January 2, 2018

Dear Sisters, Associates and Lay Consecrated,

In August 2017 we asked you for input regarding key topics that needed to be addressed at Chapter 2018. You expressed an overwhelming desire to look ahead 10-15 years in an effort to determine what needs to be completed and what seeds need to be planted and nurtured now to prepare for our future. Specifically, the topics of leadership and mission, including our sponsored works, surfaced as being of critical importance to address during Chapter.

In preparation for our work at Chapter, we now want to encourage a deeper conversation among sisters, associates and lay consecrated about our future. We are living religious life in a challenging time. Indeed, we often hear the phrase “living in a threshold time” to describe our life today. This threshold metaphor can be both helpful and challenging. It can help us understand our experiences of uncertainty, loss and possibility in contemporary religious life. Standing at a threshold opens us to new realities and possibilities and can be exciting and hopeful. But the metaphor also reminds us of the ambiguity and risk involved in crossing most thresholds. This awareness of risk and the possibility of failure can sometimes contribute to a kind of apathy, paralysis or lack of will to make the decisions and take the actions that move us into our future.

What will we need to let go of and be free from in order to move forward? What do we want to be free for? Who are we called to be and what are we called to do in this moment of our life as a Province for our deepest hopes, dreams and passions to be realized?

We invite and encourage you to take time for communal reflection and sharing on the accompanying questions which address challenges in planning for our future and the future of religious life as a SNJM.

The 2018 Chapter Steering Committee

Maureen Delaney                Diane Enos                Donna Fyffe, Facilitator
Sally Gunn, Secretary         Mary Haupt                 Margaret Kennedy
Yvonne Lopez-Morton           Sarah Lucier               Linda Patrick, Chair    Janet Walton

Imagine what might happen if the task of discernment were reframed as “noticing the arrival of your highest future possibility.”...Could it be that even in our obvious diminishment the God of the future is still calling us to fresh horizons?
Carole Shinnick, SSND

The seeds of tomorrow are already all around us, but they are still very small compared to the old structures that are still embodying the past.... Attend to the openings, the challenges, the disruptions where we feel the past ending and the future wanting to begin.
Otto Scharmer
Focus on the Future: Conversations
with Sisters, Lay Consecrated and Associates
COMMUNAL REFLECTION

These questions are for group/communal reflection and sharing. Anyone (individual sister, associate, lay consecrated, mission center coordinator) may initiate a group and you may participate in as many groups as you choose. We encourage you to “cross pollinate” and if possible, gather across mission centres and regions. If you want to do this via Zoom or phone conferencing, please contact Jennifer Brandlon (503-675-7115 or jbrandlon@snjmuson.org). You may also choose to meet with those in your local mission centre, prayer group, living group, etc. We ask that for each group that meets, one response sheet is sent to the Chapter Steering Committee by the group initiator on the form provided.

1. How would you describe the threshold we are now standing at as a Province? What are we leaving behind?

2. Where do we need to be disturbed or disrupted in order to move actively into our future?

3. As we cross the threshold, what are we assuming or imagining we will find on the “other side”?

Prospective Immigrants Please Note

Either you will go through this door or you will not go through.

If you go through there is always the risk of remembering your name.

Things look at you doubly and you must look back and let them happen.

If you do not go through it is possible to live worthily to maintain your attitudes to hold your position to die bravely

but much will blind you, much will evade you, at what cost who knows?

The door itself makes no promises. It is only a door.

Adrienne Rich
Focus on the Future:
Conversations with Sisters, Lay Consecrated and Associates
Response Form

Group initiator, please summarize as succinctly as possible your group’s response to the three reflection questions below and email this response form to wevalueyourinput@snjmuson.org as you complete it or at the latest by March 2, 2018.

We hope these group responses will give us a tone of the deep hopes, fears, and dreams of the Province. We will use the information you provide to further refine and shape the content of the Chapter.

Thank you,
The Chapter Steering Committee

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Please list names of the group initiator and members. Group responses will be published on the SNJM protected website without names.