

Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

**SPECIAL CHAPTER**  
**2021**

Held online



## Table of Contents

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Opening Ceremony of the Special Chapter .....	5
Introduction: Our Journey from 2016 to 2021 .....	10
Our Journey of Discernment .....	13
Our Journey towards the Future .....	16
Decisions.....	20
Recommendations .....	21
Closing Ceremony of the Special Chapter .....	23
Annex: Working Documents .....	29
Imagining scenarios for new entities .....	31
Scenario 1.....	32
Scenario 2.....	33
Scenario 3.....	33
Imagining scenarios for new government structures .....	34
Government structure - Scenario 1 .....	34
Government structure - Scenario 2 .....	36
Scenario for community of goods .....	39



## Opening Ceremony of the Special Chapter

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Welcome to everyone as we begin the celebration of this sacred ecclesial event, the Special Chapter of 2021. What a thrilling moment to be together across so many frontiers.

Today we begin by celebrating the Eucharist. We make ourselves consciously present to Jesus Christ and to each other as we open a new chapter in our life as a congregation with two questions that guide us forward: Who is God calling us to be? What is God calling us to do?

For the sake of our mission, the women who are here together as capitulants have a commitment and a responsibility to discern the next steps we need to take as a congregation in the way we organize ourselves and in the ways we share all of our resources in common.

Let us pause for a moment to call on the Spirit to help us truly enter into the dispositions of the Heart of Jesus, to experience ourselves as Religious of the Sacred Heart, women of the gospel, who live among our people and, at the same time, are gathered together as a global community. Let us feel our spiritual presence with each other, connected in a heart way, united with Mary, whose Heart was both joy-filled and pierced, courageous and questioning. Mary who helps us enter the space of love in the pierced Heart of her Son, who invites us to be women who live love deeply and daily. It is only with this attitude of love that we will be able to let go of our personal preferences and things we hold very dear to our hearts, to enter into a mutual dialogue and discern what God is asking of the Society of the Sacred Heart now.

As always when we begin a gathering, we recognize our place in the midst of our world which continues to set our agenda. When we convoked this Special Chapter three years ago, we had no idea about the world in which we are living today and the consequences of this multi-layered crisis on people we love and serve and on the mission to which we are committed.

Life has been disrupted in ways we never imagined from the death of so many loved ones, our sisters and family members, co-workers and friends, the political polarity and destabilization we are experiencing in so many countries, the impact of environmental abuse on people and the planet, to a church that wants to be more responsive to the needs of God's people today and yet often is thwarted by internal power struggles and a lack of understanding or experience of real synodality.

At the same time that we are living through a sad and painful epoch moment, we also experience the joy of the Gospel. We experience people being more kind and thoughtful towards each other, young and old being more conscious of the impact of climate change, with a deeper understanding of what it means to be vulnerable and need community, a greater sense that it is essential to reach beyond our individual needs and respond to the common good. Despite the challenges of this moment in history we see the signs that the Word of God incarnated among us is working to overcome the darkness.

So why are we here at this Special Chapter? We as a Congregation are in a critical moment of transformation. Fifty-four years ago this month another group of women RSCJ were gathered here in Rome at a Special Chapter, asked by the Church to return to the founding vision of our congregation, to renew our mission and charism in the light of the second Vatican Council and the needs of the world at that time. It's not by chance that the two major topics of that chapter were governance and the use of our resources. If you have not done so, I would urge you to reread the 1967 Chapter Document, especially the courageous and insightful words of Mother de Valon, many of which could be spoken today with the same conviction and urgency.

Today, we are called again to create something new, not because our demographics are changing, which they are, but because the world needs our charism and mission more than ever to discover and make known the

love of God in the midst of this blessed and broken world. And while the ways we have organized ourselves to live our lives in mission and the ways we have shared our resources for the sake of mission have served us well for the past 50 years, the time has come for us to reimagine ourselves in response to the needs of the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

We left the Chapter of 2016 with these two compelling questions as well as three images. We are called to be One Body in the Heart of Jesus Christ, we are called to be Bread that is kneaded, fired, broken and shared, and we are called to board a boat that is setting sail, journeying together to new shores for the sake of life. These images are accompanied by four calls: to reach new frontiers, to live more humanly in the radical style of Jesus, to create silence, to be and act as one body.

The Spirit was active and alive in the Chapter of 2016, as though God in his wisdom and tender mercy was getting us ready for the next chapter of our lives, giving us the tools and the insights to address a reality that has not yet fully unfolded. We are having a Special Chapter because in order to go forward together to live our mission with vitality, each one of us needs to take the responsibility that the Constitutions gives to us as Religious of the Sacred Heart, “to live in the truth of our hearts, the charism of St. Madeleine Sophie.” (Constitutions 140) We too have a responsibility for the common good. During the last four years, each one of us has been preparing for this moment, invited to share her dreams, her concerns, her joys and sorrows, her convictions and deep commitments. All of us have had the opportunity to speak our truth, to share our dreams and visions for the future. Each one of us has participated in the way that she was able through prayer, through reading and conversations, through difficult moments and convergences, through the preparation for our provincial chapters, through zoom conversations with old friends and new acquaintances. We have connected among

ourselves and with our co-workers and colleagues in ways that we never imagined possible.

In a few minutes, we will celebrate Eucharist and enter into the mystery of the open side of Jesus. We will remember the death and resurrection of Jesus, the reality which lies at the heart of the sufferings and hopes of the human family. Through this Eucharist we are drawn into the gift of Jesus to his Father for the life of the world, making us more truly the Body of Christ, broken to give birth to a new humanity.

