

Good morning and welcome to this sacred place, this holy ground. In our tradition because of Mary Ward's vision to *Take the Same of the society*, this place is special for us. She was not called and we are not called to be Jesuits but to be apostolic women religious in the spirit and rule of St. Ignatius. Manresa seemed a fitting and blessed space for us to chose to hold this General Congregation, a welcoming place, a place of prayer, a place which was for Ignatius a confirmation of his conversion. He did not set out to visit Manresa, he had loftier thoughts and plans, he was going to Jerusalem! He went to lay down his arms in Montserrat and came across the river to Manresa. And here he stayed for 11 months! His Manresa story is full of mystical language—his moments of illumination, of rapture, of reconciliation and of the Spiritual Exercises. It was at the river Cardoner that God made him "See all things new", it was here that the Father showed him Jesus in the midst of the fire of the Spirit. For Ignatius the vision of Jesus was the greatest gift of his life...he went on to found the Society of Jesus and his whole life, his whole mission, was about Jesus.

Many people have worked hard to prepare for this GC. I am particularly grateful to the leadership team, to Igora, Judy, Macarena, Brenda, Geraldine, to Cristina back in Casa Loreto for the work they have done in preparing for today. We are also grateful to

- South Asia for our bags each one hand-painted at the Kolkata Development centre
- Irish province for the bicentenary mugs and cards
- Spanish province for the bottles, the logos and supplies

- Our Artist in Residence Susan for all the art work she has prepared and carried from Australia and for her constant gracious yes to all requests for help over the last years.
- Our Communications team for their enthusiasm and work on the website and with the communications. This paperless GC is new for all of us and it will be a learning but let us go gently. Your tablet will be needed to access the website and any documents needed will be there in the delegate section. The communications team are available to help with any questions you have about accessing the website, and any technical questions.

The province presentations will take place on Friday and Saturday, and will be in alphabetical order so we will begin with Australia. If any of you have Powerpoint presentations we ask that you please give them to the Communications group today as they will be responsible for uploading the presentations and working the powerpoint.

A WhatsApp group has been formed for the delegates. Please do not say good morning, good night or thank you on this group. It is only for formal announcements. Do not send videos. This group will be deleted on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

A much loved event for our preparation for this GC has been our Emmaus group of 3. We have heard many stories of the joy experienced in your meetings. From now two Emmaus groups have become our Faith Sharing groups of 6 and from tomorrow morning we will begin each morning at 9.30 in our Faith sharing groups, The faith sharing groups and the faith-sharing process will be found in the

Prayer Room page of the Website. The gospel of the day will be used for the faith-sharing. On each table you will see two cards, one is obviously for your for Faith-sharing and one is for table conversation groups. Each morning the day will begin at your faith-sharing group but as you come to the room in the morning you will take or be given another card with a saying of Mary Ward, this will match a saying on one of the tables. This is where you will find your table group for that day. So each morning you begin in your faith sharing groups which will not change during the whole GC and immediately after faith sharing you move to your table group, determined by your Mary Ward saying you have received as you entered the room. At the end of each day the conversation group cards will be collected and tomorrow you will get another one.

We chose as the motto for this GC, *The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever* to honour the fact that we are celebrating the bicentenary of Teresa Ball and the founding of the house of the Institute in Ireland, the beginning of the Loreto Branch. We also honour the many Loreto/IBVM women, in whose tradition we have been formed and we acknowledge that we stand on the shoulders of giants. On the tables are the images of just 10 of those extraordinary women, women who played a significant part in our story over the last 413 years, and particularly the past 200 years: Teresa Dease who founded the North American branch; Delphine Hart who mentioned the need for union of Mary Ward's congregation to the Pope back in 1871; Stanislaus Murphy, Gonzaga Barry, Michael Corcoran who played significant roles in our struggle for union at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Agnes Walsh who after Vatican 2 made significant steps in building relationships with the then IBMV, now the CJS. and the then North American

branch. Sometime in the next few weeks, look at each of them and learn something of their story. We come here to this , carrying responsibility for the call to our Institute at this time in our history, to make history, we are invited to discern, next week to go into the cave for three days of this chapter time and to confirm a decision for our Institute to Become One with our CJ sisters. We especially welcome Veronica, Amadea, Mariana, Poonam and Pragya to be one with us these days. Those of us who attended the CJ GC recently will over our time together share with you how special that experience was for all of us. Many of you touched into the experience watching the live-streaming of liturgies and especially our petition to the CJs on August 23rd. And so Veronica, Amadea, Mariana, Poonam and Pragya, it is really important for us that you are with us, and I want to say a very special thank you especially to Veronica for taking this time to be with us. When Veronica first put her name down to come to this GC she had not been elected Superior so your presence here now is of significant importance in our journey together and is greatly appreciated.

