



2010 CROSIER GENERAL CHAPTER

Starting Afresh from A Place of Light

State of the Order Report

Introduction: Emerging Urgency

This State of the Order Report concentrates on the tasks and challenges given to the worldwide Order at the Ordinary 2009 General Chapter. The Ordinary Chapter of 2009 spelled out a future direction and specific directives that entail a planned process of change in the provinces and local communities, aimed to give tangible visibility to the communal, fraternal, liturgical, and formational elements of our Crosier way of life. These concrete components of the Order's religious life were formulated at the general chapter to specify how we intend to work at **Starting Afresh from A Place of Life**. They touch on the originating inspiration of religious life at Clairlieu and give fresh impetus and specify sustaining norms to support our religious life in Crosier community.

The first year for working out the implementation of the decisions of the Ordinary Chapter has seen significant steps in the direction of strategic planning to accomplish the aims detailed in the relict. I will expand on these steps further on in this report. Thus, this State of the Order Report, for the Extraordinary Jubilee Chapter of 2010, intends to sharpen the focus on the work of starting afresh we have set before ourselves. The report will focus on the implementation process and highlight how it will involve the concentrated attention of members and leadership.

Throughout, this report presumes the 2009 State of the Order Report and, in particular, strives to underline the urgency of the work before us. In the 2009 State of the Order Report the General Chapter began to study some of the key data and projections for the next ten years. These data give special urgency to our actions and plans now. I return to the most salient of them, in this report, to underscore their relevance and urgency.

The statistical projections on membership trends for the coming ten years are startling. The loss of 130 members in one ten year period is the largest drop in a comparable period for the last 50 years. Calmly interpreted, that loss is explained by the normal course of aging: the largest cohort of members in their 70s and 80s approaches the end of life's course. The more dramatic interpretation, however, will accent the challenge and burden that the sharp decline places on the present Order members who will carry on.

According to present trends, by 2020, only 300 members constitute the entire Order of the Holy Cross. About 100 of that 300 will be in initial formation (all of these, thus, are not yet members as of 2010). Accordingly, the other 200 members in solemn vows, especially those in the age cohorts where Crosier religious life leadership is expected from them, have unparalleled responsibility on their shoulders. Vocational accompaniment and Religious formation work stand out as paramount and privileged tasks to consolidate the energies and focus of this group of 200.

We know that the only path to growth in Crosier religious life is through the rejuvenation of members. That "fresh start" is signaled concretely in the faith profession of vows, pro-

nounced at the end of the novitiate. The Crosier Order needs to place a higher priority on initial formation and an unashamed bold acceptance of new members into the Order.

The second set of data that presses for a closer and more urgent review are related to vocational perseverance. The picture of Crosier formation and perseverance of candidates from initial entry through solemn vows has been weaker than that of most other religious groups. While one can always and rightfully expect that the formation process includes selection and decision-making to leave religious life, both from the candidate's side and from the Order's, nevertheless our Crosier candidates have been leaving at a higher rate than other congregations' averages.

The challenge for our Order is to have better and more intensive personal accompaniment of candidates and higher quality formation programs. We have begun to work at addressing this challenge, but it is obviously not a one-time crisis or a one year's decision to fix it.

Addressing vocational accompaniment and initial formation will entail steady and solid priority given to formation work in local communities of strong religious life conviction and generous fraternity. This priority needs to demand careful planning.

More and better-trained formators need to be part of the Crosier Plan for the coming ten-year window of opportunity. How many more? That, of course, depends on how many sustainable formation programs there ought to be throughout the Order. Presently the presumed pattern is that every province and proprovince each, individually, provides Crosier formation. That preset assumption and its value as a guide for the future is beginning to crumble in many provinces.

Crosier formation and leadership

The general chapter (2009) considered Crosier formation in the contemporary globalized and highly mobile world an appreciated challenge but could not name explicitly how to address it to anyone's full satisfaction. The challenge and urgency might be detailed concretely as follows.

