was appointed in 1978. India became a separate province in 1968 and Mary Languida, an Anglo-Indian, was appointed as leader.

In Africa and Latin America, the appointment of local RNDMs as leaders and formators has been swifter than in Asia. The first two Kenyan sisters, Pauline N'Kabira and Magdalene Nyile were professed in 1994. Kenyan sisters were named as formators in 2005 and were appointed to leadership teams from 2004. N'Kabira was appointed province leader in 2013. The first Kenyan general councillor, Lucy Wambui, took up her mandate in 2014. In Latin America the first Peruvian sister, Elsie Valenzuela Acosta made her first profession in 1985. Natty Collanqui was the first Peruvian formator in 2003-2008 and was regional leader from 2009 to 2014. In the Philippines, two Filipinas, Fe Felizarta and Ma Corazon Cagalawan made their first profession in 1995. Fe was appointed to the regional leadership team from 2006-2009, while Corazon was regional leader in Senegal from 2012-2015.

After Vatican II, religious life changed dramatically as communities became smaller, less institutionalized and decision-making and responsibilities were shared by the members rather than being the responsibility of community leader. However, RNDMs struggled to articulate a new understanding of governance. The 1978 General Chapter had noted the lack of clarity around understandings of authority and obedience.

Successive general chapters struggled to articulate a model of leadership and governance that many in the Congregation were intuiting and shaping. Western

[244] Smith, ed., *Zeal for Mission*: "The auxiliary sisters are employed chiefly in the various manual works of the house. They have neither the right of electing nor or being elected to office...With the exception of the Office, they follow the same exercises of piety as the Choir Sisters, but they are only obliged to make one half hour's meditation daily...The Choir Sisters always take precedence over the Auxiliary Sisters. The Auxiliary Sisters wear the same Habit as the Choir Sisters with the exception of the veil and the mantle, which are rather shorter, and the sleeves are bound with black", 389.

provinces particularly, experimented with different team models and configurations of leadership with numbers on leadership teams varying from three to nine. Latin America set up commissions wherein each member of the Region exercised responsibility for an aspect of leadership in the region. In 1995 India divided into three Vice-Provinces because of the vastness of the country and the wide dispersal of RNDM communities. This facilitated the role and movement of leaders in the country. In the year 2000 each of the three units was accorded the status of province. This provoked some consternation in parts of the Congregation when at the 2002 chapter the number of delegates from the three provinces of India totalled nine.

In the mid-1990s newer foundations were recognized as regions and by 2008 had official representation at General Chapters. By 2008 governance according to the Constitutions bore little resemblance to reality, but there was certainly greater clarity about the role and responsibilities of leadership and membership. The 2008 General Chapter document recognized that governance structures at community, province and international levels were evolving through Sisters opting to live creatively and courageously. This has been the underlying and largely unconscious movement within RNDM life and mission since Vatican II: "We RNDMs will need to continue to imagine our way into the new structures and relationships that will be required of us. We recognize that humans do not so much think their way into new ways of living but live their way into new ways of thinking and creating".[245]

In Chapter Six, comments from provinces and regions indicated that RNDMs have a strong aversion to hierarchical and military terminology, as well as any connotation of 'superior-inferior' relationships and behaviour. A team approach to servant leadership and relationships that promotes equality and mutuality was advocated in most parts of the Congregation.

Culture has played a significant role in how leadership is exercised in international religious congregations. In societies that value egalitarianism, and have a tradition of democratic government, leadership personnel are more likely to operate as a team whereby members take responsibility for different aspects of leadership according to their particular gifts and interests. In this context, decision-making is by consensus and appropriate information is shared with the wider membership. In more hierarchical societies, the concept of team has taken longer to implement. Between 2002 and 2008 the CLT encouraged larger provinces in Asia to have a full-time team member working alongside the province leader to share responsibilities. When appointments were subsequently made, the particular roles of the leader and full-time team member often lacked clarity and sisters preferred to communicate directly with the province leader. Sometimes the full-time person ended up taking on secretarial and other administrative tasks rather than leadership roles. While the

[245] *RNDM Earth Community: We are One, We Are Love*, 13.

model of team works more or less well at CLT level and in western provinces, the understanding of 'team' differs, and some find it difficult to work collaboratively.

The western concept of team may not necessarily the best model for every part of the Congregation. Questions of culturally appropriate leadership need further reflection and elaboration within religious Congregations today to ensure that the voices of all members, young as well as older are heard. Vietnamese society is strongly influenced by Confucianism, which though inherently hierarchical, also strongly emphasizes harmony in diversity within social relationships, based on the virtues of *rén* (benevolence), *yì* (righteousness), *lǐ* (propriety), *zhi* (wisdom), *xin* (honesty and trustworthiness), *zhōng* (loyalty), *shù* (reciprocity, altruism and forgiveness), and *xiào* (filial piety).[246] How the values associated with Confucianism may have consciously informed the thinking of Vietnamese RNDMs is difficult to assess. Confucianism entered Vietnam from China some two thousand years ago, and perhaps its emphasis on the imperial examination system and mandarin bureaucracy may have less appeal for contemporary Vietnamese RNDMs. It is interesting to note that Vietnam was the one province that did not critique the 1979 Constitutions chapter on Unity and Charity. They affirmed the hierarchical model of leadership presented in the chapter: "We love the way that described all power came from the Father through Christ and from Christ to the Church and from the Church to the legitimate superiors. This required the superiors to govern the Congregation in fidelity to the mission confided to it"

Study and reflection on *ubuntu* leadership[247] derived from the philosophy of the Bantu tribes of East, Central and South Africa, and based on social relationships of harmony, community, collaboration, dignity and respect, could offer new insights around leadership structures in Kenya. Again, it is not easy to discern whether or not such important values have influenced the thinking around leadership in the Kenyan province. It is also difficult to assess how non-Kenyan RNDMs understand *ubuntu* leadership, and whether they can appreciate its potential importance for Kenyan RNDMs. Questionnaires and conversations around leadership and the culture of the place do not appear to have been part of congregational leadership reflection. Nor does there appear to have been any research as to how much current models of governance are influenced by a western pre-occupation with the rights of the individual and democracy.

All religious promise to be obedient to legitimate ecclesial and religious authorities. However, contemporary understandings of the relationship between obedience and authority are still evolving throughout the Congregation. RNDMs unanimously

[246] See LingLing Yang, Beverly J. Irby, Genevieve Brown, "An Emergent Leadership Model Based on Confucian Virtues and East Asian Leadership Practices", http://cnx.org/contents/3e5162b5-b4d9-44cc-8132-9ea9562a7e49@3/An-Emergent-Leadership-Model-B, (accessed 20 July 2015).
[247] See Frans Dokman, "Ubuntu Management in the World Council of Churches", http://www.worldcat.org/title/ubuntu-management-in-the-world-council-of-churches/oclc/775918503, (accessed 27 July 2015).

expressed their rejection of hierarchical titles and behaviour, and insisted on the values of mutuality, respect, dialogue in relationships between leaders and members. They were less clear about how to manage differences and potential conflicts of interest, particularly between the CLT and PLT or RLT. The question of whether the CLT is perceived merely as a symbolic centre of unity, or if it has real authority and power to act, continues to generate lively and sometimes heated discussion particularly around the appointment of province and region leaders. Provinces and regions insist that they know their own people and their needs better than the members of the CLT. The CLT maintains it has the overview of the whole Congregation and is entrusted with carrying the vision of the previous General Chapter forward. The CLT also has access to confidential information that may affect decision-making and appointments, but rights to privacy prevent them from divulging such information. The members of the CLT emphasize that their role is not simply to 'rubber stamp' decisions taken at province level. A question yet to be answered is whether in an international Congregation is it feasible and just to have diverse approaches to decision-making related to appointments so that some provinces and regions decide for themselves and some are appointed by the CLT after consultation?

It is useful to consider two different contemporary theological approaches to authority and obedience. The first is an instruction issued by CICLSAL following a Plenary Session which took place in 2006. The document is entitled "The Service of Authority and Obedience" (*Faciem tuam, Domine, requiram* "Your face, O Lord, I seek"). Franc Cardinal Rodé was the Prefect of CICLSAL at the time[248]. The second approach is that of American biblical scholar, Sandra Schneiders, IHM.

The CICLSAL instruction recognizes a diversity of models of government and practices of obedience, which are often influenced by the various cultural contexts. It acknowledges "the differences that characterize under psychological profile, communities of men and women". It understands and places religious authority and obedience as central in the search for the will of God. The document speaks of reciprocity in the sharing of gifts in the community, in pardon and fraternal correction, in bearing one another's burdens. It refers to dialogue, co-responsibility, listening and discernment, but it nevertheless reinforces a hierarchical approach to authority and obedience. Authority is exercised as service to the community and to the Reign of God. Persons in authority are responsible for the fidelity of the community to prayer. They are called to promote the dignity of the human person, and to inspire courage and hope in the midst of adversity. They are called to keep the charism of the institute alive, and to keep alive the sense of faith and of ecclesial communion with the Church, and to accompany the journey of ongoing formation.

[248] *The Service of Authority and Obedience*. Vatican City: Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 11 May 2008, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccscrlife/documents/rc_con_ccscrlife_doc_20080511_autorita-obbedienza_en.html, (accessed 15 July 2018).

Sandra Schneiders[249] has devoted three volumes to exploring contemporary understandings of religious life. She situates the vow of obedience in the context of mutuality and listening, which is consistent with RNDM expression and experience. She points out that the demise of the traditional notion of obedience that had existed from the monastic era until and beyond Vatican II, created what appeared to be a theological vacuum. Schneiders believes this created fertile ground for rethinking this dimension of religious life, but she notes, confirming RNDM experience, that "living into its articulation has taken decades".[250]

Schneiders defines authority as the right to be heard and heeded. She describes three types of relational authority exercised in religious congregations. First, she identifies natural or quasi-natural relational authority, such as that of a parent in relation to a minor child or of a teacher to a student. Schneiders contests the validity of this type of authority being exercised in religious congregations because of its implied hierarchical distinction between superiors and inferiors. Second, she refers to dialogical relational authority, the right to be heard and heeded that arises when one speaks the truth in love within a relationship. She places this type of authority in religious communities in the context of friendship and the discipleship of equals and invokes it in relation to Congregation discernment and decision-making: “To neglect to participate in the Congregation’s processes of discernment and decision-making, to refuse to really listen to the others in the Congregation and take their input seriously, and to fail to implement the decisions at which the community arrives whether or not the leader articulates them or they are written down, and whether or not one’s own position has prevailed, is to fail in the obedience that one has vowed within the community”.[251]

Schneiders introduces a third type of relational authority as “office” authority, which is conferred on a person by appointment or election and is exercised as part of pastoral care and leadership in the community. She argues that a community confers a particular kind of authority on its leaders that other members of the community in their dialogical relationships do not exercise. Leaders have the right to be heard and heeded precisely as leaders in matters pertaining to the common good, which can include the regulation of the attitudes and actions of individual members. She stresses that office authority is relational, which means it functions mutually, reciprocally with the authority of the members, adding that both leaders and members exercise both authority and obedience, though not in the same way, within the context of the community as a discipleship of equals. Schneiders relates the framework of authority to Constitutions: “Relational authority in the Religious Congregation, that which is exercised among the persons who make up the

[249] See Sandra Schneiders, Finding the Treasure. Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context, vol. 1, Religious Life in a New Millennium, (New York: Paulist Press, 2000); Selling All: Commitment, Consecrated Celibacy, and Community in Catholic Religious Life, vol. 2, Religious Life in a New Millennium (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2001).

[250] Sandra Schneiders, *Buying the Field: Catholic Religious Life in the Mission to the World*, vol. 3, Religious Life in a New Millennium, (New York: Paulist Press), 424.

[251] Ibid.,442.

community, both peer relationships and the relationships between leaders and other members, works within and according to the authority framework of Constitutions upon which the members have conferred authority, which has been ratified by the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities, and which provides for leadership, processes of discernments, methods of decision making, ways of resolving conflicts, and so on in the community".[252]

The understanding and living of the vow of obedience by RNDMs leans more solidly towards the position of Sandra Schneiders.

Learnings:

1. recognition of the complexity of leadership in diverse cultural and generational contexts;
2. different models of leadership take time to evolve, and local culture affects the way in which change occurs. Insufficient work has been done on the relationship of Western models of governance in religious life and the different cultural contexts in which RNDMs live and work;
3. within ten to twenty years western provinces will probably not have local-born religious available for leadership;
4. exploration of approaches to leadership that respect local culture, e.g. influence of Confucianism in Vietnam or *Ubuntu* in Kenya. But on the other hand, can it be said that there is, or should be an RNDM culture of leadership?

Church

Sandra Schneiders understands religious life to be in a liminal position where God, people, and culture intersect.[253] "Liminal" means being on the margins, or on the edges. The brief survey of the history of consecrated life in Chapter Two showed that hermits and ascetics literally occupied liminal space on the edges of cities and in the desert. The historical movements of monastic, mendicant and apostolic religious life led religious into new liminal spaces, from where they critiqued both church and society. Such prophetic critiques could and did mean religious were brought into tension and conflict with church hierarchy. The rapid increase in the number of religious congregations with simple vows founded in nineteenth century Europe saw Rome introducing new measures to both protect and control their development. It was only at Vatican II that the Church reached beyond the juridical uniformity of Constitutions required by Pope Leo XIII's *Conditae a Christo* (1901) to recognize the spiritual insights of founders and to affirm and celebrate the rich diversity of charisms and ministries they introduced.[254]

[252] Ibid., 445-446.
[253] See Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure*.
[254] Clarence Gallagher, "The Church and Institutes of Consecrated Life," *The Way Supplement* 50, (1984): 8.

By its official approbation of constitutions, the Church confers ecclesial existence on religious institutions within the communion of the Church. Euphrasie was concerned to receive the official approbation of the Church for her Constitutions because she believed this would offer RNDMs protection from what she saw as the interference by some priests and bishops in the life of her young Congregation. Nevertheless, in submitting her request for approbation she was required to seek written testimonials from bishops in whose dioceses RNDMs were present. Francis Redwood SM (1839-1935) bishop of Wellington, New Zealand, opposed the approval of the Constitutions and was not reticent in his complaints about Euphrasie to the Sacred Congregation: "I have also serious reasons to believe, that she is entirely autocratic in her authority and confident in her own judgment, to the point of taking little account of the observations, even of Bishops and that, even if she does not intend to do so, at least in practice, she eludes the authority of the priest, by appealing to the Bishop and that of the Bishop, by appealing to the Pope and the Holy Canons, which she is constantly quoting".[255]

Until recently, apostolic activity of religious has been carried out under the auspices of the diocesan authorities. Convents were usually built adjacent to or in close proximity to cathedrals, basilicas or parish churches. As RNDMs shifted from institutionalised living into homes in suburbs or in villages, the distance from the parish church was often much greater. The 1979 Constitutions recognized the integral relationship between the Church and the Congregation, referring to "Church" thirty-nine times. Certainly, there are different ecclesiologies in the Congregation. Some RNDMs now approach the hierarchical Church with suspicion and mistrust, with a small group expressing anger and a sense of alienation from the Church. The issues are partly related to culture and partly to inclusion and exclusion. New Zealand, which is furthest away from Rome, is the most vocal in critiquing the Church. On the other hand, some RNDMs, particularly from Asia and Africa, are disturbed at what they perceive as an apparent indifference to the institutional Church and are concerned at the impact such apparent indifference may have on younger members. The shift in attitude towards the centrality of Church in RNDM life is reflected in the 2014 Constitutions where "Church" is mentioned sixteen times, significantly fewer times than in the 1979 Constitutions.

