



November 1, 2019

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

On October 4-8 in Albany, all of the leadership teams from the provinces and the vice province gathered with the Congregational Leadership Team for our semi-annual meeting of the Congregational Leadership Group. A few new participants attended this CLG meeting. Margaret Schulz, Amy Hereford and Fran Maher, in their fourth month as full-time leaders in St. Louis, joined us for the first time. Additionally, at the invitation of the current CLT, the newly elected congregational leaders were also present: Sally Harper (via videoconference from Peru), Patty Johnson, Mary McGlone, Sean Peters, and Therese Sherlock. Mary Jordan, FMSA, facilitated for us.

A spirit of trust and openness permeated our time together. Some participants remarked that this was a fruit and continuation of the spirit they had experienced at the Congregational Chapter. Communion with one another was fostered by sharing of the heart, two right-brain processes that called for humility and self-revelation, and many opportunities for prayer and contemplative dialogue.

We began breaking open the Statement of Future Direction by focusing on the final calls “Go deeper. Journey farther. Respond boldly,” assuming that these challenges infuse all the directions and commitments affirmed by the chapter body. Relying on symbolic gestures and few words, we helped each other to enlarge the meaning of these brief yet powerful statements.

We spent significant time discussing the chapter’s decision that every unit of the congregation will engage in a communal discernment of their preferred direction for governance. Each leadership team shared their ideas, questions, and initial plans for the communal discernment process. All agreed that this important discernment is “a process not a package” and that we need to establish a way to maintain communication between the units as the processes evolve so that all are kept informed and can learn from others’ experiences. This discussion raised the topic of financial information that could be helpful to the process. While acknowledging that finances should not drive the discernment in a particular direction, we agreed that true discernment requires freedom, and certain kinds of data might free Sisters from anxiety caused by misinformation or



misunderstanding. We took initial steps toward establishing an ad hoc group to address financial issues identified by the CLG.

Finally, a few other practical topics appeared on our agenda, including:

- Update on the current status of the Congregational Formation Plan and an opportunity to visit with the two women in the Congregational Novitiate and their co-directors, whose pilgrimage across the congregation coincided with our meeting in Albany;
- Update and education on the “agrégée discerners group,” those who are exploring the possibility of another way of living the charism; this led to a recommendation to establish a pathway for communication about their experiences;
- Update on the volunteer ministry at the southern U.S. border in which many Sisters and ACOF have participated; Our Peruvian leaders also described the reality of Venezuelan refugees entering Peru and opportunities to serve them;
- Discussion of some points related to preparation for the 2020-21 budget, which the incoming CLT will present at our March 2020 CLG meeting.

As always, a highlight of our time together was the opportunity meet with local Sisters and Associates. We thank the Sisters and staff at the provincial house in Albany for their wonderful hospitality. And we thank you all for holding us in prayer!

Your Sisters,

*Congregational Leadership Group*