



Prot. no. 30b/21 SG

**ALL SUPERIORS AND DELEGATES OF CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS
ALL MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT PAUL**

Dear Brothers,

Together with the Members of the General Government, I wish you all the grace and peace of Jesus, our Master, and I send you my warm and affectionate fraternal greetings.

First of all, I would like to inform you that at the beginning of this year, given the persistent and alarming situation around the world created by the Covid-19 pandemic and taking into consideration the fast approaching date for the convocation of the XI General Chapter, that is, 06 March 2021, the General Council considered it appropriate, if not prudent, to carry out a new consultation with all the Major Superiors and Delegates of the Congregation on the real possibility of celebrating the General Chapter from 06 to 26 September 2021 at Ariccia (Rome) as was decided and announced earlier.

For this reason, on 22 January 2021, I sent out a letter to every Major Superior and Delegate of our circumscriptions asking for their opinions. I have heard their opinions and those of the General Councillors, starting from the local situation with regard to the safety of our health and the required travels of our confreres for both the General Chapter at Ariccia and the Provincial Chapters and Regional Assemblies in their respective circumscriptions in preparation for the former.

Among other things, the letter stated that *“with the discovery of vaccines against Covid-19, a light is already perceived at the end of the tunnel. However, this unfortunately, this does not mean that this evil, which is now extended to the whole world, will be cancelled almost by magic. Overcoming the pandemic will still depend on several factors, including the effective access of the different nations to the vaccine and the concrete organization of the vaccination campaign in their own territory in view of the immunization of the entire population”*.

In the responses from our eighteen Major Superiors and Delegates, twelve of them felt it appropriate to postpone the celebration of the General Chapter. Among the reasons given, I would like to mention the great prevailing uncertainties regarding the health situation in the foreseeable future and the doubts with regard to getting necessary entry visa to Italy for the General Chapter. All the same, I would like to mention that five Major Superiors of this group were of the opinion that there would not be any problem to celebrate the Provincial Chapter or the Regional Assembly in their respective nations. The Superiors of other five circumscriptions did not give a precise answer but only expressed some perplexity leaving the final decision to the General

Government. Finally, one of the circumscriptions gave a positive response with regard to the celebration of the Provincial Chapter and also regarding the possibility of travelling to Italy on a pre-established schedule.

Besides having heard the Superiors, together with our Procurator General, Fr Alberto Fusi, I had a personal meeting with Msgr. José Rodríguez Carballo, Secretary of the *Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life* (CICLSAL) on 2 March, in order to receive some guidance from him. Msgr. Carballo reiterated Pope Francis's disposition regarding the difficulties of celebrating General and Provincial Chapters (or Regional Assemblies) via online technology in an entirely telematic way or even partially present and partially telematic. The telematic form, on the other hand, raises many questions such as connectivity problems, time zones, liturgical celebrations, confidentiality, minimizing of interpersonal and fraternal relationships, etc. Therefore, for the celebration of these events, the physical presence of the participants must be guaranteed (cfr. Letter from CICLSAL, 01 July 2020). Msgr. Carballo also informed us that this situation of uncertainty in which we live is making several religious Institutes whose General Chapters are due in the coming months to postpone them to sometime next year.

Taking into account the above-mentioned considerations and with the approval from the CICLSAL, the General Council in its meeting held here from 01-04 March 2021, decided to shift the XI General Chapter to 06-27 February 2022, postponing the date of its convocation to 06 August 2021.

We fervently hope that for this new date, we will have a worldwide situation that offers greater safety for the health of all participants, which allows free travel and easy entry to Italy from one's country without too many restrictions. Such a situation will provide us the opportunity to celebrate our Chapter in all serenity and peace, something that befits an event of this importance.

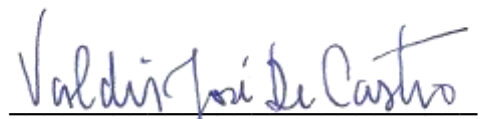
During the course of these six months, until the date of the convocation and the appointment of the Preparatory Commission, the ante-preparatory Commission will continue its service of animation of the General Chapter. We invite everyone to carry on with full dedication the roles entrusted and the commitments undertaken with faith, hope, dedication, creativity, and above all, with patience, attitudes and disposition necessary to face this difficult time in which we live.

Let us entrust our synodal journey towards the XI General Chapter to Jesus Master so that this event can truly become a time of common sharing, discussion and discernment in view of defining together the future of the Congregation for the many years to come, in creative fidelity to the charism we inherited from Blessed James Alberione, our Founder and Father.

Faternally yours,

Rome, 5 March 2021




Father Valdir José De Castro, ssp
Superior General