Global Christianity and RNDMs as part of religious minority groups

There are approximately two billion Christians in the world, accounting for 32% of the global population. If we compare statistics from 1910 and 2010, it is obvious that the demographic shifts experienced by RNDMs are paralleled in the wider Catholic Church. Catholics make up about 50% of all Christians.

[255] Francis Redwood, "Observations on the Constitutions of Our Lady of the Missions, 25 May 1877".

Global Christianity - Catholic percentages of population		
	1910	**2010**
Europe	66.3%	25.9%
Americas	27.1%	36.8%
Middle East, N. Africa	0.7%	0.6%
Asia-Pacific	4.5%	13.1%
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.4%	23.6%

Catholics as percentage of global Christian population

Apart from the Philippines where Christians make up approximately 85% of the population, and East Timor 98%, Christians are a very tiny minority in Asia. In Bangladesh they comprise just 0.3% of the population; in India they 2.3%, Myanmar, 4% and Vietnam, 7.5%. In these countries the Catholic communities are close-knit and families and religious alike have a strong sense of shared identity, solidarity with each other, and loyalty to the Church. A significant number of RNDMs in Asia have relatives in other religious congregations or ordained as priests and bishops. Rural parishes particularly are also a centre for social life. Scandals that have affected the Church in the West are more hidden and have not yet made the same impact in Africa or Asia. The voice of women in the Church in Asia is gaining strength through the AMOR conferences (Asia-Oceania Meeting of Religious) and Ecclesia of Women in Asia, a forum of Asian Catholic Women Theologians. RNDMs regularly participate in such forums.

As we see above, the African Church is growing rapidly. Parishes are vibrant, liturgy is highly participative, inculturation is taken seriously so that liturgies connect with the deep faith of the people and daily issues of survival – poverty, safety, education, health and disease, violence, or access to safe drinking water. RNDM communities in Kenya and Senegal are closely connected to the local parishes. In South Sudan the context of ministry is different; religious communities are international and inter-cultural, and the relationship with the church is both at parish level, and through the NGO, Solidarity with South Sudan. In Latin America, the home of liberation theology and Basic Christian Communities, Pentecostal movements have stepped into a vacuum created during the papacy of Pope John Paul II when BCCs were discouraged by more conservative bishops. RNDMs in Peru and Bolivia, although few in number, are often involved in pastoral ministries within parish communities.

Global Catholicism means a growing decentralisation in church governance. This is reflected in the 2014 Consistory with Pope Francis appointing new cardinals from remote parts of the world, such as Myanmar, New Zealand and Tonga where Catholics comprise only a small minority of the total population.

Learnings:

1. the triumph of women as seen historically in the lives and ministry of Clare of Assisi, the Beguines, Angela de Merici, Mary Ward and many other apostolic religious, is well and truly alive today as the lives of ministries of many women religious demonstrate;
2. Pope Francis' decentralizing moves in Church, as seen in the creation of Cardinals from the periphery, is bringing a non-euro-centric culture and experience to impact the centre of the Church. How effective can charismatic personalities be in shaping attitudes toward the institutional church?
3. although a faithful daughter of the Church, Euphrasie wanted autonomy at governance level for her Congregation in its dealings with local bishops and parish priests.

Community

From apostolic times Christians found their identity and support in small communities that gathered for prayer, Eucharist and sharing of resources. Even in the desert, ascetics moved towards forming loosely-structured communities for mutual support. Monastic communities were modelled on the Acts of the Apostles. The introduction to the Rule of St Augustine is a call to love God and neighbour. The second article outlines the purpose of a religious community: "In the first place – and this is the very reason for your being gathered together – you should live in the house in unity of spirit and you should have one soul and one heart entirely centred upon God".[256]

The Rule fostered friendship, unity, and reconciliation. At the same time, it promoted asceticism, discipline and obedience. Euphrasie's letters constantly remind the sisters of their call to live together in harmony. In situations of cultural difference, she urged understanding and tolerance. Her final words to the Congregation on her deathbed was consistent with the Augustinian call to unity, "be very united on earth so as to be united for all eternity".

Chapter Three showed that RNDM community life has changed dramatically since Vatican II. Smaller communities meant a shift in relationships. The disappearance of superiors in western provinces and in some Asian communities had as its corollary, members being regarded as adult and taking more personal responsibility for community life.

In many parts of the Congregation intercultural communities are becoming the norm. Some provinces and regions are becoming increasingly international and awareness of cultural diversity has been raised to greater consciousness since the 1984

[256] "Rule of St Augustine", Chapter I, #2.

General Chapter. International meetings and formation programmes foster friendships and connections that cross boundaries of geography, culture, education, experience and generation. RNDMs see themselves as "friends in search of God".[257] In the coming years the presence of sisters from western provinces in international communities will diminish as fewer Australian, Canadians, English, French, Irish or New Zealand RNDMs are available for mission beyond their provinces.

The question of single living is a vexed one for Sisters in Asia and Africa. Latin America offered no comment on the matter. It is important to understand the cultural contexts out of which the different perspectives arise. Schneiders has described the emergence of a ministerial religious life in western countries that is no longer confined to institutions, and the monastic lifestyle that was formerly required. She observes that until the 1950s, women religious lived two different lives side-by-side – virtually the whole of monastic life and a full-time ministerial life in their apostolates: "They carried all the burdens of the monastic life with none of the leisure for personal prayer, *lectio divina*, genuine community life, or ordinary recreation of monastics, and all the burdens of the apostolate without the professional preparation or privileges enjoyed by the clergy".[258]

Schneiders points out that the type of ministries undertaken by religious not only led them out of the institutions, but also out of the convents and monasteries: "Their previous living situations (convents or monasteries) ceased to determine what ministries they could undertake; rather the ministries they undertook began to determine where and how they lived. Living singly, inter-Congregationally, or in small mobile groups in function of the ministries in which they were involved furthered the dismantling of the monastic lifestyle…New ways of being and living community have had to be developed in place of 'living in' community geographically and physically which any who have lived this way know is no guarantee of genuine affective and effective sharing of life".[259]

While Schneiders accurately reflects the shifts that have taken place in western provinces, her thinking does not describe the lifestyle of RNDMs in Asia, Africa or Latin America. Although the majority of communities in India and Bangladesh are attached to schools, some members of these communities are also involved in ministries outside the institution. In village areas RNDMs work with the poor in non-formal education, health care and community development programmes. In Myanmar, Vietnam, the Philippines, Laos, Taiwan, Kenya, Senegal, Peru and Bolivia, RNDMs are mostly in small communities in rural areas, engaged in traditional apostolic works such as teaching but increasingly in activities that promote

[257] André Sève, "Towards What Spiritualities?" *Vocation Quarterly Review*, July 1972.
[258] Sandra Schneiders, "Discerning Ministerial Religious Life Today", *National Catholic Reporter*, 9 September, 2009, https://www.ncronline.org/news/discerning-ministerial-religious-life-today, (accessed 27 July 2015).
[259] Ibid.

the empowerment of women. Often surrounded by violence, living singly in such contexts is neither culturally appropriate nor socially safe.

The 2008 Chapter document presents the vision of community life, whether in larger or smaller groups under one roof, or in communities without walls. It states: "Our shared life in community finds its source in God-Trinity, who has inscribed the rhythm of Divine Relationships into the fabric of creation. We are drawn into this dance of communion with each other, interwoven and interdependent with all that is. We celebrate the grace of difference, and the giftedness of each sister. Our RNDM structures support patterns of relationships and networks which facilitate this gift of communion in the midst of our diversity. As 'friends in search of God' we celebrate life and share mission together. We joyfully nurture relationships that are life-giving and based on a spirit of trust, cultural sensitivity, mutual respect, appreciation and encouragement. We participate actively and responsibly in the Mystery of the Universe and in the unfolding story of the Congregation".[260]

Courage to Chart a Path Forward

Generally speaking, the Congregation has not yet formally attempted to address concerns around colonialism and imperialism and their relationship to missionary and community life prior to Vatican II. It has already been noted that Asian RNDMs were not appointed as formators or leaders until many decades after the foundation of each mission, while RNDMs in India North East drew attention to language that categorizes and divides. More positively, India Central observed that recent developments in the Congregation were bridging the gap between west and east. Behind these statements are historical issues related to colonialism and racism that continue to strike a chord in many international missionary congregations both subtly and unsubtly at all levels of governance, community life, ministry and in interpersonal relationships. General Chapters since 1984 have acknowledged the challenges, celebrated the diversity of intercultural community living, and encouraged reconciliation to address differences. Since 2002 the effects of the colonial past as experienced in the Congregation have been broached more directly. The CLT included a recommendation in its report to 2002 General Chapter that "each Province/Region make use of local programmes to enable them to work personally and as a group with those elements of racism, ethnocentrism and classism that are within us all, individually, communally and as a Congregation".[261]

The 2002 General Chapter noted that "racism and prejudice exist among us" and the incoming CLT was encouraged to prepare a Congregational process of reflection on topics of global mission that included racism. The 2008 General Chapter addressed the matter unambiguously: "With grief and repentance, we courageously name the pain that still exists among us in the form of racism, prejudice, the effects of

[260] *RNDM Earth Community: We are One*, 10.
[261] *If You Knew the Gift of God*, 7.

colonialism and the misuse of money. All of these result in forms of oppression, manipulation and control which have no place in our RNDM Earth Community".[262]

In the "Guidelines for Action" in the same document, delegates agreed: "Workshops on issues of prejudice, racism, white privilege, discrimination and the effects of colonialism both within our Congregation and in the wider society will be offered at Congregational formation programmes and within all provinces and regions".[263]

It is unclear to what extent this guideline was implemented in provinces and regions, but little was done at Congregation level apart from sessions on cultural diversity in initial and on-going formation programmes. Right relationships are a very important value in religious communities, particularly among women religious. Understandably there are fears of unleashing unresolved pain, and lacking skills to address it. Striving to achieve harmony by avoiding tension and conflict can appear an easier or safer option than exposing and healing wounds from the past. Naming the issue is a courageous first step, but further courageous and concrete steps need to be taken to acknowledge the past, to seek forgiveness of those who have experienced discrimination and racism so that all members can make the journey towards healing and reconciliation. Then each member will come to an inner freedom that releases her for mission and enables her to strive towards her true potential.

Learnings:

1. identification of the implications of the evolving nature of ministerial religious life for RNDMs;
2. financial implications of single living;
3. as western provinces age, their members may need to consider a more conscious grouping together, although geography could preclude such steps;
4. the ethnic and generational diversity of the Congregation is asking members, consciously and unconsciously, to move towards more tolerance, more flexibility;
5. global RNDM connections need to be strengthened and closely monitored;
6. RNDMs need to continue their on-going study of and prayerful reflection on emerging Trinitarian theologies.

In this chapter we have traced the six key words and concepts back to early traditions of religious life, particularly as they concerned the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, and examined their consistency and evolution up to the present. The formulation of rules and Constitutions through history and the role of the Holy See in alternately prescribing uniformity and affirming degrees of diversity point to a journey that is shared by all religious congregations. Some of the key

[262] *RNDM Earth Community*, 12.
[263] *RNDM Earth Community*, 20.

words and concepts will differ such as the name of the founder, the charism and spirit and the language of the founders or dominant group. However, issues related to authority and obedience; relationships with the Church, community life will be very similar, particularly among international missionary congregations.

This study has not directly included the three vows, mission and ministry in its scope, but there too there would be common ground with other religious congregations. Religious congregations have much to treasure and celebrate from the past – the vision and foresight of founding members; the extraordinary zeal, courage and heroism of pioneers who ventured as missionaries and evangelizers into new lands; the embracing of different cultures and languages; the establishment of schools, hospitals and social services; passion and innovation in so many fields of human endeavour across the globe; solidarity with the poor and creative approaches to new mission needs. At the same time the shadow of Euro-centrism is still with them – languages, cultures and worldviews imposed on peoples of other traditions; remnant effects of a colonial era that both subtly and unsubtly categorized people into superior and inferior groups, including a tiered-system of religious life.

Today similar attitudes can exist within provinces between the dominant culture and minority ethnic groups. With significant demographic shifts taking place in religious Congregations originally founded in Europe, with community life and the membership of general councils becoming increasingly international, greater awareness and change are inevitable. However, just as women in western countries challenge patriarchy and hierarchy in the Church and society, so too issues of power and dominance in the Congregation must be acknowledged and addressed. The story of religious life is a human story. It is at once sacred and selfless but it is also flawed and fallible. Religious are challenged to make sense of it all in honesty and humility in order to find the spaces of healing and wholeness – it is can be a graced journey that religious can offer in to the wider social context today.

Chapter Nine The Dance Continues

When an apostolic religious congregation undertakes to re-write its constitutions, it recognises that it is initiating a task that will be both time-consuming and challenging. One of the reasons behind the challenge is the cultural diversity characteristic of contemporary apostolic missionary congregations, and its corollary, how should such cultural diversity be honoured in constitutions. The RNDM Constitutions refer to the Congregation's diversity of cultures on two occasions. First, "[t]he Rule of St. Augustine, based on the love and unity of the Trinity, was adopted by Euphrasie Barbier as a foundational text. This Rule invites us, as women drawn from many cultures, to have one heart and one mind and to share one mission, witnessing to the unity and harmony that existed in the heart of the first Christian community" (Const. #5). Again, "[as] members of an international missionary congregation we are challenged to live with mutual respect, reverence and cultural sensitivity. Knowing that the Holy Spirit dwells at the heart of all peoples and cultures, we celebrate our unity in diversity and embrace the grace of difference with simplicity and joy" (Const. #32). These two articles of the Constitutions tend to be exhortatory rather than prescriptive or mandatory, and their interpretation depends much on how RNDMs, collectively in their provinces or regions, or individually, decide to interpret them.

Nor do the Directives offer anything more substantial about the challenges posed by RNDM multi-culturalism. RNDMs are reminded that "[t]he simplicity and dignity of our dress is appropriate for us as consecrated persons in keeping with the culture of the country" (Dir. #11). Further on, it is stated that "[m]issionary effectiveness calls us to become inculturated in each milieu we enter by studying the culture with its religions, languages, customs and philosophies, and to discover with the people the Gospel values inherent in the culture" (Dir. #34).

