



# Society of the Sacred Heart

*see, I am doing something new*

*Special Chapter 2021*

Synthesis of Provincial  
Chapter Documents:  
Preparation for Special  
Chapter 2021

July 2021

Presented by the Special  
Chapter Preparation  
Committee

# Contents

Preface.....	3
Part I: Introduction .....	4
The Changing Context.....	4
Ways of Organizing Ourselves .....	4
Sharing Resources.....	4
Overview of Province Responses.....	5
Our Convergence and Divergence .....	7
Part II: Provincial chapter feedback.....	9
Regarding new ways of organizing ourselves and sharing resources: What are the essential principles of organizing ourselves and sharing resources? What are the implications of implementing these principles at different levels (international, national, local)? .....	9
Essential principles of organizing ourselves .....	9
Centrality of mission .....	9
RSCJ/Lay relationship.....	10
Mutual trust and co-responsibility .....	10
Discernment.....	11
Implications for How We Organize Ourselves.....	11
Essential Principles of Sharing Resources.....	13
Implications for Sharing Resources.....	14
As we develop new ways of organizing ourselves, what are the issues around authority and accountability that we believe the Special Chapter needs to address? .....	16
Issues around authority .....	16
Issues around accountability .....	17
How do we envision the Society in 15 years' time? .....	19
The map of the Society and its units .....	19
Where are we, what are we doing and with whom? .....	20
How are we responding to the needs of the world? .....	21
What are our ways of processing and making decisions? .....	21
How will initial formation be organized? .....	22
How do we communicate and connect with one another? .....	22
What does governance and leadership look like?.....	23
Part III: Reflection.....	24
Part IV: Words and terminology.....	25

# Preface

Dear Sisters,

We are pleased to present this synthesis of the Provincial Chapters held in preparation for Special Chapter 2021. The process of reading and reflecting on the words of our sisters is both grace and challenge. It is grace because we experienced all the joy and struggle that stretching for change can bring. The challenge is in determining how best to capture the richness of not only what we think and feel but who we are as RSCJ, in our Cor Unum and in our diversity.

It is not possible to include everything in a synthesis but we have done our best to identify points of convergence and divergence in each of the three areas: How we organize ourselves and share resources; issues around authority and accountability; and how we envision the Society in 15 years' time.

The hope is that this synthesis will help to stimulate further reflection and deeper discussions. Perhaps there are new insights, perspectives and questions that arise for you. We invite each one to read and reflect on this synthesis in parts. You may find elements helpful for local or Province level discussions and/or decisions, as well. Finally, the synthesis is not intended to replace the reading of the original Province Chapter documents, but rather to accompany it as a companion text.

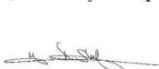
This synthesis is presented in four parts:

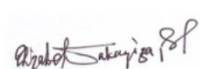
- I. Introduction and Overview to help situate you in your reading.
- II. Synthesis of Provincial Chapter Feedback organized by the three areas.
- III. Reflection with some possible questions to help keep our conversations moving in new or deeper directions.
- IV. Words and Terminology that require closer attention.


May our continued discussions aid in building the one body and furthering the mission of the Society.


With thanks and kind wishes,

**Special Chapter  
Preparation Committee**

  
Imma De Stefanis, RSCJ (USC)

  
Elizabeth Nakayiza, RSCJ (UGK)

  
Erick Odmark

  
Mieko Shinjo, RSCJ (JPN)

  
Genelle Stock (ANZ)



# Part I: Introduction

## *THE CHANGING CONTEXT*

---

Since the official convocation of the Special Chapter in September 2019, with the phrase “See, I am doing something new,” (Isaiah 43:19), the whole Society has been engaged in the preparation. The Special Chapter 2021 has been called to specifically address **two topics**:

## *WAYS OF ORGANIZING OURSELVES*

---

Intention: For the sake of Life and Mission, to restructure our Body so that it be more agile and dynamic, working with others, at local, provincial, regional and international levels.

## *SHARING RESOURCES*

---

Intention: We commit ourselves as one body to live our community of goods by sharing our resources throughout the Society, especially our financial resources, in order to sustain our life and mission for the future.

The significant forces affecting the Society leading into the Special Chapter include:

- Changing demographics of the Society
- Capacity of and for leadership
- The need to explore new models of leadership
- The future of our institutions and ministries
- More effective and logical use of Society properties and skilled personnel

We continue the 1988 General Chapter desire “to let the world continue to set our agenda.” As Barbara Dawson wrote in the letter for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of 2020 and of 2021, “For the first time since we have become a global community, we do not need to search for suffering that we hold in common across the globe.” We have lived a uniquely challenging time these two years. When the spread of COVID-19 reached pandemic proportions and thrust the entire world into a state of emergency and panic, approximately half of the Chapters had taken place in person. The rest were virtual. Many of our countries continue to live in a state of crisis, while others have either been affected to a lesser extent or have greater control over a serious situation owing largely to accessibility to vaccine options.



On the one hand, **what we lived** shone a new light on pre-existing unjust and inequitable social, economic, and political systems. COVID widened the gap between those with access and those with little or no access to resources: work, classes, technology, health care and the vaccine itself. It magnified the divide among us as people *within* a country as well as *between* our countries. It has been a period of illness, death and loss of unimaginable proportions and we continue to grieve.

