



*Sacred Mystery
embraces us in unifying love and
we are in communion.*

*Breathing in and breathing out
unifying love -
our charism, our mission -
we participate in the Mystery of
Transformation.*

(Congregational Chapter 2013, page 4)

September 22, 2015

Dear Sisters and Associates/Consociates/'Ohana/Familia de San José,

We are eager to share with you our Congregational Leadership Group retreat experience which took place prior to our regular CLG meeting in September. In the beautiful setting of a retreat center on the banks of the Hudson River, our hearts were opened to one another in a profound way. With a life-size image of the “LePuy kitchen” as a backdrop, we gathered for contemplative reflection and open-hearted sharing. Right at the beginning, we identified what would hold us back from thinking for the good of the whole and, through ritual, let go of those fears and obstacles.

Although the retreat was not designed to have specific outcomes, through shared meals and playing together, through ritual, prayer and contemplation, bonds were formed, trust deepened and challenging conversations took place. We found that these hard conversations, like fire, both burned and illumined. Our contemplative time gave us the courage to leave behind our fears and move into deeper communion. We progressed from “I” to “we as province,” to “we as congregation.” We moved toward a mutual understanding that oneness does not mean sameness, differences need not be mutually exclusive and the good of the whole outweighs our fears. We were reminded of Mother St. John Fontbonne sending our first sisters to the New World in spite of all that she did not know. Like her, we face the unknown. Yet we boldly came to a common heart: **to remain the same is not an option.**

This sacred time transformed us, left us with the desire to continue deepening our relationships and provided new ground for our CLG meeting. Our meeting was not business as usual. Prayer experiences each day drew us into contemplative dialogue. In that manner we addressed the following items. Around each of these topics substantive conversations helped us to clarify and expand our mutual understandings to make certain that the directions we set and the feedback we offer are clear for those attending to these topics.

- We set directions for groups including:
 - Urging the vocation/formation working group to complete its work on the congregational formation plan, and to develop a congregational formation process for candidates and novices for our review in the near future;
 - Requesting intra-congregational consolidation of vocation ministries and justice ministries.

Following our principles of mutuality, collegiality and subsidiarity we asked those who minister and have expertise in each of these areas to work out the details of these directions.

- We reiterated the importance of the Process Design Team work and the potential for this group to impact other developments.
- The Albany participants in the *Seeding Our Future* cohort (the younger sisters in our congregation) shared the experience of their July meeting. Hearing the hope and energy in their presentation, the CLG committed to support these sisters in their desire to build relationships and plan for the future.
- We heard about and supported the developing amalgamation between the units of Hawaii and Los Angeles.
- We shared our financial realities across the congregation and encouraged the sharing of best practices in finances, development and investing.
- We affirmed the need for a governance resource group to examine emerging issues and evolving structures in collaboration with the Process Design Team and other groups.
- We identified formally and informally sponsored ministries as a first step in better understanding how we may relate to these institutions and works in the future.
- We discussed and gave direction to the activities of ACOF (Associates, Consociates, 'Ohana, Familia de San José), the St. Joseph Worker Program, and the Archives consolidation.
- We identified the time before and after the US Federation Event in July 2016 as opportunities for groups to come together to share intra-congregationally.
- As they begin planning for the 2019 Congregational Chapter, the Congregational Leadership Team asked for the names, credentials, and contact information for potential facilitators.

We ask you to keep all of these groups and activities in prayer as they continue their work on behalf of us all.

Finally, Sisters and ACOF, we urge you to participate fully in the Process Design Team experiences as they become available. These events will provide sacred time similar to what we shared on our CLG retreat and will transform us all as we lean into a deeper experience of our oneness.

In Christ who calls us into communion,

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