

CRC PRESIDENT'S REPORT

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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CRC PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I come to you today with joy to report on my term as President of the CRC for the past two years.

First, I have to admit that my commitment to the CRC was new to me because, on the one hand I had lived for many years outside the country, and on the other hand I wasn't expecting such a responsibility, since I had just been named Provincial Superior of my community. Luckily, my 14 years as Secretary General of my community, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (MIC), had given me the opportunity to meet many of you and had made me aware of the challenges and achievements of an organization like the CRC.

Administrative Council

As planned, the **Administrative Council** (AC) held six meetings over the course of the past two years. The list of these meetings can be found in Annex 2.

Maximum participation from each of the AC members allowed for some very interesting discussions. Information on the commitments of the staff at the CRC office in Montreal was provided to us on a regular basis.

A very important point in our discussions was the reports on the activities taking place in each of the regions: reports on Western Canada were given by Sister Gloria Keylor; on Atlantic Canada by Sister Brendalee Boisvert; on Ontario by Sister Sandra Shannon; on Montreal by Sister Annette Noël and on Quebec City by Father Gérard Blais. We were informed about founding anniversaries, new projects in local communities, the closure of houses, developments in the history of community infirmaries, etc. This sharing made us sensitive to the situations of all the communities spread across Canada. I encourage you to continue to inform the delegate in your sector about your experience. This sharing strengthens the bonds of unity between us. And I can tell you that all the members of CRC's Administrative Council include these situations in their prayers.

We appreciate being able to discuss the concrete needs of members at the General Assemblies. My experience as President of the CRC has taught me that the concerns expressed vary across the country. In that regard, we are wondering how the Council can collect this information on an ongoing basis and include it in CRC's orientations.

During an *in camera* session at our September 2017 meeting, we attempted to discern the continued involvement of Father Timothy as CRC Director, since his term would be

coming to an end on January 1, 2018. After considering various points of his administration and discussing matters with him directly, we came to the decision to ask his Major Superior to allow him another mandate with the CRC. A letter to that effect was sent to his Superior. As the Basilians will be having their General Chapter next June, the new Superior will have to discern the renewal of Father Timothy as CRC Executive Director.

Visits to the CRC office

My tenure led me to visit the CRC central office several times. These short visits allowed me to realize how much work our employees carry out on a daily basis. I especially enjoyed being able to chat with each of them personally at pivotal moments, such as during the discernment on the renewal of the contract of our Executive Director, Father Timothy Scott. Their appreciation was also very positive.

Conference calls

Conference calls with the Executive Committee members (Brother Louis Cinq Mars, Sister Joan Cronin, Father Timothy Scott and myself) enabled us to finalize preparations for each meeting of the AC.

AECQ and CCCB

My presence with Father Timothy at the biannual meetings of the Quebec Assembly of Catholic Bishops (AECQ) and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) was also part of my agenda. We were normally present at the first two days of their assemblies. Personal contacts with both groups have enabled a rapprochement and discussions to better understand the situation of the different communities in their respective dioceses. In September 2017, I spoke at the CCCB Assembly in Cornwall to give them information about the Conference and our various projects.

Travels abroad

Rome

It was with great joy that the Vice-President (Brother Louis Cinq-Mars), the Director (Father Timothy Scott) and I, accompanied by our secretary and guide, Sister Erika Martino, travelled to Rome from 11 to 15 October 2017 for our visit "Ad Limina". We were very well received in the different dicasteries. A list of the dicasteries we visited can be found in Annex 8.

A visit to the offices of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) for a meeting with Executive Secretary Sister Patricia Murray, IBVM, was also highly profitable.

I will tell you that we were particularly touched by our visit with Cardinal Braz de Aviz. He reminded us of the importance of respecting our respective charisms. The origin of the charism is the work of the Spirit, we do not have the right to let our charism die. He reminded us that it is not an easy time to be living a religious life in today's world, but that we are living a time of discernment in which we must try to understand the movements of the Spirit.

