

To lead our Society in rediscovering our deepest identity as Marists

Superior General's Report
General Chapter 2017

John Hanman sm

To lead our Society in rediscovering our deepest identity as Marists

Superior General's Report
General Chapter 2017

John Hanna sm



1. It is with gratitude that I look back over the past eight years. I realise that the leadership of the Society though always exacting was a grace-filled time. At this juncture, I am pleased to be part of the dynamic that will lead to the election of a new superior general who will bring the Society forward in the spirit of our Blessed Mother, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit advance the reform that is being propelled by Pope Francis and to which we are called to be active collaborators.
2. We are living in a bewildering¹ world, where uncertainty and turmoil prevail and there is an inherent danger in not understanding the magnitude of the task before all of humanity to ensure peace, justice and the integrity of creation. Pope Francis specifies this perplexing phenomenon as *“a change of era rather than an era of change.”*²
3. Experiencing such mammoth change will be confusing and disorientating for many, specially religious and priests. One may ask what is driving our modern world into such confusion. High on the list has to be the destructive individualism that asserts subjective rights over those that respond to ensuring the needs of the common good. Growing skepticism, indifference and hostility towards religious faith convictions give way to the demolition of long cherished beliefs which are treated as if they are no longer cutting-edge or relevant. Such tendencies systematically weaken the spiritual longing of the human heart. But not only that,

¹ Antonio Spadaro – Crux interview, This is isn't ordinary time on the Jesuits' historic gathering. <https://cruxnow.com/interviews/2016/11/25/isnt-ordinary-time-spadaro-jesuits-historic-gathering/>

² Pope Francis, Florence, November 10, 2013. <https://cruxnow.com/church//2015/11/10/pope-francis-says-catholics-must-be-open-to-change/>

they separate communities and alienate us from our history and the witness and experience of the past. The secularist agenda is an imminent danger to deep-rooted religious living more than we might like to acknowledge.

4. Our core identity as a religious congregation is an expression of an initiative by Mary, our Mother, to evangelise an ever more secular world. Therefore, our compelling call is to discipleship, promoted by the teachings of Jesus who invites us to look inward and outward to a more focused understanding of the spiritual through contemplation of the Word of God and service. Every gift that God gives is not just for us. It is for others, to be shared, and will bring most joy when it is shared.
5. Change is never-ending and will continually call on us to adapt our ways of understanding and living, of bearing witness to our faith in Jesus through witness and action. I am not talking about doctrine but the way we profess and live out our faith commitment. Such reform can only happen by *“grafting ourselves to and rooting ourselves in Christ, leaving ourselves to be guided by the Spirit.”*³
6. In this context Pope Francis’ leadership is an irrepressible beacon of hope, a guiding light enabling us to face up to increasing challenges. I pray that the new superior general and his team will have the self-assurance to move forward knowing what all Marists are called to do in bringing to fruition the seed sown by our first and permanent superior, Mary.

³ Ibid.

A special thanks to Marists everywhere

7. This report will focus on a limited number of aspects of our work as a general administration in tandem with the major superiors and may not focus sufficiently at times on the enormous gratitude the Society owes to each Marist who works ‘at the coalface’, those, who in the words of Pope Francis, are close to the people through their daily ministries, bringing the healing power of God’s grace to those in need... being *“shepherds living with the smell of the sheep.”*⁴

8. In a circular letter in 2014⁵ I listed at random many examples of such tireless Marists working in numerous Marist communities, labouring steadfastly at the service of the overall mission. I wish to repeat what I wrote then *“that I am confident we have the heart of Jean-Claude Colin. We work to know his mind and his mission intention... walking with the people listening to them, supporting them, praying with them, all because we have integrated a personal love of Christ, a love for Mary and a burning desire that others too will come to value, adopt and deepen their commitment to the Lord through prayer, fidelity and study.”*⁶ Many thanks to one and all.

⁴ Pope Francis – Chrism Mass homily, Holy Thursday, 2013. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papafrancesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html

⁵ Be United with a Common Purpose, §§ 5-14.

