

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH  
 Chapter 2018-19\_Meeting Minutes  
September 8, 2018 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Present: (See attached spreadsheet for the list of attendees)

ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
1) Prayer	The day began with a Prayer Service in Chapel on Saturday, September 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2018. Sister Mary Drexler gave opening announcements.	Sister Mary Herrmann officially opened the first Chapter 2018-19 session at 9:04am.
2) Roll call	<p>Before roll call, everyone moved from the Chapel into the Gathering Room for the remainder of the prayer and Chapter beginning.</p> <p>Sister Mary Ann White performed the roll call of the 58 delegates. Sister Mary Frances Becker and Sister Colette Palmer were absent. The names of Sister Joseph Marie Fitzgerald and Sister Marie Timmons were removed from the roster and Sister Josette Marie Gocella’s name was added. Seven agrégées and two associates with voice only were also present as participants.</p> <p>The anointing of Sister Mary Dacey, SSJ, the Facilitator, was followed by the anointing of leadership, then all of the delegates, participants and observers.</p> <p>The Rite of Blessing was given by Sister Mary Herrmann and the prayer service ended with a song.</p>	Roll call of the Sisters acknowledged 55 full delegates.
3) Introduction	Sister Moira Sullivan, co-chair of the Steering Committee, introduced Sister Mary Dacey and provided Sister Mary Dacey’s biographical information to the group.	
4) Overview	Each attendee had been given a packet which contained the 2-day Chapter schedule, a copy of Sister Mary Dacey’s powerpoint presentation, a set of voting cards and the Chapter Journey of Discernment prayer card. Sister Mary Dacey gave an overview of the morning’s agenda and then began her opening conversation.	
5) Powerpoint presentation	The theme for the presentation was on <b>Communal Discernment: Moving from “I” to “We” in the service of the greater good of the whole.</b> This discernment process is further challenged by the contexts within which many religious	

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	<p>congregations find themselves today. Sister Mary Dacey discussed the corporate and canonical aspects of religious life using the image of an umbrella. The umbrella represents the whole community. The left side represents the corporate aspects – properties, healthcare, sponsored ministries, financial administration. The right side represents the canonical side – everything tending to the mission, formation, care of the membership, living the mission to each member’s fullest ability. And then she questioned whether or not the congregation still had the ability/capacity to hold up its “umbrella” – could it still maintain both the corporate and the canonical aspects.</p> <p>The reality of today is that we are seeing an increasing deinstitutionalization of religious life. Currently there are 411 religious institutes in the United States with the majority of members between the ages of 65 and 92. Leadership teams are consumed with attending to the corporate side, often times cannot focus much on the canonical side and, sometimes, as a result of a smaller leadership pool of candidates, are not equipped with the expertise to lead successfully. As a result, many congregations are focusing on unburdening their leadership and outsourcing the administrative tasks. This allows the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provides sufficient leadership expertise</li> <li>2. Frees leaders to focus on spiritual leadership</li> <li>3. It enables people to assume / continue leadership at an older age because they are not burdened with the corporate responsibility.</li> </ol> <p>Institutions such as the NRRO (National Religious Retirement Office) are able to provide sound advice for managing the corporate responsibilities. You can outsource the corporate side but you cannot outsource the canonical responsibilities. To exist canonically, a religious institute must provide the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A major superior</li> <li>2. A council of at least 2 members for that major superior</li> <li>3. A periodic general chapter for its members</li> </ol> <p>Continued congregational viability is determined by whether, 2 chapters from now (eight years), you will have a competent pool from which to discern new</p>	