On the other hand, **how we lived** COVID led us to leverage our creativity, commitment and *cor unum*. It was the way in which we responded to the needs of the people and our sisters or the way in which we worked to keep projects, schools and Provinces operating. It was the way in which we sought to build our *cor unum*, our one body, using virtual video platforms.

## OVERVIEW OF PROVINCE RESPONSES

---

The Provincial Chapter documents reveal an overarching spirit of **openness** to change and commitment to search for new pathways for our life and mission. We recognize that with change comes loss and suffering. It is not easy to let go of ways of doing things that give us a sense of comfort and security. It is not easy to let go of ideas or mentalities that are so ingrained within us that they are a *part of us*. We repeatedly hear that we must be willing to take risks and to suffer loss in order to opt for opportunities that favor mission and let new life burst forth.

Many provinces said that they did not know what changes are needed, but there were themes on **approaches to change**:

- The Society will continue into the future and in flexible structures that will allow it to evolve.
- View change as a process and not merely a decision or set of decisions.
- The need to clarify or redefine certain terms that we use very freely, as we find the terms do not always have the same definitions or connotations for everyone.
- The need to clarify the attitudes and behaviors that reflect the spirit and significance of these terms. In other words, what does it look like in action? How will we know when we see it?
- The need to provide members and leaders with training in particular areas that help us to develop a more contemporary or even more mature approach to how we implement changes and navigate the change process.
- In our pursuit of change we must be consistent, persistent, and continually examine the *why* behind the *what*. Change can lead to transformation, but change is *not* synonymous with transformation. Change may lead us to modify structures, processes, even behavior. It does not automatically lead to modification of attitudes and beliefs. When the desire



to live a new life is stronger than the desire to return to the old life the process of transformation has begun.

- Ensure that change leads us to greater “us-we”<sup>1</sup> thinking and practices.
- Remember that change in structure is not the same as merely merging or rearranging units, then acting and deciding in the *same way*. We want to remain open to creating something *new*.
- Take a planned, strategic, systematic approach to change that includes periodic evaluation and the opportunity to modify the plan, as needed.

As you read this document, you will find a consistent **call for clarity** in virtually every dimension of our lives. Many remind us that it is critical that we do *not confuse clarity with rigidity or closed systems*. In other words, it is possible to have greater clarity and still be flexible and open. We also remind one another, however, that it is important that we not wait until we have 100% clarity before deciding and/or acting. Different situations will require a different minimum threshold of clarity.

Overall, we yearn for greater congruence in our lives among what we *believe*, what we *say*, and what we *do*. This congruence is sometimes referred to as integrity of the whole. Our challenge is to examine *when* and *why* this does not happen.

We find the Province documents are full of references to the **tensions in our lives**. Perhaps our inconsistency is linked to these tensions. Many name the tensions presented below.

<i>Older generations – younger generations</i>	<i>Subsidiarity – centralization</i>
<i>Risk – reservation</i>	<i>Trust – mistrust</i>
<i>Centralization – decentralization</i>	<i>Authority – power</i>
<i>National culture – religious life culture – society culture</i>	<i>Increased lay participation – contained lay participation</i>
<i>Local identity – the “body”</i>	<i>Universal – variable</i>
<i>Co-responsibility – authority</i>	<i>International – intercultural – cross-cultural</i>
<i>Society languages – national language</i>	

<sup>1</sup> We mean a broader and more inclusive WE than just rscj. In many documents we speak of "being with others", or "rscj and laity," but these expressions still correspond to a mental model where we still conceive ourselves apart.[ARU]



The tensions we experience can be explicit and/or implicit. We generally agree that at different levels (personal and collective) we must confront our tensions and name them in order to create a pathway to healing and reconciliation.

## *OUR CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE*

---

In addition to our general agreement on all of the points described above, we also **converge** in what we identify as the essential principles of how we organize ourselves:

- Mission-centered/mission-driven
- We remain committed to education (Constitutions #7 and #13)
- Discernment is at the root of all we decide and do
- Growth and nurturing of RSCJ/Lay relationships
- Mutual trust and co-responsibility

Although we converge more than we **diverge**, it is important to honor the experiences and perspectives of all. In some cases, we hold opposing opinions, experiences, or views. In other cases, we articulate different positions but not necessarily opposing ones. In a few instances, we may also recognize the “prophetic voices” among us.

The following are points over which we diverge:

- Views differ on centralization and decentralization. People acknowledge the decision-making process will differ by topic and local context.
- We might agree on the need for clarity but not always in the same areas or for the same reasons and purposes.
- While we generally agree on the need for increased engagement of or participation by lay, we vary in how we describe the extent or limits of that participation.
- We generally agree that we have a responsibility to train and form our collaborators, but a small group reminds us that we must be open to *learning from* them, as well.
- As we envision the future map of the Society some see Provinces will continue to be the core unit, while others see the Regions or other geographic combinations as constituting the core unit.
- There are differing views about the location of the Councilors (live in Rome or live in Regions) and how Councilors should be identified.



- Some call for a more standardized and uniform approach while others call for flexibility that takes context and culture into account.
- Some appear to equate authority with positional leadership and/or power, while others also include the role of personal authority that is rooted in prayer and discernment.
- There are many instances where we are using the same terms or words, but we appear to ascribe different meanings to them. Sometimes the words appear to have the same significance, but the attitudes and behaviors that reflect them differ. We invite you to review Part IV of the document for further reflection and discussion about the list of terms we commonly use but interpret differently.