My hope and my prayer is that God will give us the courage and the wisdom we need to enter into this moment of discernment, that we have the freedom to let go of anything that will block the Spirit, that we will humbly acknowledge our need of each other and live this Special Chapter with a sense of sisterly love and fidelity to the Heart of Jesus.

I would like to end by calling to mind words at the end of the Constitutions of 1982:

*In all the circumstances of our life,  
wherever our mission leads us  
our sole purpose in living is to glorify the Heart of Jesus,  
to discover and make known His Love.  
These Constitutions point out the way.  
They are for us  
an authentic expression of our charism.*

*Trusting in the action of the Spirit  
whose law is written in our hearts,  
each one of us pledges herself to cherish  
these Constitutions,  
to deepen her knowledge of them, to observe them,  
and to make them live  
through a fidelity which is constantly renewed.  
We take to heart our responsibility  
to intensify our inner life,*



*to live discernment and obedience, to animate  
our apostolic courage so that we may build  
a more just world,  
and, above all, to strengthen that spirit of union and charity  
which should characterize our Society.*

*In the richness of our varying cultures  
and the diversity of our commitments,  
these Constitutions will be a bond of love and unity  
placing upon the whole Body  
the seal of God's work.  
We shall form but one heart and one mind,  
thus giving reality to the words:  
"Cor unum et anima una in Corde Jesus".*

*Then, in and through our Society,  
the prayer of Jesus may be fulfilled:  
"The glory which you have given me I have given to them,  
that they may be one even as we are one,  
I in them and you in me,  
that they may become perfectly one" (Jn. 17:22- 23).*

And now I welcome Father Douglas Marcouiller SJ to celebrate with us  
this banquet of thanksgiving which unites us as One Body.

***Barbara Dawson, rscj  
Superior General  
10 November, 2021***

## Introduction: Our Journey from 2016 to 2021

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When we embarked on the “Rebecca moment” of Chapter 2016, the Society all over the world shared in the joy of setting sail with Philippine to a New World, discerning together towards ‘something new’. The two questions asked of us then, “Who is God calling us to be?” and “What is God asking us to do?” were revisited.

In 2021, in the context of a synodal Church in which our mission is carried out, we, 67 delegates of St. Madeleine Sophie’s “little Society,” were entrusted by our sisters with the work of a Special Chapter. We encountered one another in a new way to envision how to organize ourselves for life and mission and to find ways to share our resources across boundaries. We were able to set out on this journey because of the number of other participants at the Chapter, translators, liturgy team and technology experts who worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

We are living in our world that is experiencing a great upheaval. Everyone in the world is weathering together the storm caused by COVID-19. This experience has sharpened and highlighted the world’s inequalities and the distance between rich and poor. The world economy continues to favour the interests of multinational companies. Societies and movements of all types take to the streets to protest, to gather, and to search for different ways of living together, *“with the hope of finding a new land where the little ones can grow in an atmosphere of trust and safety”* (General Chapter 2016, p. 16). Political and economic instability are the norm in many countries. Violence and war bring great suffering and movement of peoples. Ecological imbalance never ceases to weigh down the most vulnerable members of the human family. Into this larger context, the global situation has shaped the context of this Special Chapter. We have walked a long way together, always with the desire to share the love of the Heart of Jesus, our hope in the midst of the uncertainty of the world and the Society.

As part of the preparation for the Special Chapter, 318 groups around the world gathered to “catch dreams” which illuminated the changes in the Society. In the JPIC gathering of 2018, we discovered ourselves to be “artisans of hope in this blessed and broken world.” The whole Society was engaged in preparing for this moment in our history. The synthesis of the provincial chapters over these last years shows the interplay of uncertainty and hope present in every local reality in which RSCJ live and minister. The contribution of our Sacred Heart family and lay collaborators was a significant part of our preparation.

Carrying the hopes and dreams of RSCJ and the Sacred Heart Family, the delegates to the Special Chapter began to meet in early 2021. Coming from each District and Province, we began to create a “community of discernment.” All of the delegates participated in three preparatory conversations, in groups with diverse languages, cultures, and locations (April – October 2021). We began listening to what was shared from every corner in answer to the question, “How are things beginning to change in your province or in your region? What is your dream for the future of the Society?”

In our different provinces we have explored together how to “be and act as one body and how to share our resources.” Never has the world and the Society of the Sacred Heart been so interconnected as in the last two years. We were bound together by a global pandemic which helped us see more clearly that we belong to one common humanity.

In all this, how would we encounter one another at the Special Chapter? We had to change plans, overcome difficulties, and conquer our fears. We had training sessions on how to use Zoom learning and how to use this new way of communicating among ourselves. We were introduced to a new vocabulary - padlet, mentimeter, breakout rooms, reactions such as raising our hand electronically, and the list went on. Most importantly, we were given instructions on how to cast our vote to help us journey

through the process. We encountered each other face to face through the screen, learning to relate to one another with greater depth even though the virtual “room” prevented the closeness we desired. However, our journey had surely begun!



## Our Journey of Discernment

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Our journey into the Special Chapter 2021 was marked with long periods of prayer and reflection guided by biblical texts which helped create the space for discernment. Throughout the Chapter, our Sacred Heart family joined us online for daily prayer and three Eucharistic celebrations at the Opening of the Chapter, the Feast of the Foundation of the Society and the Closing of the Chapter. This shared online prayer space supported the interior silence in which the Word of God was heard. It united the capitulants, communities and our mission partners. Our *Cor Unum* was deeply felt.