⁶ Ibid § 13

The mandate of the General Chapter 2009

9. The superior general, assisted by the general councillors and officers, *“exercises responsibility and care for the whole Society and for each of its members. His chief concern is that the Society should grow and develop, that it be governed effectively, and that it be led with wisdom towards its ends, for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary, Mother of God...”* (Const. 180).
10. I am guided in writing this report by the constitution just cited and n.163 which states that *“the general chapter represents the entire Society gathered to evaluate its fidelity to its spirit and mission, to resolve important questions concerning the Society as a whole, to decide on directions to be followed for the future...”*

The General Council elect,
General Chapter 2009



11. So the work of a chapter is about all of the Society represented by its delegates working as a cohesive capitular body towards the building of a dynamic future for the Society. So, this report will touch on many aspects of the work of the general administration - though not all - which was its responsibility in law or delegated to it by the 2009 Chapter. The call "*to resolve important questions concerning the Society as a whole, (and) to decide on directions to be followed into the future*" will influence the paths I choose to follow. The fundamental instruments which guide this work are the Gospels, the Constitutions, the mind of the Church, and the mandate given to us by the General Chapter of 2009.
12. Below are listed the specific tasks given to the General Administration by the General Chapter of 2009 to implement its mandate. It is best to study the entire chapter document *Statements and Decisions* N.176 –X111, 1 (SD) in order to get a deeper understanding of the context in which the various recommendations were rooted. I have checked where I think the general administration has achieved its goal, or is in the process of doing so or has yet to do so. I will focus on a number of the most important ones in terms of the overall goals of the last General Chapter and the work of the general administration and its work with the major superiors and units.

THE TASKS SET BY THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2009 FOR THE GA					
	Decision	Primary responsibility	Done	Being actioned	Pending
11	Deepening vision and culture of unit > focus on Marist identity	To be agreed by GA and major superiors (M-S) *		✓	
12	Each unit to review and prioritize ministries	Process devised by GA and implemented by M-S and councils		✓	
14	Setting-up an external review of government	GA	✓		
15	Annual meetings of GA with major superiors	GA	✓		
16	Superior general (and GA) participation in meetings of major superiors	Initiative of superior general	✓		
19	Strive to increase presence in Asia	GA with M-S		✓	
20	Continue reinvigoration of education	GA		✓	
21	Network of city-centre churches	GA & M-S -exchange of ideas and personnel		✓	
24	Program of renewal based on Const	GA to create program & provide practical tools		✓	
25	Training of local superiors as spiritual leaders by 2011	M-S in dialogue with GA*		✓	
32	Appointment of coordinator for vocations	GA	✓		
34	Ongoing Implementation of program for international formation	GA	✓		
35	Providing sufficient formators	GA & M-S		✓	
36	Program for formation of formators	GA	✓		
39	Provision of structured program for young Marists to live Marist charism	GA	✓		
41	Offering of long period of spiritual renewal after 10 years of final vows	GA & M-S	✓		
42	Selection and preparation of members for higher Marist Studies	GA			✓

	Decision	Primary responsibility	Done	Being actioned	Pending
48	Review and stimulation of Special Projects Fund	GA, GFC, M-	✓		
49	Coordination of ongoing formation programs for those in the first 10 years of Marist life	GA		✓	
50	Establishment of Ongoing Formation Fund	GA		✓	
52	Identification of Marist who could provide services for Society by end of 2010	GA	✓		
55	Nomination of the important works for SM and development of plans for international staff	GA in consultation with M-S			Unable to achieve goal
58	Process to enable Marists to recognize the place of Lay Marists	GA			✓
59	Appointment of promoter of Laity	At all levels	✓		
60	Further investigation re Formation of International Marist Family Council	GA			No apparent energy
61	La Neylière	EU provincial with GA and M-S	✓		
62	Cause of Fr Colin	GA	✓		
64	Draft policy on financing the future of the Society	GA		✓	
64	Implementation of finance for Mission Policy	GA		✓	
64	Task-force to study needs of financially dependent units	GA		✓	
64	Assessment of resources	GA		✓	
64	Assessing appropriateness of further dedicated funds	GA with M-S		✓	
64	Identification of burdensome assets & properties	GA with M-S	✓		
65	Assisting needy units to be more self-sufficient	GA	✓		
66	Valuation of properties and assets	G	✓		

The Relationship of the General Administration with the Society

13. When we took up office the members of the general administration spent time articulating our roles, responsibilities and what it means to lead effectively. We agreed as an administration that our primary task was *“to lead the Society in rediscovering our deepest identity as Marists, individually and as a body, by living the Constitutions and implementing the Chapter decisions.”*
14. From the outset each member of the general administration sought to develop an ever closer collaborative relationship with the major superiors as a body and with each one in particular within his assigned unit. This approach was convincingly endorsed by the Council of the Society meeting in 2013 through the mission declaration, which reads:

The Council
of the Society,
Dublin, 2013



We, the Council of the Society of Mary, through reflecting, discerning and working together, are convinced that the Society will best carry out its mission in this world of profound change by embracing wholeheartedly the reality of our being a small congregation within the Church.