While views diverge on the various issues, all Provinces expressed an openness to change and commitment to service and mission.

At the end of this document, there are questions that we invite you to reflect upon and discuss with one another. We hope these provide an opportunity for deepening our conversations and clarifying our thoughts and desires as we take further steps toward the future.





## Part II: Provincial chapter feedback

**Regarding new ways of organizing ourselves and sharing resources: What are the essential principles of organizing ourselves and sharing resources? What are the implications of implementing these principles at different levels (international, national, local)?**

### *ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZING OURSELVES*

#### *CENTRALITY OF MISSION*

---

A universal essential principle upon which we all agree is the centrality of mission in all aspects of governance. We may hold different views of what new structures and processes might look like, but we are clear that all we do and decide should be driven by **mission**. The importance of mission certainly does not come as a surprise. We frequently speak of the importance of being attentive to our diversity and developing simple and flexible models. In the midst of our rich diversity which can also introduce tensions, the mission unifies us because it is rooted in our commitment to live in unity and conformity to the Heart of Jesus. Therefore, whatever we decide, it *must* be centered on and impelled by mission. *The Society of the Sacred Heart shares in this mission by making known the revelation of God's love, whose source and symbol is for us the Heart of Christ.* (Constitutions, #3).

We frequently cite the 2016 Chapter call “to be and to act as one Body” which called us to “revitalize our unity in diversity and to act as one Body, dynamic, interconnected, linked with other bodies, in the world and as Church, in order to share, collaborate, and be in solidarity among ourselves and with others.” (*General Chapter 2016*, p. 19). In this same spirit, most Provinces reminded us that the purpose of governance and leadership is to foster, promote and support life and mission of the Society.



## *RSCJ/LAY RELATIONSHIP*

---

In being “linked with other bodies,” the **RSCJ/Lay relationship** becomes increasingly important in new ways that can also introduce new challenges. These relationships exist at different levels and in vastly different ways throughout the Society. Many Provinces indicate the need for clarification because not all relationships are the same or equal. There is a difference between collaboration, partnership, employment, volunteer, and personal relationships.

- In collaborations and partnerships, we want to clarify with whom and in which areas.
- In relation to governance, we recognize the RSCJ/lay collaboration as key; however, we feel there is a strong need to define and clarify the nature and extent of lay participation in mission, community life, leadership, and decision-making processes especially when these decisions directly impact the lives of RSCJ themselves as well as the management and distribution of resources. We need to clearly define these roles, responsibilities, and expectations especially as these relate to decision-making. Some remind us of the importance of referring to what is permitted canonically if we consider the possibility of lay serving on leadership teams.
- With regard to the Sacred Heart family: We need to clarify *who* the members of the family are and the extent of their participation and access to the more intimate information or side of our lives, just as we do not have access to or expect to know the intimate sides of their lives.

An example of this imbalance is the stress we place on the formation of lay in the areas of mission, spirituality, and charism. Some point to this as an example of where we should also be asking the question, “What can we *learn* from them?”

Although our relationship with lay persons is important to us, we vary significantly in our understanding of the nature of this relationship. Many call for the need to increase the active participation of lay in government, on teams, commissions, projects, and some areas of decision-making. Some Provinces do not have the RSCJ needed to fulfill certain roles and they need to transition to lay to assume the roles and responsibilities formerly held by RSCJ. For some, the integration of lay is also a way to draw from their experience, expertise and perspective that enriches our ability to decide and live aligned with the mission in this complex contemporary world. Some express increased lay participation as a need and some as a desire.

## *MUTUAL TRUST AND CO-RESPONSIBILITY*

---

The very same relationships we treasure sometimes are the ones pierced by past and present hurts. Sometimes this is on the part of members toward one another and sometimes it is the result of our experience of leadership and/or decision-making processes. These experiences appear to give rise to a consistent clamor for **mutual trust and co-responsibility** as essential principles in all aspects of governance. This calls to mind the *Artisans of Hope* imperative to



examine our “complicity in unjust systems characterized by the misuse and abuse of power that hurt, diminish, and disregard others,” *internally* as well as *externally* (*Artisans of Hope*, p. 13). We speak extensively about the need for mutual trust and co-responsibility.

At the same time, we experience imbalance and inequity among ourselves and observe it in our approach to our lay relationships. It is the past hurts and offenses - what one said or failed to express, what we have done or when we have failed to respond – that lead us to carry unresolved conflicts and offenses. They can potentially prevent us from more fully living the mutual trust and co-responsibility we believe to be essential to whatever form of organization we develop. Relationships – personal and professional - serve as both challenge and invitation but we are committed to the work that relationships require, among ourselves as RSCJ, and with so many lay partners, collaborators, and friends, whom we treasure and respect.

## *DISCERNMENT*

---

We consistently echo the Constitutions (#141) that “**discernment** will be the hallmark of our governance.” Any decisions we make in the context of or as a result of the Special Chapter should be characterized by discernment. At times, we also point to the difference between discernment and decision-making. In some instances, we challenge our use or misuse of the term “discernment” to support a decision already made. We find tensions can arise when the discernment of a person and the discernment of leadership result in different, even opposing, outcomes. For many it leads to the question of what “obedience” means today. Furthermore, the Provinces highlighted the importance of collective discernment in governance.

