

*The official texts
of the 20th General Assembly
of the Society of African Missions*

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Bringing from our treasures things both new and old

Dear Members and Associates,

The above line captures the essence of General Assembly 2013. The official texts of this 20th General Assembly are brought to you in this Bulletin. While the text itself carries the outcome of deliberations, and the Message is a very clear encapsulation of all that was discussed and agreed, a word may be helpful to catch something of the spirit of the gathering.

A striking feature of this 20th Assembly was the very strong presence of delegates from Africa and Asia, a fact which accurately reflects the ever changing demographic reality of our Society. Seventeen of the forty delegates came from the world's South, while the back-room support team had a strong majority of members from the South. This feature provided a dynamic youthfulness to all undertakings, which I believe is reflected in the text itself.

The treasures from which we draw

The treasures from which we draw are multiple: the Good News as given to us by Jesus Christ; the inspired teachings of the Church that contextualise this Good News in the concrete reality in which we live; the charism of the Society as inherited from De Bresillac and mediated through time and succeeding generations of missionaries and Society Assemblies; and the cultures from where we come and in which we exercise ministry . This treasure formed the backdrop for the Assembly. All of it has relevance today, as the core motivation for mission remains eternally valid, to try to communicate to the people of our time that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, so that everyone who believes in him might not be lost but might have eternal life”. (Jn 3:16)

We are the Society of African Missions, so our primary focus continues to be Africa and its peoples. The Assembly recognised that for many of the older Units the majority of members no longer live and work in Africa. But by supporting Africa through prayer, and working for the most abandoned wherever members find themselves, even outside of Africa, is a continuing call that validates their missionary vocation. Our commitment is always *ad gentes* and *ad vitam*. This requires a stability of assignment which sometimes poses a challenge to younger members, coming from a culture characterised by a spirit of transience and global mobility.

Rhyming of the old and the new

How the old and the new interact and rhyme is one of the key challenges coming out of this Assembly. Tasks were given to the General Council to coordinate the sharing of personnel and resources for the good of the overall mission of the SMA. Such a challenge should be possible to meet through the active engagement of individual members and each Unit in this task. This may require a letting go of preferred choices for mission or the resources received for mission, whether on an individual or collective level.

A remarkable level of solidarity within the Society has been expressed, especially in recent decades. This is reflected in a commendable generosity to pool resources of personnel and finance to pursue the mission entrusted by God to the Society. At GA13 the paying Units agreed to increase their financial contributions. Such generosity at a time of considerable diminishment of their assets is a clear indication of a Spirit-filled missionary commitment. Those in receipt of financial support were also challenged to increase efforts towards self-sufficiency, and an eagerness to achieve this target was evidenced.

Being the best that we can be

All Assemblies of recent decades have placed a strong emphasis on Formation. The 20th Assembly retained a strong emphasis on the need for quality initial formation programmes. 280 students require a minimum of 35 formators, who need to be replaced during each six year cycle, if the programmes are to be realistic. This poses an enormous challenge to leadership at all levels and it is critical that the generosity

of members and Units to support this ministry is maintained and even augmented. GA13 also put a fresh emphasis on the need for quality on-going formation in addition to initial formation. We are all challenged to live lives of integrity, and personal wellness is the seed of fruitful mission. The Assembly recognised that each member is ultimately responsible for his own wellness but recognised too that programmes need to be put in place to support integrative living.

The vision of Assembly 2013 seeks to enhance collaboration with other missionary congregations and with lay faithful of good will. First in the line of collaborators are those sharing a similar charism to ours. The OLA Sisters continue to live with us this common charism and members and Units are encouraged to exploit all areas of collaboration in support of mission.

In the footsteps of the Founder

Reflection on charism impels us to look again at the legacy bequeathed by our Founder. An enormous amount of work has been done in the past thirty years to help us all appreciate more fully the dynamic missionary spirit that filled the heart and soul of this extraordinary apostle. As research on his life and writings continues and the Cause of his canonisation is earnestly pursued, the Assembly reminds members to seek his intercession through prayer, and communicate all graces received to the Postulator. All Units are asked to promote the 200th Anniversary of de Bresillac's birth as an opportunity to further knowledge of his life and ministry and deepen our missionary spirituality. There is perhaps a greater openness among members in the newer Units to foster devotion, and these seem to be promising times to advance the cause particularly in Africa and Asia. Units should continue to use the prayer for his canonisation and promote the use of this prayer at all meetings of SMA friends and benefactors. There is need for an increased effort on all our parts at the level of promotion in order that the painstaking work of the postulator may bear fruit.

All Provinces and Districts and some Districts in Formation have now taken the decisions of GA13 and applied them to their own reality. The remaining Districts in Formation will be gathering in Assembly over coming weeks to do likewise. It will be a central plank of all discussion at upcoming and on-going Regional Assemblies. It is a challenging and demanding programme for every Unit. I ask all members to strive to

make these decisions a reality in their own place. During the coming six years regular reviews will be carried out at Plenary Council and at each local level to assess the impact of these decisions. Necessary changes in view of greater fruitfulness will be made at each level.

How can we benefit from this document?

This document can only bear fruit if it is used. It is made available to you now also in digital form through the SMA international website for ease of access. Please discuss it section by section at Apostolic Community meetings, in Formation houses and in all meetings held in collaboration with OLA and others. Our international media office gives you an ideal opportunity to respond to this document. It is good to share your thoughts and reactions with others so that we can further precise what is SMA mission today, a request made to the General Council in this document itself.

A sincere word of thanks to all who contributed to GA13 – participants, facilitators, secretariat, personnel at the Generalate – SMAs, Franciscan Sisters of the Presentation of Mary and Lay staff – and the St John of God Brothers.

We invoke the Holy Spirit and the intercession of the Servant of God, Melchior de Marion Brésillac, to strengthen all of us as we endeavour to implement the decisions of GA13.

Fachtna O'Driscoll SMA
Antonio Porcellato SMA
Francis Rozario SMA
François Gnonhossou SMA

Opening of the 20th General Assembly

Dear brothers and delegates to the General Assembly

Welcome to All

It is a privilege for me, and an unexpected one, to welcome you today to the opening of the 20th General Assembly of the Society of African Missions. All 40 delegates are present, 19 of whom are delegates “ex officio”. The “ex officio” delegates are the heads of units and were elected six years ago in order to fulfil the mandate that had been given to them. The other 21 delegates have been elected by their peers to attend the Assembly. We come from 15 existing SMA units and from 19 countries, proud to be a part of what we call the international SMA, the large family of the African Missions. I would like to mention the presence among us of one special invitee, Steven Phillips, a member of the lay associates in the U.S., who has come in the name of the different groups and fraternities of lay missionaries attached to the SMA. Neither should I wish to forget to welcome, as participants in the assembly, those individuals that render us service of a technical nature without which we cannot function: the secretaries, the translators, and the moderators (facilitators), in particular Sister Generose, who will have the opportunity to discover who and what SMA is from the inside, and who knows how to maintain discretion when it comes to our imperfections. All of these people, in one way or another, contribute their service to help us to work in comfort, as have all of those who, in one way or another, even at a distance, have contributed to the preparations for this assembly. I am thinking in particular of those members that have collaborated in the publication of the *Report on the State of the Society of African Missions*, and of the members of the Preparatory Commission, who drew up the questionnaire. They have truly rendered us great service in the redaction of a common document and in the synthesis of replies, knowing full well that their work could result in frustration for those members who may not find their own comments and suggestions included. The results of their work have just been published in the form of SMA Bulletin n° 140. Their work can serve us well as a point of

departure for our own reflections in the coming days. My thanks also go out to those people, members of the SMA or not, who have put in place the necessary logistics for us to conduct a paper-free assembly. This is the first time that we are attempting to conduct a paperless assembly. It is a challenge that asks for our patience and, at the same time, for the willingness to learn new ways of communicating on the part of those of us who are less accustomed to newer technologies. I hope that these newer technologies will not prevent us from focusing on the real issues facing our assembly and will not distract us too much.

It is a joy for all of us to be together, gathered together in faith, in hope, and in fraternity, and for that reason, the first word I should like to say is one of thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving to God our Father for having gathered us together for his mission. Thanksgiving for his kindness and favor, for having permitted us to reach the end of this mandate, in spite of our uncertainties, our hesitations, and our weaknesses. Thanksgiving for having brought SMA to see the light of this day and permitting us to meet together. Thanksgiving for the missionary commitment of the Society, which has received his blessings for the past 156 years, as we daily remember in our special prayer for the assembly.

The numerous celebrations marking 150 years of evangelization, which took place in many West African countries, have allowed us to take stock of the work already accomplished and the blessings we have been favoured with, blessings sprung from those first seeds of 150 years ago. They have produced abundant fruit and good fruit for the most part. During this mandate, which is now drawing to a close, we first of all celebrated 150 years of mission in Sierra Leone. This took place in 2009. Indeed, one of our latest endeavours, a new planting, if you will, fragile and late in time but equally promising, if we but know how to nurture it, is the taking up again of the original work undertaken by our founder himself in Sierra-Leone with the opening of a mission in that country at Kwama, not far from Freetown. It is in fact an area of primary evangelization in which we readily encounter all the elements and all the challenges that the Founder wished to bequeath to his newly-born society.