This challenges us to become
 more focussed,
 more overtly Marist
 in spirituality and community life,
 in our identity and our mission,
 more international, more collegial,
 more open to working in collaboration
 with the laity, and more courageous.

In the light of this reality,
 we, Superior General and council
 and the major superiors,
 commit ourselves to building a future together,
 by exercising a leadership, globally and locally,
 in which priority is given to animation,
 competent government, increased collegiality
 at all levels, and appropriate structures.

15. In line with previous administrations, each member of the administration was assigned specific roles and responsibilities. Each assistant general was given responsibility for certain portfolios and assigned as a link-person between several units and the general administration. Obviously, each person had his own style and this naturally impinged on what could and would be done. Our systemic work as a general administration ensured a careful preparation of

visitations and a thorough study of the reports drawn-up subsequent to the visitation.

We focused our actions through:

- formal and comprehensive visitations,
- attendance at provincial and district chapters,
- presence at other major meetings such as councils of the province, regional meetings,
- meetings with formators,
- regular contacts with each major superior mainly through the use of Skype and/or email,
- correspondence as the need arose.

16. Success is attributable to the quality of the relationships forged and the trust that was strengthened through time despite some initial resistances and fears on both sides.

17. We sought to advance the mandate given by the 2009 General Chapter. The area of formation was very much at the centre of our concerns, as well as financial questions, and the attempt

Kevin Duffy
on visitation
in the District of
the Philippines,
2011



to open each unit to its potential as a change agent within the Society. The advances are noted especially in the areas of:

- formation (training of formators, raising standards in formation, recruitment, participation in international formation, rationalising houses),
- prioritising and strengthening of ministries,
- leadership training, formation of regional superiors, specialist renewals, etc,
- financial management and planning - building up and diversifying investments.
- improving governance and greater collaboration,
- research - as evidenced from reviews in governance, finance, and formation, carried out at the behest of the General Chapter and the General Administration.

The deeper integration of our Marist Call

*“As the Constitutions are
the fundamental charter of the Society,
the chapter’s intention is to exploit
the Constitutions as a powerful means
of renewal (Const. 230)...”
(SD, 24).*

18. The GA from the very outset sought to develop a simple and accessible process to lead confreres to a deepening of our understanding of the nature of our Marist Call and the implications of this Call in our personal and community

lives and ministry. Obviously, our Constitutions are the key source from which such a deepening might begin. In 2011-12 we initiated a yearlong consideration of our Constitutions and prayer culminating with the 25th anniversary of the approval of our Constitutions in 2012. For this we commissioned Craig Larkin to write an accessible series of reflections on our Constitutions both old and new - *Bearings*. We also asked local superiors to initiate the reading of one of the constitutions each day at the principal community meal. That practice is still continued in a number of houses.

19. Many of the districts and provinces have held annual retreats on Marist themes, particularly on the Constitutions. Justin Taylor was commissioned to write a biography of our founder. Other works were written by Francois Drouilly⁷ all of them focusing on a deeper understanding of our founder's spirituality and vision of what the Marist vocation entails. The bi-centenary of the "*Fourvière pledge*" was well prepared and well celebrated. In this we were joined by the wider Marist family as a means of deepening our understanding of our shared Marist roots and our common heritage. Linked to the event were initiatives such as that of Canada where Gaston Lessard's *Devenir mariste* (2015) was a helpful tool for French speaking Marists as indeed was the *Ascent to Fourvière* by Justin Taylor and Francois Drouilly (2015). All of the above in my view led to a greater consciousness of our rich spiritual heritage which was taken up by many in the Society and the wider Marist family.

⁷ Fifteen days of prayer with Jean-Claude Colin, 2010; The Logbook of a Spiritual Adventurer: The correspondence of JC Colin, superior general, 1836-1854, 2013; Weaving a Mantle of Mercy, 2016

The Colinian Period of Renewal

“A long period of spiritual renewal, for “spiritual growth and conversion”, following the model of a “second novitiate”, will be offered to Marists after ten years of final profession” (SD, 41).