With an open mind, open heart and generosity of spirit, we set out on our task as capitulants toward a new way of organizing ourselves. Soon we realized that we were entering a process of true experimentation, of only pointing the way to something that we hoped to bring into being. The Spirit kept us together and helped us to distinguish in the midst of our complexities the truth and goodness of each one as we listened to each other, to ourselves and to God. Like Sophie, we wanted to live our lives “in obedience to the Holy Spirit.”

This Special Chapter has been more a process than an event, strengthening our confidence and hope, characterized by communion, unity and diversity. On a journey of deep listening, stepping back and considering the call of the Spirit, we studied the reports from the General Council, provincial chapters, commissions, new experiences and organizations already present, the finance and congregational study, and many other documents. All have highlighted our reality as a body: fragile and vulnerable but creative and full of life. The reflections of the whole Society, RSCJ and lay colleagues alike, formed the basis of the process. There was no doubt that we have touched our uniqueness in our unity.

We lived the days of the Chapter in an attitude of contemplation that unites us to Christ, in our work as in our relationships. The work of the

Chapter was rooted in the formal steps of a discernment. A small group met with the facilitators to develop the process in five stages, which served as a foundational structure to keep moving us forward in the Chapter. These five stages highlighted the Spirit's participation in our daily work:

Stage 1: Getting to the Chapter

Stage 2: Reconnecting with the Initial Call

Stage 3: Towards a New Way of Organizing Ourselves

Stage 4: The Spirit and We have Decided

Stage 5: "And you will see greater things...."

While sometimes uncomfortable, the facilitators and the Coordinating Committee, of course with the help of the Spirit, helped us stay on a course that ensured as much as possible that the Chapter considered its questions with a discerning attitude.

Holding a chapter online has been a challenge. Generative listening, time for silence, and personal reflection have been necessary to welcome the action of the Spirit and to recognize the steps that kept opening us to a consensus. Each capitulant had to "let go" of what she held dear to move forward for the common good.

From our days of work, there flowed a force of conversion and transformation that made us available not only to listen and welcome one another but also and above all to distinguish the 'refrains' that the Spirit regularly sang with insistence for the Society. The images from General Chapter 2016 of the body, of bread and of the boat inspired our search for criteria and components that helped us to begin the construction of an archetype of what we want to live in the future. An important step was

to imagine various possible scenarios of regrouping and of sharing our resources to allow the Society to live in a way that points to life and mission, onto a journey towards the future.





## Our Journey towards the Future

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As we developed our processes of discernment, rooted in our personal and communal daily prayer, the chapter community knew that our conversations would soon turn to the question, “How can we better organize ourselves for mission, both now and for the future?” We were asked to consider our aspirations for the future of the Society and what structures would facilitate those aspirations.

The image of a seed planted for future growth emerged to inspire our work.

- What elements of a new model of governance would allow us to grow?
- How will we attend to needs as they change rapidly?
- How do we nourish new growth?

We began with models to help us envision new possibilities for organizing the Society and sharing our resources as One Body. Four models with their strengths and limitations were presented. Each one offered a distinctive way to create new units/entities within the Society to adapt governance relationships and apostolates across boundaries. The models enabled the capitulants to imagine new structures without being bound by any particular one. It also helped us to dream while remaining realistic and flexible.



We thought of new models and integral to them was the need for new styles of leadership and formation. We saw the importance of training and preparation for the new generation of leaders and formators to be



able to offer this service to the Society. Leadership and authority, we were aware, are interrelated topics that required more attention, both to define the terms we use and to explain how they are lived out in the Society.

In the spirit of deep listening we met each other, we listened to one another and the Spirit in virtual breakout rooms through a variety of combinations, in groups named after RSCJ Superiors General, colours, birds and flowers, in pairs or groups, in interest topics, regions and the new generation. We heard the need for deeper and more informed connections among one another, with other religious, and with lay partners; locally and beyond nationality, culture, religion, race and generation. We learned about each other's strengths and fragilities. We saw the need for the wisdom and prayer of our sisters that give us energy for mission. We drew strength from the lives of our sisters who have gone before us. We rejoiced at the legacy that Sophie and Philippine have handed on to us. RSCJ in leadership roles expressed the need for greater care and support in order to sustain them in their service and to help them enliven others. We upheld the value of diversity and acknowledged the challenge of language limitations and historical tensions.

In light of these concerns, a general consensus emerged that the new governance structure could help the Sacred Heart family in each local area be aware of the needs of the world as a whole by connecting us to each other across the globe. Thus, we began to see the structure of the organization as one with ever widening circles, beginning from the local context and increasing in size until the whole world/Society is included. Intertwined in these widening circles are lines of connection through common interests and apostolates, strengthening relationships among individuals and local areas around the world. We began to call these lines of connection "apostolic axes."



In a spirit of prayer, we gathered the common values and hopes that emerged in our conversations. We found points of resonance around these areas: new entities; apostolic axes and interconnection among them; community of goods and sharing of resources; collaboration with others for life and mission; community; formation and training; leadership, co-responsibility and accountability. With these conversations as a background, we began to work in small groups in five areas:

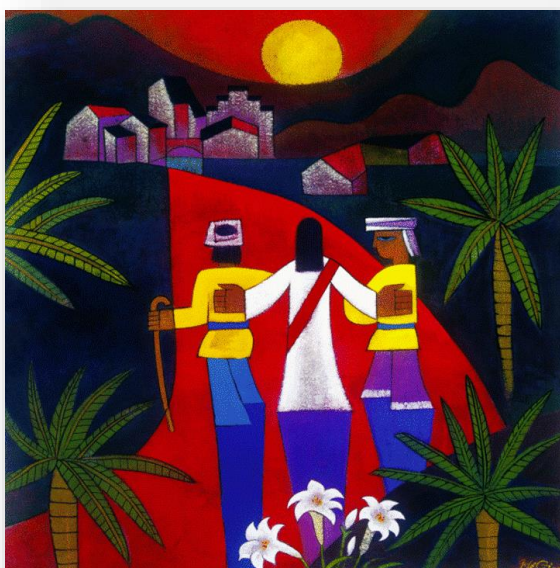
1. To create entities that are larger than provinces and smaller than regions, with a criterion for deciding the composition of those entities
2. To propose criterion for the apostolic axes and a way to integrate them into the life of the Society
3. To develop possible governance structures, including within them ways to enable and support our sharing of resources internationally
4. To suggest stages and concrete steps of implementing the new structures of governance, involving the whole Society

5. To find ways to address more urgent situations that cannot wait for the implementation of new governance structures.

While this process helped us find new ways of doing things, it also clarified the complexity of the undertaking of this Chapter.