We also celebrated the 150 years of evangelization in Dahomey, present-day Benin, in 2011, a visit that coincided with the visit of Pope Benedict XVI and the issuing of the apostolic exhortation “*Ecclesia Munus*”, fruit of the 2nd African Synod, and a roadmap charting new ways of working for the evangelization of the continent in the light of the current African reality. More recently, on March 9th of this year, a great thanksgiving celebration was organized in Lagos to mark the 150th anniversary of the first celebration of the mass in modern times there by Father Borghero. During this celebration, the work of the SMA was gloriously remembered.

This celebration also afforded us the opportunity to welcome Cardinal Okogie as a new honorary member of the Society. Cardinal Okogie has presided for nearly forty years over the work of evangelization in the Archdiocese of Lagos. A small ceremony of welcome took place here at Nocetta, because the original ceremony planned for Lagos could not take place since the Cardinal, in his role as elector, came to Rome for the election of the successor to Pope Benedict XVI. I was personally very much moved when I witnessed the emotion and the joy of the Cardinal on being attached in a more juridical manner, and at the same time in a more spiritual and fraternal manner, to our humble Society. His joy was a testimony to the value and the merit of our Society.

I should wish to take advantage of this event to remind ourselves that we have available to us certain possibilities, one of which being that of welcoming honorary members for a variety of reasons. During this last mandate, we welcomed close to thirty honorary members, and each one of them has experienced this welcome with great emotion, at a deep human and spiritual level. If we are able to welcome a Cardinal, and this is the second time that this has happened, we are also able to welcome those with a lesser public presence. We have done so for some of our very faithful collaborators, such as Papa Rafael, the legendary cook for sixty years at the Regional house in Lomé, who was at the service of so many of our confreres who, as we well know, can be demanding and of an uneven temper. In our Society, there is a place for the very great, but also an equal place, maybe even a greater place, for those who are small in the public eye, all of them great or all of them small in the eyes of God the Father of all.

In the welcoming of the Cardinal to the Society, I also see a beautiful fruit and a beautiful example of the long collaboration between the

SMA and the local churches. This collaboration is an example of one of our ways of being an apostolic society, which we have always tried to practice. In the welcoming of those individuals close to us as honorary members, I also see people that are not generally part of recognized lay movements. Their collaboration in our work is a sign of a sincere interest on the part of thousands of benefactors and friends, who have always quietly held the work of the mission close to their hearts.

Current Situation for the Church

The first question put forth in the questionnaire is this: are we living a crisis of mission in the SMA? The replies to this question have been diverse. Let me go back to some of the answers. “SMA operates in a turbulent world... It is normal that the SMA feels disorientated and challenged. This invites renewal with regard to our view of the world, our mission theology, our methods, our activities, and our plans, including the use of our available resources in personnel and funds. This world we experience is perceived by some as a threat or a crisis and by many as but a normal development in the course of world events. In spite of it all, our hope remains strong...”¹.

We live in a world that is hard and difficult, we experience it in a painful way in some countries in which we are working, like Nigeria or the Central African Republic, but it is in this unputying world of ours that we celebrate our 20th General Assembly in an ecclesial context of optimism and renewal. As sons of this Church on its journey we experience privileged moments, and the source of this hope that remains strong. I should like to remind us of some of these moments that can inspire us. One of these is the 50th anniversary of Vatican II, what Benedict XVI has called in *Porta Fidei*² “the great grace from which the Church has benefited during the 20th century”, a grace that allows us to rediscover the importance and the place of the Word of God, that Word that had been the moving force behind all the reflection of the Council, and which has given us one of its most beautiful fruits in the conciliar document “*Verbum Dei*”. It is truly a Word of life, truly a Word to be celebrated,

¹ *SMA General Assembly 2013 Documents and Synthesis of Replies*, Bulletin n°140, March 2013, pp. 55-56. --just a note, the quote given doesn't exactly match the English text

² *Moto proprio, Porta Fidei*, n° 5, 11 october 2011

truly a Word to be experienced and communicated, and truly a Word that is the goal and the means of mission.

We are also truly privileged by the Year of Faith, in the midst of which we find ourselves. This year is one of the last gifts of Benedict XVI, and reminds us that believing is a joy, one that we must allow to shine forth, because “Faith, which is truly a free act, requires us to act as social beings on the basis of what is believed.”³ Faith is “that companion of life that allows us to perceive ever anew the marvels that God has done for us. Committed as we are to reading the signs of the times in this, our particular day in history, faith impels each one of us to become a living sign of the Risen One in the world.”⁴ “Yes, we are happy because of our faith,” Benedict XVI said in his last public audience this past February 27th, “It is the most precious good that no one can take away from us. Let us thank God for it every day, in our prayers and in a Christian life of integrity. God loves us, and is waiting for us to return that love.”

This assembly is also celebrated in the light of Easter. All the mass readings of last week have permitted us to relive the experience of the presence of the risen Jesus in the lives of the first Christians. Jesus is alive. He has never ceased to manifest his presence in the assemblies of the first Christians, in the group of apostles, and among women. He gets us to move. He causes his own to set out on the roads. “Do not stay here at the tomb ... Go, go and tell all, go before me to Galilee, that crossroads of all the nations, go forth to the ends of the earth. I am sending you... heal, teach, carry my Word, and my life, forgive ...” Yes, in the Easter appearances, we see clearly a missionary commitment that is always current and fresh.

And here also, in these latter days, to quote from the beginning of the Letter to the Hebrews, God, giving his Spirit to the gathered Cardinals, talks to us still by sending us a Pope of Surprises, simple and loving of those that poverty has not spared, as was Francis of Assisi, whose name he bears. In his first homily to the Cardinals who had elected him, meeting together in the Sistine Chapel on March 14th, he set out the priorities that he foresaw for the Church of today: to walk,

³ *Op.cit.* n° 9

⁴ *Op.cit.* n°14

to go forward, to build, and to confess Jesus as Lord. This is precisely what we wish to do as a missionary society. “Walk,” says Pope Francis. “Our life is a journey, and it is not good to stand still. Walk always in the presence of the Lord, in the light of the Lord, seeking to live in an irreproachable manner, as God asked Abraham to do in his covenant. Build, build the Church. Its stones are the result of a plan. True, its stones have substance, but these living stones are anointed by the Holy Spirit. Build the Church, the bride of Christ, on the cornerstone that is Christ himself. Confess Jesus as Lord. We can go as far as we want to, we can build many things, but if we do not confess Jesus Christ as Lord, it will lead to nothing. We would become humanitarians, just another NGO, but not the Church, not the bride of Christ.” And in his homily on Holy Thursday, Pope Francis asked priests to come out of themselves, and to go as pastors to the sheep.

We in the SMA are in the line of what the Pope asks when we call on our assembly to reflect, first on what our mission is, and, in consequence, to adjust our style of living and the manner of proclaiming our faith, to continue to form ourselves and to form those who would wish to join us in mission. We are invited to share the responsibility of leadership and our finances in the light of our mission, and not in our own personal interests, with a view of making for ourselves a comfortable berth in the midst of our society.

A Communal Searching of the Heart with the Aid of the Holy Spirit

The goals of the General Assembly are described in our Constitution and Laws °65. They are recalled in the document *Process and Structure, Procedures and Rules.*”

We are not here to impose our ideas or even the ideas of our own entity. It is a general assembly, not a provincial or a district or a regional assembly. We are here to seek out together what the Holy Spirit is telling us, to discern and set out in clear terms the mission that has been entrusted to us and our manner of participation in it. The prayer for the General Assembly, which we have not failed to recite in our communities and in our different living and working situations, invites us to implore the Holy Spirit: “May the Spirit accompany our preparations. May understanding deepen our deliberations, and may each one be enriched by the experience of the other.” We know that we

shall not be able to take into account all the ideas and the sometimes contradictory propositions that have arisen from the replies to the Preparatory Commission's questionnaire. We must choose, formulate, invent, trust in the Holy Spirit, and find our foundation in Christ, as John Paul II often reminded us. This theme of finding our foundation was taken up by the Synod on the New Evangelization, which emphasized the necessity for the Christian life to be rooted in an experience of communion with Christ.

We must be aware of the current cultural context and find a road that will help us redefine those deepest convictions of ours that give life to our missionary commitment, a path that will place us on the frontiers of evangelization, in the footsteps of our founder. This is a road that may very well bring us, if we have the requisite courage, to let go of positions held in the name of "Tradition" or arising from fears of leaving our safety zone. These are positions that no longer correspond to the challenges that confront us. We must guard our freedom of action in the face of current ideologies and in the face of the domination of new technologies and of modernity, even though some of these tools may prove to be of service to us. Is not our present theme: *SMA Mission today, its challenges and its vision into the Future?*

Taking stock of the present is an indispensable task for the General Assembly. In fact, at each General Assembly, all the General Superiors describe this task as important, one may say even of the greatest importance. It is as if in the writing of the history of the Society, the General Assembly must signal a pause and a fresh beginning for the Society.

