



Piccole Suore Missionarie della Carità
(Opera Don Orione)
Casa generale
Via Monte Acero, 5 – 00141 Roma
www.suoredonorione.org

Prot. MG 18/22

Re: Convocation of the XIII General Chapter of the LMSC

**TO ALL
LITTLE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF CHARITY**

DEAREST SISTERS!

in the light and joy of the Risen Christ, in the context of grace that the current celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of our Founder St. Luigi Orione is offering us and in the ecclesial climate with which we approach the event of the Synod convened by Pope Francis, with great hope and trust in the Divine Providence, I am here to **convoke all the LMSC to the XIII GENERAL CHAPTER**, in accordance with our Constitutions Art. 149 and 150.

**The XIII General Chapter will take place in Montebello della Battaglia
(PV)
at Villa Lomellini, Via Camillo Benso Cavour, 3/5
from 7th to 28th May 2023.**

The General Chapter, as we all know, is the highest moment in which we all put ourselves again, at different levels, but with the same responsibility, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is a privileged time to enter the dynamics of the Spirit, free from any conditioning that may come from history, from the past, from traditions or from the tested experiences of the past. Only with confident openness, humility and courageous flexibility, we will be able to make the Chapter bear the authentic fruits that the Spirit wants to suggest, indicate and inspire.

The events that we have lived as humanity in the last two years, first with the experience of the pandemic, now with the experience of war, have made us understand that we do need to give back a new splendour to our consecrated life. We need to give a new historical form to the charism, a new birth that may give way to new, significant, evangelical forms, adapted to the true reality of the world, of societies, of different cultures and dynamisms of societies.

Certain realities of our Provinces and Communities, certain personal realities with which we have to deal everyday, make us understand that we have reached a crossroads that requires a turning point and some new, fundamental choices towards the future. Many things: styles, forms, habits, attitudes have reached a *"terminal state"*, we can say. This is not to be considered as something negative or dramatic, but rather, as a propitious moment for a *"new beginning"*, a rebirth and a restart, without fearing the unprecedented that the Spirit is already making us feel and desire in our hearts.

A *"new beginning"* that may not have *"words"*, *"concepts"* as reference points, but rather *"life"*, *"experience"*, the concreteness of new *"styles"*, where even the new generations may feel attracted, at ease, and live joyfully the beauty of their vocation and charism.

1. CHOOSE LIFE

All humanity is living this time and, as Saint Paul says, *"the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time"* (Rom 8:22). Indeed, if we know how to grasp and welcome *"the first fruits of the Spirit"* (Rm 8:23), if we don't want to resign ourselves to follow a painful path of survival, a path with no exit and no future, we may be able to hasten the *"birth"* of this new creature, of a consecrated life and of a new Congregation.

Sisters, the event of the Chapter is offering us the best opportunity to let ourselves be carried by the wind of the Spirit, in order to make a wise and fearless discernment. It also may offer us the opportunity to look at the signs of the times with clear and sharp eyes, and to make new and unprecedented choices, taking future as a point of reference, free from sterile ties, from modalities that today don't offer a living and vital response anymore, going back to the charism. They no longer constitute evangelical and healthy spaces, nor laboratories in which to live, experience and bear witness to the Gospel, except for exhorting, decreeing and speaking.

The time is now up! We cannot keep dilating this renewal and reform of our life and our mission in the Church. God is now offering us a new opportunity for an authentic conversion, God is asking us today to make the right choice, God is saying to us today: *"See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live"* (Dt 30:15.17-19).

We all need to assume a new attitude in the face of the next Chapter celebration, without conforming ourselves to the old model or concept of *"chapter"*, which often says and approves beautiful decisions and guidelines, which remain in the papers, but are not courageously embodied at the moment of making decisions. God's words to the people of Israel are addressed to us today: do not turn your heart away, do not remain slaves to the *"idols"* of the past, choose life, and you will have an offspring, a future.

2. WHICH CHAPTER TO HAVE FUTURE?

Let us recall a statement from the Code of Canon Law (and our Constitutions, too) which clearly affirms that *"it is the Chapter's responsibility to protect the charism, or rather the intention and plan of the founder, protect the heritage of the Institute and promote an adequate renewal that may harmonize with it"*¹.

It is important that, approaching to the celebration of a new General Chapter, we are aware that *"it is not possible to legitimize the new by referring only to the history and identity of the origins, (except for the charismatic one), but it is a matter of integrating what has never existed into that identity... It is not a question of denying the past, but of going beyond..."*².

Therefore, I would like to dwell on three ideas of this aforementioned Code: intention, protection and renewal.