Proposals were brought to the plenary session regarding each of these five topics. While the proposals received overwhelming support, the next days were filled with lively and challenging conversations about the details of each proposal. These conversations, facilitated with attention to the Holy Spirit's guidance, brought us to a greater trust and hope in our sisterhood and the mission of the whole Sacred Heart family. With much prayer, stimulating exchanges and letting go of what held us back, these proposals became the decisions and recommendations which were approved by the Special Chapter 2021.

We were, indeed, guided on the way to Emmaus, with Jesus in our midst. In the following days leading to the end of the Chapter, like the disciples, we recognized Jesus and were not our hearts burning?



1. The Special Chapter agrees that the new organization of the Society will include the following aspects:

- The new organization will be made up of new entities smaller than the regions and larger than the provinces.
- The apostolic axes will be incorporated into this new organization according to rhythms and modalities that will be defined.
- The new organization will have new governance structures. These structures will enable and support the putting in common of our resources.

2. The General Council will create an International Planning Commission, after consultation with the membership, the mandate of which will include development of a plan for reorganization of the Society. This Commission will work in collaboration with the General Council and the Provincials and will be accountable to the General Council.

The Special Chapter recommends:

1. That the following aspects be taken into consideration when planning the creation of NEW ENTITIES:
  - Demographics
  - Balance between the needs of sisters and the actual capacity of the sisters
  - Language
  - Collaboration with Mission Partners
  - Sustainability
  - Geography
  - Support for interculturality, Cor Unum and unity
  - Common or emotional history
2. To use as a resource the material generated regarding the Apostolic Axes.
3. That the General Council find new ways to address the URGENCY OF CERTAIN SITUATIONS that exist among the provinces, districts and areas of the Society, taking into consideration the materials generated by the Special Chapter.
4. That the following TOPICS BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION when forming the new organizational structures
  - Training
  - Communities
  - Leadership and authority
  - Laity-Mission
  - Ongoing experience as a source of learning

5. That the General Council and the International Planning Commission take into consideration the POTENTIAL SCENARIOS OF NEW ENTITIES described in the attached maps (3 maps) in the planning process.
6. That the General Council and the International Planning Commission take into account the scenarios of possible STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT (attached as an appendix) in the planning process.
7. That the General Council, in collaboration with the Planning Commission and the Finance Commission, take into account the elements developed for THE SHARING OF OUR COMMUNITY OF GOODS (attached as an appendix) in all planning for the future.
8. That the General Council and the International Planning Commission use the materials generated by the Special Chapter on implementation as a resource when developing their plan towards creation of new entities and a sharing of our resources. We recommend that the plan include at least the following: work with Provincials and Provincial Councils, engagement with the Assembly of Provincials, participation of the membership and the family of the Sacred Heart, ongoing education of the membership and the leadership, and a proposed method of *ad experimentum* that reflects the various realities of the current provinces/district/areas.

And now, with some directions that the Chapter has taken, we will return the work to our sisters and lay colleagues to begin the next steps in this exciting process of creating something new. The "*fate of the Society is in our hands*" as we continue to listen to the answers to the questions of who is God calling us to be and what is God calling us to do as we walk the journey together.

## Closing Ceremony of the Special Chapter

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Thank you, community of the Casa Grande and our sisters and friends in Mexico for sharing this Eucharistic celebration with all of us across the globe who are part of our Sacred Heart family. I feel like we are with you in your chapel, even though we are thousands of miles away! Thank you for welcoming us to your home, as always!

Each time we gather to celebrate Eucharist as we have done today, we enter into the paschal mystery and remember that like Jesus, our lives are shaped by life, death and resurrection. The Eucharist is a moment to thank God and to be humbly grateful for God's constant love. It is a time for us to remember that we are called to live lives rooted in this same love, to make God's love incarnate, even when it is not easy. Ultimately this is the essence of the Special Chapter we have just completed.

I want to thank each one of you who have prayed for us through these days of the Special Chapter. We have felt the power of your prayer and experienced the power of the Spirit acting among us for the sake of the whole. This Chapter has been an AMAZING EXPERIENCE of COR UNUM and the coming together of the One Body that is the Society of the Sacred Heart.

I want to thank all of you who participated in the preparation for this Chapter – RSCJ and lay men and women who shared their hopes and dreams, their desires and their fears – who believe in our mission and took the time to pray and reflect together on how we can live this mission better because of doing what we do together within our local communities and as a global community. Your experience was an enriching part of this Chapter.

