



**28th RNDM Congregation Chapter
Hua Hin, Thailand
18 January – 15 February 2020**

Oneness for Mission

Rome
Feast of Pentecost
31 May 2020



Dear Sisters

Loving greetings to you all. We are living in challenging and chaotic times. Who would have thought that just two weeks after returning from the Chapter that the world would be struck by a global pandemic? We were very fortunate to have completed our Chapter and returned home before international travels were stopped. All of us are experiencing lockdown in our countries with governments putting in place various measures of social distancing to slow down and stop the spread of COVID-19. Despite the restrictions placed on regular Church activities, we have found other creative ways to nourish our faith life. We know that God's Love is present right in the midst of chaos, in the flux and flow of life.

In our preparation for the 28th Congregation Chapter with the theme of ***Seeing Anew One Body One Mission*** and throughout the days of meeting in Hua Hin, we prayed together and worked with a sincere desire to know one another more deeply, listening attentively to what God is requiring of us as RNDM missionary women today.

At the 2008 Chapter, we as a congregation committed ourselves to live more consciously as part of the "one Earth community" and the 2014 Chapter reaffirmed this. In 2020, the call to ecological conversion is urgent more than ever. As a Chapter body, we were convinced that our aspirations have to translate into real actions to address the distress of our common home.

We valued the contribution given by Fr Frank Morrissey on canonical questions and the options that we can consider in the discernment of

Oneness for Mission

possible new structures of government as our needs change. Maureen Gilbert's input on Interculturality stimulated us to be more active in ways and strategies that we can use to deepen our relationships and understandings of one another and to build stronger community. We are challenged to be daring witnesses to God's universal love in our intercultural living. We have the potential and capacity to engender a "revolution of tenderness"¹ in our living of hope, joy and inclusivity. We know that this does not happen automatically and it requires of us much openness and tolerance.

How will we live the vision and priorities articulated in the Chapter document for the next six years? We need creativity, collaboration, prudent daring, patience and a deeper commitment to the values of the gospel. This is our ongoing work. The contribution of each member of the congregation is essential and necessary as we implement these Chapter orientations and give flesh to our deep yearnings of ***Oneness for Mission***.

As humans we tend to live ourselves into new ways of thinking rather than thinking into new ways of living.² We have witnessed the vulnerability of our world with the COVID-19 pandemic. What major shifts in our life and mission are we being called to in the midst of this? What new paths need to be forged in our missionary response?

In this mysterious and adventurous journey through times of great uncertainty and unprecedented happenings, may we be filled with zeal and joyful daring. We draw inspiration from the life and mission of Mary as Constitutions 41 reminds us:

¹ TED Talk - Pope Francis 25 April 2017

² 2008 Chapter Document We Are One, We Are Love p. 13

Oneness for Mission

Mary of the 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.

May we be women of Visitation and Pentecost deeply in our beings and live this with generous and loving hearts.

With blessings of peace and hope

Josephine Kane Margaret Maung Singabekian Lucy Gifford

Oneness for Mission

One Body, One Mission! More than ever, the cry resounds in RNDM hearts across the congregation. As we journey together into the core of who we are, the 28th Congregation Chapter calls us to enflesh our oneness for mission in ever new ways.

God-Trinity, breathing through all creation, awakens our cosmic consciousness that we are one with all life, one with Earth, One Body in God. At the same time, we recognize that Earth and Earth community are in crisis! We are deeply moved by the distress of our planet home, made poor by human greed.

We, therefore, commit ourselves to the authentic living of our charism in our world today. Fired by the passion and zeal of Euphrasie Barbier, our international missionary identity impels us to live interculturally as witnesses to God's universal love. As contemplative women, we welcome and participate in the Divine Missions, flowing out into all creation, calling us to the peripheries in response to the cries of Earth and her inhabitants. Transformation and radical action are needed in every sphere of our life.

Sustainability into the future depends on our discerning new structures and models of government to meet emerging needs. This demands courage, flexibility, creativity and collaboration for the sake of the mission we hold in common.

These challenging times in our RNDM journey invite our committed and generous response to our God who calls us anew each day.

Chapter Orientations

Care for our Common Home

Ecological conversion is a missionary imperative, requiring collective practical action at all levels of the congregation.

We commit ourselves, as in recent Chapters, to continue to participate in works of eco-justice.

We deepen our understanding of the Universe Story, engage the wisdom of indigenous peoples and collaborate with other prophetic voices in responding to current global crises.

