

Regional Meeting NED  
Abbey Maria-Toevlucht, Zundert  
April 17-20, 2023

**Participants**

President: M. Katharina Brecht  
Vice-president: D. Guido Zundert  
Superiors: M. Pascale Arnhem  
              M. Rebekah Bocholt  
              D. Malachias Echt  
              D. Alberic Schiermonnikoog  
              D. Benedikt Westmalle  
              D. Manu Westvleteren

Invited: M. Eleanor Councilor of Father General

Excused: D. Isaac Tilburg

Secretary: Sr. Tamar Bocholt

Summary of the Dutch report

**Evaluation General Chapter** by giving a score from 1 to 10 to the following statements:

1. The General Chapter is the highest policy-making body of the Order.  
The topics discussed and the efficiency with which decisions and visions are arrived at.
2. The input of the Abbot General and the functioning of the Coordinating Commission.
3. The work of commissions and commission discussions.
4. The General Chapter also aims to provide deepening for superiors (conferences...).
5. The General Chapter is a forum for mutual contacts and encouragement for the superiors.
6. The liturgy (the Eucharist for the whole Order and by the regions, vespers, hall...).
7. The accommodation (lodging, food...).
8. The daily order and free time....

Some elements from the discussion:

There were many positive remarks about the Chapter. Is the only way to arrive at a vision and decisions through voting? Functioning of the coordinating commission was good. Commissions depend on members; advantages and disadvantages that the commissions remain about the same at different General Chapters. Some reports in the auditorium were not handled well. The first part of the General Chapter in February was seen as more lively and encouraging....

1. We request clarification on how ad hoc commissions work and how they report.  
YES 8 NO ABST. unanimously, vote accepted
2. We ask the generalate for the next GC to give some guidelines around confidentiality and transparency, including when presenting final reports in the auditorium.  
YES 8 NO ABST. unanimously, vote accepted
3. We appreciate the enlightening input and involvement of Father General during the sessions in the auditorium of the General Chapter.  
YES 8 NO ABST. unanimous, vote accepted
4. We ask for the next GC to invite as few external guests as possible to lighten the program.  
YES 8 NO ABST. unanimous, vote accepted
5. We consider it important that a synthesis of the GC be written during or after the GC.  
YES 2 NO 3 ABST. 3 vote rejected
6. We always request a silent breakfast at the GC.  
YES 8 NO ABST. unanimous, vote accepted
7. We ask to organize a next GC in Jan-Feb rather than Sept.  
YES 5 NO 0 ABST. 3 vote accepted

### **Matres Immediatae**

We are grateful for the good and clear working paper. Apparently there are no real obstacles to work with Matres Immediatae. The idea as proposed of gradually moving to Matres Immediatae sounds good. But if with new foundations we take the motherhouse each time, we will eventually go to a splitting of the order. Perhaps the danger is not so great; there are not that many foundations.

Does the idea of secondary benefits (material benefits...) that many nuns monasteries get from their F.I. play into it for those who don't want a M.I.? Apart from necessity, there is also a progressive movement in the order to consistently pursue the same rights for women and men. So will we have an Abbess General soon? Or abbots non-priests? Concerning the Constitutions, indicated by the Law Commission to be different between monks and nuns, we would prefer to simply delete them. It seems a bygone idea to us.

1. We favor the introduction of Matres Immediatae in our Order as a possibility for communities that desire it.  
YES 8 NO ABST. unanimous, vote accepted
2. We ask that Constitutions 39.1 for monks concerning the role of the Pater Immediatus at the community sede vacante be deleted and replaced with Constitutions 39.1 for nuns concerning the role of the Prioress at the community sede vacante.

YES 8          NO    ABST.                  unanimous, vote accepted

3. We ask that Constitution 39.2 for monks concerning the right of superiors of daughter houses to vote in an election of the mother house be deleted.

YES 8          NO    ABST.                  unanimous, vote accepted

4. We ask that Constitution 39.3.b for monks concerning the passive right of superiors of daughter houses to vote be deleted.

YES 8          NO    ABST.                  unanimous, vote accepted

5. We ask the Law Commission to make a survey of all the differences between the Constitutions for monks and the Constitutions for nuns, with the aim of making the Constitutions for monks and for nuns as similar as possible.

YES 8          NO    ABST.                  Unanimous, vote accepted

## Abuse

We received two texts, a translation of D. Pierre André's text and a text by M. Pascale, built around three points: 1. a summary of the theme; 2. what has already happened in our order; 3. how to proceed?

These are two good texts! Some elements of the discussion:

Victimization can also lead to excesses.

Transgressive behavior is even broader, very general. Perhaps that is a first step in our community. It is difficult to convince our brothers/sisters that it also concerns them; sometimes we experience resistance. How can we make them aware that the issue also concerns them?

To whom should formation be directed? The need for formation is much more pertinent for the guests-brother/sister, chaplain, novice master... but still, it is good that there is formation for everyone. There are also guests who manipulate brothers/sisters. There is not always control over relationships of brothers/sisters with guests. Therefore, it is important that everyone be involved in formation. It would be good for something to be organized for superiors, it is long overdue. Formation implies input, personal study, but can we also think of something along the lines of Exordium, Experientia? It would be good if there were something at the Order level as a working tool. It seems important in the community to bring people together to exchange.

1. We will organizing a formation on safeguarding for superiors in the region for the next regional meeting.

YES 8          NO    ABST.                  unanimous, vote accepted

2. We want a concrete joint formation on safeguarding for all members of the communities.

YES 8          NO    ABST.                  unanimous, vote accepted

2a This formation can take place at the level of the region

YES 4          NO 1    ABST. 3                  vote accepted

2b This formation can take place at the level of the Westmalle association.

YES 6          NO 1    ABST. 1                  vote accepted

2c This formation can take place at the Order level (e.g. on the model of Exordium, Experientiae...)

YES 8            NO    ABST.                    unanimous, vote accepted

3. We want to put the topic around abuse back on the agenda of the next regional meeting.

YES 6            NO 0    ABST. 2                    vote accepted

4. We want a superior to be appointed at the regional level to keep this theme current.

YES 5            NO 0    ABST. 3                    vote accepted

## **Delegates**

Some elements of the discussion.

Are regional meetings meant for superiors or for communities? We have a long tradition of working with delegates per community for the regional meeting. Yet we experience a different, more open dynamic among superiors when we meet without delegates. This now seems important. On the other hand, there are also some communities that cannot send a delegate because they cannot find anyone or they are too small.

Can we look for an intermediate form?

1. To increase the involvement of the communities in the regional meetings, we ask as much as possible to prepare the meeting agenda in the community in advance.

YES 8            NO    ABST.                    unanimous, vote accepted

2. The regional meeting before the GC we meet with delegates from each community that may have a delegate. The other two regional meetings we meet without delegates.

YES 8            NO    ABST.                    unanimous, vote accepted

3. This arrangement will be reviewed after the next GC of 2025.

YES 8            NO    ABST.                    unanimous, vote accepted

## **The future of our region**

We are a small region. Difficulties in the region were evident at several points during the General Chapter. Should we brainstorm around our future? The small group does make the meeting pleasant and workable.

M. Gratia of Maria Frieden's request to return to our region pleased us. Then we are one more person, from another country ... Vote:

We are in favor of Maria Frieden's transfer to our region.

YES 8            NO 0    ABST 0                    unanimous, question accepted!

Welcome M Gratia!

We keep the region as it is now. No votes around need to be taken.

Next regional meeting : April 15-19, 2024 in Schiermonnikoog.