Perhaps pertinent in any reflection on RNDM changing perceptions around cultural diversity are the comments of German historian Antje Flüchter: "Being a proselytising religion, Christianity was from the beginning exposed to numerous cultural encounters, and these hugely increased in the context of European expansion. Therefore, it can be assumed that these encounters led to numerous negotiations of religious differences. Conversely, the exposure did not fundamentally challenge the Western master narrative of the homogeneity and Europeanness of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has always claimed to be a universal church, but – at least until recently – this claim must be differentiated from the globally acting and living church. For a long time, the evangelisation endeavour was understood as a simple transfer, that is Christendom, its theology, its rituals etc. were just transported from Europe to the world, without any changes during this

process".[264] Flüchter's lengthy quote is very apposite here, as the RNDM "master narrative" offers an example at the micro level of what Flüchter demonstrates was true of the Church at the macro level. The RNDM narrative was not be challenged for at least the first hundred years of the Congregation's existence. Culturally, that narrative prioritised Western cultures, particularly French[265], and then as the nineteenth century drew to close, Irish, English and New Zealand cultures, and it was not long before the Catholic practices associated with those cultures were transplanted to India, Australia, Canada or Vietnam. It was unconsciously accepted that these practices and rituals would best meet the needs of the people among whom foreign RNDMs were sent to live and work. That there was an ingrained sense of Western cultural superiority is apparent in the comments of Sisters sent to 'save souls' through their educational and social ministries. Missionary practice of the time was about labouring "strenuously for the conversion of this pagan land" [Assam, India].[266] Popular Catholic belief of the times meant that those not baptised were those not saved. New Zealand-born Gwen Mary McCarthy, writing from Vietnam shortly after the arrival of the RNDMs there in 1924, comments on Lang-Son: "There are only two of the many pagodas here, but this will indicate that paganism is not by any means dead yet…the work still to be done is stupendous because it is impossible to go about it directly. Surrounded by pagans we cannot instruct them unless they themselves wish".[267]

Mission at this time was about transplantation, not inculturation. Mission was about 'saving souls' given that popular Catholic belief of the time did not encourage acceptance of the immanent presence of the Holy Spirit in all cultures and traditions. Pope John Paul II's pneumatology in *Redemptoris Missio*: "[t]he Spirit manifests himself in a special way in the Church and in her members. Nevertheless, his presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time. The Second Vatican Council recalls that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person, through "the 'seeds of the Word', to be found in human initiatives-including religious ones-

[264] Antje Flüchter, "Introduction," in *Translating Catechisms, Translating Cultures , the Expansion of Catholicism in the Early Modern World*, ed. Antje Flüchter and Rouven Wirbser, Studies in Christian Mission (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), 4.

[265] An important example that demonstrates a lack of cultural awareness as to what local culture required of foreign missionaries occurred in Samoa in 1874 where Euphrasie insisted that a cloister be erected, and grilles placed around the choir in the chapel much to the chagrin of the Marist Fathers who considered such moves culturally inappropriate. The subsequent impasse which saw neither Euphrasie nor the Marist Fathers being prepared to compromise meant that the RNDMs left the missions in Samoa, Wallis, and Futuna in 1878.

[266] Estella Clarkson (Mary de Sales, RNDM), "The Sisters' Convent at Shillong, Capital of Assam," in *Diamond Jubilee Magazine in Commemoration of the Foundation of the Convent of Notre Dame Des Mission, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1861928*, ed. Mary Hickey (Mary St Domitille, RNDM), (Christchurch: Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, 1929), 77.

[267] Gwen-Mary McCarthy (Mary St Floride, RNDM), "Lang-Son Mission Station on the Hills," in *Diamond Jubilee Magazine in Commemoration of the Foundation of the Convent of Notre Dame Des Mission, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1861928*, ed. Mary Hickey (Mary St Domitille, RNDM), (Christchurch: Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, 1929), 81.

and in mankind's efforts to attain truth, goodness and God himself" #28),[268] would probably have been as challenging to nineteenth century RNDMs as Martin Luther's ninety-five theses!

Though the Congregation's multi-cultural character is obvious today, the many different cultures of its members cannot be thought of as discrete entities, untouched by other cultures. Even in a country like Vietnam, where all the sisters are Vietnamese, global culture impacts on the life of people every day whether it is the media they access, the food they eat, the means of transport they use or the theological and spiritual texts they study. This in turn suggests that cultures are always changing in some way or another. As Wijsen notes, "[d]ue to modernisation and globalisation most societies in the world are not multi-cultural in the sense of a patchwork quilt or mosaic of separate pieces with hard, well-defined edges, but of a cultural mix or cocktail…cities like Amsterdam, Paris or London, but also Jakarta or Nairobi, create youth cultures that are a mix of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim traditions, combined with secular-political and ethnic ideals, bound together particularly by reggae or rap music".[269] This complex mix of cultures is not without challenges for RNDMs. As some Kenyan and Filipina-born Sisters have noted, it can be difficult for them to discern what might be required of them in order to become Kenyan and Filipina RNDMs, and therefore responsible for inculturating a Kenyan or Filipina expression of RNDM life in their respective countries. Sometimes, locally-born RNDMs can be a minority group in their own provinces because of the congregational emphasis on the importance of internationality. Perhaps an important subject for on-going research is how multicultural living may impact a Sister's awareness of her own cultural identity. Is it enhancing it or is it diminishing it?

One aim of this research was to see how the Congregation's changing demographic and cultural realities affected the writing of the Constitutions. An important consideration in arriving at even a tentative conclusion is that contemporary constitutions of apostolic religious congregations are essentially consensus documents. Vatican II's emphasis on values such as collegiality (see *LG* #27) and Catholic Social Teaching's emphasis on subsidiarity had allowed religious to significantly modify hierarchical structures so that more religious could be involved in decision-making processes that affected their personal and collective lives. Writing constitutions was no longer the responsibility of a founder, but was a congregational task. What was apparent in the inputs from the different RNDM provinces, was that first reports often demonstrated a cultural specificity, as could be seen for example in Vietnam's concerns about the active and passive voting rights of Sisters who were not yet finally professed. Such a concern was cultural-specific and to a significant extent brought about by the political situation in Vietnam. After 1975 unification of North and South Vietnam under a Communist government, admission to the

[268] Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* in William R. Burrows, ed. *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading 'Redemptoris Missio' and 'Dialogue and Proclamation'* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), #28.
[269] Frans Wijsen, "Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church," *Exchange* 30, (2001): 220.

novitiate had been difficult for some years, a situation that had changed by end of the second millennium, after which novitiate numbers grew quite quickly, and the subsequent increase in young Sisters was significant. For a province like New Zealand, where the last first profession of a Sister had been in 2000, there was no such concern about active and passive voting rights of young sisters, and so little interest for legislation around such a matter.

Cultural differences and community life

Something similar occurred in the reports about the lifestyle of different RNDMs. Three types of RNDM life had emerged as important in the different reports – 'single living', 'living community' and 'living in community'. 'Single living' referred to Sisters who lived alone. In Western societies such as New Zealand, 25% of all women over the age of seventy-five live alone, while between 40-50% of the general population live alone from the age of fifty onwards, a statistic that amazes Sisters from Asia or Africa. Interestingly, in New Zealand the proportion of Asian and Pasifika people living alone is much lower than that of European New Zealanders.[270] 'Living community' is a term used to describe a group of Sisters, living singly but reasonably close to one another and meeting together a regular intervals for prayer, at meals, or community gatherings. Though such Sisters are not physically together under the same roof, the frequency of their contacts mean they see themselves as 'living community'. 'Living in community' refers to Sisters living together in the same house. My research demonstrates that Sisters in the Western provinces hold quite different positions from other RNDMs regarding 'living singly', 'living community' or 'living in community'. Again, these diverse positions are often driven by different cultural contexts and expectations.

Despite the quite rigorous comments from different provinces and regions on living singly or living in community with other RNDMs, the consensus nature of the Constitutions is apparent in that there is no reference to single living or any requirement that RNDMs must live with other RNDMs under the same roof. The Directives which accompany the Constitutions state: "A community is defined as a group of sisters living in one house, sub-groups in a larger house, or sisters living in separate places coming together according to province policies" (Dir. 40).[271] Of even more interest is the inclusion of the words "according to province policies". Provinces and regions are required by the Constitutions[272] to write a province handbook or

[270] Statistics New Zealand, Tatauranga Aotearoa, *Two's a Crowd: Living Alone in New Zealand,* 2013, http://archive.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/Well-being/social-connectedness/social-networks/living-alone/characteristics-people-live-alone.aspx, (accessed 13 August, 2018).

[271] Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, ed. *Directives* (Rome: Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, 2014), #40.

[272] See Constitution #143. "Celebrated in the same spirit as the congregation chapter, a province chapter seeks to know the will of God in its particular mission as part of the whole congregation. While in session, it is the highest legislative authority in the province. It makes statutes in keeping with the spirit of the constitutions and the congregation chapter's mandate". This Constitution mandates provinces and regions to write their own province statutes or directory of handbook which would allow them to include a cultural perspective.

statutes that could allow them a cultural specificity that is not possible in documents intended for the whole congregation. Cultural specificity was there at the micro-level in the reports from the different provinces and regions, then lost at the macro-level in the Constitutions but there is the possibility/probability of regaining it through writing particular specificities into province or region handbooks. But such specificities need to conform with the Constitutions and such handbooks require the approval of the CLT. Thus, a province could not seek change to rules around passive and active voting rights as these are canonically determined. On the other hand, the Constitutions identify the essential elements for RNDM community life, but individual provinces and regions can determine the nature and size of community that best meets the ministry and personal needs of different Sisters.

Another facet of community living to which considerable attention has been paid is how RNDMs relate to one another. This can be seen in a variety of ways. First, it has been demonstrated that unconscious racism has been part of the shared RNDM history, and the 2008 General Chapter spoke of the need for workshops that would address issues such as "racism, prejudice, the effects of colonialism, and the misuse of the power of money".[273] Second, all reports pointed to the need not to use titles such as 'superior general' with its militaristic overtones, or 'superior' which could imply that that those who were not superiors were subjects or, even worse, inferiors. Third, the search for a greater sense of equality and mutuality in community life lead RNDMs in some parts of the Congregation to move beyond addressing Euphrasie Barbier in language that emphasised her special status and superiority as founder. No longer should she be referred to by titles such as "Very Reverend Mother Superior General", "Our Venerated Mother Foundress" or as her biographer named her in his title *Very Reverend Mother Marie du Cœur de Jesus, née Euphrasie Barbier, Foundress and First Superioress General.*[274] The title of Marie Bénédicte Ollivier's authoritative biography, *Missionary Beyond Boundaries: Euphrasie Barbier 1829-1893*, points to the changing attitudes RNDM perceptions around their founder. The Constitutions refer to her as Euphrasie or Euphrasie Barbier.

Relationships between the centre and the margins

Another area that has been contested throughout the Congregation is the relationship of provinces and regions to the CLT. There was a brief period after the 1969 Special Chapter when a certain enthusiasm for some de-centralisation seemed to be gaining ground. This was particularly apparent in the decisions by the five older Western provinces to establish new 'foreign' missions. Of course, the permission of the General Council was required for such initiatives to go ahead, but by the 1980s declining vocations in those same Western provinces meant that new ways of

[273] *RNDM Earth Community: We are one, we are love,* 12.
[274] See L'Abbé A. Coulomb, *Life of the Very Reverend Mother Marie Du Coeur De Jesus, Née Euphrasie Barbier, Foundress and First Superioress General of the Institute of the Daughters of Notre Dames Des Missions*, trans., a Daughter of Notre Dame des Mission (Paris: Institute de Notre Dame des Missions, 1902).

managing personnel and financial resources for these foundations needed to be introduced if they were to continue to grow. In 1987, the General Council made the important decision to establish an RNDM presence in the Philippines and in effect moved towards assuming responsibility for management of regions established after Vatican II. In 2006, after the opening of the Congregation's international formation centre in Davao, Philippines, the CLT became responsible for missioning younger RNDMs who had been finally professed. Such centralising tendencies step did not always sit easily with some province and region leaders. However, Constitution #100 is very clear that the general chapter, a collegial assembly while in session, is the highest legislative authority in the Congregation, and furthermore enlarged general council meetings are held at least bi-annually and these provide another forum in which different concerns can be discussed and ways for moving forward identified. Furthermore, the constitutions of any apostolic congregation have as a primary goal, structures which enhance unity across a congregation, and at the same time recognize that the time for the uniformity that was honoured in the past is no longer an option in today's multi-cultural world.

One significant area that requires on-going dialogue between the centre (the CLT) and the margins (provinces and regions) is the appointment of leadership teams at province and regional levels. To recapitulate what has been the congregational practice: the first Constitutions written by Euphrasie, the *Interim Constitutions,* and the 1979 Constitutions all required that the General Council appoint the Province Leader. The *Interim Constitutions* and the 1979 Constitutions also mandated that such appointments be preceded by a consultation process with the Sisters of a particular province or region. From the 1990s onwards in provinces such as Canada or New Zealand, and to a lesser extent in some other parts of the congregation, there was a perception that direct voting by the Sisters would demonstrate a greater acceptance of such values as collegiality and subsidiarity. Canon Law allowed such a procedure. Canon 625 #3 states: "Other superiors [excluding general superiors] are to be constituted according to the norm of the constitutions, but in such a way that, if they are elected, they need the confirmation of a competent major superior; if they are appointed by a superior, however, a suitable consultation is to precede." The decision of the 2014 General Chapter was to opt for the consultation/appointment method rather than a direct binding vote by individual Sisters in the different provinces and regions. The Constitutions require that "[t]he province leader and councillors are appointed by the congregation leader with the consent of the [general] council after a consultation process in the province" (Const. #126). Neither the Constitutions nor Directives stipulates what a consultation process involves, and provinces and regions can identify in dialogue with the CLT what particular method would work most effectively for them. The possibility of such dialogue is important particularly in provinces with a rising median age.

Fairclough's comments are perhaps pertinent here. He notes that "[i]nstitutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which

directly or indirectly legitimise existing power relations. Practices which appear to be universal and commonsensical can often be shown to originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc, and have become naturalised".[275] One such universal practice characteristic of the Congregation has been the on-going centralised nature of decision-making since its inception. Perhaps this aspect of RNDM life needs more consideration, even changes, so that the Congregation can demonstrate an important way of being counter-cultural in a world where increasingly power is concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people. Pope Francis, well aware of the problems centralization has meant for the universal Church, lamented that "excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church's life and her missionary outreach".[276] The risks inherent in a centralising tendency is that cultural diversity can be lost. In the RNDM story, a "commonsensical" dimension probably lies behind the decision to prioritise consultation over voting. Rising age medians particularly in the Western provinces, and the rapidly declining number of younger sisters who could assume leadership responsibilities is a real challenge and probably needs addressing in creative ways that reflect a real dialogue with all RNDMs.