I would like to draw your attention to the general audience we had with Pope Francis. We were lucky enough to be placed in the front row. After a celebration of the Word, the pope approached us, and we were filled with emotion as each of us addressed a short message to him. I presented to him as a gift a basket of products made by men and women religious from Canada (chocolate, caramel, maple syrup, fruit cake, etc.). A card accompanied this gift: *Most Holy Father, the members of the Canadian Religious Conference thank you for reminding us to live as joyous witnesses of communion. May the Spirit always go before you and fill you with faith and hope at the heart of your mission in the service of the universal Church.* When he left us, he asked us to pray for him.

In summary, we believe that this rapprochement between Executive Committee members and the Vatican is very helpful in maintaining bonds of friendships and getting to know one another better.

Tucson, Arizona

On February 22 and 23, 2018 in Tucson, Arizona, Brother Louis Cinq-Mars and I had the joy of participating in an **inter-American meeting** of the executives of several religious conferences from the Americas: CLAR (Confederación Caribeña y Latinoamericana de Religiosas/os), CIRM (Conferencia de Superiores Mayores de Religiosos de México), LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious) and CMSM (Conference of Major Superior Men). Each of the representatives gave a brief report on the activities of the conference he or she represented. A too-brief discussion time did not allow us to arrive at any concrete engagements between our conferences, but it did constitute a first step in mutual knowledge and our mutual interest will lead us, in the near future, to gestures of collaboration between us.

On the afternoon of February 23, we traveled through part of the Sonoran Desert to the Mexican border to experience a prayer celebration in solidarity with “The Dreamers” and migrants at the foot of the wall separating the two countries. Guided by representatives from the “The Samaritans” group (the Tucson Samaritans—Los Samaritanos), we listened with great emotion to the stories of people who risk their lives crossing the wall and travelling across the desert. Last year, more than 150 people died on this journey. *The*

Samaritans vigilantly leave jugs of water all along the paths that the migrants take. The migrants must walk in the desert for 4 to 5 days before reaching the first city, Tucson. This moment of prayer was very memorable for all of us.

Meeting with the Committee of Contemplatives of the CRC

Just before the visit to Rome, I had met with the members of the Committee of Contemplatives. They entrusted me with their desire to receive, as soon as possible, the document accompanying *Vultum Dei Quaerere*, Pope Francis' apostolic constitution on women's contemplative life. Cardinal Braz de Aviz informed us that the document would be distributed soon.

Other points

Correspondence on behalf of the CRC or representing it at various events is an opportunity to show our presence in the heart of our world.

In conclusion

So, broadly speaking, those were some of the various involvements entailed in my responsibilities as President of the CRC. The experience brought me countless riches.

These opportunities for getting closer to the different communities allowed me to hear the heart of religious life beating with all its hopes and achievements.

It is true that accepting a two-year commitment within the CRC required some of my time. Many of you have been approached to accept a mandate on the Administrative Council. That proposal was very often declined due to lack of time. However, the CRC Administrative Council, composed of superiors and major superiors, needs your participation. Although we all have well-filled calendars and agendas, the little bit of extra time required to attend meetings is truly rewarding for every council member. I would say that my entire community has benefited from my experiences.

Another point I would like to stress is the bilingualism within the CRC Administrative Council. All working documents are presented in both languages, French and English. We also benefited from simultaneous translation for unilingual people during our meetings. Again, a very good friendship was built among the members of the Council over the past two years. Whether one is Francophone or Anglophone, we were all working for the same cause: the advancement of God's kingdom on Canadian soil.

Thank you to the Administrative Council members with whom I shared the same concerns. Thank you to the office staff, a special thank you to Sister Erika, our secretary, who provided me with the documents I needed and who was always very open with me. And to Father Timothy who supported me in my task, thank you.

Thank you to all of you for entrusting me with this mandate, and long life to the CRC.