

Crossing the Threshold: Emerging Direction

“In a spirit of contemplation, we root ourselves in the Gospel and the vision of Blessed Marie-Rose to go forth boldly with a renewed vision.” (Preamble of the Acts of the 34th General Chapter of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary)

The 5th U.S.-Ontario Province Chapter invited us to take a long, loving look at reality to see how we have been faithful to our mission, and to explore how God is calling us into the ever-evolving future. It is evident that we are passing through many thresholds:

- Our oversight of SNJM sponsored ministries is changing.
- Our understanding of leadership models, who will be involved in leadership, and how we exercise leadership in the future, is broadening.
- Our collaboration with others is becoming the paradigm for harnessing collective action for the sake of those on the margins.
- Our experience of SNJM is expanding including the development of our understanding of the vocation of the Associates and Lay Consecrated persons.
- Our time together enabled us to create a hospitable space that welcomed diversity of thought, genuine care for one another, and a curiosity about the paths beckoning us into the future.

During our week’s discussion, a number of questions helped us ponder the ways we might move forward. We recognize that we need to probe these questions personally before addressing them collectively.

- How do we want to be engaged in the evolution of religious life?
- What do we want to do: something more, or deepen what we are doing already?
- In what ways are we so imbued in our SNJM culture that we don’t recognize the need to change?
- Who do we think we are now and how do we want to respond to that reality?

In addition to the many individual direct service and advocacy activities in which we are currently engaged, we discussed several corporate pathways for the future. In our World Café process two actions emerged with very strong support.

- 1. Steeped in our SNJM heritage and traditions and Catholic social teachings, we commit ourselves to collaborate with other religious congregations, faith communities, and justice efforts to counter policies, legislation, and rhetoric that assault human dignity and our environment. We resolve to use our passion, resources, educational expertise, and moral voice to counteract the abuse of power and immoral treatment of women; refugees; immigrants; persons who experience racial, ethnic, LGBTQT discrimination; and people who are economically disadvantaged.**
- 2. We will create an SNJM Fund as a legacy to continue and extend our mission to future generations.**

In addition to the two actions above, we desire to engage in meaningful conversations on the following topics:

1. We will address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion among us.
2. We will pursue ways of giving honest, straightforward, and caring feedback, particularly in leadership selection processes.
3. Based on our experience and treatment as women in the Church, we will utilize a process of theological reflection on our current understanding and practice of being Catholic today.

Brief Summaries from Associates and Chapter Work Groups

Associates

We reflected on three questions we received prior to Chapter dealing with a focus on the future, mission and leadership. Members of the Associate Coordinating Committee led discussions on these questions and our facilitator, Andrea Cano, helped to further guide us by examining these themes as well as purpose, pathways and ongoing resources. On Saturday, July 7, 2018 several Associates shared their personal associate stories with the Chapter and our facilitator summarized her work with us during Chapter.

Government Structures Committee

Leadership Selection Process: On Saturday, July 7, 2018, Sisters spent focused time considering the options for increased engagement of members in the next Selection Process for Leadership. Our time consisted in: a) hearing updated information from 2015 to current time; b) taking time to dialogue and ask questions; c) inviting Sisters at table groups to be a Special Design Team commissioned to create a new selection process. All suggestions were handed to the Government Structures Committee who will rework and prepare another draft to be sent to members sometime in later Fall 2018. On Sunday, July 8, 2018, the Government Structures Committee presented to the Sisters a report of their work since 2015. It was unanimously accepted.

SNJM Corporate Member Board

Sponsored Works: On Thursday, July 5th, the SNJM Corporate Member Board presented a proposal for the future sponsorship of nine ministries currently sponsored by the Province. The Members described the work they had engaged in over the past year; the groups with whom they had collaborated; and the results of that collaboration, including the values participants had articulated as critical to retain. They then described four possible scenarios for the future sponsorship of the nine ministries and the potential strengths and weaknesses of each scenario. Three of the options had been rejected as not viable or desirable. The Members then presented in some detail the scenario that had received unanimous support from all consulted. They described the structure anticipated, the values it would embody and ensure, the work that will be required to bring it to completion, and a projected timeline. After table discussions and an open mike session, the sponsorship scenario proposed by the Corporate Members was unanimously affirmed. The recommendation of the Chapter will now be deliberated by the Province Leadership Team, who will make the final decision.

Chapter 2018

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