The congregation leadership team will provide an assessment tool to evaluate carbon footprints. Each province, region, new foundation (unit) will work to offset carbon footprints in concrete ways. Updates will be shared at Enlarged General Council meetings, in view of ongoing planning.

Congregation Heritage Sites

We value and treasure our RNDM heritage and heritage sites in different parts of the congregation.

The Chapter entrusts to the congregation leadership team overall responsibility for the heritage sites in Lyon and Sturry.

Such responsibility includes:

1. Ongoing assessment of the needs of our heritage sites, and developing a plan for their maintenance, upgrading, staffing and financing

Oneness for Mission

2. Collaboration with unit leaders and bursars across the congregation to develop a Trust Fund to sustain both sites
3. Missioning sisters to Lyon and Sturry and providing them with the preparation and resources they need for their mission, and the means to work collaboratively. In missioning sisters to heritage ministry, consideration is given to language proficiency, visas, length of stay, and possibilities for some engagement in ministry in the area
4. Presenting an update to the next Enlarged General Council for feedback and further planning.

Congregation Missions

Our priority as RNDM is to be present to and work with those who are vulnerable and neglected, those marginalized in our world today, with particular regard to women, children, youth, indigenous peoples, migrants and victims of human trafficking (See 27th *Congregation Chapter*, 2014, p. 12).

The Chapter recommends that the congregation leadership team:

1. Finalize the discernment to establish a new congregation mission in the U.S.A. They will share an update at the next Enlarged General Council meeting, in view of further decision making, as necessary;
2. Initiate exploration of at least one new congregation mission in a new country, in Africa. They will engage the congregation in the process, share regular updates and finalize the decision at an Enlarged General Council meeting.

Congregation Communications Plan

The Chapter recommends that the congregation leadership team coordinate the development of a congregation communications plan, to support the unity of our RNDM life and engage the challenge of being missionary in a digital culture.

The plan could provide resources and education for mission promotion as well as initial and ongoing formation.

Congregation Structures

The Chapter decides:

1. That a *Directive* be added to the current *Constitutions and Directives* to provide for the possibility of having some communities come directly under the congregation leadership team.

When, according to circumstances, it is not expedient to establish or maintain a province or region, or to establish a new foundation, other provisions can be made by the congregation leader with the consent of the council.

Such provisions could include, among other possibilities, having certain local communities relate directly to the congregation leadership team.

Oneness for Mission

In each case, after consultation with the sisters concerned, appropriate governance norms, to be approved by the congregation leader with the consent of the council, are to be drawn up and applied.

2. That a *Directive* be added to the current *Constitutions and Directives* to allow for the possibility of having a vicar at the intermediate level of government.

Where it is necessary or appropriate, in order to assist the province leader in her office of governance, a province vicar, who is a major superior, may be assigned responsibility for a certain portion of the territory, or for a defined group of sisters.

She works in close collaboration with the province leader and keeps her informed regularly of developments concerning the areas entrusted to her care.

She always carries out her responsibilities according to the mind and instructions of the province leader, who may reserve certain decisions to herself personally.

3. That a *Directive* be added to the current *Constitutions and Directives* to allow for each intermediate unit of governance to draw up its own government plan.

Each province, through the province chapter or assembly, establishes its proper statutes or governance norms, adapted to its reality.

Oneness for Mission

Once adopted by the province chapter or assembly, the statutes require the approval of the congregation leader with the consent of the council, before they become effective.

4. That each of the existing intermediate units of governance, either acting on its own, or in collaboration with other units, will establish before the next Enlarged General Council meeting a revised government plan, defining the unit's internal structure in relation to the entire congregation. These plans are to be reviewed at the Enlarged General Council meeting for internal and overall coordination.

The congregation leadership team will then assume responsibility for the coordination of the various proposals and will facilitate their application.

Before the status of an intermediate unit changes, it is to establish a succession plan, in accordance with the *Constitutions* and the law of the land, and have it approved by the congregation leadership team, to assure the security of its temporal goods and their availability for the mission of the congregation.

5. That, when international or intermediate unit committees are established, in as much as possible, at least one of the members shall be a younger sister, so as to provide her with internal experience of the life and ministries of the congregation.

Oneness for Mission

6. That a sister who is missioned to another country or culture is to be provided with appropriate inculturation procedures, so as to assist her integration into her new mission. Each receiving unit is to have orientation plans and accompaniment arrangements in place for adapted inculturation.
7. That, before employing professional help within the congregation and its intermediate units, appropriate preparation shall take place with the sisters, and clear employment expectations shall be drawn up.
8. That the current *Directive 53* be revised as follows:

Each intermediate unit shall ensure that appropriate spiritual and material provisions are in place to develop a spirituality of the elderly and to care for and support them.