Father John Dardis SJ who is a General Consultor of the Jesuits responsible for Discernment and Apostolic Planning, will lead the discernment days, and will also join us for mass in Montserrat where we will give thanks and end our Bicentenary year. John has walked the journey of Becoming One with us for a number of years and has been a good friend to both the out-going CJ and IBVM teams. He is also our celebrant for our opening mass this evening.

We come to our own GC with open hearts and minds, to listen to the Spirit, to discern and hear the word of God speak to us, ready to listen to the whisper of

God into the life of our Institute, the whisper of God into the life of our members and our mission and all those we serve.

Each one received a name tag when you arrived. It has your name and the name of the province or region where you have come from. In a short while I will call each one by name, in alphabetical order by province or region, then the Leadership team followed by the CJs and then the support staff. As I call your name, I invite you to stand and to respond by simply saying in your own language, the words of Samuel, when He heard the God's call – "Here I am". I invite you to remove your name tag and come forward to receive a new name label, with your name and the title GC delegate or your GC role. This small gesture indicates that from here we take our place as members of this congregation, not representing a province, a region, a place or a leadership team, but coming here to discern and act on behalf of the whole body of Institute. Please return to your table and sign the confidentiality form. At the end of the roll call one person from the table will bring the signed confidentiality form back to me.

In the Sanctuary where we will celebrate our opening liturgy, the work of Br. Mark Rupnik and his students are magnificent images depicting the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. There is a particularly beautiful image of Pentecost. Mary with the Apostles and St. Paul in a boat. It is described by the artist that in each one we see a flame of divinity, a gift and a mission to the world. Each wears the same brown cloak symbolising unity and at the same time each has a different colour on their garments which signifies diversity in the Church.

In an address to the Redemptorist General Chapter last Saturday Pope Francis said that celebrating a General Chapter 'is not a canonical formality' but 'living a Pentecost, which has the capacity to make all things new'. Echoes of the sanctuary and of Ignatius's Cardoner illumination. During these days let us be like the Pentecost boat, a flame of divinity and a gift for one another, in our unity and in our diversity. Let us be accompanied by Jesus and Mary, moved by the wind of the Spirit. Jesus say Amen.

***Called by name to be a member of this GC 2022***

So before we move forward I would like to read aloud the words of the promise of confidentiality which each one, each delegate, support staff, facilitator, is asked to sign when they return to their place:

*As a delegate / support staff / facilitator / invitee of the General Congregation that the IBVM celebrates from 5<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022, I commit myself to maintain confidentiality about the information, interchanges and decisions that take place during the course of this GC, in relation to the content, the identity of those who intervene, the way of participation or the taking of decisions.*

*I make this commitment to preserve the freedom with which each one exercises her service to the Congregation in this GC. I will promote clear communication through official channels chosen for this purpose, and will not engage in personal sharing of information with individuals or with groups of IBVM or CJ Sisters or other people including family and friends on the developments of this General congregation.*

*And so now each one is Called by name to be a member of this GC 2022*

Wendy Hildebrand  
Natalie Houlihan  
Mary Wright  
Ai Thien Nguyen,  
Jane McDonell,  
Mary Di Girolamo  
Carmen Diston,  
Lucy Nderi,  
Marren Awiti,  
Jane Gikonyo,  
Mary Kamotho,  
Catherine Okari,  
Kate Myers,  
Una Coogan  
Josette Zammit-Mangion ,  
Carmel Swords,  
Elizabeth Cotter  
Kathleen Fitzpatrick,  
Barbara Murphy,  
Pat Murray,  
Orla Treacy,  
Thérèse Yaw Kan Tong,  
Geneviève Maigrot,  
Patricia Mc Laughlin,  
Pat Hanvey.  
Sabrina Edwards,  
Mary De Souza,  
Mercia D'Souza,  
Goretti Tirkey,  
Monica Suchiang  
Antoinette Rodrigues,  
Elena Cerdeiras,  
Josefina De Miguel,

Cecilia O'Dwyer,  
Judy Illig,  
Barb Nelson  
Christa Parra  
Veronica Fuhrmann CJ,  
Pragya Alexander CJ,  
Poonam John CJ,  
Mariana Ojeda CJ  
Amadea Puliková CJ,  
Ewa Bem  
Maria Bongiorno,  
Isabel Gortàzar,  
Maria Lopez de Haro,  
Nirmala Arul,  
Sarah Rudolph,  
Matilda Lakra,  
Lucy Wambui,  
Rachel McLoughlin,  
Susan Daily,  
Brenda Eagan  
Macarena Fernandez de Bobadilla  
Geraldine McAleer  
Judith Nekesa  
Igora Pinto  
Noelle Corscadden

*Confidentiality Forms brought up  
Pledge*

And so I officially declare our General Congregation 2022, open.  
Jesus Say Amen.