A mandate of six years is drawing to a close, and to finish my remarks, I should wish to take a quick glance at some factors and events that have affected the life of our house here in Rome and the functioning of the General Council. We have experienced the death of our confrere Charles Cuenin, of happy memory, who was our local bursar, on March 14th 2008. We have also experienced some joys, some surprises, and some challenges. I shall rapidly cite some of these, such as: the appointment of Fr. Kieran O'Reilly, our former Superior General, to become Bishop of Killaloe on May 18th 2010; the completion of the term of Fr. Jarlath Walsh as General Bursar of the Society; the welcoming of Fr. Didier Lawson, who comes to us from the diocese of Berberati in Central Africa, a country and a diocese that he had served with a great deal of love and

devotion, to that post; and the appointment of two of our members as bishops of Central Africa. We rejoice at these appointments, and at the same time, they compel us to greater efforts regarding the needs of this Church and of this country which suffers from socio-political upheavals that destabilizes it and impoverishes it.

The departure of Kieran for a service in his own country's Church, which does honor to the SMA, left a vacancy in the General Council, which the Plenary Council has remedied with the nomination of Fr. Tom Curran, who had to join an already-functioning team. I should like to thank him for accepting this new responsibility and for having adapted himself to our manner of functioning in the General Council. I shall also take advantage of this opportunity, for this is the last chance I shall have, to thank the members of the General Council for their collaboration and their devotion, and for the work either completed or initiated. I also wish to thank the secretaries: Derek, the secretary general, Paul-Marie, and before him Alexis, for their unstinting work at the Secretariat. Being a secretary in a group such as ours demands a great deal of willingness to be available, and a willingness to remain in the background. It is a job that never ends, and which is never short of the unexpected. I also wish to thank the confreres that work in the different services attached to the Generalate: the archivists; the postulator, who is at the same time the procurator in our relations with the Holy See; those involved with the Media Centre in Lyons; the student priests that form part of our community and who contribute their joy and their intellectual perspectives; the Franciscan Sisters of the Presentation of Mary, as efficient in their humble service of housekeeping as they are in welcoming guests, and in prayer; and everybody—all the employees, who love this house and take great care of it, giving it life and giving ourselves life as well. As much as we ourselves are at the service of this house, and at the same time, at the service of all of SMA, we have been and shall be even more so in the future, it seems to me, a blessing to each other.

Two French ladies, Christian but non-practicing, stayed with us for two weeks before Easter. They had come to copy some hand-written documents in our archives and store them in the computer. (There are still thousands to be copied.). While in Rome they also took advantage of their visit to see the sights in town. What they appreciated most during their two weeks with us was our very simple manner of life, the friendship and good-will that exist among us and which does not

allow the tensions present in our community to overwhelm it, and our simplicity in welcoming guests such as themselves. May this spirit continue to be present and to wax stronger during all the sessions of our General Assembly. Welcome to all of you to this central house of the SMA, which is also the house of all SMA members. May the Holy Spirit guide us in our work!

Without further ado, I now officially declare open the 20th General Assembly of the Society of African Missions.

Rome, 9th April 2013

Jean-Marie Guillaume, SMA
Superior General



General Assembly 2013 Message

1. GA 2013 began on Tuesday, 9th April, and concluded on Friday, 3rd May, 2013. Comprised of 40 delegates from every unit of the Society and one lay associate representing all the lay associates and missionaries who live their missionary vocation with the SMA, the General Assembly was facilitated by Fr Basil Soyoye SMA and Sr Generose Sibay FSP, ably supported by a secretarial and translation back-up team led by the Secretary General, Fr Derek Kearney SMA. Particular thanks are due to T. J. Jones for his technological work both prior to and during the Assembly. The warm hospitality of all at the Generalate was much appreciated by the delegates, who extend their gratitude to the Franciscan Sisters of the Presentation of Mary and to the lay staff for their unstinting care and service during our stay. We are also grateful to the St John of God Brothers who provided accommodation for some of the delegates.

Under the Guidance of the Spirit

2. A truly international gathering comprising members from 19 countries, GA 2013 was conducted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whose help the entire Society has been invoking over the past year in prayer: "May the Spirit accompany our preparations. May understanding deepen our deliberations, and may each one be enriched by the experience of the other." Similar sentiments/thoughts found expression in the homily of Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples, at the opening Mass of the Assembly.
3. Reminding us of the rich tradition of the Society, the Cardinal observed how, since its foundation, "your Society has blazed a well-marked trail, and we can see the fruits of these efforts, given life by the Holy Spirit, thanks to the generosity of your confreres." He went on to challenge us to be equally generous today and equally faithful to that tradition by trusting "that the Holy Spirit guides the Church in that freedom that comes from God. We perceive this help in the mystery of the Spirit's action."

4. Likewise, we perceived the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit in several ways: in the prayerful support and encouragement we received from so many members, not least the older ones whose prayer is an important element of SMA mission; in the atmosphere of openness and respect for one another that pervaded the Assembly; in the willingness to listen and the sharing that characterised our life together; and, most especially, in the prayer and spiritual exercises that were at the heart of each day, culminating in the celebration of the Eucharist. We trust, too, that the Spirit's presence with us will evoke a generous response from all SMA members and associates, in a manner that continues to blaze a trail for the Gospel during this mandate.

Keeping the Focus on Mission

5. As with recent General Assemblies, GA 2013 broadly followed a process that involves three distinct phases: a description of the challenges being encountered in various aspects of the Society's life and work; identifying and articulating the key priorities in the face of those challenges; and devising a plan of action to fulfil those priorities during the mandate. However, in contrast to previous Assemblies where small group work on specific themes was the norm throughout, on this occasion the entire Assembly focused for the first eight days on the essential theme, *The SMA Mission Today: Its Vision and Its Challenges for the Future*. The preparatory work undertaken prior to the Assembly, and found in *Bulletins 138 (The SMA, Which Mission?)* and *Bulletin 140 (SMA General Assembly 2013 Documents and Synthesis of Replies)*, was of great help to the delegates in helping them to accomplish the work effectively.
6. As regards the challenges facing SMA mission, it is clear that they are multifaceted and come from a world that stands under the sway of sin and is resistant to the Gospel in so many respects. However, as Pope Francis has reminded us so clearly since his pontificate began, they may also arise from within a church that has become self-referential and narcissistic, closed in on itself and slow to evangelize (cf. Pope Francis to the Argentine Conference of Bishops, Friday 19 April). Taking these insights to heart, GA 2013 recognises all too clearly that challenges to its mission may arise within the SMA itself as a result of individual and collective failures in witness, when

our actions belie our words and when our spirituality is not translated into service that reflects the teaching and practice of Jesus himself.

The Fundamental Task: Evangelization in Continuity with SMA Tradition

7. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* (AM), Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that evangelization is “the mission and the true identity of the Church” (AM 162). Hence, the task facing the Church in Africa remains the same:

... commitment to evangelization, to the missio ad gentes, and to the new evangelization, so that the features of the African continent will increasingly be modelled on the ever timely teaching of Christ, the true “light of the world” and the authentic “salt of the earth ... Rediscovering the centrality of the divine word in the Christian life leads us to appreciate anew the deepest meaning of the forceful appeal of Pope John Paul II: to pursue the missio ad gentes and vigorously to embark upon the new evangelization.” (AM 159, 161).

8. In response to this call and in the face of enormous challenges in the secularised world, GA 2013 makes the Pope’s vision its own during this Year of Faith. It renews the SMA commitment to the Church’s faith and mission of evangelization in obedience to the Gospel (Mk 16:19); and, in continuity with the charism of the Founder and the rich tradition of mission to Africa and peoples of African origin that has been handed on to us, it calls on all SMA members and associates to be bearers of Christ, “the light of the world” (AM 159-160).
9. Seeking to put this vision into action, GA 2013 commits the Society to the ongoing work of primary evangelization in both rural and urban areas where knowledge of the Gospel is lacking; it also underlines SMA commitment to the most abandoned by working for JPIC among the marginalised, two-thirds of whom are women, inside or outside Africa. These are among the emphases highlighted by Benedict XVI in *Africae Munus* concerning the mission of the Church in Africa today: “For the sake of Christ and in fidelity to the lesson of life which he taught us, she feels the duty to be present wherever human suffering exists ... Through her ability to see the face of Christ on the face of children, the sick, the needy and those who suffer, the

Church is helping slowly but surely to forge a new Africa.” (AM 30). In the same vein, the Pope challenges all to struggle against the destructive exploitation, intolerance, racism and other injustices experienced by African migrants, refugees, prisoners and victims of human trafficking (see AM 84). GA 2013 commends SMA members and associates already heeding the Pope’s call and undertakes to continue doing so in collaboration with local churches, with the OLA sisters and other religious groups founded by SMA members, and with religious congregations everywhere.

10. Collaboration with local churches and religious has always been an important dimension of SMA mission, and this too remains an SMA priority. GA 2013 insists on it and on dialogue as key dimensions of SMA mission; and so it undertakes to continue promoting ecumenical, interreligious and intercultural dialogue in all the areas where we work, so that mutual understanding may be promoted, divisions among people overcome, and healing and reconciliation achieved. This work presents an immense challenge to our mission today, both because of the variety of independent churches and syncretistic movements which have sprung up in Africa over recent decades and because of the extremism with which some religious beliefs are associated. GA 2013 requests all SMA members and associates to adopt a broadly ecumenical outlook in such situations, and in collaboration with the local church and with other religious groups to work towards finding “a response suited to the context, for the sake of deeper evangelization as a way of effectively communicating Christ’s truth to the people of Africa” (AM 90; see also 88-94).