20. Because of the difficulty in finding and eventually being able to release suitable leaders for this program, we scheduled the first six-month program from March to August 2015. Following the assessment of both the participants and leaders it was perceived to have been a successful and uplifting spiritual experience. Happily, another such program began on March 1 of this year concluding on July 31 in *La Neylière*.
21. It is important to note that the province of Australia, on behalf of Marist Asia Pacific (MAP), successfully planned and executed several three-month long renewal programs for confreres from Oceania and Asia over a five year period.



Spirituality and Lifestyle Program,
Australia, 2014

International Formation

22. The previous administration devoted much time to the setting up of an international formation structure that would guarantee “*quality, consistency and continuity*” in initial formation, including the provision of trained formators and the necessary finance to make it possible. The General Chapter in 2009 endorsed this approach and simply asked the incoming administration to “*ensure the implementation of the Society’s program for international formation*” (SD, 34).

The general council, after reviewing the work already done, confirmed its intention to continue with the objectives of having international formation for both the novitiate and theologate. This practically speaking meant that the theologates would continue in Oceania at Marist College, Bomana, and Marist College, Suva, in addition to a theologate for all other Marists in Rome. Later on it was decided to close Bomana and locate the Oceanian students in Suva. Other houses of

Students of
the International
Theologate
"Casa di Maria",
Rome, 2015



study would continue in a number of the units mainly for pre-novitiate preparation, as well as providing training in philosophy as a prerequisite for theological studies.

23. The International Theologate in Rome was opened in 2012. An English Language International Novitiate had already started in Dumalag, Davao, the Philippines, in January 2009. The novitiate transferred to Tutu in 2011 and after some major difficulties in the short-term was transferred to Maryvale, New Zealand, for novices other than those from Oceania who remained on in Tutu. Also in 2011 a Spanish - Portuguese Language International Novitiate was held in Belo Horizonte. In 2012 the International Novitiate was established in the Philippines first in Dumalag and finally in 2014 in Eden, Davao.
24. On the recommendation of the Council of the Society in 2013 a committee was set-up to *“review the current and potential formation programmes in the Society of Mary”* with a view to *“quality, consistency and continuity of the whole of initial formation in the Society and the Society’s human and financial ability to sustain these programs”* (CS2013, 45).
25. This report was affirmative in terms of quality and consistency for both the international novitiate and the international theologate formation houses. There were a number of important recommendations which were accepted for the most part by the general council after consulting with the major superiors at the ARC meeting in 2014 and the formators concerned. The ARC meeting composed of the major superiors and general administration continues to review the programs as part of its annual review. Similarly the directors of formation evaluate the work in their own houses of formation with reference to the review.

26. A previous report on theological formation, *Review of Marist Theologate Formation in Oceania*,⁸ was carried out, at the initiative of the provincial of Oceania, in the houses of formation in Bomana and Suva in 2012. This report led to some significant changes and developments in formation within the province of Oceania.
27. The *General Directory of Initial Formation* was revised in 2014. The document is available on line and is the standard reference on procedures to be followed in all formation houses.
28. One of the recommendations of the report on international formation is the appointment of “a coordinator of Marist formation”.⁹ I believe this is an important issue which can be taken up amongst others at the chapter as part of our conversations on formation.
29. Since the opening of the international houses of formation, members from the general council have made several visitations of the International Theologate and Novitiate. I have also had the opportunity to visit all the major pre-novitiate formation houses in the Society.
30. My overall conviction is the quality of international formation is good and the young men are entering well into the process, and are systemically well-formed for the challenges that will face them as religious and priests. The

⁸ Frank Hoare ssc & Andrew Murray sm, *Review of Marist Theologate Formation in Oceania*, 19 December 2012. Final Report.

⁹ *Ibid.* P.(3) C

fears some had with regard to receiving formation outside of one's own culture did not impact as might have been expected. Our overall satisfaction should not, however, be interpreted as "job done, let's focus on something else". Complacency has no place where high formation standards are concerned.



The superior general visits the International Novitiate in Davao, 2012

Other developments in formation

31. A number of important developments have produced improvements in the quality of formation, worldwide:
- a. The increased vigilance in recruitment and more proficient accompaniment programs ensure a better quality of candidates entering the Society. Ongoing progress is rigorously needed in this area and we can learn much from the outcomes of the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia.
 - b. Better selectivity in the admission of candidates to the Society ensures a more discerned entry to the novitiate, to temporary and final profession and indeed to ordination. All of this leads to greater stability among those who remain and are ordained. The world in which young men are called to minister *“is increasingly sophisticated, so we must accept only those who are capable of ministering in terms of personality balance, academic ability, spiritual awareness and commitment”*.¹⁰
 - c. Finally, it goes without saying, that our numbers of entrants need to increase greatly if we are to maintain strength as a congregation - *“Without Vocations we don’t have a future”*.¹¹

¹⁰ Leadership for Mission, 2016-2017, mark 3, § 5.