## *IMPLICATIONS FOR HOW WE ORGANIZE OURSELVES*

---

1. **Mission** must impel how we organize ourselves. We use the term mission, however, to signify the mission of the Society; a project or initiative; and a person who is serving abroad in an area of need. Some feel we must be clearer about what we mean when we speak of mission especially for our collaborators.
2. **Discernment** is central to the spirit and structure of governance and the practice of leadership. We are clear, however, that all would benefit from a renewal in the understanding and practice of discernment (personal and collective) as a way of life in our world and model of religious life. At a minimum, training should include renewed understandings and practices around discernment processes; the characteristics and roles of personal and collective discernment; and the relationship of discernment to decisions and the vow of obedience.
3. We need to develop a common understanding of the **terminology** we use to describe what we desire in governance and leadership models. We use different terms: horizontal, circular, participatory, consultative, and inclusive. In different settings, each model has a set of unique characteristics, but we tend to use these terms almost interchangeably.



Moreover, we do not all mean the same things when we say “horizontal,” for example. What do we identify as the principal characteristics of each model and what are the attitudes and behaviors that reflect them?

4. We acknowledge inconsistent experiences of leadership. People hope to identify and define the essential elements or characteristics of the governance and leadership model we desire, what the behaviors look like, and then determine what we call it. What we appear to seek is a model of **balanced leadership** that recognizes the responsibility and autonomy of each one at level and unit. A servant leader approach is critical.
5. **New decision-making models** are likely to emerge that **transcend geographic location** or reflect leadership priorities. Decisions may be at the Provincial or Regional or Society level, and the exercise of authority, decision-making and accountability will be centered more on our shared mission and values than our sense of territory. It is, therefore, important to define decision-making processes around units in different structures, particularly if they co-exist with hierarchical geographic models. We need greater clarity about the differences and relationship between **structures, protocols, and processes**.
6. For many, regions will become the **core unit** of our future organizational structure. For others, Provinces remain the core unit, but the region will still assume increasing importance. Regardless, we see ourselves operating more extensively and consistently across international and cultural lines, strengthening the importance of training in languages as well as inter-cultural and cross-cultural competency. This also requires giving attention to the tension that language introduces when it is linked to power and information.
7. Most see **subsidiarity** as a key characteristic of future governance structures and practices. Achieving subsidiarity requires clarity about which decisions can or should be made at the local, Provincial, Regional and central levels. We situate subsidiarity within governance and leadership models that we call “circular” or “horizontal.” To achieve subsidiarity, we need to come to a common understanding of what it means; what it looks like in action; its relationship to collective discernment; and deciding which matters are decided at the center, which belong to the whole and which belong to the “units.” How and where decisions are made should vary according to *what* is being decided.
8. We want to **avoid a universal model** as the goal of how we organize ourselves. In addition, we acknowledge what we say and what we do sometimes differ. The underlying principles and values must be universal, but the practice must be adaptable according to the contexts.
9. We use different terms to describe our **relationship with lay**. We need to clarify the different types and levels of relationships, and we must determine within each whether we seek lay participation, input, or engagement.



10. Changing structures is necessary but not sufficient to **change mental models around leadership** itself. We need leadership training that educates us to different models and styles of leadership to help us discern the type of leadership that different situations require over time. There needs to be greater openness and flexibility in our approach to leadership, and we need to recognize where we can learn from others (other individuals, groups and/or other sectors). Training and formation in leadership will also help us to identify emerging leaders among both RSCJ and lay, and to provide them with the tools they need.
11. We seek a simple and agile model of structure that **reduces the burden and workload** of leadership as the membership of the Society changes.
12. We need to emphasize the importance of **members' growth** in responsibility in the same ways we expect of leadership: Co-responsibility, mutual trust, transparency, flexibility, openness, mutual accountability. We expect a lot from leaders, but we must learn to hold one another as members to the same standard of attitudes and conduct.
13. Adapting to new ways of organizing ourselves must be viewed as a **process of transition**. The transition to “new” should include at least five elements:
  - a. spiritual of transformation in letting go and letting in;
  - b. systematic, systemic and strategic plan for change;
  - c. training and accompaniment to ensure we continue to develop the skills and expertise we need especially as situations evolve;
  - d. a model that is adaptable to the local contexts and ongoing changes within the Society; and
  - e. commitment to work in networks and in collaboration with RSCJ and lay at every level of the Society.

Testing new models reminds us to be open to an ***ad experimentum*** approach. We do not need to succumb to a pressure to decide definitively. There is value in living with something for a while and modifying it as needed based on what experience teaches us.

New ways of organizing ourselves as a process of collective transformation will allow us to grow in our understanding and practice of mutual trust, co-responsibility and deeper interconnections.

### ***ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF SHARING RESOURCES***

---

It was clear that the responses focused to a lesser extent on financial sharing and to a greater extent on sharing the charism of the Society with partners and personnel, as well as the wisdom and competencies within the Society.



There is a unanimous aspiration for a just and equitable distribution of resources that allow each entity to be autonomous for its life and have the means to live the mission as fully as possible. The essential principles described above also characterize our desired approach to the sharing of resources.