There are so many people who have made this Chapter possible – our facilitators and consultants who have walked and worked with us over many months, all the commissions and committees, each person who

contributed their skills and gifts for the sake of the whole Society. Behind the scenes, so many people have been working carefully. Without our Technology Committee and our Communications Committee this meeting would not have been possible and certainly you would not have been able to participate and follow the workings of the Spirit during these last 24 days. Our secretarial and logistics team, our interpreters and translators have worked night and day to ensure that we receive the working papers and that despite our differences in languages and time zones, we could communicate with each other. The secretary of the Chapter, with the help of the Minutes Committee and other assistance, has made sure that we have a clear and accurate memory of all that has taken place during these days. The Liturgy Committee has been phenomenal in sensing how to place our work into the context of the essential – our relationship with God, the world, the past, the present and the future. And they have accompanied our global community in your prayer for this Chapter. I want to thank the community in Joigny, our sisters in Rome, and this community in Mexico for all the work that went into making a global celebration of the liturgy possible.

It definitely has taken a village to make this Chapter a successful and meaningful time.

At the opening of this Chapter I shared my hope and my prayer that God would give us the courage and the wisdom we need to enter into this moment of discernment, that we would have the freedom to let go of anything that would block the Spirit, that we would humbly acknowledge our need of each other and live this Special Chapter with a sense of sisterly love and fidelity to the Heart of Jesus. God answered my prayer and your prayer in very concrete and real ways.

This has been a chapter of discernment. And, like any discernment or retreat experience, when you go deep it is not always easy. Having this Chapter during this Covid pandemic and at the same time that world



leaders met to address the urgent climate issues, has heightened our consciousness that no one can walk alone – we want and need to learn from each other and we need to pay attention to those who are most burdened by the injustices and inequities of our world. We have humbly and concretely recognized, in a new way, our need of each other as well as our need of our lay partners in mission in order to live our lives and mission with vitality. I particularly want to thank all the women and men who work with us, especially those who care for our sisters who are elderly and infirm. You help all of us RSCJ to participate as fully as possible in life and to live our mission to the end.

It was very clear in this Special Chapter that we as a congregation are walking the same road together. I felt that we were in the same room, even though geographically we were all over the globe. One could feel the commitment of each one of us to our mission and to each other. This was tangible. I also felt that we were closer to our people and our realities during this online Chapter, living locally and connecting globally. In a very real way, the capitulants brought their people and their realities “into the room with them”.

So, did we create something new in this Chapter? The words of TS Eliot have returned to me over and over:

*We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time...*

I believe that the seeds of this Chapter have been germinating for a long time, certainly from the Chapter of 2016 but long before that. I experienced in this Chapter a depth of our commitment. I could see that we are imprinted with the spirit of Madeleine Sophie, with a passion to discover and make known God’s love in the best way we are able. Our foremothers, who are part of our communion of saints were also with us in the room. I could imagine Sophie and Philippine, talking, debating,

probably with times of tension, when Philippine persisted in her vision and desire to do something new and Sophie perhaps a bit more cautious of this new undertaking. In many ways, we are like them – recognizing that we need to do something new but sometimes not sure that we are ready or have all the means we need to realize our hopes and vision. This Chapter is like a lighthouse that will give us direction, help us to follow the star and save us from ending up in the wrong place or crashing into the rocks.

As One Body, we are already in the boat and we will move forward with something new, new ways of being in relationship with each other, discovering new ways to live our mission as educators, with the same passion and humility as Sophie. For those of you who are RSCJ and also our lay partners in mission, I want to share that the capitulants undertook their responsibility surrounded by you. Who we are, who we serve, what is most important to us, was in the background of each conversation. Sometimes the stretching our imaginations to create something new was painful, being sensitive to what is now and knowing that change is both necessary and hard.

There is a call for each one of us in all of this, not just the capitulants. In order to have new life, we must accept the pangs of giving birth. We are now entering into a time when all of us will need to let go of some things in order to have new life. My prayer now is that we can enter into the new phase on the journey towards the Chapter of 2024, trusting in God's desire for us that the Society carry on its mission with passion and vitality, willing to let go of what might hinder us and choosing to be women of hope.

The fate of the Society really is in our hands. All of us are being asked to become artisans of hope, adding our small piece to the mosaic of life. I learned a lot about myself and about RSCJ during this Special Chapter. Let us really believe that we can trust in the fidelity of God and the love of our sisters, that it is okay to not know everything, that it's good to ask

for help and that all works of art, including ourselves and this little Society, have imperfections and still are much-loved works in progress.

It's not by chance that we end the Special Chapter and begin this next part of our journey in Advent, waiting, accompanied by Mary as we anticipate new birth – knowing that God is already with us and yet living in expectation, longing and hope of new life.

As we end this Chapter, I'd like to share the wisdom of Teilhard de Chardin who suffered because of his vision and yet persisted faithfully to the end:

*Above all, trust in the slow work of God.*

*We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.*

*We should like to skip the intermediate stages.*

*We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.*

*And yet it is the law of all progress  
that it is made by passing through some stages of instability –  
and that it may take a very long time.*

*And so I think it is with you;  
your ideas mature gradually – let them grow,  
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.  
Don't try to force them on,  
as though you could be today what time  
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)  
will make of you tomorrow.*

*Only God could say what this new spirit  
gradually forming within you will be.  
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing  
that his hand is leading you,*

*and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself  
in suspense and incomplete.*

Now Bozena as Secretary of the Chapter and I will sign the official Minutes.

And with these words, we will close this Special Chapter of 2021. I send the capitulants to their home countries and provinces, to return to your ministries and your people, grateful for each one of you, knowing that we are together on this journey forward to live the charism and mission of the Society with passion and love for the sake of God's people and the well-being of our world.

**Barbara Dawson, rscj  
Superior General  
2 December 2021**

**ANNEX:**  
**WORKING DOCUMENTS**





## Imagining scenarios for new entities ...

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We imagined scenarios for the composition of entities trying to take into account the criteria that we consider most important...