On more than one occasion another contestable concern was the relationship between the Congregation, represented by the CLT, and CICLSAL. This was driven in part by Franc Cardinal Rodé's apostolic visitation of Catholic Sisters in the United States. This development, which had been initiated by the Vatican authorities in 2008, began just prior to work on the writing of new constitutions started. Un-surprisingly, some RNDMs, predominantly in the western provinces, feared that the Vatican visitation would mean restrictions being placed on how religious life was to be lived in the twenty-first century. This did not happen, and the ordination of Pope Francis in March 2013 undoubtedly has heartened women religious.

Again, despite the 2008 RNDM General Chapter's call that RNDMs identify as a new missionary imperative, care of creation, the fourteen references to creation that are in the Constitutions tend to be general statements rather than indicative of the need to embrace new missionary ecological imperatives. Such ecological imperatives have strong biblical, magisterial and theological mandates, and just as importantly, RNDMs whether living in Australia, Bolivia, Kenya or France recognize all around them signs of environmental degradation. CICLSAL advised that references to cosmic and eco-theologies not be included in constitutions as they had not been time-tested, although this seems to be contradicted by papal teachings which from the 1970s onwards suggest otherwise. In 1979 John Paul II had emphasised in his encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*[277], that care of the environment was required in today's world. In his 1990 World Day of Peace message, the need for a new ecological awareness was noted, while in his 1991 encyclical, the pope stated that

[275] Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 64.
[276] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), #32.
[277] See Pope John Paul 11, *Redemptor Hominis*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979).

"man's desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, [permits] man to consume the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way"[278]. Again John Paul writes that "[i]t is the ecological question — ranging from the preservation of the different species of animals and of other forms of life to "human ecology" properly speaking — which finds in the Bible clear and strong ethical direction, leading to a solution which respects the great good of life, of every life".[279] John Paul rightly affirms that the biblical narratives are replete with references to creation and humankind's responsibility for it. For example, both the first and last chapters of the bible, point to humankind's relationship with all creation (see Gen 1; 2; and Rev 21). Pope Benedict XVI too often reminded people that care of the environment was not an option but a moral imperative. In his 2010 World Day of Peace message, Benedict stated that "respect for creation is of immense consequence, not least because 'creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works,' and its preservation has now become essential for the pacific coexistence of mankind".[280] To argue therefore that references to RNDMs' responsibility to care for creation should not be included in any new constitutions seems somewhat disingenuous, and the promulgation of *Laudate Si'* in May 2015 would have confirmed the rightness of including something more mandatory on care of creation in the Constitutions.

How should the term 'Divine Missions' be understood in the third millennium?

RNDMs have always treasured Euphrasie's insights into the mystery of Trinitarian spirituality, something that was somewhat unusual in popular nineteenth century French Catholicism where devotional spirituality – Christological, Mariological, hagiographical – was more honoured in actual RNDM spiritual life and practices. As American theologian Richard McBrien astutely commented "as far as many Church members are concerned, the doctrine [of the Trinity] could be erased completely from the Christian treasury of faith and that many spiritual writings, sermons, pious exercises, and even theological treatises could remain in place with little more than minor verbal adjustments".[281] So it is remarkable as Marie Bénédicte notes that in a century when theology was essentially Christological and Mariological, Euphrasie discerned that "the source of mission was at the heart of the mystery of the Trinity".[282] Euphrasie's understanding of mission as being sent was grounded in John 20:21, "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you",' rather than Matthew 28:18-20. While Matthew's 'missionary command' with its somewhat prescriptive character was important for many nineteenth century missionaries, does not appear in Euphrasie's writings.

[278] Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991), #37.
[279] Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), #31.
[280] Pope Benedict XVI, *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), #1.
[281] Richard McBrien, *Catholicism*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (East Malvern, Vic.: Dove Communications, 1980), 356.
[282] Marie Bénédicte Ollivier, *Missionary Beyond Boundaries: Euphrasie Barbier 1829-1893*, trans., Beverley Grounds (Rome: Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, 2007), 608.

Key to Euphrasie's understanding of mission was being sent, and this is still key for RNDMs. But today there are also some reservations around the concept of mission being understood primarily in 'being sent' categories, as it can suggest that the sender has something that the recipient needs, and so the recipient should be beholden to the sender. This concern explains why some RNDMs, notably those with access to more recent theological writings on the Trinity, and in particular on pneumatology, are emphasising the immanent presence of the Spirit in creation. Such a pneumatology has important implications for moving beyond a pre-Vatican II missionary concern about saving souls, for inter-religious dialogue where the Christian meets the other as one also open to the Spirit, and for the mandate to be stewards and carers of creation. The immanent presence of the Spirit in all creation makes a hierarchical ordering of creation which gives humankind domination over the rest of a Spirit-filled creation problematic.

Hegemony of English Language

A particular concern of many RNDMs was the presumed advantage enjoyed by those RNDMs, who at congregational meetings, have English as their first language. Although fewer than 25% of all RNDMs are now ELF (English *lingua franca*) speakers, the fact that English is prioritised at congregational meetings needs to be constantly scrutinised to ensure that the contributions of ESL and EFL speakers are not minimised or diminished in any way. If this were to happen, it would constitute a classic example of the hegemony of the English language throughout the Congregation. To cite Fairclough: "I shall understand ideologies to be significations /constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities), which are built into various dimensions of forms/meanings of discursive practices or trans-formations relations of domination…certain uses of language and other 'symbolic forms' are ideological, namely those that serve, in specific circumstances, to establish or sustain relations of domination".[283]

A veritable academic industry has grown up around the presumed hegemony of English since Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's *Selections from Prison Notebooks* appeared in English in 1971. Most of the subsequent publications that explore this subject demonstrate a left-wing character, and its corollary, an anti free-market bias, and postulate a close relationship between both the English language and the English colonial and American neo-colonial stories.[284]

[283] Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 87.

[284] See, for example, Rotem Kowner and Judith Rosenhouse, "The Hegemony of English and Determinants of Borrowing from Its Vocabulary," in *Globally Speaking: Motives for Adopting English in Other Languages*, ed. Judith Rosenhouse and Rotem Kowner(Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2008); Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, "Linguistic Human Rights and English in Europe," *World Englishes* 16, no. 1 (1997); Yukio Tsuda, "Critical Studies on the Dominance of English and the Implications for International Communication," *Japan Review* 10, (1998).

In the nineteenth century, the dominance of French-speaking Sisters at congregational meetings, which were then few and far between, would have prevailed. From the 1932 General Chapter onwards, English-speaking Sisters began to outnumber French-speaking Sisters on General Councils. An important moment in congregational history occurred at the 1972 General Chapter, when Khasi RNDM, Lillian Shadap (Mary John Bosco) for whom English was her second language, was elected to the General Council.[285]

From the 1970s onwards, the decline of vocations in the five Western provinces and the subsequent need to replace Western personnel with RNDMs from Asia first, and then as numbers increased elsewhere, with Sisters from those countries in Africa, Latin America and Oceania where RNDMs were living and working, meant that the subsequent mobility of personnel saw English was becoming the *lingua franca* of the Congregation, which meant that from 2000 onwards, great efforts were made to ensure RNDMs from non-English speaking countries had the opportunity to learn English. As Kowner and Rowenhouse note "British imperial hegemony and huge colonial possessions during the late nineteenth century were undoubtedly a major determinant in facilitating the spread of English at that time, but not the only one. After WWI, and particularly after WWII, American economic hegemony and growing political and cultural importance proved the main spur for the spread of English, and the USA became the cultural and linguist harbinger of the English language. In the post-war era the combined impact of these two nations has brought English to a new and unprecedented position, not only for its geographical spread and the number of its speakers, but for its overall significance. It has assumed the role of the world's *lingua franca*. Today English is the preferred language of communication at virtually any international meeting hosting representatives of more than a number of nations, and at many regional meetings as well. English speakers can be found in almost any corner of the globe and English is now the dominant or at least one of the official languages in over 75 states and territories in which at least 1.6 billion people live".[286] RNDMs were only one of the many organisations that used English as their *lingua franca.* Prior to the 1980s, the use of English probably pointed to "western cultural and political dominance"[287] in the Congregation, but today knowledge of English is increasingly more and more important for RNDMs given its international character. To say this is not to denigrate the many other languages that RNDMs speak as their mother tongue, but the reality is that to communicate with others outside of their language group, means they require another language. A global language *per se,* does not need to be the hegemonic language. A global language can promote a sense of sisterhood among RNDMs, not the oppressive weight of hegemony.

[285] See Susan Smith, ed. *Zeal for Mission: The Story of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions 1861-2011* (Auckland David Ling, 2012), 387-388.
[286] Kowner and Rosenhouse, 6.
[287] Eva Kushner, "English as Global Language: Problems, Dangers, Opportunities," *Diogenes* 50, no. 2 (2003): 22.

"Language has also been viewed, notably because of its relationship to thought, as a powerful element of unification".[288] This is what is currently happening among RNDMs. For example, it is not difficult to imagine how enriched future congregational gatherings could be as younger Sisters from Africa, Asia and Latin America readily communicate with one another in English. It is also worth noting that RNDMs today are often working in countries where governments do not hesitate to control national media whether it be the press, TV or radio. Although it is easy for some left-wing commentators[289] to argue otherwise, English too can be an important way by which RNDMs who live in countries where governments are more likely to control and censor media outlets, can access information about their own and other countries. When RNDMs listen to, or view the BBC World News or Al Jazeera, English is not the language of hegemony, but the language of liberation.

Czech-born, Canadian-based academic Eva Kushner writes: "Thus while the omni-presence of English is far from having heralded the advent of a more fraternal world, it does not necessarily carry with it western cultural and political dominance, although the danger exists that it can do so, or be perceived to do so…It [omni-presence of English] also implies constant attention to linguistic curriculums at all levels of education everywhere, in defence of the right of human beings to express themselves and to communicate in all possible freedom".[290]

Kushner's comments offer hope for all RNDMs seeking to avoid the danger of "western cultural and political dominance" and embracing the challenge of moving beyond simply living in multi-cultural and multi-lingual communities to living in inter-cultural, inter-lingual communities. Multi-cultural communities are those in which peoples of different cultures are present in the same community with a common goal of peaceful co-existence, and perhaps some adaptation. Inter-culturality on the other hand requires making more explicit "the essential mutuality of the process of cultural interaction on both the personal and social level".[291] As Bevans points out: "[t]he process of Interculturality involves learning from each culture in a community, sharing not only at the superficial levels of food and holidays but at the deeper levels of feelings and fears and struggles, listening to one another, asking questions of one another, working out real cultural equality and facing inequalities of power, learning how to express negative feelings and misunderstandings toward one another. Key to the practice of Interculturality is "intercultural competence", or the ability to deal honestly and creatively with cultural difference".[292] Bevans continues that this is not without its challenges. "Our default [position] is to live monoculturally and ethno-

[288] Ibid., 27.
[289] See Kowner and Rosenhouse; Yukio Tsuda, "Speaking against the Hegemony of English: Problems, Ideologies, and Solutions," in *The Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication*, ed. Thomas K. Nakayama and Rona Tamiko Halualani(Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011).
[290] Kushner, "English as Global Language: Problems, Dangers, Opportunities."
[291] Robert Kisala, "Formation for Intercultural Life and Mission," *Verbum SVD* 50, no. 3 (2009): 335.
[292] Stephen B. Bevans, "The Love of Christ Impels Us (2 Cor 5:14): Intercultural Leadership for Intercultural Living and Mission," in *SVD General Chapter 2018*, (Rome: 2018): 18.

centrically…[i]n an increasingly globalized, migration-shaped world, fostering truly intercultural communities is becoming more and more central to the Church's missionary task." Such a task requires creative leadership, not managerial leadership. As Peggy McAllister writes, in focussing on creative leadership "we are asking different questions of ourselves and others. Instead of trying to protect something, we are trying to create outcomes in service to something much bigger than ourselves."[293]

Frans Wijsen believes that missionaries, and therefore by extension, RNDMs "have a great expertise in coping with cultural difference. They know by experience what it means to live and work in another culture. They realise the more you get to know people, the less you understand them. Consequently, many missionaries are contributing to the development of intercultural hermeneutics as the hermeneutics of intercultural encounter".[294] Wijsen's "hermeneutics of intercultural encounter" has a meaning similar to that of Bevans when the latter describes 'interculturality'. For Wijsen, missionaries are "intercultural ministers" in the sense that they constitute an intermediate culture. From this we can add another meaning to the term 'intercultural' than the one given above. Inter-cultural refers to the space between cultures, or the culture in-between.

Interculturation is a missionary challenge for the Church in the twenty-first century. Interculturation does not abandon the concept of inculturation, but broadens it. Missionaries are called to become mediators between different cultural orientations, bridge-builders between people of other faiths, signs and instruments of solidarity, scouts of the promised land, forerunners of a 'global ecumene' in a creoloizing world."[295] In this way, English as the *lingua franca* of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions can shed its neo-colonial character, and become a language of hope rather than the language of hegemony for the contemporary RNDM.

Perhaps the words of Congregation Leader, Josephine Kane, when RNDMs received the Constitutions in 2015 are helpful in reminding us of our responsibilities as apostolic missionary women today: "In our call as religious missionary women we must face the overwhelming needs of our contemporary world with faith, courage and zeal. We are attentive to the cry of the poor and impelled to continue the mission of Jesus in our time by contributing our loving service to bring about the reign of God. As international missionary women, we are challenged to live with mutual respect, reverence and cultural sensitivity wherever we may be sent. In this way we witness to the universal love of the Trinity revealed through the sacred in creation, in

[293] Annemarie Sanders, " Readying Congregations for New Understandings of Leadership, an Interview with Peggy Mcallister," *The Occasional Papers: Leadership Conference of Women Religious* 44, no. 2 (2015): 24.
[294] Wijsen, "Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church," 227-228.
[295] Wijsen, 228.

all peoples and religious traditions in striving to bring about unity and peace in our world".[296]

Discoursing and dancing with others

One of the more rewarding and delightful aspects of post-Vatican II life for apostolic religious congregations, is that members of different congregations are often meeting either formally or informally, at international, national and local levels. Examples of such meetings include formal international meetings of UISG held annually in Rome, AMOR (Asia Oceania Meetings of Religious) which are held bi-annually, international forums for women and men religious such as the Nemi-based SEDOS (Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission) seminars which allow for conversation around current missionary trends and life in the Church world-wide, as well as national regular meetings of religious superiors and leaders throughout the world. Such regular opportunities for communication allow the participants to grow in awareness of commonalities of which there are many, and differences of which there are fewer.

