

**CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL  
CONVOKING THE 2005 GENERAL CHAPTER TO  
THE MAJOR SUPERIORS AND ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION**

Dear Confreres:

The end of term is approaching for the General and Provincial governments. In view of the decree of the 1999 General Chapter that the future Chapter be convened before the end of the first quarter of the year ending the General Council's term in office (cf. Decree #5), having consulted with the Provinces beforehand (cf. D. 230), and with the consent of the General Council, by means of this letter (cf. D. 229), I hereby convoke the General Chapter to begin February 26, 2005, in Rome. Chapter participants are to be present in Rome no later than the 25th of February. The conclusion of the Chapter is tentatively set for March 13, 2005, subject to the approval of the Chapter participants (cf. C. 249).

The Major Superiors should ensure that the Provinces and local communities entrusted to their care convoke local and provincial chapters. Each Province and Vice Province, having notified the General Superior beforehand, should hold its chapter at least three months before the General Chapter (cf. C. 250). Local and provincial chapters should proceed according to the directives prescribed in our law: for Provincial Chapters: C. 250-253, D. 251-253; for local Chapters: C. 254, D. 254-257. Major Superiors are reminded that the first session of the Provincial Chapter should elect the necessary delegates and substitutes to participate in the General Chapter (cf. C. 239, 251), as well as discuss and prepare proposals for consideration by the General Chapter (cf. D. 252.7). A copy of the minutes and acts of the Provincial Chapter is to be sent as soon as possible to the Superior General and his Council for review and approval (cf. D. 253).

In preparation for the chapters, the Provincial Superiors are reminded to prepare a report on their Provinces which includes information on their personnel, disciplinary, material and economic status, and their apostolic works (cf. C. 241).

The General Ukrainian Vicariate, according to the norm of D. 233 and §10j of its statutes, will hold a Chapter of all professed members at a time and place chosen by the Vicariate Superior delegate, subject to the approval of the Superior General and his Council. The confreres of the Vicariate are entitled to elect one representative to the General Chapter, as well as one substitute. For the purpose of electing a representative to the General Chapter, the house of Atok (Cameroon) will be united with the Nyakinama (Rwanda) house, in accord with D. 233 and D. 254. Provincial Superiors are reminded of the change made to D. 216 by the 1999 General Chapter: "Those who have the right to vote and to be elected, if they are working outside their own Province (Vice-Province, Vicariate or General Vicariate) are resident in that place for more than twelve months, shall take part in the voting and are eligible for the offices of the Province (Vice-Province, Vicariate, etc.) in which they are working" (cf. D. 216a).

No later than three months before the General Chapter, the General government will send to all the Provinces, Vice-Province, General Vicariate and houses directly under its jurisdiction, in accord with D. 229, the tentative order and agenda of the General Chapter, along with the proposed "Instructions" for its celebration (cf. 231). Provinces will find these Instructions, suitably adapted, to be of great use in conducting their own Chapters (cf. D. 251).

The celebration of an ordinary General Chapter is a significant moment in the life of the Congregation. Its goal is to protect the patrimony of the Congregation, to promote its continuing progress and renewal according to its charism and mission (suited to the needs of the times), to treat matters of major importance, to promulgate appropriate decrees, and to elect a new General government. To prepare for this important moment, I direct all the confreres to reread the sections of the Constitutions and Directory that treat of the Chapters. I encourage, where possible, that this review be held in common, before the celebration of the local chapters. I particularly enjoin on all that they take up with seriousness their participation in the chapters, and that they present the observations and proposals which they, before the Lord, believe are necessary for the wellbeing of the Congregation.

To aid this preparation, I ask the confreres to consider the following questions, which we expect will be treated during the General Chapter: In this era of fewer vocations, of an aging membership in different parts of the world, and, consequently, of smaller communities and provinces: How can the Congregation (i.e., local, provincial, global) better organize itself to meet these changing circumstances? What structural changes would assist the Congregation at this time (e.g., joining together smaller Provinces)? Where should we concentrate our limited resources of people and funds? Where is the best prospect of future growth and development for our Congregation? How can we better promote vocations to our Congregation? How can we make our Marian missions a truly Congregational effort? In view of the limited financial resources that are available to the Congregation, how can we improve and make more effective the administration of the Congregation's material goods? How do we evaluate the religious

witness of our community? Is our witness to the vows sound and enthusiastic? How can we promote greater contentment and fidelity in living the vows?

In addition to the questions that are supplied above, the General Liturgical Committee is preparing an updated Marian ritual and prayerbook for approval by the Chapter. Likewise, the General Prefect of Formation, having consulted the formators of the Congregation, is preparing an updated version of the *Ratio Formationis Marianorum* for review by the upcoming Chapter. These documents will be sent to the Provinces by the end of the current year.

Since the fruitfulness of the General Chapter is due above all to the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit, I ask the confreres to pray that all the participants be open and docile to the Spirit's inspirations. Therefore, in accord with D. 230, I ask each local community to offer a novena for this intention through the intercession of Blessed George, our Renovator, in anticipation of his feast on January 27, 2005, with a Mass that day to be offered for this intention. Further, during the celebration of the General Chapter, I ask that each confrere, either in private or in common, pray for its participants by reciting daily the "Prayer for the Congregation." Finally, all are encouraged to support the work of the Chapter by offering their Masses, prayers, sacrifices and good works for this intention. Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Immaculately Conceived, and of the patrons of our Congregation, may Almighty God grant that this Chapter be fruitful and effective!

Given in Rome, July 31, 2004  
the feast of St. Ignatius Loyola, patron of the Congregation.

**Fr. Mark Garrow, M.I.C.**  
**Superior General**