If six (pro)provinces each conduct all levels of initial formation on their own, requiring minimally three to six formators, the formation responsibility alone calls for 18 to 36 Order members working in formation. Even if we retain present preset patterns where only three (pro)provinces (e.g. Indonesia, Congo, Brazil) shoulder the burden of conducting Order formation, the Order chooses a future that fosters only continuing the present and past way of doing things. It is too unimaginative and merely static to just go on following past trends where each province makes or breaks it on their own.

The Order's members and leaders have the challenge of both supplying excellence in formation and creating broader more global range formation possibilities for attracting candidates to Crosier Religious Life in these coming ten years. Planning for additional, interprovincial, strategies in the Order's formation program is part of our present challenge and was named as a pressing future component for the Order in the coming ten years.

Crosier formation occurs in Crosier community. Each formation community demands critical mass and solid leadership. Thus, in addition to the role of formators, the question of leadership stands out as a high demand. The burdens of supplying quality leadership in 7 areas and 10 communities (pories, provinces, proprovinces and general leadership) falls on



this diminishing pool of members. Both superiors and councils, economes and fund raisers (at all levels) must come from this limited personnel pool. Our younger provinces and proprovinces feel presently “not ready” and overwhelmed with all that is demanded of them. The wave of the future, however, will not slow down for us to just catch our breath or frantically reach higher ground. The future Crosier Religious life leadership needs and demands on younger members in their 30s and 40s are already clear even now. Engaged commitment in community and personal experience by solemnly professed members in chapter responsibility, building fraternal community, and mutual accountability, are all central to gaining a general preparedness for Crosier religious life leadership.

When an organization is in significant downward numerical decline, competition for resources tends to increase (especially for personnel and financial resources). Especially among the younger parts of the Order, where establishing their own national strengths seems the timely thing to do, the competition can be felt in this way: other provinces should supply the Order’s demands and need, so that “we in our province” do not lose our own foothold on the future in the places where we are at present.

Thus, a major challenge I want to highlight in this extraordinary Jubilee Chapter and bring to bear on our coming work in implementation is the urgent and pressing need to cooperate well and collaborate generously between provinces in securing a shared Order wide future. Cooperation between the provinces and proprovinces of the Order is already an important component in planning. The reception of three novices in Blessed Theodore this year and the confident hope for beginning an initial formation program in Brazil already now have need for developing strategies that will incorporate interprovincial cooperation as part of the possibility for success. Wahyu Salib and Sang Kristus also have begun cooperation in formation. But cooperative efforts must be strengthened and broadened to meet world wide order needs. Currently there is no program for initial Crosier formation in international English. This significant deficit needs to concern us all as we plan our preferred future for the world wide Order.

Responsibility for the Order’s life as a whole needs to exercise the imaginations and the real sacrifice of all parts of the Order within this coming decade. It may feel untimely to make international demands on the young parts of the Order. However, from the perspective of planning, it is also already time.

Planning Process

Having looked at key urgent issues that surfaced at the General Chapter 2009 and that need to continue to stir the creative imagination and response of our Order on the threshold of a new century of Crosier History, in the following sections, I now present in more detail a report on the planning process that has been evolving in the first year following the ordinary general chapter.

Two provinces will have held their provincial chapters (Sang Kristus & Blessed Theodore) and one proprovince will have held a consultation prior to the extraordinary Chapter. Congo and the United States are already planning their provincial chapter meetings for next year. And the Brazilian confreres are actively engaging in community planning work prior to taking up residence in Brazil. Each province is working to develop a long range plan for the development of the Order’s life in the area. In addition, local community’s are charged with planning change in their local arrangement so as to incorporate the directives of the General Chapter. The strong need for planning surfaced at the General Chapter 2009 both in order



to implement the directives and decisions of the chapter, but also enable provinces and communities to focus personnel, time, energies, and finances on the work that needs to be done.

This section of the report will bring members up to date on the progress made in organizing planning initiatives in this first year of implementation. It will also keep in focus the significant work that still needs to be accomplished. Further, it will suggest ways in which province and community members can gain skills and cooperating in working at planning and working with a plan.