RNDMs know their changing demographics are not characteristic of their congregation only. This is a world-wide phenomenon. It apparent that the institutional church is experiencing similar demographic shifts, as Asian, African, Latin American and Oceanic bishops and priests now far outnumber those of Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The Church, in turn, mirrors what is going on the wider community. America may think it is on the way to becoming great again, but that situation is changing rapidly and as countries that were formerly colonies of imperial powers such India or Nigeria, or countries which experienced exploitative trading concessions such as nineteenth century China, are growing in all areas, and so are fast overtaking the so-called superpowers. The on-going supremacy of the West in general, and the United States in particular cannot be taken for granted.

These developments can be seen at a micro-level in religious congregations too, virtually all of which are experiencing decline in the West. For example, "the number of women religious in the United States has declined 75 percent in 50 years, from a peak of 181,421 in 1965 to 47,160 in 2016, according to the National Religious Retirement Office. Nearly 8 in every 10 women religious are older than 70".[297] Prior to Vatican II, the congregations of which these religious are members had contributed enormously to the life of the Church both in their countries of origin, and in the foreign missions, a contribution that was costly for them in numerous ways. As New Zealand church historian Ernest Simmons commented on pre-Vatican II life: "It

[296] Josephine Kane, "To All the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions" in *Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions: Constitutions*, (Rome: Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, 2016), 9.
[297] Dan Stockman, "Bishops, Sisters Discuss Declining Numbers of Us Women Religious," *"Global Sisters Report", National Catholic Reporter*, 16 October 2018, (accessed 17 October 2018).

is difficult to find anything to admire in the blindness that prevented the bishops, the clergy, and the laity from seeing that they were building a church on the bent backs of the nuns".[298] However, awareness of that extraordinary generosity and commitment should not blind the contemporary Catholic to the truth that the mission of those religious was usually exercised in a euro-centric and maternalistic or paternalistic manner that paid little attention to local cultural mores. That period of apostolic activity began to decline as governments in the western world assumed more and more responsibility for the social and educational work in which religious had engaged. In other parts of the world, former colonies that had become independent nation states were re-assessing the ways in which religious could live and work. The decline in numbers of Western missionaries working in Asia, and to a lesser extent in Africa and Latin America, does not appear to have been accompanied by a lessening of enthusiasm for western models of religious life in these continents. How Western models of religious apostolic life are to become inculturated in ways that move beyond realities such as food, dress and lifestyle is an on-going question for all religious congregations today.

In recent years, a number of commentators have written extensively on what is perceived to be the decline and fall of apostolic congregations founded in the modern age.[299] One such commentator, American Ted Dunn provides a useful summary of the first four stages that occur in the life cycle of apostolic religious congregations.[300] The first stage is that of inspiration and innovation and revolves around the efforts of a visionary founder who realizes that the gospel has to be lived in a new way in order to hasten the coming of the reign of God. Such a person is able to attract and energize others to join her in this task. It is a time of enthusiasm, geographical expansion and numerical growth. In the second stage, "ideas, people, resources and projects accelerate exponentially",[301] and growth is the name of the game. But in the third stage, it is recognised that ministries and life need to be stabilised and organised. As Dunn writes: "The organization has time to systematize its efforts preferring sanity, security and predictability over chaos. Offices and titles are stamped into the organizational chart and behavioural patterns are stamped into the book of norms. Stabilization and maintenance of the status quo are hallmarks of this period".[302] However the very success that a congregation attains has within it the possibility for decline. Maintenance of the institution can become the guiding principle in decision-making. In the fourth stage, "those who built and believe in the system are promoted and elected in order to keep it going. They serve and protect

[298] E. R. Simmons, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in New Zealand* (Auckland: Catholic Publications Centre, 1978), 107.
[299] See Gerald A. Arbuckle, *From Chaos to Mission: Refounding Religious Life Formation* (London: Chapman, 1996); Raymond Hostie, *Vie Et Mort Des Ordres Religieux* (Paris: Desclee de Brower, 1972); Diarmuid O'Murchu, *The Prophetic Horizons of Religious Life* (London: Excalibur Press, 1988); Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Reframing Religious Life: An Expanded Vision for the Future* (Middlegreen: St Pauls (UK), 1995).
[300] See Ted Dunn, "Refounding Religious Life: A Choice for Transformational Change," *Human Development* 30, no. 3 (2009): 5-13.
[301] Ibid.
[302] Ibid.

the system they believe in and unwittingly collude in its demise by preventing radical change".[303] A number of apostolic congregations have reached this point in their history. Some acknowledge this and may for instance, decide to no longer welcome candidates into their communities, recognising that a median age of eighty precludes younger people joining them. Others may still believe that growth will begin again if only they can find the right button to push.

There are a variety of buttons that can be pushed as apostolic congregations respond to diminishing numbers, particularly in the western world. One response is simply to accept the inevitability of decline and this can be the rationale for doing very little. Other congregations may focus on recruitment of new members, not so much in Western countries as in Asian and African countries with varying degrees of success. The strategies of other congregations suggest that they believe restorationism is the way to attract recruits, and there is some anecdotal evidence that indicates a return to the past maybe attractive to some. Finally, there are those looking at new recruitment possibilities by expanding their membership through lay associates or companions. This involves inviting lay people who believe in the ethos, charism and ministry of a particular congregation, to associate with professed members in a variety of ways that can include financial, prayerful and apostolic support.

These different responses have as their starting point diminishing numbers, always presumed to be a cause for concern. Here the insights of German theologian, Karl Rahner may be important. In 1963, Rahner suggested that the Church of the future would be a "diaspora" church.[304] Other scholars resonated with Rahner's opinion, and Australian Jesuit, Brendan Byrne, summed up Rahner's thinking when he wrote: "Christianity, [Rahner] foresaw, would cease to be a religion of growth (from cultural forces) and become a religion of choice, with the laity taking a primary role and the clergy deprived of its socially privileged status. The church would not cease to be missionary – to commend its gospel and seek to implement its values in wider society – but all this would have to be done in a spirit of dialogue rather than imposition from the position of privilege historically enjoyed by Christianity in the West. Rahner's call received a lukewarm response from Catholic church authorities…and was regarded as overly pessimistic by many fellow theologians. But Rahner stuck to it to the end of his career. Fifty years on, despite the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the consequent freedom to worship, the vision looks remarkably prophetic".[305]

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[303] Ibid.

[304] See Karl Rahner, "A Theological Interpretation of the Position of Christians in the Modern World," in *Mission and Grace: Essays in Pastoral Theology*(London/New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 3-55.

[305] Brendan Byrne, "Paul and the Diaspora" Re-Imagining Church with the Aid of Rahner and Harink," *Australian Biblical Review* 53, (2005).

Central to Rahner's thinking was his awareness that Judaism was not a proselytizing religion. After the Babylonian Exile (c.598-538 BCE), the Jews recognised themselves as distinct from other nations and peoples among whom they were dispersed, but God required that they bore "witness before them of faith in the one true God and of the humane pattern of life flowing from observance of the Mosaic Law. In the phrase coined by (Second) Isaiah, God had made them a 'light to the nations' (Isa 42:6; 49:6; cf. 60:3; Luke 2:32)".[306] The Jewish communities living in the post-exilic Mediterranean world did not understand themselves as a proselytising religion focussed on converting as many Gentiles as possible; they understood their vocation as being a 'light to the nations'.

Byrne believes that Paul understood that the gospel had to be preached in all places, or at least in every large city of the Roman Empire, and this explains the apostle's missionary restlessness. "Those Gentiles that God had chosen for 'citizenship' in the people of God would respond and form the *ekklêsia* in that locality. There, on the parallel with Israel, they would 'model' before their non-believing fellow citizens what it was to live in the light of the Gospel, owing primary allegiance to Jesus Christ, as risen Lord, and living in the hope and watchfulness of his return in glory".[307] The goal of such *ekklêsia* was not to baptise every Gentile. We can see that Paul modelled a way of being missionary that was very different from that mandated by the modern missionary movement's interpretation of Matthew 28:16-20, a text which that made great sense to Europe's colonising nations from the sixteenth century onwards. All too often, this was an understanding that was predicated on numerical growth being equated with qualitative growth.

There is much in Rahner's insight and Byrne's subsequent unpacking of it some four decades later that is important for religious communities facing the problem of falling numbers and loss of institutional works. The example of post-exilic Judaism and Paul's approach to missions suggest that religious communities should be forsaking the numbers game except as a signpost to identifying radical new ways of witnessing to God's presence in a fractured world. In the nineteenth century, founders of apostolic congregations to use Vatican II language, were well versed in reading the 'signs of the times'. The 'signs of the times' that then demanded gospel-like service were many: urbanisation and industrialisation in Western Europe had resulted in economically deprived and politically disenfranchised classes whose basic needs were ill-met; the migration of landless peasants and working class poor to new colonies or to the United States meant bishops in these countries sought out apostolic religious women and men to respond to their flocks' pastoral, educational and social needs, something they did very capably. As one male religious remarked to the author of his congregation's apostolic activity in New Zealand, "the great contribution of our colleges was to take the Irish from the bogs to the boardrooms".

[306] Brendan Byrne, "The Apostle Paul to the Bishops of Oceania," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 87, no. 4 (2010).
[307] Ibid.

Finally, their apostolic works among the indigenous peoples in the foreign missions, meant that religious missionaries not only proclaimed the good news to indigenous peoples in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania but also socialised them into a western way of life, which was believed to be inherently superior to indigenous cultures, and into the Roman Catholic Church, where at that time the emphasis was on 'Roman' rather than 'Catholic'.

In the Western world, governments now provide many of the services that formerly religious undertook. In the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, governments may provide such services, but in other instances, religious are not allowed to own schools or to teach other than at kindergarten level. O'Murchu believes that the de-institutionalisation, more rapid in the West than elsewhere, means religious, individually and collectively, are prone to doubt about their congregation's future. If institutional witness goes, what is left? O'Murchu identifies four varieties of such doubt. First, operational doubt, which he defines as questions about external practices, such as certain prayer rituals, or institutional apostolic works. Second, ideological doubt which he sees as pertaining to internal values, particularly around vowed poverty, where he believes that a contemporary collective need for greater material security, and an ever-increasing growth of individualism are subverting trust in God and a willingness to take real risks. Consumerism is supported by, and in turn, supports the growth of individualism. He argues that an unhealthy individualism is characteristic of many religious congregations today. Third, ethical doubt whereby religious increasingly question the types of ministries in which they have traditionally been involved. They ask: "Is it appropriate for religious to work in well-maintained hospitals that increasingly are used by the wealthy classes, is it right for religious to teach in elitist schools, or even in schools whose pupils comes from the middle classes?" It is often difficult for religious to enter into meaningful dialogue about such matters, and instead individual members make individual choices about how they can continue to be apostolically engaged. Finally, O'Murchu argues that absolute doubt is the beginning of the end.[308] He suggests that at "this stage, survival rather than reform has taken over as the basic energy driving and sustaining the group. Being 'nice' to one another and not disturbing the peace leads to several sub-conscious collusions…It is difficult to describe accurately what is transpiring at this stage, because nobody is likely to record the process of dying out…To one degree or another everybody is in denial, while desperately trying to put on a brave face".[309]

The gospel text that assumes importance in any consideration of the long-term future of religious life is surely John 12:24-25a, "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it". John's insight that death and dying are the prelude to new life is pertinent for apostolic religious congregations,

[308] See Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Religious Life in the 21st Century: The Prospect of Refounding* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016), 206-208.
[309] Ibid., 207-208.

and provides a biblical mandate for the process of refounding which was enthusiastically promoted in the 1980s as it became apparent that all was not well in apostolic congregations in the West.[310] Refounding may be described as the process whereby an apostolic congregation discerns that it needs to embrace a dying process if it is to give birth to a new way of being that is not committed to working out of previous models of religious life no longer appropriate for the twenty-first century. The process of dying is never easy at either the personal or collective level, and so understandably is avoided as much as possible. Although there was enthusiasm for refounding seminars as presented by New Zealand-born Marist priest and cultural anthropologist Gerald Arbuckle, such seminars remained simply that. Religious seemed unaware that a painful transitioning from decline to a dying process that would precede new life was required.

If refounding is to mean a new life for an apostolic congregation, then it involves accepting that there is no new life without a dying to the old life that has been loved and honoured and manifested in an apostolic willingness to engage with the other through ministries specific to a particular congregation. Again, O'Murchu is helpful in summarising what refounding requires:

1. living in contemplative communities that alert religious to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit, and what she wants to bring to birth. Refounding is not about new mission plans and identifying new ways by which communities can be active;
2. seeking first the reign of God, and its justice. This requires being in solidarity with all that is oppressed, it requires being open to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth;
3. recognising that it is above all the cry of the earth that is calling religious to embrace those theologies located in *Laudato Si'*. What might happen if religious took seriously Francis' words: "As Christians, we are also called to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's creation, in the last dust speck of our planet" (14);[311]
4. understanding that the Paschal mystery is about letting go, about dying, and this in turn requires recognising the cyclical nature of the history of religious life. The reality is that religious orders die out more often than not, and history demonstrates that when they do survive it is because of radical refounding. The lives and efforts of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) or Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582) highlight the need for dying to the old that refounding necessitates;

[310] See G. A. Arbuckle, *Out of Chaos: Refounding Religious Congregations* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988).
[311] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015).

5. Elsewhere in *Religious Life in the 21st Century*, O'Murchu indicates that a radical revisioning of what religious poverty requires today is also key in any refounding narrative. In the founding phases of any congregation, a willing acceptance of poverty is characteristic of all narratives, but as congregations grew and expanded, "religious universally do not seem to have evolved a more refined sense of discernment – to notice the subtle move to more comfortable living".[312] Almost without exception, this move has led a consumer-oriented, individualistic lifestyle. There would be very few religious communities today, no matter in which country they are living and working, whose lifestyles parallel those of the poorer sectors of their society.

American Ursuline Virginia DeVinne offers further insights for moving into the future. She notes the new language around the apparent decline of religious life: "coming to completion", an expression she rejects in favour of "a narrative of deepening communion".[313] If a congregation's narrative is basically a "diminishment narrative" then "we run the unnecessary risk of closing in on ourselves, becoming preoccupied with protecting ourselves and our assets, [and] expecting leadership to reassure us that we will be taken care of until the last sister dies."[314] She asks if the phrase "deepening communion" is not more powerful than "coming to completion"? Aren't we living into a growing awareness that today our evolutionary universe is being attracted to ever greater union with an expansive God? All apostolic religious congregations are today faced with choosing in an experiential way the diminishment narrative or the deepening communion journey.

The growing multi-cultural character of congregational life, a development which is true of most apostolic religious congregations today, is of particular interest to many contemporary RNDMs. It has already been noted that in the contemporary global world, there are virtually no cultures that are still discrete entities. In the Western world where the institutional decline of religious life is most apparent, religious find themselves living in, and part of societies which are increasingly accepting of economic inequality, individualism, consumerism, xenophobia and certain reluctance to respond generously and intelligently to climate change and environmental degradation.