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	<p>leadership.</p> <p>Sister Mary Dacey also shared dimensions of communal discernment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is deeply spiritual, and assumes that each person commits to personal prayer and reflection to prayerfully consider all issues and decisions.</li> <li>2. It assumes a commitment to the integrity of the dialogue; as far as possible, each person speaks her truth directly to the others, not about them outside of the meeting.</li> <li>3. The underlying question is always, “What is for the greater common good of the whole?”, which is often different from personal preferences.</li> <li>4. All have a voice.</li> <li>5. It is peaceful, respectful, but not necessarily easy; participants make a commitment “to have the meeting at the meeting.”</li> <li>6. Communal discernment is transparent with all participants present as equals and with equal access to all information needed to make the best decisions together. It unites rather than divides.</li> <li>7. Each participant is being invited to be open to diverse voices; is being called to surrender some of her personal preferences and hopes.</li> <li>8. The dialogue format is more about listening than speaking, and is committed to contributing to a shared future.</li> </ol> <p>In the communal discernment process there are three sources of wisdom:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discernment (seeking God’s will together for the future)</li> <li>2. Consensus building (hearing each person’s truth and then dialoguing together)</li> <li>3. Non-violent communication (speak honestly about their own feelings instead about what is wrong with others)</li> </ol> <p>During the discernment process of the weekend Sister Mary Dacey presented two contemplative questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who are we called to be as carriers of the charism?</li> <li>2. How do we want to live this religious vocation fully and well until we meet God face to face?</li> </ol>	
6) Consensus group – first session	The focus of this first Chapter weekend is Governance. Everyone present was broken up into smaller groups. With a facilitator, in the	

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	<p>course of the weekend, each will participate in two discussion groups. The first group is called the Home table, the second group is the Consensus table.</p> <p>Reflection time was given and then the participants were asked to discern and discuss a statement from page 32 of the Constitutions: "...Collegiality in decision making and law making requires that all who will be vitally affected by a decision help to make the decision by their prayer, study and discussion." The question posed was, <i>"In light of our commitment to collegiality and subsidiarity, (pp 32-33 in the Constitutions), how do we see decision making in the congregation, given our place in the paschal mystery of religious life?"</i></p> <p>Sister Mary Dacey asked if each participant would list one or two personal commitments they would be willing to make about this Congregation's decision making process. Then, using communal discernment, each table would utilize the same process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everybody at the table speaks/shares her input.</li> <li>2. Next, conversation surrounding the shared input occurs.</li> <li>3. Last, the group determines what ideas were common to the Home table.</li> </ol> <p>Everyone in the group at the Home table then writes down the common themes on her paper. Each person then takes her paper with her to the Consensus (2<sup>nd</sup>) table.</p>	<p>This question was printed on forms that were provided at each table. On the form everyone was invited to list up to three commitments. First personal reflection time was given and then consensus building discussions commenced.</p>
	<p>1:00pm – 4:00 pm session</p>	
<p>7) Consensus group – second session</p>	<p>During this session all participants moved to their second assigned group.</p> <p>The same communal system was followed from the first group. The Consensus group was designed to have one person from each of the first tables represented at the second table.</p> <p>Deeper consensus happened at the Consensus table – each person gave the small group report from her first table, discussion followed and then common themes arose. After reaching consensus, the table facilitator wrote down the common theme(s). Sister Mary Drexler and Sister Marianne Stuckert worked Saturday evening to craft one commitment statement that captured the essence of</p>	

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	all 8 consensus tables. This statement was presented to the Chapter participants on Sunday morning.	
– Section #1 on the Governance section of the Constitutions	<p>Sister Linda Fusco spoke on behalf of the Government committee and discussed section #1 of the proposed changes to the Constitutions concerning governance. These proposed changes had been sent to all of the Sisters for review prior to the Chapter meeting.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. On pg. 32, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and collegiality should be understood as being ingrained within each Sister.</li> <li>2. On pg. 33, Sister Linda suggested that each Sister knows her responsibilities. Leadership too, knows their responsibilities and lives the charism through their service to the community.</li> </ol> <p>There was one question for clarification by Sister Mary Helen Forney: Will the paragraphs being omitted be held somewhere else? Sister Linda answered that the Government committee had not yet determined what would/should happen with the omitted sections.</p> <p>Next, a handout was distributed which had the following questions for conversation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are you seeing?</li> <li>2. What are your feelings about the recommendations?</li> <li>3. What are you hearing from others as you converse?</li> </ol> <p>After table conversations, the table facilitator asked if her table's participants could affirm the changes or if they had exceptions to the changes and/or wanted deeper conversation about the changes. The table facilitators presented their discussions:</p> <p>Table 1 – They can affirm the changes but they wish to keep references to the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>Table 2 – Seven of the eight could affirm the changes if the Holy Spirit was kept in, but want deeper conversation about the section on pg. 33 (before the blue) about charism not being static. One questioned why are we rewriting Constitutions as we begin chapter – could this please be addressed in the future.</p> <p>Table 3 – All six can affirm the changes but they asked if, on pg. 33, if the 2</p>	