- To project ourselves to live a General Chapter that may be a true and authentic *"new beginning"* it is essential to return to the Founder's project. We shouldn't make a simple historical or emotional memory, but rather understand it more deeply and in a new and contextualized form,

¹ Cf. Can. 631 and 578 CIC; *Constitutions LMSC*, Art. 148.

² Cozza Rino, *Difficoltà nella Vita consacrata oggi. Consapevolezze che rendono possibile il cambiamento*, Magazine Testimoni, EDB, February 2022, pag. 21-22.

scrutinizing more the foundational *intention* and the spirit that inspired Don Orione, than the fact or the work in which he embodied it in his own time.

- It isn't of lower importance the fact of being able to find what needs to be "*protected*" in this charismatic project of the Founder, but not as a "*form*", rather as a "*substance*". What gives identity is the charismatic and spiritual value that the Founder "*incarnated*" in its historical time. It is our turn today "*to protect*" and "*to re-incarnate*" it in historical and cultural contexts which are very different from those of the origins.
- The third idea that is fundamental is "*to renew*", which is the consequence of "*knowing intentions*" and "*protecting*". The "*renewal*" goes to the heart of the vital dynamics of the Institute. It indicates the *ability* to deepen the charism that makes them flexible to "*abandon*" the "*old wineskins*" in order to adopt "*new wineskins*", capable of containing the "*new wine*". Renewal comes from the hand of openness, freedom, welcome, courage, hope, the ability to "*look at ourselves from the outside*", without self-referentiality.

These three ideas summarize what we often call "*creative fidelity*" to the charism, or the "*re-foundation*" of the Institute.

So we can say with Rino Cozza that "*the General Chapter is an institutional tool born as a function of thinking about the charism in a horizon of meaning for new contexts...*". It is not a moment to receive "*indications to float, but impulses to navigate towards unprecedented contexts*"; the Chapter cannot be a space "*in which the main concern is to fix what can no longer be readjusted*"³.

3. THE PROPOSAL FOR THE XIII GENERAL CHAPTER

The celebration of the XIII General Chapter has already been preceded by some initiatives of involvement that we have started during 2021, together with the General Council. You certainly remember some texts to reflect as Councils and as a Community, the Questionnaire sent to all the Sisters, the first reflection on the results of the Questionnaires requested to the Provincial and Regional Councils and the three interprovincial meetings held in the month of March 2022.

As a result, we have started an itinerary of involvement and synodality which gave us a valid orientation when deciding the motto, the theme, the thematic cores and the methodology. As General Council, we have been very faithful to what we had received from you, and I am sure you are now able to notice it and feel yourself represented. We have not developed the logo yet, because the Provincial and Regional Councils have been asked to send us proposals.

a. The Motto, the Theme and the Thematic Cores

The Motto chosen for the next General Chapter comes from a beautiful letter from Don Orione written at Easter 1936: "*May Christ rise in us, if we may have ever failed along the way. May He live in us with his grace, and may we live in Him and of Him, because outside of Him there is no life nor consolation that is worthwhile. To live Christ and to make the whole world live of Christ! And may the victory of the Lord also be our victory*".

Therefore, the Motto and the Theme of the XIII General Chapter 2023 are:

“TO LIVE CHRIST AND TO MAKE THE WHOLE WORLD LIVE OF CHRIST”
In order to be a “Samaritan congregation” through the prophetic witness of a new way of doing, acting and living.

³ Cozza Rino, idem, page 23.

Don Orione is a strongly "*Christocentric*" saint; we always find Christ at the basis of his whole life and Work. This is the key of his spiritual and apostolic strength. Let us take what Saint John Paul II said in the homily of the Canonization: "*The heart of this strategy of charity was 'without limits because it was opened wide by the charity of Christ'. The passion for Christ was the soul of his bold life, the interior thrust of an altruism without reservations, the always fresh source of an indestructible hope*"⁴.

Our journey towards the Chapter, therefore, must be marked and permeated by this: recovering the Christocentricity of our life, returning to Christ and restarting from Christ, because we cannot be a "*Samaritan Congregation*" if we aren't a "*Christocentric Congregation*" first, made up of Christocentric people, of consecrated women with Samaritan hearts.

Charity has no meaning if it is not lived in Christ, with Christ, for Christ: "*Caritas Christi urget nos!*". Because, if everything in the Church and in the universe tends to "*Instaurare omnia in Christo*", there cannot be a true, authentic and effective charitable action if it is not evangelizing.