Progress in Planning our Preferred Crosier Religious Future

Shortly after the conclusion of the 2009 General Chapter the elected councilors and master general began working on developing a draft implementation proposal for the general council meeting of December. The basic approach was to begin with the decisions of the general chapter, listed in the relict. Following that, the chapter decisions were formulated into operational goals, along with detailed steps to accomplish the goal set. The general council thoroughly reviewed and revised the General Chapter Implementation Plan and subsequently adopted and published it for the overall Order membership.

In working through the entire set of decisions and directives of the general chapter, and reviewing the minutes of the chapter meeting, it is clear that the Order needs to have and provide time for accomplishing the directives set at the chapter. But providing time also entails structuring that time so that the time provided is also productive work time and assures accomplishing the directives set out for us in the different provinces and communities.

Recognizing the Need and Urgency to Plan Implementation

During both the December meeting of the general council and the April-May meeting, the leadership explored the planning implications for implementation of the chapter. In December the council reviewed the benefits of planning and, as a contrast, noted what results when there is no active planning.

Benefits. The central benefits attached to planning are these: planning creates a forum for understanding why the province, proprovince or community exists and how the shared values should influence decisions. Planning fosters communication and teamwork among leadership, membership, and staff. Planning lays the groundwork for meaningful change by stimulating thinking and focusing on what is really important to the long range success of the Order. Planning brings everyone together to pursue opportunities for better meeting the needs of the Church and ever-changing world.

Results of no planning. On the deficit side, when there is no active planning, there results a number of significant difficulties. Most especially, without planning the main reason for change becomes response to outside stimuli and pressures. Equally, without planning, competition for resources (personnel and finances) develops among leaders and members in the Order. Priorities are driven by individuals rather than the community, province or proprovince. And finally, responding to crises becomes the rule.

Conditions. As the general council reviewed the conditions for successful planning to implement the general chapter directives it became clear that a number of pre-requisites need to be anticipated. Provincial leaders and councils need to commit to and support the entire



process. The ownership issue includes participation and encouragement of members to remain engaged. There needs to be an adequate commitment of province and community resources to complete the planning process as designed. This commitment includes leadership time, membership time and energy, and money. The planning process includes revising the status quo and asks hard questions. In many ways, the general chapter already began to ask hard questions and detailed significant directives for revising the status quo. But the province leadership and community membership need to plan to work directly on following through for translating those directives into reality at the province and local level.

Workshop. As a conclusion to the December general council meeting, it was decided that there would need to be clearer help given directly to the provinces in working out province and community level planning. The council directed the master general to find a consultant to interview at the next council meeting and also to set up a workshop to help leaders work out the processes for planning in their own provinces and communities in October of 2010. For participation in this October planning workshop the membership of the general council would be supplemented with an additional person from each of the provinces and pro-provinces, intended to help design the planning process in each of the respective provinces.

The year 2011 will, then, be devoted to giving time to complete the development of an implementation plan in each of the provinces. These province implementation plans, which will include community plans, will serve as the basic framework for developing the spiritual well being report of communities and provinces, as spelled out in the general chapter directives.

At the heart of the 2009 General Chapter's decisions was the local community, its fraternal life, its common liturgical rhythms of prayer, its ministry and service outreach and its setting as a community of formation. Thus a number of the general chapter directives concretely implicate planning in local community chapters to actualize the normative components of Crosier Religious Life. Planning out how communities, under the guidance of province leadership, will attain these set goals over time has already begun in this first year after the chapter. Some communities may, indeed, be further along than others. But the ultimate aim in planning is not mere mechanistic compliance with directives, but rather authentic religious ownership and realization of communities dedicated to God, whose members become new in mind and heart, intent on God.

Planning consultant

The planning consultant interviewed in April represented a consulting agency especially founded for helping religious congregations and orders conduct planning. They have experience in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Despite the threats to air travel due to the Island Volcano, Mrs. Jo Kennedy, the director of the Craighead Institute in Glasgow, spoke with the general council and outlined the approach to planning and consulting their institute uses in working with Orders like ours.