In addition to these, we identify certain additional principles. In sharing resources with generous hearts and through careful discernment and decision-making processes, and driven by mission, we seek practices and policies that **empower** for mission, support **self-sufficiency** and **sustainability** while also respecting the **dignity** of those who receive these resources.

In sharing resources, the overarching essential principle is that of **solidarity**. For us solidarity implies the constant reminder that all resources held by one or more units belong to the whole. Some point to the challenge that the word “sharing” introduces. Sharing implies ownership where those who have more are the owners rather than the stewards of those resources.

While we express a deep desire to share, Provinces also expressed their uncertainty as to how and where decisions about sharing resources are made. The hope is that the process for the sharing of resources builds in accountability and transparency.

### *IMPLICATIONS FOR SHARING RESOURCES*

---

- Develop **clear lines** of responsibility, decision-making and accountability in sharing *and* receiving resources. Clear lines should *not* be confused with rigid structures.
- It is critical that we take **local realities** into full account when we are engaged in discernment and decision-making processes. The local realities we indicate include political, economic, social, historic, ecclesial, legal, and cultural.
- Expanding access to **technology** is a way of efficiently sharing resources. We recognize the ways in which technology has helped us to get to know one another and to deepen relationships in ways we could have never imagined before. In addition, we have also begun to see the ways in which this can help us to reduce our negative environmental impact through reduced travel.
- There is a need for **training and/or updating** in various areas to ensure effective plan development and responsible implementation of resource management and distribution. Some of the areas we named include discernment and decision-making within a shared leadership model; technology, languages, finance; and intercultural as well as cross-cultural competence.
- An **analysis** of both needs and resources that leads to identifying RSCJ and experts in areas of need. Expertise includes those who help us to understand and recognize the statutes of both civil and canonical law. Some envision a database of needs and resources that would be accessible to everyone.



- There is a strong voice calling for developing clear systems of **accountability** that inspire trust over mistrust and transparency over secrecy. There also needs to be clarity in relation to the roles and responsibilities of those directly involved in the decisions and/or implementation of these decisions. Accountability will be characterized by a system of *mutual reporting* that is reflected in clearly outlined systems of procedures, protocols, and processes.
- It is important to take **sustainability** into account in the management and distribution of resources. Our resources are not inexhaustible so we must administer them in a way that provides the greatest opportunity for sharing resources for the longest period of time possible.
- A **strategic and systematic approach** is needed to support all of the above.



## As we develop new ways of organizing ourselves, what are the issues around authority and accountability that we believe the Special Chapter needs to address?

### *ISSUES AROUND AUTHORITY*

---

First and foremost, we must acknowledge that authority has been an area of consistent **struggle** and pain for many years. We often equate it with power that is associated with positions of formal leadership and roles within the hierarchy of the Society's organizational structure. More specifically, we find the unjust use of power and power imbalance to be tied to a number of factors including race, language, socioeconomics, culture, and generation. We must remember that diversity characterizes our Provinces as well as our international Society. We aspire to build stronger RSCJ/lay relationships based on mutual trust and respect, yet we exercise authority in ways that may not reflect these values. Our behaviors and attitudes, whether as leaders or members, must consistently reflect the essential principles and values we profess. Working through the tensions and struggles associated with authority requires that we develop a common understanding of the relationship of authority to obedience and co-responsibility; a common understanding of discernment; consider the role of culture and generation; and situate authority within each discerning person and not only within the formal structure.

Different cultures have different views of authority. Our Society culture is rooted in a very deep and long history, and perhaps we are also being called to evolve our thinking. Some asked that we remain attentive to generational differences in the understanding of authority, discernment, and accountability. Many see significant value in **intergenerational and intercultural dialogue** in a spirit of generative listening.

We need to **redefine our concept of authority**. Many say it must be rooted in leadership that is at the service of the members and world today; based on openness, transparency, and dialogue; and practiced within the context of personal and communal discernment. Others describe the importance of mutual trust among the members themselves as well as between the members and those in leadership. Positive use of authority is characterized by clear communication; clarity and transparency in decision-making; respect for members' personal journey and discernment process; and clarity about multi-level and multi-directional accountability.

The issues of authority are connected to the need for **authentic consultation with and participation of members** at all levels of decision-making. This does not necessarily mean in all





areas where decisions need to be made but it does mean at each level. We are serious about the importance of co-responsibility, and this is one way in which we believe we can live this call.

Many Provinces caution against arriving at a single, uniform model of authority as the goal. Rather, our goal should be uniformity of spirit, essential principles, and core values, but diversity in models and practice. In other words, we need **new approaches not just new structures**. We recognize the importance of **learning from others**. We do not need to invent something from zero. Some Provinces are already taking specific and creative approaches. There are other international congregations also testing new models and approaches. What can we learn from them? The information we gather can inform our own conversations and decisions in relation to testing new models.

