

## **Finance**

(Including the call to simplicity of life, the practice of evangelical poverty, and self-sustainability.)

Below are the Brothers' responses from the first phase of the pre-chapter reflections. After reflecting on the Description of the Charism, the Brothers were asked to think about and discern what practices or exercises could be adopted by all members of the Congregation in order for us to live more deeply and intentionally the Charism of the Congregation. Here the suggested practices from the Brothers are grouped according to specific statements from the Description that gave rise to each suggested practice. You will see that certain themes are repeated. We did not want to combine similar practices in this document, but rather allow the Brothers to see all that was suggested, and thus see some common themes. The Working Committees for the General Chapter will further refine these practices based on feedback received from the Brothers individually, or from community/area gatherings.

At this stage of the process, you are invited to reflect on this material both individually and in community or area gatherings. Please identify what practices you support, or make suggestions as to any additional practices you think should be considered. Please send group summaries or individual responses to Stephanie Stricker at the Generalate by 15 June 2013.

([Sstricker@xaverianbrothers.org](mailto:Sstricker@xaverianbrothers.org)). Chapter Delegates have been encouraged to help organize gatherings, if possible.

### **SPECIFIC STATEMENT FROM DESCRIPTION:**

"As consecrated laymen, we Xaverians freely choose an "ordinary life" without privilege or entitlement where we seek to find God and be formed by the 'common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life.'"

### **Suggested Practices:**

1. The groups gathered by "conveners" could be a good way of helping us Brothers to strengthen that "honest and fraternal dialogue" which would be a great help to us as we look at how simple our life really is, and truly answer the call to live simply.
  - a. Have area meetings in the near future which would have somebody as engaging as Fr. John Donahue, SJ, to help us get ready to more intentionally get involved in groups like those mentioned in my first suggestion. Many writers on the religious life have said that the way we live our vow of poverty is foundational. At the area meetings with John Donahue several years ago, a number of Brothers made commitments to live more simply and to somehow strive to make the world a more just place. The conveners and groups described in my first suggestion would have been a great support for Brothers to live up to such commitments.
  - b. We've received much information on our financial situation, but it would be good for us to find ways to help one another and challenge one another to live in ways that do such things as distinguish wants from needs and act responsibly in light of our income and our witness to others.
  - c. We need to have small group gatherings of Kenyan and Congolese Brothers with at least some of our Anglo Brothers to have an honest and fraternal dialogue about the financial future of the Congregation in all areas of the world and what we are all called to do in light of this
2. Live simply
3. Every community meet twice a year to discern specific ways that as individuals and a community they can live more simply and better honor the vow of poverty.

### **SPECIFIC STATEMENT FROM DESCRIPTION:**

A band of Brothers who mutually help encourage . . .

**Suggested practice:**

1. Membership should be kept informed in advance of changes being discussed in relation to financial matters (disposal of property) and be asked for input

**SPECIFIC STATEMENT FROM DESCRIPTION:**

Our place is on the margin . . . renouncing power and prestige . . .

**Suggested practices:**

1. Promote ways in which dependence on Congregation financially is more apparent . . . Brothers not act as if they were financially independent . . . e.g. making financial donations.
2. Whenever possible living together rather than separately.

**SPECIFIC STATEMENT FROM DESCRIPTION:**

Witnessing to the ideals of the first gospel community

**Suggested practices:**

1. That the general administration attempt to provide housing in certain geographic areas for those Brothers who wish to live in a community (of say, four) rather than to live separately – alone.

**SPECIFIC STATEMENT FROM DESCRIPTION:**

We believe that it is through our life of Gospel witness lived in community that we respond to the summons to the spirit, etc

**Suggested practices:**

1. Even in aging, we Americans & Belgian Brothers can still manifest “God’s care and compassionate love to peoples of the world,” by remaining conscious of the need of our missions. Once a year, the Brothers will meet with Leadership in order to receive updates on our African, Haitian and Bolivian Missions, along with and discerning prayerful, financial & technological ways each Brother or community may contribute to the well being of some aspect of mission needs.

**SPECIFIC STATEMENT FROM DESCRIPTION:**

In community we are encouraged to discover our gifts and talents and to affirm the gift of our brothers calling each to greater service of the Lord. Here we also find grace and support to embrace ascetical practice of poverty, consecrated celibacy and obedience for the sake of the Kingdom.