When perusing books or articles on religious life, readers often come across expressions such as "being-counter-cultural" or "prophetic", language which invites religious to reject the negative aspects of contemporary culture by embracing biblical values which focus on the poor, which encourage inclusion rather than exclusion, and which invite awareness of humankind's responsibility for the rest of creation. As previously noted, one of the significant contributions made by nineteenth century

[312] O'Murchu, *Religious Life in the 21st Century: The Prospect of Refounding*., 160.
[313] See Ursula DeVinne, "Perennial Power: Calling Forth Life", National Reporter https://www.globalsisters report.org/column/trends/perennial-power-calling-forth-life-55480 (accessed 13 October 2018).
[314] Ibid.

religious involved in education, whether in their country of origin or on the foreign missions, was to ensure the upward socio-economic mobility of their students. One of the unforeseen consequences was that religious too became upwardly mobile and now in most instances are living comfortable, middle class lives. Not that I am advocating lives of penury for religious but the question of what vowed poverty means in an economically unequal and environmentally damaged world needs addressing in radical ways that could mean the beginning of refounding as outlined by O'Murchu – a dying to the old ways to prepare for a new and transformed life.
In many countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, the situation is different although not as markedly as is often thought. The Euro-centric approach to mission characteristic of the pre-Vatican II Church certainly did not disappear when the number of foreign missionaries working in these continents began to diminish quite rapidly, or ceased altogether in some places because of government policy. Often enough there was a residual enthusiasm for the important institutions particularly for English-medium schools or large and well-run hospitals that increasingly met the aspirations of the growing middle classes in such countries. Such institutions also generated significant incomes which enabled growing numbers of religious to opt for more middle-class life styles.

The situation was different in those Asian countries where government policy had forbidden religious to own and teach in schools. After the forced departure of Western missionaries, the life style of local communities in such places changed quite markedly as religious no longer had access to foreign money, while loss of big institutional works meant loss of status and position in their societies. However, as government policies in these places have been relaxed somewhat, the position and lifestyle of religious have improved materially. Therefore, what was true of Western religious life is becoming true of religious life in many other parts of the world. It is becoming more middle-class in its lifestyle and aspirations. Here the cultural challenges are twofold: first, how to discern what in Western culture helps foster the growth of gospel values; and second, to discern how inculturation understood as the cross-fertilisation of gospel values with the cultural aspirations of a particular community can occur. What in cultures needs to be identified as reflecting gospel values, and what militates against living the evangelical life?

Another aspect of apostolic religious life that deserves further consideration is how religious are moving beyond an unthinking acceptance of hierarchical governance in the Church and in their particular congregation. Certainly, the de-institutionalisation of religious life particularly among English-speaking groups in the West and the movement into small communities or to living singly encouraged movement beyond hierarchical structures. Again, this reflects the democratic nature of secular government structures, and the belief in individual rights in the West. Countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America do not have long histories of democratic governance, and therefore religious there may not so readily demonstrate the same enthusiasm for participatory decision-making processes. For example, neither Confucian

systems of government nor the Indian sub-continent's experience of first the Hindu caste system, and second, the British raj could be described as important preparations for acceptance of democratic values. But having said that, the exposure of religious from countries that became nation states after World War II to models of governance that embraced democratic values is slowly but surely chipping away at hierarchical structures.

Initially I had intended to call this chapter "Conclusion". But there can be no conclusion to this narrative. The only way there could be a conclusion would be if religious congregations were to opt for the diminishment model. In practice this may be what some once formerly vibrant communities are doing, particularly if they have moved towards a corporate business model where management of material resources absorbs so much energy. The increasing age of membership and the often-inadvertent accumulation of more wealth can mean "trust in material resilience undermines reliance on God's providence. This in turn affects how much apostolic risk and creativity the group members will embrace".[315] Perhaps particularly important, and as a Westerner I hesitate to say this, the big challenge is how apostolic religious congregations in Africa, Asia and Latin America interpret and live out their religious life in their particular cultures. The perhaps unconscious enthusiasm about an individualistic, consumer-oriented life style that has had such a deleterious effect on apostolic religious life in Western countries is certainly appearing elsewhere. If this issue is not addressed, the perhaps O'Murchu's comment "the growth in the South will not endure and that, by the end of the twenty-first century, Catholic Religious Life universally will be in a serious state of decline and disintegration,"[316] will prove to be sadly prescient.

Today, constitutions of apostolic religious life today need to reflect a desire for more contemplative community life, a yearning for a radical break with the dictates of consumerism and its corollary, the rejection of an individualism which is so detrimental to religious life, a prophetic understanding of what the relationship of cultures to faith requires, and an openness to those evolutionary and cosmological theologies which proclaim a solidarity and openness to the cry of the earth in which God's creatures live and move and have their being.

[315] O'Murchu, *Religious Life in the 21st century: The Prospect of Refounding*, 206.
[316] Ibid., 200.

Epilogue

It has been an honour and privilege for me to work with Maureen McBride's research into the processes the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions followed in re-writing their Constitutions in the years 2009-2012. The context in which this process began was very different from that in which Euphrasie Barbier, the Congregation's founder, began writing the Constitutions in 1864. This task has not been an easy one as Maureen's research was still in a very preliminary stage, but hopefully the essence of what she wanted to pass on to RNDMs and other religious missionary congregations has been captured.

It has also been a real sadness that Maureen left only half a page summary of her conclusions, and I considered it unwise to try and guess what Maureen's rather cryptic notes might have been suggesting. Therefore, the points raised, and the tentative conclusions reached in the last chapter, Chapter Nine, “The Dance Continues” are my responsibility, and do not necessarily reflect the direction in which Maureen might have wanted to move.

However, Maureen has left RNDMs a real treasure regarding the processes that preceded the Constitutions, approved by CICLSAL in December 2014. Maureen also hoped that research into the processes that RNDMs followed, and the resulting 2014 Constitutions could be a useful resource for other international congregations as they undertake the work of rewriting constitutions. Our Constitutions invite all RNDMs to move forward into the future with confidence, knowing that the principles and values located in them are a sure guide for us as we continue to embrace our vocation to bring about the Reign of God in our world today.

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Appendix

2014 CONSTITUTIONS
RELIGIEUSES NOTRE DAME DES MISSIONS

NEW TEXT UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED AT
GENERAL CHAPTER 18 JANUARY - 16 FEBRUARY 2014,
HUA HIN, THAILAND

CHAPTER ONE: THE GIFT OF GOD

1. The congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, founded in Lyon, France, in 1861 by Euphrasie Barbier, is a religious missionary institute of pontifical rite.

2. Euphrasie Barbier received a particular gift to understand that the Trinity is the source of all missionary activity. Her profound experience of God led her, under the impulse of the Spirit, to found in the Church a religious missionary congregation whose members would live the grace of consecration for the Divine Missions through contemplation, communion and mission.

3. The Church affirms the unique gift received by our Foundress and recognized the congregation by approving the constitutions, giving the congregation the right to live in the Church with its own religious missionary identity.

4. Our missionary identity with its source in the heart of the Trinity has a universal character.
   Empowered by the Spirit, we are sent as disciples of Jesus to share our lives in the service of love seeking the fullness of life for the whole of creation.

5. The Rule of St. Augustine, based on the love and unity of the Trinity, was adopted by Euphrasie Barbier as a foundational text. This Rule invites us, as women drawn from many cultures, to have one heart and one mind and to share one mission, witnessing to the unity and harmony that existed in the heart of the first Christian community.

6. Euphrasie Barbier perceived the unique grace given to Mary to welcome and participate in the Divine Missions, in faithful love, silent contemplation and joyful service. She was inspired to choose for the congregation the title, Our Lady of the Missions, a title that expresses, according to her own explanation, the congregation's special charism and spirit.

   > *By placing themselves under the title of Our Lady of the Missions the sisters wish to honour in a way altogether special the Divine Missions, which were the object of Mary's deepest desires, and which this Holy Virgin glorified by the most profound and loving adoration, the most complete fidelity and the most generous devotedness.*[317]

7. What Mary is at the heart of the Church, Euphrasie Barbier wished her to be at the heart of the congregation: a presence of enduring faith, profound love, total openness and generous service. It is for this reason that Euphrasie Barbier

[317] Euphrasie Barbier, Manuscript of Constitutions of Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, c. 1888.

chose Mary of the Visitation and Pentecost as a model for living our religious missionary life.[318]

8. To participate in the Divine Missions is to be held in the communion of love at the heart of the Trinity. Only this love gives meaning to the zeal that Euphrasie Barbier urged to be the distinctive spirit of the congregation and each of its members:

> *This zeal should be the dominant force of their whole life. It should fill them with a hunger- a thirst for justice and nourish their prayer, their aspirations and their spirit of sacrifice.*[319]

9. The final goal of the congregation's missionary activity is the glory of God.
Under the impulse of the Spirit, the Son receives all and gives all back to the Father in praise,
carrying to the heart of the Trinity the whole creation redeemed by him.

CHAPTER TWO: CONSECRATION FOR MISSION

10. To be called to the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions is to receive from God the gift of sharing in the Divine Missions in the spirit of Mary. Attentive to the Word, she hastened the coming of salvation to the nations. Like Mary, impelled by the Spirit, inspired by love, supported by faith and nurtured by hope, we live our consecration for the reign of God.

11. Our consecration to God is made through the public profession of chastity, poverty and obedience according to the constitutions of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions. Through the public profession of vows we become members of the congregation with the rights and obligations which membership implies.

12. We accept the obligations to live the vows, to share in the community life of the congregation and to participate in its missionary activities in collaboration with legitimate authority.

13. Our religious consecration for mission is a deepening of our response to the baptismal call to participate in the Paschal Mystery. Through our vows we offer our lives as gift in freedom and love. We make the following of Jesus our way of life, witnessing to God's compassionate love for earth and all humanity.

[318] Archives, RNDM Writings Vol. 1, 149.
[319] Euphrasie Barbier, First Handwritten Constitutions, #150, 1871.

CONSECRATED CHASTITY

14. Through the vow of chastity we freely respond to the mystery of God's unconditional love in deep faith, inner freedom and radical availability for the reign of God. Captivated by the love of Jesus and led by the Spirit, we joyfully offer our lives and our creative energy to be in communion with God, with one another and with the whole of creation.

15. By our vow of chastity we commit ourselves to celibacy and to a life of chastity without compromise. By this obligation we freely commit ourselves to a chaste love, which is both profoundly human and deeply spiritual.

16. Consecrated chastity, a gift offered on the day of our profession, can be lived only in daily conversion to Christ. Fidelity to prayer, the experience of solitude, personal asceticism and self-discipline are essential to live this commitment.

17. It is in contemplation, pondering the Word of God and sharing in the Eucharist that we grow in intimate relationship with Christ, who is the centre of our life.

18. Called together to live as sisters, we grow in deeper communion and friendship with one another as we recognize and respect our differences and gifts.

EVANGELICAL POVERTY

19. By our vow of consecrated poverty, we identify with Christ in his incarnation, passion, death and resurrection through our daily self-emptying, dying and rising with him.

20. Euphrasie Barbier invites us to rely on Divine Providence as the *sole treasury of the congregation.*[320] We seek to live consciously with deep trust and thanks-giving to the Giver of Life for the gift of one another and of creation.

21. We commit ourselves to live simply and frugally, sharing our material, spiritual and intellectual gifts. We take reasonable care of our physical, mental and spiritual well-being. In the spirit of gospel simplicity and reverence, we joyfully forgo even necessities if the occasion arises, keeping in mind the words of Euphrasie Barbier that "*we seek not a comfortable poverty which wants for nothing, but the real poverty of the cross".*[321]

22. By our vow of poverty we renounce the use and disposal of material goods. Personal gifts, salaries, pensions, insurance and income we receive, whose title was acquired after first profession, belong to the congregation. We live inter-

[320] Euphrasie Barbier, First General Chapter Minutes, Third Session, 8 September 1867.
[321] Euphrasie Barbier, Letter to Mother Mary St Jude, Lyon, 10 October, 1885.

dependently, sharing a common purse. We receive from the congregation according to our individual and communal needs.

23. We retain the ownership of our personal property and the right to acquire more by a personal title of inheritance. Before first profession, we cede its management to whom we wish and determine its use and the purpose to which the revenues are to be put. We may renounce our personal property according to the congregation's norms.

24. We take personal responsibility for the common purse[322] and willingly accept the common law of labour. We respect the sacredness and dignity of work. We commit ourselves to share our energies, time and talents for the common good and the well-being of all, promoting the gospel values of justice, peace, integrity and freedom.

25. Evangelical poverty calls us to accept the moral responsibility for the conscious use of earth's resources and to live in right relationship with the whole community of life. We recognise and respect the interdependence of creation, and with simplicity and humility we join in partnership with prophetic voices to preserve the sustainability and the beauty of creation.

EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE

26. Consecrated obedience is our free response to the infinite love of God. We publicly consecrate ourselves to follow Jesus, who in all circumstances of his life and mission, searched in faithful love to know and do what pleased the Father.

27. Our religious obedience commits us to listen attentively to God's call as individuals and as members of the congregation. A particular understanding of obedience for us is our readiness to be sent. It challenges us to be open and responsive to the many ways God calls us throughout our lives. Euphrasie Barbier encourages us to be ever attentive to the "*whisperings of grace*".[323] Our wholehearted response to the Divine Missions is possible only through the power of the Spirit.

28. The exercise of leadership in the congregation is an expression of obedience. Those in authority take Christ, the servant leader, as their inspiration.

29. We are all called to live in relationships of responsibility, trust and collaboration for the common good and availability for mission. We enter into dialogue and

[322] Euphrasie Barbier, Letter to Mother Mary St Jude, 19 February 1872.
[323] Euphrasie Barbier, letter to Mother Mary St Teresa and the community, Deal, 15 February 1883.

discernment with our leaders to enable us to share in the mission of the congregation to bring about the reign of God.

30. By our vow of obedience we obey in faith the lawful commands of our leaders in accordance with the constitutions.
We obey the Pope, the leader of the Church.

31. A formal command of obedience is given by the congregation or province leader in writing or
before two witnesses. Such a command is only given for a grave reason.

CHAPTER THREE: MISSION

32. As a religious missionary congregation we are called to live the gift of consecration for mission. We participate in the Divine Missions, God's universal gift of love manifested in creation, in the life, death and resurrection of the Incarnate Word, and in the mission of the Holy Spirit outpoured at Pentecost.

33. Our religious life is essentially a union of contemplation and mission. In silence and solitude we experience the mystery of God's infinite love and hear the cry of the poor which impels us to continue the mission of Jesus in our time.

34. Filled with zeal we witness and proclaim the gospel message of love, unity, peace and justice. With free, joyful and generous hearts, we go as disciples of Jesus we go wherever we are sent, in our own country and beyond.

35. Through various forms of education and social ministry, we respond to the needs of people, especially marginalized women and children and those who are poor and oppressed. We enable them to live with dignity and respect and take their rightful place in the society.