If and/or when **lay** are in positions of authority we want clarity around the roles, responsibilities, and scope of authority especially as it relates to decisions that affect the lives of RSCJs and RSCJ communities as well as the management and distribution of resources. In this, we acknowledge the need to confer with canonical statutes and seek advice related to the role of lay in positions of leadership and authority. On the one hand, many identify a need or desire to integrate lay more in our leadership structure. On the other hand, some remind us of the implications of sharing authority, being accountable to lay and/or respecting the decisions for which they are ultimately responsible. In other words, we must be prepared, once again, to change our attitudes, behaviors, and mental models, and not just change the structures. Many emphasize the importance of providing training in the Society's mission and charism to those who bring the professional expertise we need in various areas. Many believe we should plan for the systematic and strategic transition to lay leadership as RSCJs become less available for these roles across all levels (Provinces, projects, international Society).

### *ISSUES AROUND ACCOUNTABILITY*

---

Issues of accountability tend to be closely tied to our issues of authority and our concepts of leadership and obedience. Many describe the correlation between how we experience authority and how we understand and practice accountability. When we experience positive models of authority and leadership (inclusive, transparent, communicative, open, flexible, non-judgmental) we as members are more likely to demonstrate accountability that reflects these same characteristics. This is where we emphasize the “servant leader” approach to leadership. That is to say, we seek a model of **mutual and reciprocal accountability** at all levels.

If there is a true spirit of discernment and if we authentically live co-responsibility we may not need to invoke the vow of **obedience** as a mechanism for compliance. It is a fact that obedience is a vow and has canonical significance. We must consider what the vow of obedience means in the context of personal responsibility. We need to review, reflect on, and rethink this concept of obedience so that how we serve is compatible with how we experience God's call and personal invitation to fulfill the mission of the Society.



In a spirit of co-responsibility, we also recognize the importance of living in **mutual accountability to one another** for our lives, choices, and decisions, and not only accountability to leadership. This will strengthen and deepen our relationships and *cor unum*. Furthermore, many state that living a more balanced relationship characterized by mutual accountability and trust with one another will help us to live these same values in more authentic ways with our colleagues and partners.

Much of how we define and live accountability will be determined by the units we create as the core of our governance structure and by the model of leadership. Regardless of what we decide, we must **clarify and define** the roles, responsibilities, expectations, and lines of accountability for each unit and in relation to the center or the General Council. Many feel accountability is not consistently evident. We need to *practice* it and not just define it or require it of others.

In relation to both authority and accountability, there is need for leadership training at all levels. We must train *both* current and future leaders. We ask ourselves how often we turn outward for the help we need when we lack the resources within.



## How do we envision the Society in 15 years' time?

### *THE MAP OF THE SOCIETY AND ITS UNITS*

---

1. Many speak of the importance of adopting **new terminology** as a way to allow something new to emerge and develop. See *Part IV*
2. We all foresee the Society will continue to be international but with fewer units and greater flexibility in **defining the “units.”** Where union or merger of units is necessary, new configurations will take into account language, culture, geography, apostolic services, numbers of members and administrative services.
3. We all expect the Society will continue to be active and welcome new members regardless of our configuration of units.
4. Many believe our structure or configuration should support and align with mission in **non-geographic units** and that this may be a more effective means for aligning structure and mission. For some, geographic distances are a barrier and for others they are not an obstacle.
5. For some **affinity of culture** is important and for others diversity of culture is important.
6. The majority of provinces offered **structural proposals** for how to think about our map:
  - a. 8 provinces see a structural role of the 4 current regions as constituting the units: ASIANZ, Philippine Duchesne, Africa, Europe although the number of regions may differ in the future. Within these, there will be groups of provinces and a regional leader who will be assisted by a coordination team. There is an increased emphasis on the region as the core unit. Some see Europe and Africa as one unit due to numbers of members.
  - b. 6 provinces imagine an intermediate level of government between local communities and the central coordination team which is called “unit,” “area,” “entity,” or “region.” This would replace the current structure of provinces, districts and regions. Entities may be grouped according to various criteria such as geography, numbers of RSCJ, or North-South solidarity. Several mention that the person responsible for these “entities” is a member of the general team. Within each “entity” groupings could be according to such criteria as cross-border,



networks, apostolic areas, complementarity of age, language, country, etc. and use participatory and circular models of leadership.

- c. 7 provinces imagine an organization in networks that go beyond geographic borders, with simple and flexible structures, that are also relational and linked to the mission. These would not merely replicate the current structure on a larger scale. Rather, they tend to see the Society as a “community of communities,” or with “mission circles.” This scenario gives more creativity to the entities to have the leadership model that is most compatible with their culture and trusts in the discovery of a new community identity. Special attention is placed on areas of apostolic urgency and where there is a greater number of younger RSCJ. The general team is at the service of these networks. In this scenario networks and communities of practice or affinity groups become more important and are not bound by geography.
- d. 5 provinces did not offer any specific structural proposals

### *WHERE ARE WE, WHAT ARE WE DOING AND WITH WHOM?*

---

1. There will be different **models of community**. What constitutes community will be redefined to reflect greater flexibility, openness, agility, and authenticity. Different types of community will be possible, and we may participate in more than one community both physical and virtual, residential and non-residential.
2. The **composition of community** may be inter-congregational, include non RSCJ and/or be international.
3. Our elder sisters may live in inter-congregational **facilities** and/or public institutions.
4. The location of communities will be determined by our apostolate, the needs of our sisters at different stages of life, and the needs of the people. We continue to work in areas related to education and JPIC with a focus on youth, women, migrants, and care of our common home. We embrace simplicity and solidarity with the poor and most vulnerable, open to living in inserted communities when and where possible.
5. We will participate in **networks** that cross all types of boundaries (geographic, cultural, linguistic, ministerial). These networks will be formed with RSCJ throughout the international Society as well as with like-minded people whose mission, priorities, and social values are aligned with ours.
6. Our **collaboration** with colleagues and partners in mission will be characterized by mutuality and reciprocity where we will be open to and formed by those with whom we work and collaborate. We are prepared to learn from our collaborators.