Responding to New Challenges in Mission

11. While affirming the ongoing importance of the SMA charism and traditional SMA approaches to mission, GA 2013 also recognizes that these have to be lived and practised in a very different context to the one in which they originated. This was reflected in the use by delegates of computer and communications technology to conduct most of their work without any use of paper. Though the adoption of this method was not without some initial difficulties, with the technological adeptness of the younger members and the expertise provided by the back-up team, these difficulties were surmounted.

In light of this experience, it is increasingly clear to all of us that this is the way of the future.

12. The challenges posed by the General Assembly's use of technology are reflective of a much greater one facing the Church's mission in the world at this time: how to evangelize the modern equivalents of the *Areopagus* (cf. Acts 17:22-31), including the world of communications itself. Pope John Paul II identified this as a major priority in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990):

It is not enough, then, to use them to spread the Christian message and the Magisterium of the Church, but it is necessary to integrate that message into the new culture created by modern communications. It is a complex problem, because this culture originates not just from whatever content, the fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology. My predecessor Paul VI said that 'the split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time', and the field of communications fully confirms this judgment. (RM 37).

In formulating its Action Plan on SMA mission, the General Assembly was mindful of this challenge too, as it called on all Units to work with media professionals who have the capacity to use the latest technology to reach out and help people in the remotest areas where we work. The SMA Media Centre is a valuable resource for the Society in this arena, and it can make a vital contribution to its mission in the years ahead.

Leadership in the SMA: Service in Imitation of the Good Shepherd

13. Among the many highlights of GA13 was the election of the new Superior General, Fr Fachtna O'Driscoll SMA. His election on the first ballot was grounded on the communal discernment of the entire Society and it marks an important sign of SMA vitality and its commitment to mission at this time. The Assembly also elected Antonio Porcellato (Vicar General), Rozario Francis and François Gnonhossou to the General Council of the Society, entrusting them with the responsibility of assisting the Superior General in his leadership over the next six years.

14. As a new mandate begins, GA 2013 extends its deepest appreciation to the outgoing Superior General and Council for their leadership and fruitful stewardship of the Society over the past six years. In particular, it expresses gratitude to Fr Jean-Marie Guillaume SMA for his generosity in assuming the office of Superior General, upon the elevation of Fr Kieran O'Reilly SMA to episcopal office, and in exercising the office with dedication to bring the mandate to completion and to prepare for this General Assembly.
15. While the election of a new leadership team was one of the key tasks undertaken by the General Assembly, it was also a clear reminder of the enormous responsibility that all called to office in the Church are now asked to assume. The readings from the liturgy on the days following the election of the new Superior General left none of us in any doubt about the fundamental quality required for this work: service in imitation of the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep (Jn 10:11). The good shepherd is not one who lords it over others but rather one who is sensitive to their needs, who builds communion, promotes reconciliation, and seeks to enable all to love one another and use their skills for the good of the whole community and the evangelization of the world (1 Pet 5:1-4; see also AM 34).
16. The call to be a shepherd is undoubtedly a special one in the case of the Superior General and his councillors, but it is also true to say that the same call, the same invitation to the care and service of the flock, is extended by Christ to all his followers. Regrettably, however, the Church as a whole has now been compelled to recognise that the witness of many of its pastors has been fundamentally lacking in this respect, reflective more of the hireling than of the Good Shepherd himself. As a result, GA 2013 prioritises the work of safeguarding children and the most vulnerable in all SMA houses, institutions, parishes and places of work. It also calls on all SMA members and associates to be exemplary in their lives and ministries, and to uphold the highest standards in all their relationships and activities.

Communion in Action

17. Recognition of the need for high standards in ministry and for promoting a culture of safeguarding highlights the need for appropriate support structures in all our missionary activities. SMA community

life, teamwork and common witness are of pivotal importance in this regard. To promote long-term stability in that witness and in the various commitments that spring from it, and to strengthen cooperation among us at all levels, the General Assembly recommends the formation of international teams for specific missionary projects that are linked to the activities that define SMA charism.

18. GA 2013 recognizes the contribution to SMA mission made by members now engaged in traditional parish ministry, both in Africa and outside it. At the same time, however, the Assembly emphasizes the need for all engaged in such ministry to be missionaries 'from the depths of their hearts,' fully committed to the priorities and commitments of the SMA as outlined by GA 2013. SMA Parishes, in particular, are challenged to be exemplary in this regard, by helping their communities to become missionary and by keeping evangelization to the fore as a dimension of every aspect of parish life. By such witness, SMA Parishes will also help to consolidate the Society's presence in the local churches where they are found and to act as a springboard for the future development of the Society.
19. GA 2013 also affirms the missionary vocation of the laity, and in particular recognizes the special contribution that SMA lay associates and lay missionaries are making to the Society's mission. Frequently able to work closely with people, engage in JPIC activities and serve the most abandoned (e.g., with refugees, street children, people affected with HIV/Aids) in ways that are not open to the clergy, they are valued members of the SMA family. By adopting the priorities and action plans of this Assembly, they too will allow the light of Christ to shine brightly amid the darkness of our world. Hence, GA 2013 puts before them the call of Benedict XVI to the laity: "In daily life, put into practice the preferential option for the poor, whatever your position in society, in accordance with the spirit of the Beatitudes (cf. *Mt* 5:3-12), so as to see in them the face of Jesus who calls you to serve him (cf. *Mt* 25:31-46)." (AM 130).
20. Service to the poor in imitation of Jesus can be extremely costly, and it is undoubtedly so in situations of hostility, religious extremism and violence. The General Assembly is acutely conscious of and concerned about the difficulties currently being faced by SMA members and associates who remain present to their people in situations of extreme insecurity and danger. As an expression of this concern, the

Assembly mandates the Superior General and Council to formulate a policy concerning all members and associates in all such areas. That policy will seek an appropriate balance between SMA commitment to the most abandoned and the safety of all in areas where life is under constant threat for one reason or another.

Securing the Future of the Society

21. In continuity with the work of recent General Assemblies, GA 2013 considered in detail three elements that are essential to the future development of the Society, under the headings formation, finance and administration.
22. The formation of new members is pivotal for the future of the Society. The General Assembly affirms the valuable contribution to SMA mission being made by our members currently engaged in this work. It also asks them to continue accompanying SMA students with steadfastness and generosity, doing so in collaboration and dialogue with Unit Superiors to ensure that the *Charter of Formation* (2004) and the *Formation Directory* (2012) are implemented fully in all SMA programmes of formation, including Stage and Tyrocinium. Greater collaboration between the Unit Superiors themselves and with the Superior General and Council is also needed to ensure a better overall coordination of the various programmes and a more effective use of our material and personnel resources in formation.
23. As with other areas of SMA life and activity, GA 2013 recognizes the immense challenges being faced by the Society in the financial realm today. In the context of the current crisis which has gripped the world economy since 2008, questions of ethics, solidarity and sustainability emerged as huge concerns in discussions. Responding to them, GA 2013 re-organizes existing funds and establishes a special fund for extraordinary needs in the area of formation. It also sets in place exacting standards for the management and use of Society funds, requesting members to maintain the highest ethical standards in all financial dealings.
24. On the question of administration, GA 2013 is acutely conscious of the huge challenges facing the Society as it grows internationally while declining in its traditional strongholds in Europe and North America. The need to keep the SMA presence and charism active in

those strongholds, while maintaining viable administrative structures with strong links to the local church and to SMA benefactors, highlights the need for greater collaboration and coordination at various levels. In particular, the General Assembly envisages a greater coordinating role for the Superior General and Council in the transfer of members between Units and in formation. It also acknowledges the need for older Provinces and Districts to be open both to having the laity occupy positions of administrative responsibility and to welcoming members of the newer Districts-in-Formation for specific projects, again coordinated by the Superior General and Council. And seeking to simplify the complex administrative structure of the SMA in Africa, it decides that members appointed to a Region be fully integrated into the administrative system of the District-in-Formation, while continuing to enjoy full rights and obligations in their Unit of origin.

Enduring Relevance of SMA Charism and Mission

25. Over the course of the four weeks, GA 2013 examined every facet of the Society's work and charted the contours of the Society's response to the challenges of our time over the next six years. Granted that those challenges are greater than ever, as the 200th anniversary of the birth of its Founder draws near and the Society gives thanks for all that has been achieved over the past two centuries, we resolve to continue the work and to hand on the legacy we have received, so that future generations too may share in the riches Christ has bestowed on all of us through his life and work.
26. Finally, as the General Assembly ends, we invoke the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Africa. May she continue to watch over the Society over the next six years; and, through her intercession, may the commitments we have undertaken bear much fruit for the glory of God and the coming of the Kingdom. Melchior de Marion Brésillac, Servant of God, intercede for us.