36. In collaboration with the local church, with humility and generosity, we reach out in loving service to bring about the reign of God. Our missionary presence and activity will vary according to the political, social and economic situations, and the religious experience of the people.

37. Throughout our lives we participate in the Divine Missions through our personal witness, community presence, and in communion with all creation.

38. As members of an international missionary congregation we are challenged to live with mutual respect, reverence and cultural sensitivity. Knowing that the Holy Spirit dwells at the heart of all peoples and cultures, we celebrate our unity in diversity and embrace the grace of difference with simplicity and joy.

39. We witness to the universal love of the Trinity revealed through the sacred in creation, in all peoples and religious traditions. We collaborate with people of good will to bring unity and peace to our world.

40. We welcome co-workers, associates and benefactors as our partners in mission. We invite them to share our spirit and story, and together we discover new ways of deepening and expressing our charism.

41. Mary of Visitation inspires us to find God in our daily encounters and challenges us to respond with generosity and love to the sufferings, joys and hopes of our world.
    Mary of Pentecost invites us to be attentive to the transforming power of the Spirit and to go out filled with zeal to continue the mission of God's love.

CHAPTER FOUR: COMMUNITY FOR MISSION

42. It is in contemplating the communion at the heart of the Trinity that we understand our call to live unity in our diversity, having one heart and one mind. The Rule of St Augustine invites us to the common life, community of goods, right relationships, prayer, simplicity, charity and humility.

43. In faith we become "*friends in search of God*"[i],[324] sharing all that we have and all that we are. Like the first Christian community, we witness by our love that we are disciples of Jesus, gathered together by the Spirit to participate in his mission. Our life in community encourages, enables and challenges us to live fully our consecration for mission**.**

44. Each sister is missioned to a particular community in a province, region or new foundation. The creation of communities ensures support for each sister at all stages of her life, taking into account her spiritual, emotional and physical needs. Each community is an integral part of the congregation.

45. For personal reasons, a sister may request permission for a temporary leave of absence from the province or region leader to reside outside a house of the community. Permission may be given for one year and requires the consent council. A sister living outside a house of the community for reasons of health, study or apostolate, does not require this special permission.
    A sister who is granted a temporary leave of absence has the same rights as the other members of the community and is bound by the same obligations apart from the obligation to live in community. (Can. 665, §1)

[324] André Sève AA, "Towards what Spiritualities", *Vocation Quarterly Review*, Centre National des Vocations, Paris, July 1972.

46. We celebrate, daily where possible, the central prayer of our religious missionary lives, the Eucharist, through which the mystery of Christ's passion, death and resurrection is made present in our midst.
One with Christ we give our lives for one another, for humanity and for the whole of creation.

47. Our contemplative spirit is nourished by our daily personal prayer and meditative reading of the Word of God. Our fidelity to prayer deepens our relationship with God, enables us to proclaim the Good News and live faithfully our consecration for mission.

48. In order to nourish our missionary zeal, we regularly come together as a community of believers "*to break open the Divine Word"*.[325] Like Mary, we ponder and treasure all these things in our hearts.

49. Called to be contemplative at the heart of creation, we create spaces of beauty and silence in our community to develop our sense of wonder and appreciation for the gift of life.

50. Each community establishes its own rhythm of daily prayer based on the liturgy of the hours and the liturgical seasons.

51. The spirit of forgiveness, reconciliation and compassionate guidance is a vital part of our daily community living. We celebrate frequently the sacrament of reconciliation and are faithful to practices of personal and communal review of life.

52. Each month we enjoy a day of solitude and silence to review our life in the light of the Word of God. Our annual retreat of at least six days is a special time to deepen our commitment and rekindle our zeal for the reign of God.

53. We enter more deeply into the Paschal Mystery of Christ through our personal and communal practices of self-discipline and asceticism, and are in solidarity with the suffering of our earth and her peoples.

54. As a community of friends we value times of sharing and relaxation in an atmosphere of mutual respect and joy.

55. In a spirit of simplicity and generosity we make hospitality our special care, welcoming our sisters, guests and strangers. Each community provides adequate privacy where we can be at home among ourselves and find silence for prayer, reading, study and rest. (Can. 667, §1)

[325] Euphrasie Barbier, letter to Abbé Coulomb, France, 12 May 1873.

56. We value mass media and social networking as important tools which strengthen communication among us and about us. They also serve to keep us informed about local and global issues, empowering our acts of justice for our suffering world and endangered planet.

57. We all share responsibility with the community leader for creating in our communities an atmosphere of unity and trust. We come together regularly to evaluate our life and mission in the light of the Gospel.

58. In our communities we share one purse, placing all we have in common. We participate actively in decision-making related to community living, finance and our shared mission. We are interdependent and accountable to the congregation.

59. We hold in communion and loving memory all our sisters who have gone before us, remembering Euphrasie Barbier's last words*: Be very united on earth so as to be united for all eternity".*[326]

CHAPTER FIVE: FORMATION FOR MISSION AND MEMBERSHIP

60. Our religious missionary vocation is a gift of God who invites each of us to share in the Divine Missions. We receive this gift, ponder its mystery and respond with our whole being throughout our entire life.

61. The aim of our lifelong formation is to enable us to listen to God as Mary did, and to welcome the gift of sharing in the Divine Missions in our world today. Like her we learn to develop a disciple's heart, ready to be sent beyond boundaries, risking all for the reign of God.

62. The vitality of the congregation and fidelity to its religious missionary identity depend on the quality of formation throughout the congregation. The congregation leader has ultimate responsibility for formation throughout the congregation. The province or region leader ensures that the approved formation programmes are implemented in the province or region.

INITIAL FORMATION

63. The essential elements of the programme for the whole congregation are drawn up and reviewed regularly by the congregation leader and council with the formation directors. Details of the programme and procedures, including pre-novitiate, are in the province or region formation directory approved by the

[326] RNDM Archives, Box File IV, Writings – Last Days of Euphrasie Barbier.

congregation leader and council after consultation with province or region leaders and formation directors.

64. The congregation leader, with the consent of the council, has authority to establish novitiates and to appoint formation personnel according to the constitutions.
The decree of establishment of a novitiate is to be in writing. The immediate responsibility for initial formation is entrusted to formation directors at each level. They are given the necessary support and freedom to plan the programme for each individual, taking into account the congregation's vision, formation programme and the different cultural realities. They are accountable to the province or region leaders where the formation takes place.

65. Those entrusted with the responsibility for formation are sisters with perpetual vows who have practical experience of religious missionary life in the congregation and are imbued with its spirit. The formation directors are women of prayer and spiritual discernment, able to understand and guide those entrusted to them. They must be well prepared to face the challenges of formation in today's world.

66. Initial formation has definite stages of preparation for religious missionary life. Personal accompaniment is essential at each stage as the individual discerns her vocation.

67. Community plays an important formative role in creating an environment of welcome, missionary zeal, simplicity and silence favourable to contemplation.

68. Since our formation programmes are designed to prepare women as religious missionaries, stages of initial formation for an individual may take place in different parts of the congregation.

NOVITIATE

69. Life in the congregation begins with the novitiate, which is preceded by a period of postulancy. The postulant makes a formal request and if she is judged suitable in terms of health, character and maturity and is free from canonical impediments, she is admitted to the novitiate by the province or region leader with the consent of the council. The congregation leader in dialogue with the council, province or region leader and formator, makes decisions about the most suitable novitiate for individual novices.

70. The purpose of the novitiate is to enable the novice and the congregation to discern whether she has a vocation to the congregation. It is a time for the novice to grow in personal relationship with Christ through silence, solitude,

contemplation and reflection on the scriptures. She develops an understanding of what it is to live a vowed life through the practice of the evangelical counsels. She grows into a deeper understanding of our way of life in the experience of intercultural community living, missionary activity and the study of our spirituality.

71. The novitiate is entrusted to the novice director, who is appointed by the congregation leader with the consent of the council. The novice director is a sister with at least two years of perpetual profession in the congregation and has the training necessary for this responsibility. The appointment is for a term of six years which may be extended to a maximum of nine years. The novice director is responsible for implementing the programmes approved by the congregation leader and the council. She is accountable to the province or region leader and council.

72. The novitiate lasts for two years. At least twelve months must be spent in formation in the novitiate community. A novitiate is not valid if the novice is absent for a period of three months. If she is absent for more than 15 days, the novitiate must be extended by that number of days. During the remainder of the novitiate, the novice has opportunities for apostolic and community experiences away from the novitiate house.

73. Where doubt exists on the part of the novice or the congregation, the congregation leader with the consent of the council may prolong the novitiate by not more than six months.

74. The congregation leader with the consent of the council may shorten the two year novitiate period for an individual by a maximum of six months, provided that twelve months are spent in the novitiate community. (Can. 648, §1)

75. The novice is accompanied by the novice director in her on-going reflection and discernment about her call to religious missionary life. At any time she is free to leave, or the province or region leader with the consent of the council and the advice of the novice director can ask her to leave. Towards the end of the novitiate she makes a formal request to the province or region leader to be admitted to temporary profession.

76. If a novice is judged suitable, the province or region where the novitiate is situated, with the consent of the council, admits her to temporary profession.
    In the case of a combined novitiate, dialogue is necessary with the other province or region leaders concerned, before admitting the novice to temporary profession.

TEMPORARY PROFESSION

77. The period of temporary profession lasts for a total of six years. With the consent of the council, the province or region leader admits a sister to temporary profession or renewal of vows. The province or region leader, or her delegate, receives the vows in the name of the Church and the congregation. If the congregation leader is present she receives the vows.

78. During the period of temporary profession the formation programme enables the sister to grow towards the fullness of her potential through her spiritual, academic and apostolic formation. This time gives the sister the opportunity to learn how to integrate her life of contemplation and communion with her missionary activity.

79. A sister who has made temporary profession has active voice in the congregation and the right to participate in all aspects of its life and mission in accordance with the constitutions and directives.

80. The congregation leader, with the consent of the council, appoints the director of the temporary professed sisters. The director is a sister with at least two years of perpetual profession in the congregation and has the training necessary for this responsibility. She is appointed for a term six of years which may be extended to a maximum of nine years. The director is responsible for accompanying the temporary professed sisters according to the congregation guidelines.

PERPETUAL VOWS

81. The sister who desires to consecrate herself totally to God in the congregation makes a formal request to the congregation leader to be admitted to perpetual profession. The congregation leader, with the consent of the council, admits the sister to perpetual profession.
    For just and serious reasons the congregation leader with the consent of the council, may refuse to permit a sister to renew her temporary vows or refuse to admit her to perpetual profession.

82. The congregation leader, with the consent of the council, may admit a sister to perpetual profession before the end of six years, provided a minimum of three years of temporary vows has been completed. (Can. 657, §3)

83. For exceptional and serious reasons permission to prolong temporary profession beyond six years is given by the congregation leader, with the consent of the council. The total time in temporary profession is not to exceed nine years. (Can. 657, §2)

84. In the name of the Church, the congregation leader or her delegate receives the sister's perpetual vows. The congregation leader missions the sister.

85. A sister with perpetual vows has active and passive voice and the right to participate fully in all aspects of the life of the congregation, in accordance with the constitutions and directives.

FORMULA OF VOWS

86. It is in the name of the Church and of the congregation that the congregation leader or her delegate receives the act of profession, which is made according to the following formula for first profession, renewal of vows, or perpetual profession.

> Loving God, You have called me by name to follow Jesus in faithful love and, in communion with all my sisters, to live deeply the mission of the Spirit in the Church and in the world.
> I …….. consecrate myself to You, and in your presence, Sister …….. (congregation leader or delegate for perpetual profession, province leader or delegate for temporary profession)
> I make the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience (for one year, two years, three years, forever) according to the constitutions of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions.
> Grant me, O God, the grace to live with zeal my consecration for the Divine Missions. Like Mary, woman of faith and courage, may I trust in Your mercy and participate in Your mission of love in all creation, until the day when I share in the fullness of life.
> You who are God, Father, Son and Spirit. Amen.

ON-GOING FORMATION

87. The relationship between personal call and response continues throughout life. On-going formation is primarily the responsibility of the sister, who avails herself of opportunities for her personal growth. The province leadership team is responsible for planning on-going formation to enable each sister to live her life to the full and to carry out the mission of the congregation.

88. Formation includes preparation for significant transition moments in a sister's life when she enters into new stages of her missionary journey.
Reflection throughout life on God's final call helps us to see each stage of our lives as a time of drawing closer to God who has called us from the beginning.

READMISSION TO THE CONGREGATION

89. If a person, who has lawfully left the congregation after completing her novitiate or after temporary or perpetual profession, asks to be readmitted, the congregation leader, with the consent of the council, may grant readmission without requiring a repetition of the novitiate. The congregation leader determines the probation period required by the candidate before she is admitted to temporary profession and the time required in temporary profession before admission to perpetual profession.

TRANSFER

90. The transfer of a perpetually professed sister to or from another religious institute is initiated upon the request of the sister after a period of serious reflection and discernment. The mutual consent of both congregation leaders and councils is required. During the probation period the sister has no active or passive voice in our congregation. (Can. 684, §1)
To transfer to a secular institute or to a society of apostolic life, or to transfer from these to the congregation, the permission of the Holy See is required and its instructions are to be followed. (Can. 684, §5)

SEPARATION FROM THE CONGREGATION

91. In cases of transfer, exclaustration, departure and dismissal from the congregation, the norms of canon law and the procedures of the congregation are to be carefully followed.

92. Throughout the entire process of discernment the province leader accompanies the sister and ensures that she has the necessary spiritual and communal support to make an informed decision.

93. The congregation is to show equity and charity towards the sister who is separated from it. When a sister leaves the congregation, the latter will, if necessary, provide her with the means necessary to make the transition to her new state in life. If there is disagreement in this regard, the sister may have recourse to the congregation leader or to the Holy See.

CHAPTER SIX: GOVERNANCE FOR MISSION

94. In the congregation, authority has its source in the mystery of the Trinity from whom love flows, setting free the whole of creation. In her contemplation, Euphrasie Barbier understood that, in participating in the Divine Missions, we form one body with one mission within the communion of the Church to take the gospel message to the world.

95. By recognizing the congregation as an ecclesial entity and approving the constitutions, the Church acknowledges the fundamental insight given to Euphrasie Barbier and confers on the congregation leader the authority to lead and govern it.

96. The congregation is organized into provinces, regions and new foundations. A province or region leader has personal authority in her own right by virtue of the position she holds, in accordance with the constitutions. What is said in the constitutions of provinces and province leaders relates also to regions and region leaders unless the contrary is stated. The leader of a new foundation has authority delegated to her by the congregation leader.

97. Living in fidelity to our missionary call is the responsibility of both leaders and members. Our structures of government enable communion among ourselves, assist us to live our life of consecration for mission and facilitate our participation in the mission of the whole congregation. They promote the apostolic and spiritual development of the members and the response of the congregation to the needs of the Church and the world.