## *HOW ARE WE RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE WORLD?*

---

1. We will live more freely in fidelity to the Spirit with a focus on humanization in a dehumanizing world and inspired by the spirit of Pope Francis. This will **challenge us to be open to new** places, ministries, and ways of working.
2. We will listen to the signs of the times through a critical analysis of reality, in light of the Gospel, our educational mission and JPIC orientation. Within this, our **primary focus** will be on young people and the most vulnerable of our world.
3. Our approach will be characterized by a more **authentic collaboration** with lay, groups, other congregations and networks across the world. Collaboration will be based on apostolic areas, common projects, professional interests, and age groups.
4. We will meet the complexity and tensions of **internationality, diversity, and inter-culturality** with trust, respect, and humility.
5. We will be more **attentive to the Spirit** and the spiritual thirst of human beings throughout the world. We are more keenly aware of our spirituality as a treasure and resource for today's world, Church, and Sacred Heart family. We, therefore, seek to promote development of interior life and spiritual accompaniment.
6. We will respond through an **expanded use of technology** to reduce our negative impact on the environment, reduce our expenses, enhance our potential for networking across geographic boundaries, and cultivate our relationships with one another and others.
7. As educators, we take seriously the need for our own **education and training** in a variety of areas. We recognize that we cannot know or predict future needs with certainty, but we can **develop processes** that help us to identify and prioritize needs over time in order to respond effectively and ensure the equitable allocation of resources.

## *WHAT ARE OUR WAYS OF PROCESSING AND MAKING DECISIONS?*

---

1. **Discernment** remains at the heart of all processing and decision-making. Discernment will be both personal and communal with a clear set of criteria, and honest consideration of the discernment process of those most affected by decisions. This spirit of discernment will help us to live **more attentive to the Spirit** who speaks through each person for the common good.
2. The **place of decision-making** will vary. Some decisions will be made centrally, others regionally, others locally and some in the context of international networks. There needs to be a documented process of how decisions are made.
3. Decisions will require **collaboration** with colleagues and partners in mission, as well as **consultation** with experts. True, authentic collaboration will require that we listen and



consider others' views and perspectives. In a spirit of genuine mutuality, we will possibly need to adjust our terminology to create a more inclusive and accessible environment for our collaborators and partners who are not affiliated with the Society.

4. Decisions will be made in ways that consider political, social, economic, historic, cultural, and ecclesial **contexts** and that weigh the **potential impacts** of these decisions on the lives of those most directly involved.

The processes for making decisions will be **participatory, inclusive, and/or consultative**. They will be **characterized** by active, deep listening, and welcome divergent, even opposing, viewpoints.

### *HOW WILL INITIAL FORMATION BE ORGANIZED?*

---

1. The period of **candidacy** will be spent in the country of origin, and it will be no less than 1 year and no more than 2 years in duration.
2. The **novitiates** will be multi-national, bringing together people across provinces or regions.
3. There will be a **common plan or curriculum** throughout initial formation, but especially during the novitiate. It will respond to the spiritual, social, psychological, and cultural diversity and needs of the novices. The approach will reflect the values we espouse and integrate the priorities we articulate. The common format for international novitiates will also be **flexible** to allow for adaptation according to the group and context.
4. International formation houses and novitiates will have an **international team**.
5. The **Professed of Temporary Vows (PTV)** will be both local and international. This stage will also include a common plan for the entire Society including emphasis on community, intercultural and cross-cultural competency, and language learning, especially English. The common plan will also allow **flexibility** according to the context and/or to meet the needs of PTVs. There will be a team in each region to accompany the PTVs.
6. We will take a more consistent, focused approach to the formation of **partners and collaborators** in mission. Sometimes this formation will be together with RSCJ and sometimes separately to respond to the unique call and needs of the laity.
7. We will be committed to the **lifelong training and education** of our sisters.

### *HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE AND CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER?*

---

1. Communication will be **characterized** as open, transparent, and horizontal.
2. **Technology** will be a tool to build and/or grow networks; foster relationships across countries and cultures; enhance our sharing of resources; and provide the larger Sacred



Heart family with a stronger sense of belonging and a greater knowledge of the Society. We want to invest the necessary resources for ongoing training and updating of technology needs as they emerge. We believe that technology is a tool that can enhance communication and deepen relationships, but it will not replace face-to-face meetings entirely. We must be mindful of equity and different access to and knowledge of technology.

3. We continue to emphasize the importance of **learning languages**. We recognize the equality-inequality of power because of languages. For many, their first language is not one of the three languages of the Society, this means they are at a disadvantage in meetings and in understanding communications (everyone is not at the same level of understanding). We need to promote awareness of the different interpretation of words using the same language.