SMA mission today : its challenges and vision for the future

Preamble

1. The Superior General and his Council will oversee the implementation of these action plans throughout the Society.
2. Each Unit/Region will make the priorities of GA 2013 the centre of their deliberations and actualize the action plans in the forthcoming Assemblies according to the specified commitments, directives and principles.
3. Each Unit of the Society is to send a report on its implementation of the Action Plan of GA 2013 to each Plenary Council (PC).
4. The PC will evaluate the progress of the implementation over the course of the mandate. After consultation with all Superiors involved, a decision on how to proceed with activities that do not meet the commitments and principles will be made in PC 2016.

SMA Mission: Challenges

1. There is a lack of clarity and common understanding of mission and charism in the SMA. This results in a lack of coordination in practice. Many have an anxiety that primary evangelization and the commitment to the most abandoned are not getting enough attention in practice either in urban or rural areas.
2. The human and financial resources of the SMA are not always used effectively in support of its mission. Among the areas to be assessed are SMA parishes and projects/commitments undertaken both in and outside Africa.
3. Growing insecurity, violence and extremism are having a serious impact on SMA mission.
4. Our lack of individual and communal witness and motivation in some instances do not enhance SMA mission: for example, integ-

riety, transparency, respect for the dignity of human persons, and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

SMA Mission: Priorities

1. To build consensus on SMA mission and charism in practice; to encourage commitment among all members and to coordinate our collective response to that mission and charism in the areas of primary evangelization, dialogue, JPIC and ministry to the most abandoned.
2. To use the human and financial resources of the SMA more effectively and efficiently in support of its mission; to reassess the choice of mission places, the contribution of SMA parishes, the use of media and the choice of other missionary projects/commitments.
3. To formulate appropriate policies/guidelines for the SMA regarding its members who are working in dangerous situations of insecurity, violence and extremism.
4. To promote best ecclesial and pastoral practice in SMA mission apostolates; to foster integrity and transparency among SMA members; and to advance the safeguarding of children and of vulnerable adults in collaboration with the local Church.

SMA Mission: Action Plan

1. Mission Commitments: Primary Evangelization, Commitment to JPIC and the Most Abandoned

- 1.1 GA 2013 requests the Superior General and Council to continue promoting reflection and building consensus on SMA mission across all Units/Regions.
- 1.2 Each Unit/Region will review at its forthcoming assembly its commitment to and practice of SMA mission according to the following directives and principles:
 - 1.2.1 Identifying zones and groups of people targeted for primary evangelization and ministry to the most abandoned;
 - 1.2.2 Continuing SMA presence in rural areas, among groups which have little knowledge of the Gospel where SMA teams are already working;

- 1.2.3 Recommitting to areas where the SMA presence is now fragile;
 - 1.2.4 Developing strategies for consolidating SMA mission and reaching out to non-Christians in urban areas, where Christian communities are already established;
 - 1.2.5 Identifying zones and groups of people where work for justice, peace and reconciliation is critical; and identification too of JPIC issues that affect the people with whom we work;
 - 1.2.6 Making an inventory of the resources at hand and the availability of skilled personnel, both clerical and lay, to develop a comprehensive and realistic missionary plan in the area;
 - 1.2.7 Promoting teamwork and the creation of stable international teams in all SMA areas of mission;
 - 1.2.8 Paying particular attention to multicultural settings to help in the integration of African migrants, refugees, prisoners and victims of human trafficking, where necessary;
 - 1.2.9 Resourcing adequately JPIC directors for their work;
 - 1.2.10 Affirming the authentic missionary vocation of our associates and lay missionaries.
- 1.3 Each Unit/Region will plan accordingly, on the basis of its strengths and resources and in dialogue with the local Church. In Africa, Units and Regions will work together to produce this plan.
 - 1.4 Units/Regions may propose specific projects to the Superior General and his Council for consideration and decision at PC 2014. If approved, the PC also will agree on personnel and budgets for these projects
 - 1.5 Unit/Regional Superiors have a particular responsibility to raise awareness among members and associates on the mission priorities in their area. Consequently, all members and associates are enjoined to assume corporate ownership of all such projects.

2. SMA Parishes and SMA Presence in Other Strategic Places

- 2.1 GA 2013 requests each Unit/Region at its forthcoming assembly to undertake an evaluation of its parishes and its presence in other strategic areas according to the following principles:
 - 2.1.1 Coherence with SMA mission according to the Priorities of GA 2013 (cf. PC 1999);
 - 2.1.2 Collaboration and solidarity;
 - 2.1.3 Concern for the most abandoned;
 - 2.1.4 Ecumenical, interreligious and intercultural dialogue;
 - 2.1.5 Development of the SMA, including vocation and missionary animation;
 - 2.1.6 Sustainability.
- 2.2 The results of this evaluation will be communicated to the Superior General and his Council by Unit/Regional Superiors for discussion and decision at PC 2014.
- 2.3 The Unit/Regional Superiors will oversee the missionary dimension of SMA parishes and the SMA presence in other strategic areas throughout their mandate.

3. Fostering Stability and Continuity in Mission

- 3.1 In order to ensure most effective use of SMA human resources and to foster continuity in SMA mission commitments, the Superior General and Council will coordinate the transfer of personnel between various units of the Society.
- 3.2 In consultation with Unit/Regional Superiors, the Superior General and Council will formulate procedures to facilitate transfers for all missionary endeavours.
- 3.3 These procedures will be finalised at PC 2014.
- 3.4 Unit Superiors, in consultation with the Superior General, will make available members for specific international missionary teams from 2014 onwards.
- 3.5 All Superiors will seek to ensure that mission appointments foster long-term commitments of at least six years, if possible.

4. Ecumenical, Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue

- 4.1 The Superior General and his Council will reconstitute the Commission to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue. This Commission will produce material, organize workshops and strive to raise the awareness of members/associates and students in formation on the importance of this dimension of SMA mission.
- 4.2 GA 2013 affirms the continued SMA presence in places where dialogue is a particularly important element of mission: for example, in Niger and Egypt.
- 4.3 All Superiors will make a greater effort to promote 27th October as Interreligious Dialogue Day.
- 4.4 GA 2013 encourages the promotion of Africa and African cultures through SMA houses and museums as part of mission animation and intercultural dialogue.

5. Media

- 5.1 All modern means of communication will be used to promote SMA mission, including television, local radio, documentaries, videos and publications.
- 5.2 Each Unit will have a person appointed and trained for media. With the assistance of the SMA Media Centre, the Superior General and his Council will facilitate the collaboration of all SMA media personnel in order to take initiatives both to promote Africa and to further SMA mission in all its aspects.
- 5.3 Each Unit will strive to ensure that its website meets professional standards and can be used in an interactive manner to dialogue with the people to whom we minister.
- 5.4 The SMA will work with media professionals who have the capacity to use the latest technology to reach out and help people in the remotest areas where we work (e.g., The Francis Project from the Netherlands, which has the capacity to do this).
- 5.5 The Superior General and his Council will coordinate an evaluation of the use of media throughout the Society.

6. Members/Associates in Situations of Conflict, Insecurity and Violence

- 6.1 The Superior General and his Council will initiate a process to formulate a policy concerning members/associates in situations of conflict, insecurity and violence. The policy will take into account the following:
 - 6.1.1 Prioritizing the safety of the member/associate;
 - 6.1.2 Engaging in consultation with those involved;
 - 6.1.3 Ensuring the registration of members/associates with their embassies / consulates;
 - 6.1.4 Acting in unison with the local Church;
 - 6.1.5 Displaying concern for the most vulnerable and abandoned;
 - 6.1.6 Putting in place clear decision-making procedures;
 - 6.1.7 Adapting the policy to local realities;
 - 6.1.8 Ensuring appropriate follow-up.
- 6.2 The first draft of this policy will be presented to PC 2014 and the policy will be in place by PC 2015.
- 6.3 Each Unit/Region and PC will evaluate this policy every three years.
- 6.4 The Regional Superior will remain in contact with the member/associate in a dangerous situation. He will also remain in contact with the various Unit Superiors concerned and with the local Ordinary.
- 6.5 The Superior General and his Council will coordinate communication between all Superiors involved and will also coordinate any logistical needs that may arise.
- 6.6 In the event of a life-threatening situation, members/associates are required to follow the decisions adopted by the Unit/Regional Superior and Council.

7. Towards High Standards in Ministry

- 7.1 Members/associates will uphold high ethical, ecclesial and pastoral standards in their personal lives and ministries. These include:

- 7.1.1 Being people of integrity;
 - 7.1.2 Adhering to celibacy by members;
 - 7.1.3 Assuming personal responsibility for one's actions;
 - 7.1.4 Exercising leadership as service;
 - 7.1.5 Demonstrating accountability and transparency;
 - 7.1.6 Sharing and community living;
 - 7.1.7 Dealing justly with our employees.
- 7.2 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults
- 7.2.1 The guidelines for developing a protocol on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults have already been elaborated by PC 2011. This document will be the basis for the protocol of each Unit and Region.
 - 7.2.2 Each Unit/Regional Superior and Council, in consultation with other congregations and with the local Church, will develop its own protocol for safeguarding, encompassing civil and canon law.
 - 7.2.3 Each Unit/Regional Superior will ensure that this protocol is adopted at all levels and implemented strictly in all SMA houses, institutions and areas of ministry.
 - 7.2.4 The SMA at all levels continues to dialogue with the local Church to develop appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding and for justice.
 - 7.2.5 Unit/Regional Superiors will organize regular workshops on safeguarding to raise awareness and review progress. A budget for this work will be prepared as part of the ordinary budget of each Unit/Region.
 - 7.2.6 The Superior General and Council, in collaboration with the PC, will monitor and update regularly the SMA safeguarding guidelines and review their implementation throughout the Society. Each Unit/Region will update its own protocol accordingly.