It is only an "exercise" and experience that has helped us to go back again and again to the criteria, to listen to what we have been talking about these days and to dialogue on the different realities, processes, history, possibilities and also the tensions in provinces that we had more difficulty in situating or grouping from these criteria at the present time. It gives us a sense of reality and realism about ourselves and the Society as a whole.

We are aware that it is just that: to imagine some ways of grouping ourselves. We are aware that this requires a deep study and knowledge of the realities and a discernment from these criteria, taking into account different variables and in a participatory process with the provinces.

As we dialogued, we realized that the creation of new entities should not override other articulations that already exist or can be created at other

levels that give us vitality: regional, with other provinces, in mission projects, etc.

Sustainability is a very important criterion that is at the base of these proposals. We are concerned about the sustainability of some of the entities we are proposing. We consider that these proposals would be a horizon towards which we can gradually move forward.

## Scenario 1

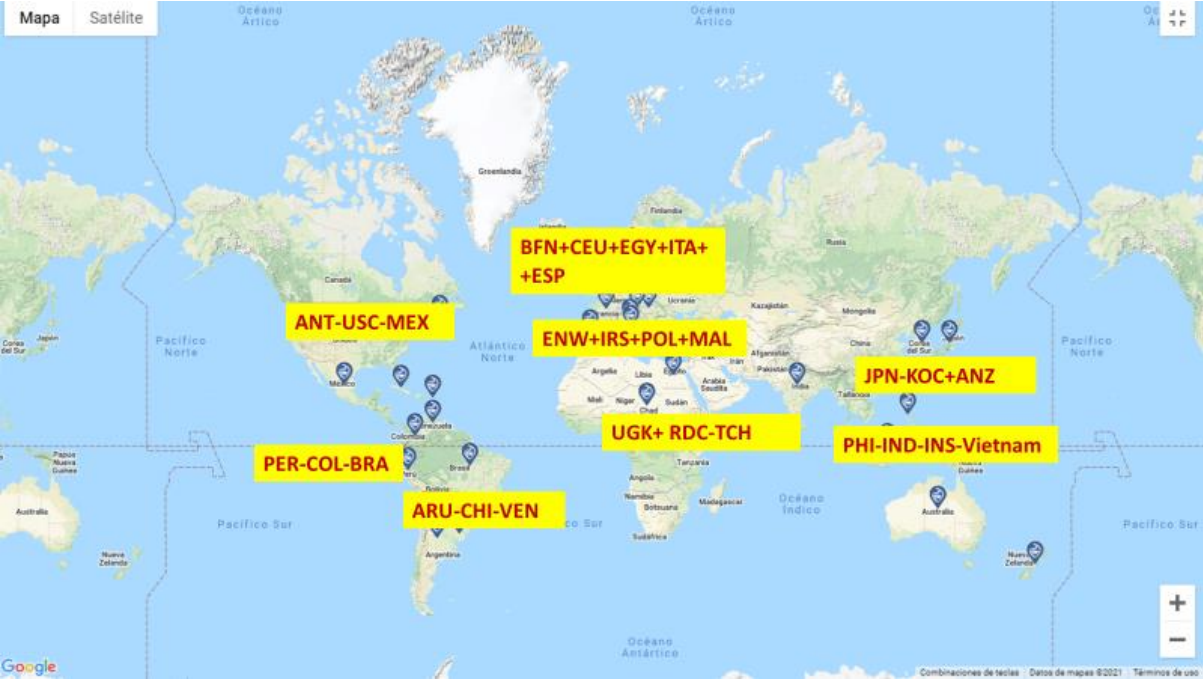




# Scenario 2

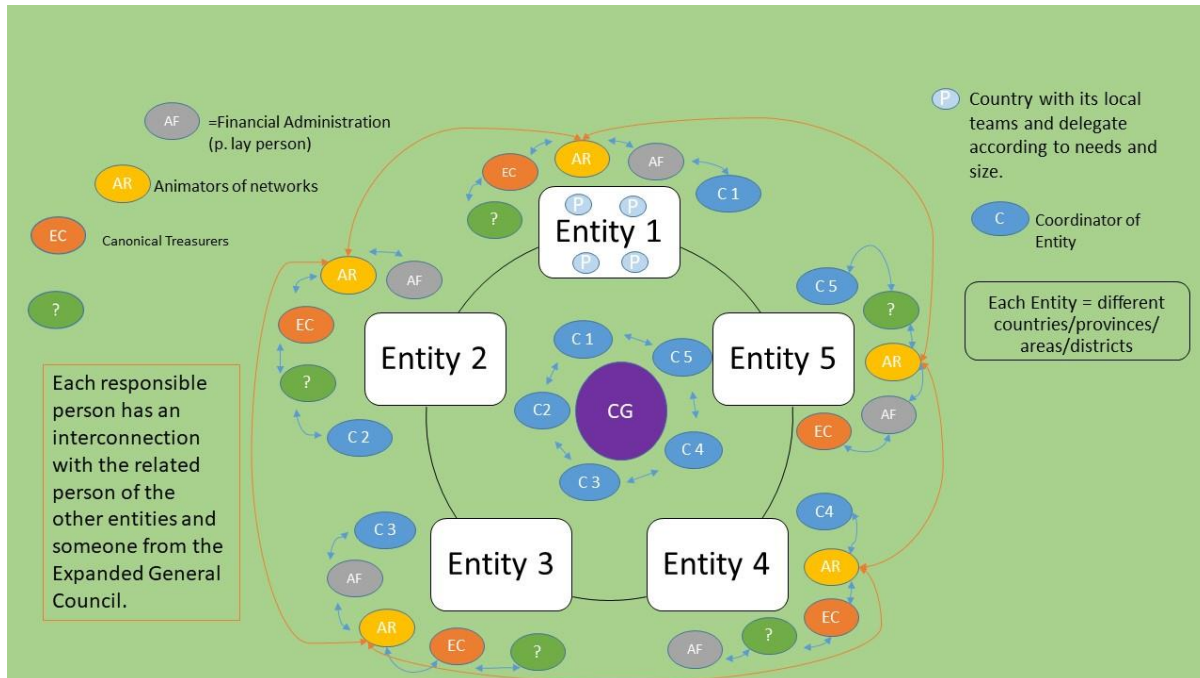


# Scenario 3



# Imagining scenarios for new government structures

## Government structure - Scenario 1



### 1. Each ENTITY has a leadership team composed of:

- a. An Entity Coordinator that serves with authority and
  - ✓ facilitates (coordinates, promotes) the pooling of human resources (RSCJ) within the entity;
  - ✓ receives information from the delegates and supports them in their service;
  - ✓ assembles the delegates to address specific issues of the entity.
- b. A Canonical Treasurer
- c. A Financial Administrator of the group that:
  - ✓ facilitates the pooling of economic resources;
  - ✓ receives administrative reports and oversees financial management with the help of experts;

d. An Animator of the different active networks.

2.The coordinators of the different entities form an EXPANDED COUNCIL.  
It serves as an intermediate authority with the General Council.

3.The GENERAL COUNCIL meets with the Expanded Council.

Each community (country/province/area/district) of the entity has:

- A delegate who collaborates with the leader of the entity.
- An administrator (preferably a lay person) who manages budgets, balance sheets, investments. As required.

The General Council assumes:

- Formation
- Internal affairs of the Society of the Sacred Heart
- Network of elderly and infirm sisters
- Congregational patrimony (the Superior General has ultimate responsibility for the spiritual and financial patrimony of the SSH)
- Guarantees that the resources (of all types) reach the entities

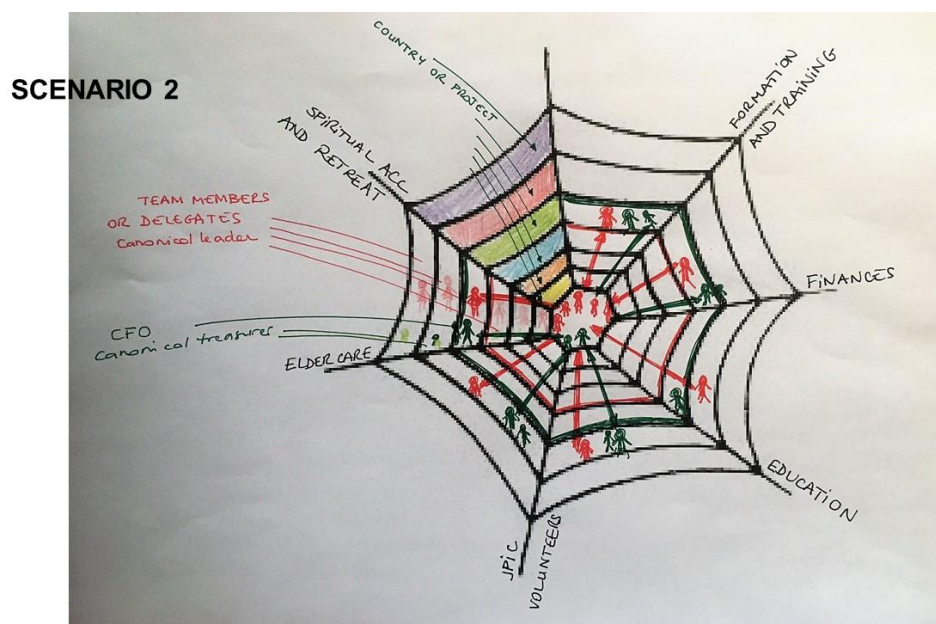
Entities and localities assume:

- JPIC
- Youth
- Education networks
- Canonical Treasurer (requires specialized training)
- Formation

Lay persons could assume:

- Administration
- Work with youth
- Educational networks (formal and popular)

## Government structure - Scenario 2



(Cfr. Constitutions §139 et seq.)

- ✓ We think that this prototype could be implemented *ad experimentum*
- ✓ We have considered that some entities could be called by the General Council to make a start now and others will follow at their pace

### LOCAL LEVEL

*subsidiarity and co-responsibility are the key principles*

- ✓ Communities or ministries, school networks...
- ✓ Lay staff of correspondents if needed (country and languages)
  - One local bursar (to take into account languages and civil laws )
  - Community assistant (care of the sisters, nursing homes)
  - Secretary if needed (communication, translation etc.)

## INTERMEDIATE ENTITY ( GROUPING COUNTRIES)

### Participation and common discernment

Holacracy, which is a mode of decision-making and governance that allows a structure to self-organise as a living entity.

#### ✓ Team

- One canonical leader/coordinator
- A permanent team member? (with some delegation)
- 3 to 5 team members, representatives of the main realities and issues of the entity: countries, ministries... (for the latter as needed.). Named after consultation of the members of the entity.
- X delegates (or groups) accountable to the leader, but who do not have to take part in all the team meetings: e.g for elderly sisters, for networks of schools, for youth and vocations...
- One canonical treasurer (possible member of the team or not) and one lay CFO, who will work with the team monthly for some time.

#### ✓ A RSCJ, **canonical leader** would be appointed by the Superior General after consultation with the members of the entity.