Fundamentally the Craighead Institute approaches planning in a religious context based on spiritual values and with explicit reference to religious life values of the consecrated life. Mrs. Kennedy raised several questions that sought clarification through discussion: What do we want to get out of this planning process? Why do we want to do it now? And what might get in the way of planning? Mrs. Kennedy also surveyed the different experiences council members have already had in planning and working with planning.



Her own presentation concentrated on the intimate connection between planning and evaluation. Evaluation goes hand in hand with the goals set. Thus, evaluation in a planning process concentrates on answering “are we doing what we said we will do?” Evaluation gives information to leaders about how people and resources are allocated. Evaluation also helps the whole membership understand the difference the Order makes through our life mission.

In working with the consultant to design a planning process and a planning workshop suitable for the whole Order of the Holy Cross, the council agreed that a basic common template for planning will be beneficial, since all are charged with implementation of the General Chapter. However, different provinces might also include planning components specific to their own area, though these should be compatible with the general chapter directives and not parallel or indifferent to them.

It was also agreed that the October planning workshop needs to privilege province planning first. But it also needs to incorporate methods for coaching and directing community level planning. It is always good to have a local (national) level consultant to work with province planning. Thus, some practical input on “how to” interview and set up agreements with a planning national level consultant would also be part of the planning workshop.

The consultant congratulated us as an Order in having already taken steps to set out the scope of the plan for the general Order by designing the document **General Chapter Implementation Plan**. Her remarks indicated that this attention to planned implementation significantly helps working at developing province level and community level plans by setting out the directives already agreed on in the general chapter. In addition, it will be very helpful in designing the October Workshop and, further, for provinces and communities in setting about the tasks before them.

The Scope of the Work of Planning: preliminary conclusions

In retrospect, a number of conclusions surface about the necessity for planning and the timeliness for planning out a process for the Order at this point in our life journey.

The first conclusion might be that even though ours is an ancient Order, the modern approach to planning, can really serve the Order of the Holy Cross to achieve realistic and attainable goals that we value and prize.

A second conclusion is that planning involves making a difference in our world. The ‘outcomes’ of planning name what difference we are trying to make. And evaluation keeps us accountable, both to ourselves and the wider church, including benefactors and supporters. In evaluation Crosiers account for the difference we are making.

A third conclusion is that there is already a significant engagement with the work of implementation and participation in the planning process within the general council. That engagement will be important in next steps. The chapter mandates and directives are at the forefront of the work before us.

A final conclusion is that a number of large issues facing the Order go beyond any single province’s intra-province plans. Especially pressing in this regard are the issues of global viability of the Order of the Holy Cross and an interprovincial initial formation program into the Order that really addresses the contemporary world’s young people and their religious spirit. The General Chapter sketched out the need for developing interprovincial strategies



for initial formation and also for fund-raising efforts that keep in focus global Crosier needs. Thus, in addition to planning for intra-province implementation and community level development of normative community, we continue to keep in the forefront our shared challenge for supra-province level Order development.

Extraordinary General Chapter

The extraordinary general chapter of 2010 is occasioned by the Jubilee Celebration of our Order's 800 year history of God's fidelity to us and of our commitment to the religious reason for our being. We commit ourselves again to **Start Afresh from A Place of Light**.

We conclude a decade long effort at transformation world wide. As we said we would do, we celebrate the gains made among us in becoming new in mind and heart and in actually living together as a sign and witness of the transcendent active and alive in our world (Const. 10.6).

The efforts made and the accomplishments achieved are welcome signs of God's enduring vocation and grace to us to walk according to the designs and destiny God plans for our world: a world prophetically marked by exemplary love and fraternity. "Religious life in common fulfills its prophetic function when the example given by its members challenges all people, Christian and non-Christian, to bestow on each person they meet a love that is universal and without regard for human rank." (Const. 15.2)

This extraordinary general chapter celebrates gains. But it also pauses in the middle of celebration to motivate and encourage all members to keep our religious life's aim in focus. In celebrating chapter, we rejuvenate our energies through a commitment to plan and we remember the profession and commitment we vow to the Lord of the Way together. We sharpen our resolve to refine our fraternal collaboration and we hone our dedication to do what we profess we will do. We start afresh.

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Master General