8. Wellbeing and Ongoing Formation

- 8.1 Unit/Regional Superiors will organize workshops to review the general wellbeing of members/associates before 2015. Resource personnel, both SMA and non-SMA, may facilitate these workshops. A budget for this work will be prepared as part of the ordinary budget of each Region.
- 8.2 PC 2016 will evaluate the effectiveness of these workshops.

9. Collaboration with the Local Church

- 1.1 In collaboration with Episcopal Conferences and with other congregations, Units will be open to setting up structures or strengthening existing structures to support the integral wellbeing and ongoing formation of local clergy and religious.
- 1.2 In response to pastoral needs where necessary, Units, in consultation with the Superior General and Council and with the local Church, will train some SMA members as resource people for the ministry of exorcism.

Spirituality and Lifestyle

Challenges

Spirituality

1. There is a wide variety of personal spiritualities within the SMA. We do not sufficiently use SMA feasts and other gatherings to present the spirituality of the Founder for our own benefit and that of others.
2. In initial formation, the emphasis on academics tends to diminish the importance of spiritual formation. This leads to a difficulty in integrating a lived spirituality with mission activities later in ministry.
3. Some members do not fully embrace the international intercultural dimension of the SMA, and this acts as an obstacle to solidarity and community.
4. Our missionary activities are not always based on spiritual convictions. Sometimes there is more focus on personal achievements than on spiritual values.

Lifestyle

5. While we strive to live a shared community life, our efforts are hampered by a lack of agreed understanding of community life, a lack of sharing and solidarity, individualism and the promotion of personal projects.
6. Inappropriate relationships, abuse of power in ministry, and the refusal to accept responsibility for one's actions may lead to various problems: e.g., scandals in the Church.
7. In some Units, there is a lack of structures/procedures to care for members who are aged, ill or in special circumstances.

8. An impatient mindset and haste in attempting to accomplish projects quickly may undermine the long-term missionary goals of the SMA.

Priorities

Spirituality

1. To continue reflection on the common mission spirituality of the SMA, based on the writings and spirituality of the Founder; to continue promoting the cause of the Founder and avail of the 200th anniversary of his birth to deepen our commitment to his spirituality and charism.
2. To seek a balance between the academic and the spiritual in initial formation, with a view to integrating SMA spirituality and missionary practice in all our subsequent apostolic activities.
3. To be open to the riches that internationality and intercultural community bring and to facilitate greater communion and solidarity within the SMA.
4. To ensure that SMA mission in all its dimensions reflects the charism and spiritual values of the SMA, and helps us all to witness to the gospel in a secularized world.

Lifestyle

5. To continue building SMA communities, recognizing our internationality, fostering availability and promoting team-work in all our missionary activities according to the commitments of GA 2013.
6. To promote individual and communal responsibility, appropriate boundaries in relationships and ministry, a culture of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and accountability.
7. To develop structures and procedures to care for members who are aged, ill or in special circumstances.
8. To be patient, take time and exercise discernment in considering how our long-term missionary goals may best be realized.

Action Plan

Spirituality

1. Strengthening the roots

- 1.1. Beginning 2nd December, 2013, until 8th December, 2014, each Unit/Regional Superior and Council shall plan various activities to mark the bi-centenary of the Founder's birth.
- 1.2. To continue promoting the cause of the Founder, members/associates shall use every opportunity to seek the intercession of the Founder and shall notify the Postulator of any graces received.
- 1.3. The Superior General and his Council shall reconstitute a Commission for Spirituality by PC 2014. The Commission shall:
 - 1.3.1. Avail of the existing resource persons for seminars and workshops;
 - 1.3.2. Identify/produce suitable material for reflection and avail of the SMA Media Centre to communicate this for use by each SMA community;
 - 1.3.3. Devise ways of collaborating with the OLA Sisters, with other congregations founded by SMA members and with other religious to deepen our mission spirituality and to practice it more fully.

2. Balance and integrity

- 2.1. The Superior General and his Council shall regularly evaluate the balance between the academic, spiritual, human and pastoral elements in formation programmes.
- 2.2. The forthcoming Unit/Regional Assemblies will evaluate how the balance between the academic, spiritual, human and pastoral elements in formation programmes can be sustained in our various ministries.
- 2.3. All Superiors will encourage members/associates to avail of an annual retreat and to have a spiritual director.

3. Internationality and community spirit

- 3.1. The Superior General, in collaboration with Unit and Regional Superiors, shall strive to foster internationality in making appointments.
- 3.2. Each SMA community and team shall create time and space to promote intercultural understanding in communities and build team-work. Superiors shall organize regular reflection on the lived experience, with a view to evaluating and improving the existing situation.
- 3.3. Every six months, the Media person in each Unit/Region shall send a short report, based on faith and mission experiences in their Unit/Region, to the SMA Media Centre; these shall be made available for use at SMA apostolic community meetings.

4. Coherence with our charism

- 4.1. Each SMA community and team shall identify the strengths and weaknesses, challenges and priorities for mission in the areas where they work. Leaders shall evaluate annually the various ministries in light of the commitments of GA2013 to primary evangelization and ministry to the most abandoned.
- 4.2. During the season of Lent, each apostolic community shall undertake a concrete action to bear witness to our fidelity to the SMA charism and to the Gospel.
- 4.3. Each Unit/Regional Superior will ensure that workshops/retreats/seminars will be conducted at least once a year using available resources, e.g. Spirituality Commission, the SMA Media Centre, JPIC Commission.

Lifestyle

5. Collaboration and team-work

- 5.1. SMA Communities shall make the priorities of GA2013 an element of their prayer.
- 5.2. After the forthcoming Assemblies, Unit/Regional Superiors shall coordinate the activities of apostolic communities in their areas

and suggest items (e.g., availability and teamwork) for examination and implementation.

- 5.3. Unit/Regional Superiors shall be witnesses of cooperation for all the members in their area. They shall be particularly attentive to the needs of members in remote/isolated places and of members who are a minority in an international community.

6. Responsibility in relationships

- 6.1. After the forthcoming Unit/Regional Assemblies, Superiors shall begin or continue the process of developing a protocol of safeguarding. Following the guidelines of Bulletin 136, (PC 2011) and in collaboration with the local Church and Superiors of other Religious Institutes, Superiors will arrange meetings to see how these guidelines can best be implemented in the area. The results of these meetings will be used to formulate the protocol. Each community will subsequently study the protocol as part of their regular meetings and ensure its implementation.
- 6.2. Unit/Regional Superiors shall identify available resource persons to assist SMA members to reflect on the experience of their ministry and the challenges it presents to them in the areas of personal well-being and responsibility, relationships and use of power in ministry, tensions within the community, dialogue and openness to fraternal correction. The Superiors shall organize workshops on this every three years.

7. Care for our members

- 7.1. After the forthcoming Assemblies, Unit/Region Superiors will identify the health-care needs and the existing resources in each Unit/Region. They will then initiate a process of planning for the future which will take account of the following factors: ageing profile, number of ill and retired members, projected financial costs of healthcare, and facilities/houses needed to care for those indisposed and in special circumstances.
- 7.2. Unit Superiors will maintain communication with members in special circumstances. Taking individual needs and circumstances into account, with the help of resource persons and in

collaboration with the local Church, they will seek to formulate appropriate procedures for the care and well-being of those members, in accordance with the requirements of Canon Law.

- 7.3. Unit Superiors will communicate their needs on the above issues to PC 2014, which will then initiate a process to draw up an overall plan for the future in which collaboration between Units, the provision of health Insurance for all members and appropriate treatment/professional help where necessary, will feature.

8. Far sighted missionary life

After the forthcoming Unit/Regional Assemblies, Superiors and Councils shall initiate an inclusive process of discernment on how our long-term missionary goals are best realized locally and with a lifestyle that is in accordance with the commitments of GA 2013.

Formation

Challenges

1. Charter of Formation

The *Charter of Formation* has not been implemented in all respects.

2. Formators

- 2.1 There are not enough qualified and full-time formators prepared to work in teams.
- 2.2 In the process of discernment, sometimes there is insufficient collaboration/ agreement between Formators and Unit Superiors.

3. Formation Houses

There is lack of clarity and overall coordination regarding the necessity for and use/usefulness of some formation houses.

4. Vocation Promotion and Preparatory Programme

- 4.1 There are not enough committed and full-time vocation promoters ready to work in teams with others – superiors, formators and mission animators.
- 4.2 All countries do not have preparatory programmes.

5. Philosophy and Theology

It is quite demanding for many students to acquire both English and French before the Spiritual Year.

6. Stage

There is no proper organized programme for Stage in some Regions.

