

## **Closing Address**

We have just met together from 21<sup>st</sup> May to 11<sup>th</sup> June. Such a positive experience was the occasion for each of the delegates and observers to pray, reflect and point the way ahead for the next five years through the statements coming from this 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. It was an opportunity to put aside our personal experience and open ourselves more largely to the life of our Mill Hill Society and listen to what the Holy Spirit had to say to us during this particular moment in over a century and a half of our long history.

As we gathered for the Chapter, we wished to begin our work with a time of prayer, putting ourselves 'apart'. Then, like the apostles who, returning from their first mission, told Christ 'everything they had done', we listened to the reports of our Society worldwide. Measuring the faithfulness of each one for his given portfolio, we were filled with gratitude towards the unique manner in which our Members and Associates give human form to the light of the Gospel where they live and work. To each Member and Associate of our Mill Hill Society, I together with the General Council wish to say thank you for what you do and for what you are and I wish to encourage you to always share that Gospel joy.

Beyond the diversity of the missionary path which makes our Mill Hill Society so beautiful, I recognise very much the common spirit and charism of our Mill Hill Society – going 'where the need is greatest'. This spirit is like a stamp put on us, a sign of our calling in the hearts of the peoples entrusted to our care, putting ourselves at the service of the local Churches and continuing to take part in their growth and especially their own missionary dynamic. Strengthened in the charism of our Society, we were able to experience the call of the Holy Spirit so that we may once again, with renewed vigour and enthusiasm do what we do best: mission.

I am convinced that this commitment to the source of our common spirit will lead each of our Members and Associates to discern our own path in the unique circumstances of the local Churches where we work and live. As I visited our missionaries worldwide over the past seven years, I experienced the reaching out of Members and Associates, serving with evermore zeal.

In our work here over the past weeks, we have sought to determine the direction to be taken over the next five years. The Chapter allows us with a fresh view, to return to that common spirit which drives us by marvelling at the profound simplicity of our missionary calling. Christ, indeed sent his disciples with nothing for the journey so that they may not be hindered, to simply meet the faces and lives of men and women by entering the intimacy of their hearts and communicating to them the light of the One in whom they can find rest.

Chapter 2022 has given our Society a five year plan stated under what we now refer to as the Umbrella Areas. The General Council will make every effort to work on this plan always aware that we cannot guarantee a predicted unfolding of the future. Our sharing here in the Chapter Hall on all the areas including what I like to call the scary edges, were an energiser in planning our way ahead for the coming years. I noted and am grateful for the broad consensus on ideas, proposals, and the final statements that will go out from the General Chapter. I recognise and congratulate you for your wholehearted engagement in the Chapter Process.

The Mission areas of Africa, Asia, Europe & North America re-affirmed by this Chapter will continue to offer a freshness and focus on our mission. So too our cherished mission in New Zealand and Latin America. Our Statement on Mission and Identity clearly mandates us to reach out to those on the peripheries and strive to live out our Mission Priorities including those priorities added to by the Chapter. We recognised the great suffering that has been inflicted on many people at the hands of those in positions of trust within the Church, including by some of our own Members, we again strive to ensure that all our parishes, missions and centres are safe environments in which children, vulnerable adults and all God's people can grow.

While ensuring that our present commitments can be sustained, both in terms of personnel and finances, with the growing number of young Members emerging from our Formation Programme, we are in a position to cautiously consider taking on new commitments in our Mission Areas in response to the needs of the local churches.

As Chapter 2015 came to a close, 'Laudato Si' was issued focusing on connecting care of the natural world with justice for the poorest and most vulnerable people. Chapter 2022 reiterated this focus calling on ways of protecting our common home as an integral part of all our endeavours.

We cherished in our Statements from this Chapter the grateful appreciation for the high standards of our Formation Programme. On visitation, I have seen the positive outcome in numbers but more especially in the excellence of our Formation Programme, filling me with joy and hope as mission continues, given us by the Highest Authority. For this mission to continue, formation is the key and we will continue to ensure the quality of a well-integrated programme.

Mention must be given to the Chapter statement in welcoming a careful reopening of formation in the DRC with a focus on orientation and basic formation in a measured manner.

The quality of care given to Members and Associates at all stages of life is appreciated and will continue to be our special concern.

I place on record my sincere thanks to the out-going General Council, Andrew Mukulu and Jimmy Lindero, not forgetting Des McGillicuddy. Accept my appreciation for your friendship, collaboration, commitment to the workings of the General Council. You have much to offer our Society in the years ahead as you look to the future.

We have just celebrated the feast Pentecost, the Holy Spirit coming down on each of the apostles and as such they were able to go out to enflame the world. The invitation for all of us is to be zealous missionaries, enflaming the world. We are asked by the Lord to go out to the whole world, without imposing on us any limit of time or space. Let us put our missionary calling at the centre of our life.

As we continue the journey, let us remind ourselves of the Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis "Fratelli Tutti". Its title is the exhortation of Saint Francis to follow the message of Jesus: to recognise each other as brothers and sisters and to live accordingly in the common home that the Father entrusted to us.

Let us move forward with enthusiasm as there is much to do on the journey that awaits us ‘that they may have life in abundance’.

On behalf of the Delegates and Observers of the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter held here at Abingdon, Oxfordshire I wish to thank the following:

Richard Oundsworth OP for leading us into the Chapter as we prepared to enter the deliberations of the Chapter.

The staff and management of Milton Hill House for making our stay here so pleasant especially with mention to the food, accommodation, the use of the Chapter Hall and our prayer space.

Gerry Hastie and Jimmy Lindero our logisticians for the role they played in ensuring that all went smoothly in the organising of the Chapter especially their liaison with the Milton Hill House management team.

We have all seen how technology can add to the proceedings of the Chapter and of course the skilful use of these modern means of communication at our disposal. My thanks to Christopher Hancock for his sheer genius in this field, allowing us a near paperless Chapter from the Secretariat. This surely was an eco-friendly Chapter in this respect. To Paul Mooney our assistant secretary, always ready and willing to assist in any way to efficiently be at the service of the Chapter.

Fons Eppink our Society correspondent always capturing the pulse of the Chapter on a daily basis, keeping the Mill Hill world and many other informed of the proceedings.

The Chapter Preparation Committee – two years standing due to the pandemic – Anthony Chantry, Fons Eppink, Christopher Hancock, Michael Corcoran, Jimmy Lindero, Andrew Mukulu. We began our meeting with Paula Molloy as our facilitator who had to withdraw due to the twice postponement of the Chapter. Taking up the baton from Paula was Catherine Ryan who journeyed with us in our preparations.

The Chapter Steering Committee taking over from the Preparation Committee – Jimmy Lindero, Philip Adede, Fons Eppink, Michael Corcoran and Catherine Ryan.

Sr. Catherine Ryan, for being with us via zoom and giving quality time to the Steering Committee allowing the Chapter Process to proceed efficiently. Catherine was unable to be with us physically due to contracting Covid 19 just before the opening of the Chapter. In the process we discovered that we had a number of skilled facilitators amongst the assembled delegates and observers.

Dermot Byrne and Philip O’Halloran for reading the minutes on our behalf on a daily basis.

Jimmy Lindero and Gerry Hastie for the final Chapter Document.

Michael Corcoran MHM  
General Superior  
11<sup>th</sup> June 2022