So, to be a "*Samaritan Congregation*" means to "*make the whole world live of Christ, living Christ*". However, this implies being a "*Samaritan congregation today*", in the historical and cultural contexts of the contemporary world. Nevertheless, this cannot be a mere and justifying welfarism, it cannot be reduced to simply being dispensers of services. Rather, it means to establish the "*revolution of charity*", of solidarity, of compassion, in our environments, according to the style of Christ, making us capable of welcoming the unprecedented, made up of new and unprecedented forms, styles, choices, modalities: "*a new way of doing, acting and living*", capable of affecting the socio-cultural dynamisms of today.

b. What do the Thematic Cores tell us?

In this context of the Motto, the Theme has come as a spontaneous consequence. We will be a "*Samaritan Congregation*", which will give an authentic witness and will be prophetic, if we go against the stream. Its prophecy is just this: to get out of the schemes proposed by today's culture, based on egoism and war, on possession, pleasure and power, and bear witness to a new "*communitarian-pacified*" culture, a counterculture of charity and gratuitousness.

How this? Through "*a new way of doing, acting and living*".

This certainly implies the ascesis of the conversion of all our structures: at mental, spiritual, fraternal, formative, pastoral, decision-making level... which must be re-created without fear if we want to choose the prophecy of a "*Samaritan Congregation*".

The sub-themes that accompany the three Thematic Cores come therefore to clarify and focus our reflection on the themes that need greater reflection and deepening, a reconversion and a "*new appearance*": more authentic, transparent, meaningful, attractive and prophetic.

The three Cores embrace the fundamental aspects of our life and charism, they are diversified according to reflection, deepening and discernment of the capitular choices, but they complement each other in harmony and complementarity:

1st Core: Passion for Christ and for humanity - "*I need holy children*"! It includes religious, spiritual and charismatic identity, the style of life and conversion, the sense of belonging and co-responsibility.



⁴ John Paul II, *Homily at the Canonization of Don Luigi Orione*, Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 16th, 2004.

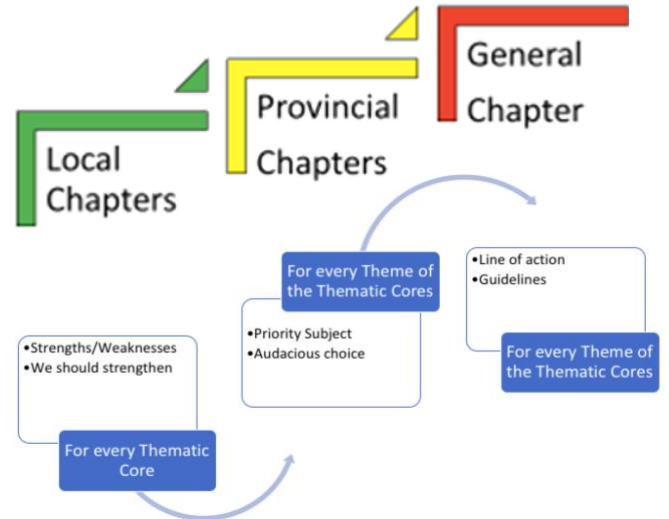
2nd Core: Prophecy of fraternity and communion - “Love each other in the Lord, like the fingers of the same hand”. It includes to be “women, mothers and sisters”, the synodality as a style of life, to be together for the mission.

3rd Core: Missionary ardour and prophecy for the challenges of the contemporary world - “Caritas Christi urget nos”. It includes to be missionaries with a “Samaritan” heart, the pastoral conversion, to put young people at the heart of the mission.

c. Methodology of the capitular journey

The methodology that we have chosen for the whole capitular itinerary is following once again the lines of the methodology now known and tested for years through the Journey of Renewal, with various adaptations and new dynamics, and in tune with some suggestions received from you in the Questionnaire, and from experience of these years.

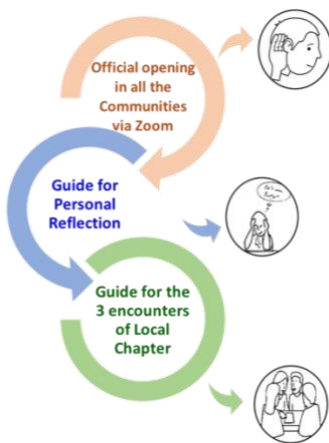
Therefore, we will live the Chapter through three strong moments: **the local Chapters, the Provincial and Regional Chapters and the General Chapter**, which will help us to deepen, reflect and propose in a gradual, systematic and synodal form, the topics concerning life and mission of the LMSC, following the themes proposed in the three Thematic Cores.



Here it goes a synthesis of the capitular journey that we will carry out.