98. Trinitarian understanding of authority and obedience invites us to work collaboratively, with an attitude of reciprocity, mutuality, interdependence and dialogue, as we seek together to participate in the Divine Missions in our every-day living.

99. The ministry of leadership in the congregation is a service of love in the spirit of Jesus. Those called to leadership practice the principles of collaboration, participation and subsidiarity.

CONGREGATION CHAPTER

100. The congregation chapter is a collegial assembly representing the whole congregation. While in session it is the highest legislative authority in the congregation. As a moment of reflection and discernment it is an occasion for reviewing, in the light of the gospel, the life of the whole congregation and fidelity to our religious missionary identity. Attentive to the guidance of the Spirit, the chapter decides the directions necessary for renewal according to the needs of the world. (Can. 631, §1)

101. The congregation chapter:
    - keeps alive the nature, purpose, spirit and heritage of the congregation and fosters renewal
    - elects the congregation leader and the councillors according to the constitutions

- sets directions for the future of the congregation and the congregation mission plan
- requests approval from the Holy See for changes in the constitutions. A request requires a two-thirds majority vote
- makes necessary changes in directives. A change requires a two-thirds majority vote. (Can. 631, §2, §3;Can. 578)

102. An ordinary congregation chapter is held every six years and when the office of the congregation leader becomes vacant. The congregation leader with the consent of the council may call an extraordinary congregation chapter. Preparation for the congregation chapter involves all members and includes a province, region, new foundation chapter or assembly.

103. The congregation chapter is composed of ex-officio members and delegates. The ex-officio members are:
    - congregation leader
    - congregation councillors
    - recent congregation leader at the first chapter following her term of office
    - province leaders
    - region leaders. (Can. 631, §2)

104. Unless otherwise provided, delegates to the congregation chapter are elected at the province chapter or assembly. The detail of the numbers of delegates from provinces is decided by the congregation leader and council at least one year prior to the congregation chapter, in consultation with the province leaders. It recognizes the changing demography of the congregation and will ensure that the number of elected delegates is more than the number of ex-officio members. (Can. 633, §1, §2)

105. Details of procedure for the congregation chapter are found in the chapter handbook.

CONGREGATION LEADERSHIP

106. The primary role of the congregation leader is to keep the charism alive and active, and to lead, animate and unify the congregation in its life and mission. The congregation leader has the authority over all provinces, works of the congregation and the members, to be exercised in accordance with the constitutions and norms of the congregation. She works in collaboration with the council. (Can. 619; Can. 622)

107. To be validly elected, the congregation leader must have at least six years of perpetual profession in the congregation. She is elected by the congregation

chapter for a term of six years and may be re-elected for one successive term. (Can. 627, §1, §2)

108. The election of the congregation leader takes place by secret ballot and requires an absolute majority of votes of the chapter members present. (Can. 625, §1)

109. A council of at least four members participates in decision-making with the congregation leader, sharing their wisdom, experience and insights.

110. The councillors are elected at the congregation chapter according to the constitutions for a term of six years. They must be sisters with at least four years of perpetual profession in the congregation. They may be re-elected for one successive term.

111. Councillors are elected in one of the following ways which will be decided by the congregation chapter.
EITHER
All will be elected by secret ballots requiring an absolute majority of votes of the chapter members present.
OR
At least two councillors are elected by secret ballots requiring an absolute majority of votes of the chapter members present. The congregation leader and the elected councillors acting collegially elect the remaining councillors.

112. At elections during the chapter after three indecisive ballots, a fourth is taken on the two candidates with the greater number of votes, or if there are several, on the two senior in religious profession in the congregation. If a tie remains on the fourth ballot, the senior in religious profession is considered elected, or if equal by date of first profession, then the senior in age is considered elected.

113. The congregation leader and the council, acting collegially, elect the congregation vicar from among the councillors. The term of the vicar coincides with that of the congregation leader. Should the office of congregation leader become vacant or if the congregation leader becomes incapacitated, the vicar governs the congregation until the next congregation chapter which must be called within six months.

114. If the office of councillor becomes vacant one year or more before a congregation chapter, the congregation leader and the council acting collegially, after consultation with province and region leaders, elect a replacement whose term expires at the next congregation chapter. The sister thus elected is eligible for a further complete term of office on the council.

115. Together with the congregation leader the councillors form the congregation leadership team. They share responsibility for the life and mission of the whole congregation. Attentive to the guidance of the Spirit, they carry forward the congregation chapter mandate.

116. Councillors have at heart the good of the whole congregation. This spirit of unity and universal concern is true even when councillors are given responsibilities for particular areas. While respecting the rightful authority of the province leaders, they work collaboratively with them to promote the life of the whole congregation.

117. The congregation leader and councillors visit the provinces, regions and new foundations to animate the members and to encourage missionary vitality. They also use congregation meetings, formation programmes and other means of communication to call members to reflection, discernment, visioning, planning and accountability. (Can. 628, §1)

118. The congregation leader, with the consent of the council, has the authority to:
    - establish provinces, regions and new foundations within the congregation in response to the missionary needs of our times and appoint leaders who are major superiors or have delegated authority
    - open missions in new areas as part of the mission plan of the congregation
    - restructure or close provinces, regions and foundations
    - approve formation personnel according to the constitutions
    - approve the setting up of trust funds.

119. In dialogue with individual members and leaders, the congregation leader missions sisters to a province, region or new foundation.

120. Unless other provisions are made in individual situations, a sister who has been missioned to a province for any reason, after a period of one year acquires active and passive voice in that province. A sister who has been missioned to a new foundation retains active and passive voice in her province of origin.

121. The congregation leader, with the consent of the council, appoints the general secretary and general bursar who share responsibility with the congregation leadership team for the administration of the congregation. They are sisters with perpetual vows. Their term of office coincides with the term of the congregation leader. They may be reappointed.

122. The congregation leader, with the consent of the council, has overall responsibility for the administration of the congregation's assets in accordance with the congregation guidelines. She is legally responsible to protect the patrimony of the congregation.

123. To provide sound management of the congregation's assets, the congregation leader and the council establish a finance advisory committee and management bodies, and employ professionals to assist them in their leadership responsibilities.

ENLARGED GENERAL COUNCIL

124. The Enlarged General Council is made up of the congregation leadership team and province and region leaders. It normally meets at least once between congregation chapters. As a wider visioning body it supports the congregation leadership team and serves to maintain the impetus of the preceding congregation chapter. Its role is:
    - to be a consultative body to the congregation leadership team
    - to provide on-going animation and formation of leaders
    - to implement the congregation mission plan according to the direction of the previous congregation chapter
    - to make recommendations to the congregation leadership team. (Can. 632)

PROVINCES

125. A province leader has personal authority in her own right, by virtue of the position she holds, in accordance with the constitutions. She accepts responsibility for the spiritual animation and pastoral care of the sisters, oversight of ministries, visioning and administration in the province. She acts in a spirit of unity with the congregation leadership team, keeping the sisters of the province open to the local needs and to the life and mission of the whole congregation.
    Within the province, she represents the congregation officially in relation to the Church and state. (Can. 636, §1, §2)

126. The province leader and councillors are appointed by the congregation leader, with the consent of the council, after a consultation process in the province. They are appointed for a term of three years and may be reappointed for one further successive term. Where appropriate, a province leader and council may be appointed for a term of six years with no successive term. (Can. 625, §3)

127. A council of at least two members participates in decision-making with the province leader, sharing their wisdom, experience and insight.

128. The province leader has at least four years of perpetual profession. The councillors are sisters with perpetual vows. The province leader and the council form the province leadership team. While having concern for the whole, councillors may be given responsibility for particular aspects of life in the province.

129. The province leader and the council, acting collegially, elect one councillor to assume responsibility if the office of the province leader becomes vacant or if the province leader becomes incapacitated. She governs the province until a new appointment is made.

130. If the office of councillor becomes vacant, the congregation leader, with the consent of the council, makes a new appointment after consultation with the province. The term of the new councillor coincides with that of the province leader. The sister thus appointed is eligible for a further complete term of office on the council.

131. Having sought the approval of the congregation leader, the province leader with the consent of the council and the consultation of the diocesan bishop, opens or closes communities and ministries within the province.

132. The province leader entrusts each sister with her mission as a member of a community with the province, according to the province mission plan. She regularly visits the sisters in the province. With the consent of the council, she appoints community leaders after consultation in the community.

133. With the appointed formation personnel, the province leader plans for the implementation of the congregation formation guidelines and programmes. With the consent of the council, the province leader admits individuals to the novitiate, temporary profession and renewal of vows, and gives advice to the congregation leader in relation to a sister's request to make perpetual profession.

134. Together with the council the province leader calls the sisters in the province to reflection, discernment, visioning, planning and accountability through regular assemblies. In dialogue with the sisters she plans for their ongoing formation and professional training, in keeping with the mission priorities of the congregation.

135. The province leader with the council has overall responsibility for the administration of the congregation's assets in the province, in accordance with the congregation guidelines. She is legally responsible to protect the patrimony of the congregation. She signs civil documents and makes contracts with Church authorities according to congregation guidelines. (Can. 636, §1, §2: Can. 638, §1, §3)

136. The province leader with the consent of the council and approval of the congregation leader and council may set up trust funds.

137. The province leader, with the consent of the council, appoints the province secretary and bursar. Under the direction of the province leader, they carry out the administration of the province.

138. To provide sound management of the congregation's assets in the province, the province leader with the consent of the council establishes a finance advisory committee and management bodies, and may employ professionals to assist them with their administrative responsibilities.

NEW FOUNDATIONS

139. A new foundation is a developing mission area in the congregation. It has the possibility of being responsible for planning with the local church and developing into a region. The length of term and scope of delegated authority in a new foundation are defined at the time of appointment in a written document. They are particular to each situation and are reviewed at the end of each term of office.

140. The leader of a new foundation has authority delegated by the congregation leader. Her term of office, role, responsibilities and governance structures are defined by the congregation leader and council at the time of her appointment.

PROVINCE GATHERINGS

141. In preparation for the congregation chapter, a province chapter or assembly takes place. Depending on what is appropriate, the province leader may, in consultation with the congregation leadership team, choose to have:
    - an assembly
    - a chapter in which all the sisters of the province are able to participate
    - a chapter composed of ex-officio members and elected delegates.

142. For a chapter with elected delegates the ex-officio members are:
    - province leader
    - province councillors
    - novice director
    - director of temporary professed sisters.

    The number of elected delegates is more than the number of ex-officio members.

143. Celebrated in the same spirit as the congregation chapter, a province chapter seeks to know the will of God in its particular mission as part of the whole congregation. While in session it is the highest legislative authority in the province. It makes statutes in keeping with the spirit of the constitutions and the

congregation chapter mandate. It elects delegates to the congregation chapter according to the congregation guidelines.

144. At a province assembly the sisters participate in the planning and evaluation of the province. The assembly can make recommendations to the leadership, but it does not have legislative authority. In the year prior to the congregation chapter the assembly can replace the province chapter. It elects delegates to the congregation chapter.

145. Each delegate to the congregation chapter is elected by secret ballot which requires an absolute majority of the votes of chapter members present. Substitute delegates are elected by the same method to replace delegates who may be unable to attend the congregation chapter.

146. Details of procedure for the province chapter are found in the province chapter handbook.

COMMUNITY

147. Each member shares responsibility for the communal and apostolic life of the community and participates in evaluation of its life and mission in the light of the Gospel and local needs.

148. The community leader is a sister with perpetual profession. She is appointed for a term of three years and may be reappointed. (Can. 623; Can. 624, §1, §2)

149. The community leader has overall responsibility for the pastoral care of the sisters, the apostolic life of the community and the administration of community assets in accordance with the province plan. The community leader encourages participation, shared responsibility and accountability through regular meetings, evaluation and planning. (Can. 619)

150. The community bursar is appointed by the province leader with the consent of the council. She administers the community financial affairs according to province guidelines and policies. This service to the community is carried out in an attitude of responsible stewardship. (Can. 636, §1)

RESIGNATION AND REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

CONGREGATION LEADER

151. If the congregation leader needs to resign her office when the General Chapter is not in session, she presents her reasons to the Holy See who alone can accept her resignation. (Can.187; Can.189, §1)

152. If the congregation councillors have grave reasons to believe the leader should be removed from office, they must present the facts of the case to the Holy See who alone can act on it. (Can.193, §2)

CONGREGATION COUNCILLORS

153. If a congregation councillor wishes to resign her office she submits her resignation to the congregation leader who, with the counsel of the remaining members of the council, can accept her resignation.

154. If the congregation leader and council have grave reason to believe a councillor should be removed from office, a decision is reached by secret, collegial vote by the congregation leader and remaining councillors. The congregation leader issues the decree of dismissal from office. (Can.193, §1, §2, §3, §4)

ALL OTHER APPOINTED OFFICES

155. In the case of provinces, regions, new foundations, and local leaders and councillors, formation personnel, bursars and secretaries, acceptance of resignation and removal from office are the responsibility of the legitimate authority that made the appointment. A secret collegial vote is required for removal from office and the sister has the right of recourse to a higher superior. (Can.624, §3)

156. All resignations, acceptance thereof, and decrees of removal from office are effected by written document. (Can.193, §4)

ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

157. The congregation, provinces and regions are public juridical persons. They are legally constituted entities in the respective countries and have the right to own and administer temporal goods according to the constitutions. (Can.634, §1)

158. Each member of the congregation shares responsibility for the congregation's resources and is accountable for the proper use of temporal goods made available to her for personal, communal and apostolic purposes. (Can.635, §2; Can.636, §2; Can.638, §1)

DISPENSATION

159. The congregation chapter, the congregation leader and province leaders may dispense sisters from disciplinary provisions of the constitutions and directives. They may not, however, dispense from constitutive laws or from the structures of government. (Can. 688, §2)

SPECIALISED HANDBOOKS

160. The congregation leader, with the consent of the council, can promulgate specialized handbooks applicable to all or parts of the congregation. These handbooks concern formation and mission policies, financial administration, chapter procedures and general policies.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FIDELITY

161. As members of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, we have been given the grace of continuing in our time, the charism received by Euphrasie Barbier. Sustained by the fidelity of God who has called us, we live faithfully in response to this grace.
Our constitutions, approved by the Church, are an authentic expression of our charism and our missionary way of life. Individually and communally we make the constitutions the subject of frequent reading and prayerful reflection, so that we may grasp their meaning more deeply and live them faithfully.

Finally, we keep in mind always the prayer of Euphrasie Barbier, our foundress;

> *May the most gentle and holy Heart of Jesus be ever the bond uniting all the members of this institute which is His in every sense. And may our meeting place be there, in that blessed sanctuary of the most Holy Trinity, until we meet together again in the glory of God our Father, in holy unity with the Spirit of pure love, in the happiness of eternity. Amen.*[327]

[327] Euphrasie Barbier, letter to the Sisters in New Zealand, 30 April 1886.