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	<p>councilors-at-large are able to maintain other ministries.</p> <p>Table 4 – All seven can affirm the changes as presented. Their question is if any of the proposed changes (red sections) need to be kept anywhere. They don't feel the changes need to be kept.</p> <p>Table 5 – On pg. 31 all six agree with the changes. On pg. 32 they all want to keep the Holy Spirit. On pg. 33 they feel deeper discussion is needed concerning Leadership.</p> <p>Table 6 – All seven affirmed but want to keep the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>Table 7 – All six can affirm the changes. They are also questioning if the third paragraph on pg. 31 is necessary to keep in the Constitutions.</p> <p>Table 8 – Need deeper conversation about where the crossed out sections/changes will be preserved for future reference.</p>	
8) Segment #2	<p>During segment #2 Sister Carol Morehouse reiterated that the Government committee seeks to update and streamline the government section of the Constitution. Sister Carol then presented more desired changes to the Constitution:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. On pg. 33, clarification was made that the addition of “the Congregation shall elect a President, two councilors and two councilors at large” is a requirement of canon law.</li> <li>2. On pg. 34 much of the text is redundant.</li> <li>3. On pg. 35, the statement about Leadership to be removed isn't necessary because it has been this way since 1999.</li> <li>4. Also on pg. 35, collaboration applies to all Sisters, so that also includes Leadership.</li> <li>5. On pg. 36 there were the following suggested changes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Remove redundant or unnecessary wording about leadership duties.</li> <li>b. Use the word delegate in place of capitular.</li> <li>c. Remove redundant or unnecessary wording about leadership duties.</li> <li>d. For canon law sentence, use the word <i>defines</i> instead of <i>imposes</i>.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>Sister Carol also assured everyone that the government committee had heard the consensus of everyone and would be definitely adding the Holy Spirit back in.</p>	

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	<p>Questions for clarification:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sister Mary Fromknecht has the concept of Leadership team been changed to President and 2 councilors? Answer - The “team” concept has not been recognized in Canon law. Canon law favors the verbiage of President and two councilors.</li> <li>2. Sister Moira Sullivan asked, with the mandate from the Bishop for five people in leadership, was there discussion, within the government committee, of proposing a different model that included five people. Answer: Sister Carol (and Sister Nancy Fisher) said yes, there was discussion but no one wanted to make a change to five people.</li> </ol> <p>Reflection time was given, and then consensus discussions followed. Next, a representative from each table was able to come up and share any reservations they had about the proposed changes Sister Linda presented:</p> <p>Table 1 – All seven affirm the changes.  Table 2 – Five were able to affirm the changes but 2 need further clarification about the leadership model.  Table 3 – Five affirm the changes but need deeper conversations about the view of leadership.  Table 4 – All seven affirm the changes but need discussion about who decides what leadership does.  Table 5 – More conversation is need before they can vote.  Table 6 – All seven affirm the changes.  Table 7 – Six of the seven are able to affirm the changes.  Table 8 – Seven affirm the changes but one needs more conversation about the number needed for Leadership.</p>	
9)Wrap-up	Sister Mary Dacey acknowledged the level of synchronicity that had been reached. She thanked everyone for their input, reminded everyone of mass at 4:00pm and Sunday’s schedule.	
10) Adjournment	The meeting was adjourned at 3:54pm.	

Submitted by Jennifer Woodard, Recorder