Here it goes a synthesis of the capitular journey that we will carry out.

➤ **The Local Chapter in the Communities**



The celebration of the Local Chapters will be starting in each Province and Delegation simultaneously and digitally, and the organization of this moment is entrusted to each Provincial and Regional Superior with their Councils. The Local Chapters will take place **within the months of May and June 2022**.

Each Sister will receive a “booklet” with the methodology for the celebration of this Chapter in the Community: It is divided into three parts: the opening meeting, the guide for personal reflection and the guide for the three communitarian Meetings.

The participants to the Local Chapter are the Sisters of Perpetual Vows and the Juniors, but the latter have neither active nor passive voice at the time of the vote.

The starting dates have already been set by each Province and Delegation:

May 2022:	Province/Delegation
1 st	Province “Our Lady Aparecida”
2 nd	Delegation “Our Lady of Hope”
4-5 th	Province “Our Lady of Guadalupe”
7 th	Province “Our Lady of Czestochowa”
7 th	Province “Mary Queen of Madagascar”
8 th	Delegation “Mother of Divine Providence”
9 th	Province “Mater Dei”

➤ The Provincial and Regional Chapter

The Provincial and Regional Chapters will be held in person and the Provincial or Regional Superior, assisted by her Council, is responsible for the convocation, organization and animation in her own reality (see Constitutions Art. 215).

The methodology involves five phases:

1st Analytical Phase: opening of the Chapter, analysis of the Provincial/Regional reality and analysis of the reality presented by the Communities through the Local Chapters.

2nd Illuminative Phase: it includes the presence and participation of some guests of the Charismatic Family or lay collaborators, chosen by the Provincial Council, and an illumination of the challenges that the historical context and cultures is presenting to consecrated life today (the speaker will be chosen by the Provincial or Regional Council). During this moment, it is possible to open a virtual space to the whole Province or Delegation, according to the Council's will.

3rd Proposing Phase: evaluation and agreement on the priority and vital topics and the audacious choices of future for the life of the Congregation.

4th Perspective Phase: deepening of the conclusions of the Central Assembly of Sacramentine Sisters, discernment and approval of various proposals for the General Chapter.

5th Elective Phase: voting for the Delegates to the XIII General Chapter, evaluation of the capitular experience, conclusion and closure of the Provincial/Regional Chapter.

A General Councillor will participate in the Provincial or Regional Chapter as “*guest*”. At the same time, a Junior could also be invited as “*guest*” and without the right to vote, chosen according to her Council's will, assuring that she has at least 3 years of Temporary Vows. She won't have neither active nor passive voice in the capitular sessions and she will leave the capitular room on the election day.

The dates of the Provincial and Regional Chapters planned by the Councils are as follows:

Dates	Province/Delegation	General Councillor
Sept 22-28	Province “Our Lady of Czestochowa”	Sr. M. Sylwia Zagórska
Sept 25-30	Province “Mary Queen of Madagascar”	Sr. M. Françoise Ravaoarisoa
Sept 26-30	Delegation “Mother of Divine Providence”	Sr. M. Józefa Kalinowska
Sept 30- Oct 4	Province “Our Lady of Guadalupe”	Sr. M. Irma Rabasa
Oct 7-12	Delegation “Our Lady of Hope”	Sr. M. Irma Rabasa
Oct 9-14	Province “Our Lady Aparecida”	Sr. M. Rosa Delgado Rocha
Oct 24-29	Province “Mater Dei”	Sr. M. Józefa Kalinowska

➤ The 2023 General Chapter

The XIII General Chapter will be held this time in the SDP retreats' house at Montebello della Battaglia.

The methodology provides five Phases of reflection on reality, illumination, discernment, decision and elections.

During the General Chapter, some representatives of the Charismatic Family will be invited: SDP, OLM, OSI, SIMN. There will be also some speakers. During these moments of illumination, it is expected to open a virtual space for anyone who wishes to participate.

Other details on modalities, dynamics and methodology will be communicated appropriately.

➤ **Elected delegates, delegates by right and invited delegates at the Provincial and Regional Chapters (Const. Art. 216 and 217)**

In the Provincial and Regional Chapter, the Provincial Superiors, the Regional Superiors and their respective Councils are members by right. The Sacramentine Sisters who participated in the Central Assembly only participate in the Provincial or Regional Chapter with an active voice; the former Superior General can participate as "*invited*" by the Provincial Superior of the Province where she is incardinated⁵.