¹¹ Ibid., § 3.

Training of Formators

32. Since 2009 we have provided basic formation training for four confreres from Africa, eight from Oceania, one from Mexico, two from the Asia and one from Brazil. Many of these are already engaged in formation and my sincere hope is that such systematic training will continue into the future.
33. An encouraging outcome of these initial studies is that one confrere is about to complete his doctorate in spirituality, two more have completed licentiates in spirituality and a further two are currently involved in studying for a licentiate at a local university within their own units whilst continuing their formation or other ministry.



Formation
of Formators 2014

34. Our goal in training as many formators as possible is to ensure quality and depth in the number of trained formators so that in all units every element of the formation process, such as discernment training and accompaniment of vocation skills, spiritual direction, and development of the spiritual life, are covered systematically and adequately from the point of entry until final profession and ordination.
35. There are a number of formators who were trained many years ago and still carry out essential formative functions in our various units within the Society. Their experience and continued availability to work in formation is greatly appreciated and indeed essential for the foreseeable future.

Formation of
Formators, 2011



36. A number of confreres have suggested on occasion that we have enough trained and competent formators for our needs. Regrettably, this is not the case. For example, if two or three of the current formator delegates to the general chapter were elected to the forthcoming general administration who would take their places as formators? This does not mean they should not be available for election! A closer look at the numbers of competent formators available to work in the provinces and districts of the Society will reveal that even some of the bigger units do not have younger men to train as formators or, if they do, they are already engaged in other important works of the Society. I actually believe the time is now ripe for a more radical and creative approach in the provision of formation into the future, if we are to avert a crisis within the Society. For example, could we conceive of our having fewer pre-novitiate formation centres in the Society to service all our aspiring candidates?
37. In July 2016, as part of the Fourvière bi-centenary celebration, the vast majority of the recently trained formators were invited to *La Neylière* for an intensive ongoing training program. It was a successful learning experience, so much so that, at the suggestion of the formators, the general administration recommends the incoming general administration to have a similar program in 2019 to continue the upskilling of our active formators.



Formators
workshop in
La Neylière
July 2016

Review of Governance

“That the superior general in consultation with the major superiors will undertake an external review of all levels of government – general, provincial, district and their relationship with each other before the next Council of the Society with a view to continuing structural change.”¹²

38. This important *Review of Government of the Society of Mary 2011-2013*¹³ was carried out by Dr John Honner who devised a consultative process employing some Ignatian principles to enable us to evaluate the effectiveness of our

¹² Ibid., § 14.

¹³ John Honner, *Review of Government of the Society of Mary 2011-2013*. Report to the Council of the Society, 2013.

governance structures. He presented an interim report to the ARC meeting in 2012 and the final report at the Council of the Society meeting in 2013. The outcomes from our governance work at CS2013 are presented in *Concilium Societatis Mariae 2013*, 6-12.

39. The ongoing work of the general administration since 2013 has been guided by the recommendations endorsed by the CS2013 and the post-ARC meeting documents, cf. *Leadership for Mission 2013-2017*.¹⁴

Ongoing work of Reconfiguration

40. The challenges of reconfiguration are great, as all those involved in the field know at some cost. Many are familiar with some of the abundant research on the topic carried out since Vatican II and before, all of which has helped religious to familiarise themselves with the realities and to grapple with the complexities.
41. Unlike many other religious congregations, the Society of Mary has a unique problem in that it is thinly scattered across great distances with a wide range of continents, languages and cultures,¹⁵ which makes us especially vulnerable as a transnational Society to achieve unity of purpose and

¹⁴ *Leadership for Mission 2014-2017*. Letter to the major superiors and Provincial and District Councils of the Society of Mary. Three separate documents were published after each of the subsequent ARC meetings.