Lay persons are employed to assist, as needed.

When sisters are cared for in nursing homes not belonging to the congregation, we visit them regularly and monitor the services received.

Initial Formation

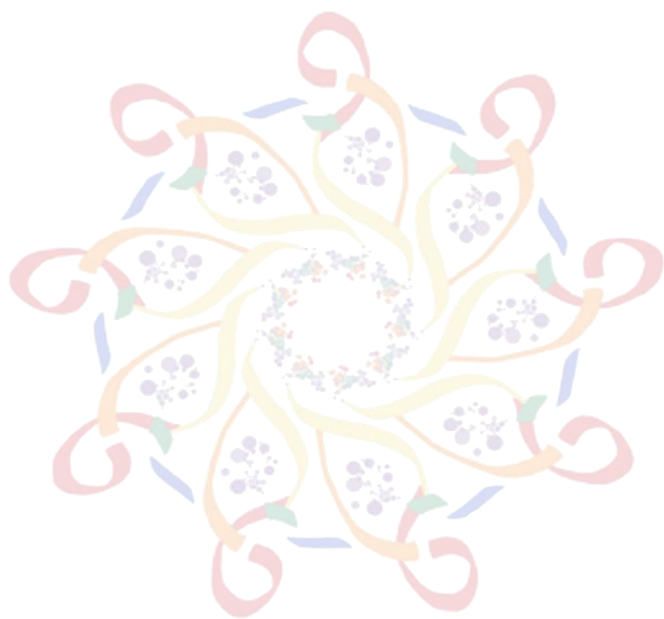
The Chapter reaffirms:

1. That given the importance of sound initial formation for the future well-being of the sisters and for the ongoing mission of the congregation, every effort will be made to ensure that quality initial formation is a characteristic of the congregation's various formation communities.
2. That initial formation is based on enabling each sister to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, sharing her life in the service of love, and seeking fullness of life for the whole of creation (see *Constitutions*, Art. 4).
3. That initial formation be personalized, seeking to develop the gifts and talents each individual sister has received for mission, thus enabling her to become a true religious missionary (see *Constitutions*, Art. 68).
4. That every effort will be made to ensure the appropriate preparation of formation personnel.
5. That before candidates are accepted to the novitiate, proper discernment takes place to evaluate their emotional, affective, and intellectual maturity. This calls for deeper knowledge of a candidate's family background, personal history, faith life, and willingness to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, no matter to which country she is missioned.
6. That, where possible, and especially when there are few novices or when there is a shortage of qualified personnel, novitiates are to be combined to ensure quality formation for all, and to

Oneness for Mission

allow the novices to benefit from the involvement of well-prepared formation personnel.

7. In the second year, where possible, the novices would have a three months' opportunity to experience the mission of the congregation in places other than in their own place of origin.
8. That, where possible, and in light of future mission planning, sisters in temporary vows are to be given the opportunity to experience the international character of the congregation.
9. That the apostolate of youth be marked by outreach and growth. Particular attention will be given to ways of making the Gospel message heard in the language and mentality of today's youth. This ministry, in its various forms of education (see *Constitutions*, Art. 35) should always include occasions for renewing and deepening our personal experience of the love of God and the living Christ (see Pope Francis, *Christus vivit*, March 25, 2019, Art. 214).
10. That the congregation leadership team and the various intermediate units develop attractive and professionally prepared websites, which are constantly updated, and which demonstrate the various dimensions of the mission of the congregation, either in a particular geographical area, or elsewhere. This will show how the founding charism of the congregation is alive and flourishing, at times taking on new expressions and responding to new challenges in a changing world.
11. That the congregation leadership team and the various administrative units make appropriate use of proven methods to encourage vocations, not only for the congregation itself, but also for the entire church.







Logo Design: Elaine Madonna Villanueva RNDM

The figures are the human expressions of the Divine Missions, gazing towards a shared vision, holding each other in unity with one hand green (life) and another blue (earth) symbolizing connectedness with Life, earth and all lifeforms. The “dots” speak of the experience of beauty in community, in the diverse divine manifestations that could be seen, heard and touched. All the “empty” spaces in the logo are suffused by the Trinity, the ineffable mystery, giving voice to contemplation. The shape of fire is Zeal from the Trinitarian communion that dynamically moves in an inward, outward and sideward movement of Mission.

Document Layout: Vo Thi Thuy Linh RNDM