### *WHAT DOES GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP LOOK LIKE?*

---

1. We continue to have a “**Superior General**” and she continues to have the support of a council. **Councilors** may be the heads of newly created units or the regional heads. Some support the idea of the council living together in Rome and others support the idea of councilors living within regions.
2. **Regions** may evolve into the core of our governance structure; however, regions may be comprised of overlapping networks beyond geographic criteria. If regions replace Provinces as the governance center, then the head of the region will likely have a team.
3. **Subsidiarity** is a key characteristic of future governance structures and practices. We recognize the need to clarify what this concretely means and looks like in action.
4. **Relationships with other** entities or people will be clearly defined and articulated. We will have clarity in relation to the roles, expectations and scope of authority of lay in positions of management or leadership in the Society.
5. Future **leadership** will be characterized as consultative, open, discerning, communicative and at the service of the members. We may begin to see lay as members of leadership teams, but we recognize the need to comply with canon law to determine what is permitted.
6. Leadership follows a continuous call to **examine ingrained attitudes and practices** that reinforce the misuse of power and perpetuate power structures that negate the dignity of others, both RSCJ and lay.
7. Effective leadership requires consistent practice of **critical reflection, analysis, and evaluation** to promote openness to ongoing evolution and change. It is also necessary to guard against mission drift as we attempt to respond to the needs and challenges of a rapidly changing world.



## Part III: Reflection

We invite you to use these reflection questions to keep our conversations going in new or deeper directions. You are free to choose whichever questions to use. You are not required to submit your responses. These questions may lead you to ask still other questions. The reflection process and discussions may also lead to concrete proposals at the local and Province levels that do not necessarily require a decision from the Special Chapter.

1. What did you learn in reading this document? What new thoughts and ideas did you consider? What gave you hope and excitement? What challenges you?
2. How do your views or views within your Province differ from those of others?
3. What do you need to let go of to fully commit to change within the Society? What mental models do you have that make change difficult?
4. What decisions should be made locally versus those that should apply more broadly within the Society? In what areas do you believe there is a need for more consistency across the Society, rather than allowing for more local differences?
5. What changes within the Society would you most support?
6. What possible changes within the Society give you concern or fear? What do you feel is essential that we *not* change?
7. As the Society continues to consider its future, how do you want to participate in the process?





## Part IV: Words and terminology

**The words we use matter.** They matter because words not only reflect our realities and experiences they can also shape them! Sometimes we use terms very freely and assume we all know what we mean and that we all mean the same thing when we use them. We also know that this is not entirely true. In other instances, there are terms or words that we have used for many years that no longer seem clear or adequate to either describe or prescribe life as we see it. Some might even say the words and the very concepts they represent have become irrelevant or obsolete.

It is also difficult to give a name to an unknown future state of being and doing. Consequently, much of the language we use is descriptive; we attempt to describe what we would like to see or what we believe we need then reach for a word that feels close enough to name it.

Presented on the next page is a list of terms that we need to address in one or more of the following ways:

1. Terms we need to *clarify* because we either do not fully understand the significance of the terms we are using OR the same word carries different *connotations* in different countries, cultures or apostolic contexts OR we share a common understanding of its significance but a different view of the attitudes and/or behaviors that reflect this significance.

Objective: We want to ensure consistent use of the term and a common understanding of its significance. Its significance goes beyond the definition we ascribe and, as much as possible, the attitudes and behaviors that reflect that significance. What it looks like in action.

Example: Horizontal leadership

2. Terms we need to *redefine* because the significance of the word has changed significantly OR the contexts have changed such that the word no longer carries the same meaning.

Objective: We want to ensure that the significance of the word has relevance within contemporary contexts. We may continue to espouse the underlying spirit of the term/word but need to give updated meaning to its significance and its application as well as the attitudes and behaviors that reflect that significance.

Example: Obedience

3. Terms we need or want to *change* because they feel obsolete AND/OR do not reflect the spirit or essential principles we espouse.



Objective: What we believe, what we say and what we do must be aligned. We change words because the significance OR the connotation no longer feel appropriate for our current and/or future state.

Example: Superior, General Superior

Below is a list of words that we find require close attention. You may discover that there are additional words or terms you would like to explore. Add them to the list as well as to your conversations and reflections. With each:

1. Articulate what the word means to you.
2. What types of behaviors or attitudes (positive or negative) do you associate with the word?
3. For you, does the word need to be clarified, redefined or replaced (eliminated from our vocabulary)?
4. Do your reflections and conversations give rise to a new word? If so, try to give it a clear, succinct definition.
5. Key: What are the behaviors and/or attitudes that reflect this word's significance? In other words, how will you recognize it when you see it in action?

<i>Accountability</i>	<i>Lay person</i>
<i>Authority</i>	<i>Leadership</i>
<i>Centralization/Decentralization</i>	<i>Management</i>
<i>Circular leadership</i>	<i>Mission</i>
<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>Mutual trust</i>
<i>Community</i>	<i>Obedience</i>
<i>Co-responsibility</i>	<i>Partners in mission</i>
<i>Discern/discernment</i>	<i>Subsidiarity</i>
<i>Family (SH "family")</i>	<i>Superior</i>
<i>Formation</i>	<i>Superior General</i>
<i>Horizontal leadership</i>	
<i>Inclusive/participatory leadership</i>	
What other words or terms would you like to explore and possibly change in some way?	