¹⁵ Cf. John Honner, *Review of Government of the Society of Mary 2011-2013*, p.4.

solidarity in mission and leadership. Further factors add to this complex reality – with the small numbers in most units and an ageing and diminishing body of capable confreres in others, we are already seeing signs of our not being in a position to provide enough able leaders. We continue to grapple with these realities, seeking out ways of bringing units into a much deeper collaboration, in order to ensure a more co-ordinated and effective leadership-cohort into the future. I will now lead you through the progress so far:

42. Canada, Mexico, USA

A reconfiguration working document was agreed by the three provincials and their councils at a multiparty meeting in Washington in November 2015. This document has been confirmed by the three provincial chapters which took place over the past twelve months. The Marist membership of the three provinces are consulted at each stage of the process and the findings of those consultations will be developed into a final working document which will be studied by the three provincials, two members from each of the provincial councils and the superior general in May 2017. The outcomes of that meeting will be presented to the superior general and council for a decision in July 2017.

43. Australia, Asia, New Zealand

An open examination of the merits of a restructured single province of Asia, Australia and New Zealand was concluded in August 2016. The Asia and Australia chapters opted for the proposed restructuring model. The New Zealand chapter decided against it but did express a willingness to engage in a collaborative enterprise. Hopefully, some concrete co-operative initiatives will happen sooner rather than later. Asia and Australia have agreed to con-



MAP leaders during ARC, Rome, 2016

tinue an exploration of the possibilities open to them through reconfiguration. They have exchanged working documents between their councils. The consultations are ongoing. No decisions have yet been made.

44. Oceania

The restructuring of the province centred on the formal suppression of Marist regions with the goal of building up a greater unity and solidarity within the province and its works. This was unanimously welcomed by the capitulants at the recent provincial chapter and much energy was put into realigning the legislation to this new reality. A substantial change in mentality will be required on the part of all in view of the cultural and linguistic diversities and ongoing financial constraints, in order to create a more unified province, but there is great determination and great good will.

45. South America

The districts of Brazil and Peru-Venezuela have worked conscientiously to develop the two units into a more cohesive governmental unit. There was a carefully prepared process where the members initially agreed to have one major superior for the two units. After a further experimental period this culminated with the amalgamation of the two units into the one District of South America on November 15, 2016. It was a good cooperative initiative despite the obvious challenges.

The Annual Review Consultation (ARC)

*“The superior general, together with his Council, will introduce annual meetings with major superiors, in order to continue restructuring, to make and review plans, to strengthen and deepen communication, understanding and collective ownership of initiatives for the Society.”
(SD, 15)*

46. This was an initiative emanating from the 2009 General Chapter. The rationale behind the setting up of the Annual Review Consultation (ARC) meetings was:

- *“To deepen trust and confidence in the way we relate within the Society.*
- *To promote communication across the Society of Mary at all levels.*
- *To strengthen the connection between the various parts of the Society of Mary.*
- *To enhance participation, co-responsibility and agility in decision making.*

ARC meeting
in Rome 2012



- *To improve the allocation of resources throughout the Society.” (SD, 13)*

47. Judging ARC in the light of these criteria confirms it as an important contributor to the development of more able leadership through shared work and insight. The growing level of trust emerging at various levels was impressive. The general administration and the major superiors got to know and appreciate the complexity of the issues more clearly. The ARC meeting was also a good opportunity for individual provinces and districts to make known their particular needs to each other. As a consequence the provision of candidates for training as formators, the delivery of personnel for new mission ventures, and the need for financial support were more fully appreciated understood.
48. ARC certainly was an important player in the build-up of trust between the general administration and the major superiors. It took time for people of different cultures, with different experiences, different needs and outlooks, to adapt to mainly western operational systems and to work more collaboratively for the common good. The age and experience



of the leaders was also a factor which brought variety in approach and differences in leadership style. Supportive formation was also helpful for those with less experience.

49. As I look back over the years, my heart fills with gratitude for the sensitive and respectful approach that grew among the ARC members with time. We the Society as a whole have grown in that time to be a more universal and inclusive congregation with an increased ownership of the wider mission of the Society as a whole.

The Financial Review

50. The review of the finances of the Society of Mary was the initiative of the General Chapter 2009, which required that *“the new general administration prepare and circulate to the major superiors before the next council of the Society a draft policy on financing the future of the Society”* (SD, 64).
51. The superior general appointed a committee and gave it the task of:
- determining the financial position of the international Society by gathering all relevant data accurately and as thoroughly as possible,
 - using the data gathered to produce a report which would recommend financial goals and strategies to the 2013 Council of the Society,
 - circulating the report for consultation to the major superiors, their councils and other persons, and re-