7. Ongoing Formation

- 7.1 There is no *Tyrocinium* programme in some Regions.
- 7.2 There is a lack of compliance with the procedures already established for sending members for further studies (*Charter of Formation*, 169-175).
- 7.3 Sufficient members have not been trained for SMA needs in disciplines like accounting, media, JPIC, counselling, conflict resolution, etc.
- 7.4 Members do not take sufficient advantage of the Sabbatical year and, in some cases, it is not well organized and coordinated.

Priorities

1. The Charter of Formation

To implement the *Charter of Formation* in all respects.

2. Formators

- 2.1 To ensure enough qualified, full-time and committed formators prepared to work in teams.
- 2.2 To create a greater dialogue and collaboration between Unit Superiors and formators.

3. Formation Houses

To reassess and clarify the necessity for and use of some formation houses.

4. Vocation Promotion and Preparatory Programme

- 4.1 To appoint in each Unit/Region a committed vocation director prepared to work in teams with others: superiors, formators and mission animators.
- 4.2 To ensure that a well-coordinated preparatory programme is in place for all candidates.

5. Philosophy and Theology

To stress the necessity for all students to understand and speak both French and English before coming for the International Spiritual Year (Charter of Formation, 52)

6. Stage

To have a well-organized Stage programme in every Region.

7. Ongoing Formation

- 7.1 To have a *Tyrocinium* for all new arrivals.
- 7.2 To coordinate ongoing formation, including further studies and Sabbatical programmes, more effectively.

Action Plan

1. The Charter of Formation

The Superior General and his Council will ensure that the *Charter of Formation* and the *Formation Directory* are fully implemented.

2. Formators

- 2.1 The Superior General and his Council will reconstitute the Formation Committee by the end of 2013. This Committee will help the coordination of initial and ongoing formation in accordance with the Formation Directory. The Superior General may appoint a member of the committee as full-time formation coordinator.

- 2.2 The Superior General and his Council will consult regularly each Unit Superior about the availability of Formators.
- 2.3 The criteria for the choice of formators should be based on human and spiritual qualities: mature and well-balanced; the readiness to commit full-time to formation and to work in a team; the willingness to be present; the ability to accompany and be accompanied, and to make decisions, even difficult ones, when necessary (CF 117-118).
- 2.4 In order to promote better collaboration between Unit Superiors and the formation team, Unit Superiors will dialogue with the formation team before overruling a recommendation regarding a student.

3. Formation Houses

The Superior General and Council together with Unit Superiors and the Formation Committee will reassess the necessity for and the use of our formation houses before PC 2014. The PC will make decisions accordingly.

4. Vocation Promotion and Preparatory Programme

- 4.1 District-in-Formation Superiors will appoint for every Unit/Region a committed Vocation Director prepared to work in teams with others – superiors, formators and mission animators – following the Unit Assembly 2013.
- 4.2 Unit Superiors in collaboration with Regional Superiors will ensure that a well-coordinated preparatory programme be in place for all candidates after the Unit Assembly 2013, in accordance with the *Charter of Formation* and the *Formation Directory*. This programme does not always need a special house. Some parishes or formation houses may also be used. The programme should prepare candidates in basic Christian doctrine, knowledge of the SMA, academic methodology, language (English or French), and learning to live a community life.

5. Philosophy and Theology

Each Unit in collaboration with formation staff shall seek to ensure that all students understand and speak both English and French before entering the International Spiritual Year.

6. International Spiritual Year and Stage

Each Regional Superior and Council will identify suitable priests, preferably SMA teams, to receive Stagiaires. They will also set in place a programme for Stage, according to the Charter of Formation and the Formation Directory by the end of 2014.

7. Ongoing Formation

- 7.1 After the Regional Assembly 2014, every Region will put a Tyrocinium programme in place.
- 7.2 The Superior General and his Council, in collaboration with Unit Superiors, will coordinate the appointment of members for further studies according to the needs of the Society. The areas of specialisation may include accounting, chaplaincies, education, conflict resolution and counselling.
- 7.3 Each Unit will draw up a list of available sabbatical programmes and propose them to members due for sabbatical. The Formation Committee will supervise and help Units where necessary.
- 7.4 The Formation Committee, in collaboration with Unit/Regional Superiors, will coordinate ongoing formation for members/associates. This will include workshops for young priests on intercultural living, transitional adjustments, team-building, safeguarding, training related to various ministries and appointments (e.g., formation, accounting and finance, spiritual direction, chaplaincy), and help for members with various difficulties.
- 7.5 The Superior General and Council, through the Formation Committee and in consultation with Unit/Regional Superiors, will revise the *Charter of Formation* and *Formation Directory* before PC 2016.



Administration

Challenges

1. Role of the Superior General and His Council

- 1.1 How to ensure an effective follow-up to the decisions of the General Assembly is a major challenge.
- 1.2 The growing internationalization which the SMA is living today necessitates a redefinition of the role of the Superior General and his Council.

2. Situation of the Provinces and Districts in Europe and North America

- 2.1 To keep the presence and charism of the SMA in Europe and North America alive and effective.
- 2.2 To put in place a structure of government adapted for the effective and adequate functioning of the Provinces and Districts in Europe and North America.
- 2.3 To have modes of presence in these countries that will continue to keep alive ties with the local Church, some missionary activities and a network of benefactors.
- 2.4 The ageing profile of members in the Units in Europe and North America.
- 2.5 The place of the Laity in assuming roles of responsibility in administration and activities of the Provinces and Districts.

3. Administration in Africa

The complexity of SMA administration in Africa is quite challenging.

4. SMA Administration in Asia

The situation of the SMA in the Philippines is quite challenging.

Priorities

1. Role of the Superior General and His Council

- 1.1 To find the means for an effective follow-up of the decisions of the General Assembly.
- 1.2 The increasing internationalization of the SMA today necessitates a review of the role of the Superior General and his Council for an adequate coordination of appointments and mission projects (cf. GA 2013, Action Plan on Mission, 3.1).
- 1.3 In the light of the increasing task load, the Superior General and his Council will need more personnel at their disposal: e.g., in the area of formation.

2. Situation of the Provinces and Districts in Europe and North America

- 2.1 To continue SMA mission and maintain viable SMA administrative structures and teams in Europe and North America.
- 2.2 To welcome members of the Districts-in-Formation into the Provinces and Districts for projects coordinated by the Superior General and his Council.
- 2.3 To promote the place of the laity in roles of responsibility in our administration and activities in Europe and North America.

3. Administration in Africa

To ensure a simplified administration.

- 3.1 Redefine the links between the Regions and Districts-in-Formation in Africa.
- 3.2 Redefine the links between the Regions/Districts-in-Formation-in-Africa and other Units.

4. SMA Administration in Asia

To review the situation of the SMA in the Philippines.

Action Plan

1. Commission to Revise *SMA Constitutions and Laws*

GA 2013 asks the Superior General and his Council to establish a Commission for the Revision of *SMA Constitutions and Laws* in accordance with the decisions of GA 2007 and GA 2013.

2. The Role of the Superior General and His Council (cf. CL 77-78)

- 2.1 Given the increasing internationalization of the SMA today, and to ensure an adequate coordination of appointments and mission projects, the Superior General and his Council will coordinate:
 - 2.1.1. The transfer of personnel between various Units of the Society;
 - 2.1.2 The implementation of contracts involving the exchange of personnel between various SMA Units for international teams;
 - 2.1.3 The appointment of newly-ordained priests in a manner that ensures a balanced distribution of personnel according to the priorities and needs of all the Units and Regions.
 - 2.1.4 The mission projects in the different Units.
- 2.2 The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, may delegate certain tasks to qualified members of the Society for effective implementation (cf. CL 90).

3. SMA Administration in Europe and North America

- 3.1 The Superior General and his Council, in collaboration with the Unit Superiors in Europe and North America, will make an evaluation of the essential needs in personnel for administration and missionary projects in these Units.

- 3.2 The Superior General and his Council will carry out a parallel evaluation to find out the personnel available to respond to these needs.
- 3.3 The result of the two evaluations will be presented to the PC 2014, which will take the necessary decisions (cf. Mission Action Plan, n. 3; PC 2010, n. 24, p. 20).
- 3.4 Recognising that lay persons have the same missionary vocation as SMA members, each Unit will review lay involvement in its administration (lay associates, honorary members, volunteers), as well as paid employees. This review will be presented to PC 2014.

4. Administration in Africa

4.1 Relationship between the Regions and the Districts-in-Formation in Africa

- 4.1.1 The Principle: When a member is appointed to a Region, he is integrated fully into the administrative system of the District-in-Formation with full rights and obligations. He also continues to belong to his Unit of origin and to enjoy full rights and obligations in it.
- 4.1.2 The Districts-in-formation in Africa have an administrative structure which integrates the District-in-Formation and Regional administration into one administrative unit incorporating the District-in-formation Ordinary Council, the Regional Council, and an Enlarged Council.
- 4.1.3 A District-in-formation Ordinary Council, international in composition, and comprising the District-in-formation Superior, the Vice-Superior and one Councillor will be established. Each District-in-formation during its Assembly will decide on the modalities of appointing a Councillor, his role and place of residence, without prejudice to 4.3.1.1 below.
- 4.1.4 The Regional Council is composed of the Regional Superior and his Council.
- 4.1.5 An Enlarged Council, which comprises the District-in-Formation Council and the Regional Superiors, shall meet at least once a year.