The elected Delegates to the Provincial and Regional Chapters have been calculated according to the data of the statistics as of **March 31, 2022** on the total number of Sisters in Perpetual Vows. It must be remembered that the Delegates will be voted by "*a unique list*" as stated in Art. 223 §2 of the General Norms modified in the XI General Chapter, 2011. The number of Delegates that the Communities will vote for is as follows:

Provincial/Regional Chapter	N°
Prov. "Mater Dei" (Italy/Spain)	7
Prov. "Our Lady of Czestochowa" (Poland/Ukraine/Italy)	9
Prov. "Our Lady of Guadalupe" (Argentina/Chile/Paraguay/Peru/Uruguay)	12
Prov. "Our Lady Aparecida" (Brazil/Cape Verde)	8
Prov. "Mary Queen of Madagascar" (Madagascar/Italy)	7
Deleg. "Mother of Divine Providence" (Kenya/Tanzania/Philippines)	6
Deleg. "Our Lady of Hope" (Ivory Coast/Burkina Faso/Togo/Mozambique)	5

➤ **Elected delegates and delegates by right at the General Chapter (Const. Art. 216 and 217)**

The Superior general and her Council, the Provincial Superiors, the Regional Superiors and the former Superiors General are members "*by right*" at the General Chapter.

For the voting of the Delegates, all the religious members of the Provincial or Regional Chapter have "*active*" voice (they can vote), including Sacramentine sisters (Const. Art. 233). All the religious members of the Province or Delegation, with at least 5 years of Perpetual Vows at the time of the Chapter (General Norms Art. 227 and 228) have "*passive*" voice (they can be voted). Then, their substitutes are voted in the same way.

The number of Delegates to the XIII General Chapter by Province and Delegation are:

XIII General Chapter	Elected	Substitutes
Prov. "Mater Dei"	2	2
Prov. "Our Lady of Czestochowa"	3	2
Prov. "Our Lady of Guadalupe"	4	2
Prov. "Our Lady Aparecida"	3	2
Prov. "Mary Queen of Madagascar"	2	2
Deleg. "Mother of Divine Providence"	1	1
Deleg. "Our Lady of Hope"	0	0
Sacramentine Sisters (elected during the Central Assembly)	2	2

⁵ Cfr. Circular letter of the Superior general Mother M. Mabel Spagnuolo, Prot. MG 17/22, on the correction of Decision n. 17 of XI General Chapter of 2011.

Furthermore, in case of not counting on the presence of a representative of the Philippine territorial coordination "Mother of Mercy" at the General Chapter, the General Council will provide for the invitation of a Sister in the most convenient way they may think, but without the right to vote.

4. "CARITAS CHRISTI URGET NOS!"

Dearest sisters, the Holy Spirit is calling us once again to live the event of the XIII General Chapter in a responsible and active way.

We are aware that we all are the Congregation, that everything also depends on the love, commitment and co-responsibility of each one of us, that life passes into the daily life of each community, work or service, rather than on the "desks" of chapters, assemblies or meetings.

We do not want this Chapter to be just "another" Chapter among many others lived up to now, but to be a real "kairos", a time which may be alive, vital, decisive, transforming. Let us therefore dispose our hearts and our minds, and let us also prepare ourselves spiritually to live this time that we begin today, let us pray together and personally the Prayer prepared for the XIII General Chapter, let us invite also our poor, our children and young people, our laity and our collaborators to pray it.

The historical moment that we are living, together with all humanity, is asking, awaiting, needing, demanding "new witnesses" who may show new paradigms of humanity, fraternity, solidarity, acceptance of diversity, authenticity with their life. By vocation, by identity, we are "missionaries" of a different way of being "human", shaped on the humanity of Christ who came because we may have "life in abundance" (Jn 10:10).



Let us read again the words that Pope Francis addressed to us: "I shall conclude by offering to you as an example for your mission and for your service to the poor the icon of the Visitation. Like the Virgin Mary, set out in haste — not the hastiness of the world, but that of God — and, full of the joy that dwells in your heart, sing your magnificat⁶."

Let us look up and forward, let us run like Mary! As she did, let us go out "in haste", not only with words, but especially with gestures and life, in order to offer the "bread" of peace and unity, the "maternal hands" of love and mercy to the Church and to this "hungry and orphaned" world, as "good Samaritans", because "Caritas Christi urget nos!".

Together with the General Councillors, I greet you fraternally in the Lord,



Sr. Mabel Spagnuolo
Sr M. Mabel Spagnuolo
Superior general

Rome, Generalate House, April 26th, 2022.
Memory of Mary "Mother of the Good Counsel".

⁶ Pope Francis. Address to participants to the XII General Chapter of LMSC, May 26th, 2017.