- She would be responsible for the communities and works in the entity and for final decisions.
- She would be a member of an extended General Council (so to bring the reality of this part of the SSH and to hear about the other parts).
- She has a permanent RSCJ assistant (with delegation).

#### ✓ Lay staff

- CFO, secretary, elder care assistant, etc.

#### ✓ Transversal work groups or committees composed of RSCJ and laity

- JPIC and volunteers, youth and vocations ministry; education; eldercare; finances; formation and training; initial formation (candidacy, PTV)

## GENERAL COUNCIL/TEAM

- ✓ **A Superior General** elected by the General Chapter
- ✓ **4 fixed General Councilors**, appointed at the General Chapter and chosen by the new Superior General, in charge of common formation, common apostolic priorities (education, JPIC , elderly sisters, spiritual accompaniment and retreat)
- ✓ **An expanded general team**: with the leaders of the intermediate entity so as to be able to hold together life and mission in a global approach ( 1 week/ 3 months, 1 zoom/month ) and to enable this extended GC to be well informed so as to discern and take decisions (sending people for mission, sharing finances, asking for formation, handing over places or project, etc.)

### Added Tasks

- Initial and on-going formation and training
- Training in teamwork and leadership, animation and management (so that it responds to the call to be and act as a single body and to the urgency of current needs)
- Final arbitration on human and financial resources for the mission

## OBEDIENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- ✓ RSCJ accountability is about life (vows, fraternal life in community) and mission to the leader of the zone.
- ✓ Language: the intermediate entity may be composed of several countries and different languages. This element has to be taken into consideration for the dialogues with the sisters;
- ✓ Delegation and mandate: the intermediate entity's leader can delegate a RSCJ to visit the communities and works and to initiate dialogues on obedience.
- ✓ The obediences/sending are given by the intermediate entity's leader after discernment by the entity's team and the needs/calls of the whole body (through the expanded General Team)



### I. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

#### A. *Source of Funds:*

1. Investments already at the central level
2. Pooled contributions from the entities, for distribution among four funds and/or surplus invested centrally
3. Other income, e.g., donations, legacies, inheritances
4. Income, properties, investments, etc., owned by the entity

#### B. *Distribution of Funds*

1. Setting aside a budget:
  - a. for the Motherhouse and General Council expenses
  - b. for implementation of the Special Chapter decisions and formation for RSCJ and lay collaborators (travel, face-to-face meetings, etc.)
  - c. for each entity's budget, according to their needs
2. Four funds held and distributed centrally:
  - a. Sustainability Fund: to support initial and ongoing formation, care for the sick and infirm, communities that cannot sustain themselves
  - b. Solidarity Fund: short term projects managed by RSCJ – why not include salaries for personnel?

- c. Mission Fund: support for projects that need counterpart funding with criteria and guidelines defined
- d. Emergency Fund: for quick response to disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes, etc.; simple requirements like the COVID response
  - Have a lay person in the Motherhouse/entity (?) Finance Office to help access funding agencies for Solidarity and Mission projects and to write the proposals. There needs to be consistent monitoring and reporting of the project.

### ***C. Management of Funds***

1. Maintain the International Investment Committee with current functions for maximizing income for global use and exercising oversight on local investments due to government constraints.
2. Maintain the International Finance Commission with additional roles:
  - a. to help the Society advance in sharing of resources, providing the Body with updated data on the financial situation of the whole and its parts
  - b. to advise the Society on the overall orientation of the management of our resources, with respect to places and laws of countries
  - c. to work with entities on the use of financial resources for mission and life



3. Some funds are kept at the central level, some at the entity level; the proportion will be determined by the center in dialogue with the entity.
4. For the entity we propose:
  - a. A lay CFO and local assistant wherever needed and one Canonical Treasurer.
  - b. Training and working together
  - c. Have the same chart of accounts for the Society to make it easy to consolidate expenses and to have the same understanding of the use of finances throughout the Body. Each entity will make a budget for three years, reviewing it each year. This will facilitate the planning at the central level for the use of finances.

#### ***D. Principles***

1. Funds are centralized: the entity makes a list of material goods, finances, properties... and the center will dialogue with the entity about receiving the surplus.
2. Entities that have a deficit are given what they need to sustain their communities and ministries and something additional to share with those in need.
3. The principle of equity among entities should also be followed within the entities, i.e., among the communities comprising the entity and its ministries.
4. Respect, transparency and mutual accountability are observed at all levels.

## ***E. Process***

1. To find ways to dialogue about our lifestyle, community of goods, the use of our financial resources.
2. Entities generate a list of their needs, as well as the gifts they can share with other entities. Same with communities within the entities.
3. The group of CFOs and canonical treasurers for the entities and Generalate can study the resource mapping and help us move forward in sharing resources.

## **II. TRAINING & FORMATION PROGRAM:**

1. Have teams consisting of resource persons in finance, spirituality and mental models to go around to the entities to spread transformative awareness, using the local language as much as possible.
2. Offer to get training to international, inter-congregational trainings in finance, formation, e.g., Jesuit Leadership Training, dicastery, UISG...
3. Ask the leadership team of the entity for a mentorship program in change management, team building and leadership.

**Spirit, Creator,**  
You make all things new,  
You go ahead of us on the way.  
Light up the way we look at things, make us able to see  
The ways you are acting in us, in others and in the world.

**Spirit of discernment,**  
Guide us throughout this chapter.  
Inspire our thoughts, our words, and  
the way we speak them,  
Guide our assemblies and our conversations  
In our common search to better serve you.

**Spirit of light,**  
Dwell in each RSCJ,  
in the whole family of the Sacred Heart  
so that your priorities become ours.  
May your inspiration enlighten us.  
May your power enable us to act.

Amen

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