**Suggested practices:**

1. Encourage Brothers to live with other Brothers to share expenses.
2. Brothers live among the people whom they serve – (poor and marginalized) – of the ministry
3. Strive constantly to live as simply as possible. If living alone, look for bargains, etc., so that one can live within one’s means. Plus, plan some monies to help out those less fortunate – example: Haitians.
4. Be more aware of how my use of Congregation’s resources affect the Brothers.
5. Develop a better system for accountability.
6. Define the practices of poverty for each region of the Congregation.
7. Each community and region entities gathers at least once during the course of the year to examine prayerfully the individual and community practice of poverty and simplicity including consideration of Style of life. Common ownership, discipline and accountability to community.

8. Naturally a balance has to be visible in many things between our ordinary lifestyle and the witness of it to people.
9. African sustainability is an outstanding need of the Congregation at this time. We have in the USA several men who excel in this domain, and who have directed our Congregation through major financial crisis.
  - a. Can both African regions select a promising brother who would receive the proper training and creativity to address this issue on their local levels? Perhaps these two brothers could come to the USA for proper training, and share in the Congregational finance committee to learn new skills through academic training as well as through fraternal and practical 'osmosis'.
10. Given the financial situation of the Congregation and the work of the Finance Committee in creating a long-range financial plan, can the Chapter adapt a funding policy for new initiatives where the Congregation, because of its very limited financial resources, is not seen as the initial source of funding for mission expansion, capital needs, operating expenses (beyond initial formation)? To help us do this regionally, can each region of the Congregation have someone serve as a coordinator for development – so that this person becomes responsible for grant-writing, research of possible funders, coordinating requests for support? The regional coordinator for development would need to work in collaboration with someone from General Administration so that regions are not competing against each other for funding.
11. In order to address desire for self-sustainability, especially in our regions in DRC, Kenya, and Haiti, can learn from the example of other Congregations and develop other sources of revenue

#### **SPECIFIC STATEMENT FROM DESCRIPTION:**

Participation in the Church's mission by believing that education is the best way for that, but at the same time to realized that education takes many forms

#### **Suggested practices:**

1. Taking care to and giving a perspective to street children. (Remarque: When these children are staying at a center, than two brothers have to be with them because too much free time, too much money, drinking...).
2. Giving witness of fraternity as a volunteer or as a cooperator in education help.
3. Being active at the industry-world and fitting oneself to be on an evangelical disposition, active at the social life because we have to take care for the financial future of our communities for, by an accelerated changing and thinning out of the Congregation's ranks, the financial assistance will stop within perhaps a decade.

#### **SPECIFIC STATEMENT FROM DESCRIPTION:**

#### **Suggested practices:**

1. I think the present situation is quite good.

#### **SPECIFIC STATEMENT FROM DESCRIPTION:**

OUR PLACE IN THE CHURCH IS ON THE MARGIN, IN SOLIDARITY AND AVAILABILITY AMONG THE PEOPLE

#### **Suggested practices:**

1. Ascetical practices of poverty;
2. A life of solidarity
3. Spirit of initiative.

#### INTRODUCTION:

- a) Nowadays the Congolese region counts 17 perpetually professed brothers; four of them are abroad. Among the thirteen brothers residing in the Congo, one is pensioned, two are fulltime implicated in formation work and three are still studying. Consequently there are only seven perpetually professed brothers who have a job... which is totally or partially (poorly) paid.
- b) The Congolese region counts actually 15 temporary professed brothers; five of them are abroad. Among the ten remaining brothers residing in the Congo, seven of them are still studying and only three have a job totally or partially paid.

#### CONCLUSIONS :

The only income of the brothers in the Congo is derisory (although there are some other revenues coming from house rents, transmitting aërials, a cybercafé, a book-shop) and excludes self-supporting for many more years. Yet this situation should not discourage us but push us to reflect, to pray, to judge and TO ACT.

Let us start with sobriety:

- Could we, should we live more soberly in a milieu where most people are poor, very poor?
- Could we moderate the consumption of beer? Is consumption of beer in the novitiate desirable, just as mobile phones?
- Could novices and postulants farm some land and grow maize for instance?
- The summer holidays of our brothers-students often last at least three months.

Couldn't they, during this period, keep in repair (painting for instance) our community houses?

- Could we explore in Kasenga the possibilities of growing cereals and breeding small cattle?
- Could the communities in Likasi till some land at the Kampemba farm in collaboration with our street-kids at Ryken house, or should we envisage the sale of that farm instead of paying (I hope my pieces of information are still exact) of paying two workmen for the maintenance of the farm?
- Let us hope that the exploitation of the festive hall will be remunerative within two years!
- Do we need a general councillor for Africa, if there is a general councillor living in the Congo and a general councillor living in Kenya.... and if our General Superior manages to spend more time in Africa?