4.2 Authority and Competence

4.2.1 The District-in-formation Ordinary Council

- 4.2.1.1 Coordination of all SMA development, missionary work and personnel in the territory, under the supervision of the Superior General and his Council.
- 4.2.1.2 Ordinary administration of the District-in-formation.
- 4.2.1.3 Appointment of members of the District-in-formation with the agreement of the Superior General and his Council.
- 4.2.1.4 Appointment of personnel for mission animation and fund-raising for the District-in-formation. He coordinates these two activities in collaboration with the Regional Superior.
- 4.2.1.5 Supervision of vocation animation, recruitment and admission of candidates to the SMA within the District-in-formation, in collaboration with the Regional Superior.
- 4.2.1.6 Admission to and renewal of temporary oath.
- 4.2.1.7 Dismissal of candidates with temporary oath.
- 4.2.1.8 Immediate authority for the formation houses within the District-in-formation, respecting that the Superior General and his Council retain overall authority.
- 4.2.1.9 Financial matters of the District-in-formation.
- 4.2.1.10 Care of members originating from the District-in-formation in difficult situations.
- 4.2.1.11 Emergency issues that may arise within a Region regarding SMA personnel and mission must be dealt with in collaboration with the Regional Superior and the Superior of a member's Unit of origin.
- 4.2.1.12 Relations with the General Council and with other SMA Units.
- 4.2.1.13 The decisions of the District-in-formation Council will be communicated to the members of the Enlarged Council.

4.2.2 The Regional Council

- 4.2.2.1 Coordination of SMA development, missionary work and personnel in the Region in collaboration with the District-in-formation Superior and his Council.
 - 4.2.2.2 Ordinary day-to-day administration of the Region.
 - 4.2.2.3 Representation of the SMA in the Region.
 - 4.2.2.4 Mission animation and fund-raising in the Region in collaboration with the District-in-formation Superior and his Council.
 - 4.2.2.5 Vocation animation and recruitment in the Region in collaboration with the District-in-formation Superior and his Council.
 - 4.2.2.6 Financial matters of the Region in collaboration with the District-in-formation Superior and his Council.
 - 4.2.2.7 Recommendations to the Enlarged Council on mission priorities and prospects in the Region.
 - 4.2.2.8 Signing of contracts with Bishops in agreement with the Enlarged Council.
- 4.2.3 The Enlarged Council
- 4.2.3.1 Periodic evaluation of the state of the District-in-Formation with reference to mission, personnel and development.
 - 4.2.3.2 Prioritizing mission and personnel needs within the District-in-formation.
 - 4.2.3.3 Transfer of members within the District-in-Formation after due consultation with the member in question and the Superior of his Unit of origin.
 - 4.2.3.4 Opening or closing of missions or parishes with the consent of the Superior General and his Council.
 - 4.2.3.5 Ongoing formation for personnel working in the District-in-formation.
 - 4.2.3.6 Discussion and decision on contracts with bishops.
 - 4.2.3.7 Approval of decisions and recommendations of Regional Assemblies within the District in Formation.

4.3 Process for the appointment of the Superiors of the District-in-formation and their Councils

4.3.1 Appointment of the District-in-formation Superiors and Councils

4.3.1.1 The appointment of the District-in-formation Superiors and Councils shall follow the process laid down by the *SMA Constitutions and Laws* for District Superiors – a consultative vote, followed by appointment by the Superior General and his Council (cf. Articles 113, 114, 121).

4.3.2 Electoral List for the District-in-formation Superior and Council

4.3.2.1 The electoral list for the consultation for the appointment of the District-in-formation Superior and Council will include not only members of the District-in-formation but also all those with an appointment in the District-in-formation. All have active and passive voice. Members from other Units maintain their attachment to their Unit of origin with active and passive voice. When a member is eligible on two lists, he must choose one before the second ballot.

4.3.3 Electoral List for the Regional Superior and Council

4.3.3.1 The electoral list for Regional Superior and Vice-Regional shall include all those working in the Region and those from the Region, having active and passive voice, in accordance with SMA voting rules.

4.3.3.2 Representation on the Regional Council shall be based on Apostolic Communities. If a Unit with at least three members is not represented on the Council, then one may be nominated to represent them. (cf. PC 2011, 9.1.1, and CL 147).

4.4 Assemblies

4.4.1 District-in-formation Assembly

4.4.1.1 Delegates will include both members from the District-in-formation and those working in the District-in-Formation.

4.4.1.2 Decisions are sent to the Superior General and his Council for approval.

4.4.2 Regional Assembly

4.4.2.1 The membership of the Regional Assembly is comprised of all SMA members resident in the Region.

4.4.2.2 Associates, priests and lay, working in the Region and all members from the Region without an appointment to the Region who are in the Region during the time of the Assembly are invited. The Superior of the District-in-formation, or his representative, is also invited.

4.4.2.3 Decisions and recommendations of the Regional Assembly are sent to the District-in-formation Superior and Enlarged Council for approval and as information to all the Unit Superiors concerned.

4.5 The Links between the District-in-formations/Regions in Africa and Other Units

4.5.1 Reports and decisions on our mission projects in Africa will be communicated to the sending Units by the District-in-formation/Regional Superiors.

4.5.2 Specific issues relating to a particular member will be dealt with in dialogue with the sending Superior of the member concerned by the District-in-formation/Regional Superior.

4.5.3 Unit Superiors are to visit their members to familiarize themselves with the mission projects.

4.5.4 District-in-formation/Regional Superiors will welcome SMA lay collaborators on visit from other Units to have experience of SMA mission.

Specific issues

Philippine District-in-formation

Challenges

1. Slow growth of Philippine district-in-formation.
2. Difficulty of team work in the DfPh.
3. Lack of consistency in vocation animation.
4. Under use of SMA properties.

Priorities

1. Ensure in-depth evaluation of the DfPh
2. Seek to ensure a greater SMA team-work among the members of DfPh.
3. Apply a vocation animation program
4. Review the use of SMA properties in the DfPh

Action Plan

1. The DfPh assembly 2013 which will be assisted by a member of the GC will
 - 1.1 conduct an evaluation of the functioning of the Unit
 - 1.2 elaborate a program of SMA development and take decisions for the future
2. The DfPh superior will organize workshops, facilitated by persons with appropriate expertise to promote greater SMA community team work.
3. The DfPh will appoint one full time vocation director who implements the agreed program for vocation animation with the collaboration of all members.

4. GA13 decides to temporarily close SILANG as international spiritual year centre from 2014.
 - 4.1 As a follow up to this decision.
 - 4.1.1 Students will be sent to Calavi for Spiritual year.
 - 4.1.2 The property will be rented.
5. The DfPh assembly will discuss how and where their students in preparatory and philosophy years will be trained. The following possibilities will be examined:–
 - 5.1 The SMA house of studies in New Manila may be used for preparatory program and philosophy program.
 - 5.2 New Students entering theology may be sent to Africa.

Dutch Province

At its request, the Dutch Province becomes a District *ad experimentum*. The Superior General and his Council will organize a consultative vote for the appointment of the District Superior and his Council (cf. CL 114).

District of Canada

The District of Canada, though showing new signs of future promise (a newly ordained priest, a seminarian, support in personnel from other SMA Units, active lay persons, healthy financial standing, very positive relations with the local church) may need a new status, such as an SMA community. The situation will be evaluated at the upcoming District assembly at which the GC will participate and a decision will be made at the PC 2014.

Bight of Benin District-in-formation

In order to study the problem raised between the three Regions of the District-in-Formation of the Bight of Benin, a process of evaluation of the situation will be made by the Superior General and his Council as soon as the GA 2013 is over. Then, the evaluation will take place during the District-in-Formation Assembly of 2013 at which a representative of the General Council will participate.

Finances

Challenges

1. The lack of sufficient resources to finance mission priorities, the Preparatory Programme, formation, the Prorata Fund and the retirement needs of District-in-Formation members.
2. The lack of sufficient resources for Districts-in-Formation to fund their ordinary budgets, become more self-sufficient and to finance their fund-raising projects.
3. The lack of transparency and accountability in the management of Society funds (e.g., the use of money for the purpose for which it has been given) and the need to abide by the approved budget.
4. The lack of solidarity and, where there are missionary teams, a method of pooling resources for the support of the mission in a fair and supportive manner.
5. The lack of a planned and supervised programme for building projects.

Priorities

1. To maintain the highest ethical standards in all our financial dealings (cf. GA 2007, p. 98, n. 4).
2. To ensure financial resources for formation, mission, the Prorata Fund (including the well-being of members, retirement, health) and SMA development.
3. To ensure that Districts-in-Formation fund at least 75% of their ordinary budget from their own resources by the end of the mandate (2019).
4. To follow a standardized and transparent method of accounting and reporting of income and expenditure throughout the Society that can be verified by audit.

5. To set criteria for the use of money given for mission in SMA teams.
6. To set criteria for the planning, supervision and follow-up of building and development projects.

Action Plan

1. Ethical Standards

Each SMA member will maintain the highest ethical standards in all financial dealings (cf. GA 2007, p. 98, n. 4, *Financial Directory*, n. 5).

2. Financial Directory

The *Financial Directory*, which is now in use, will be revised by the Financial Committee after GA 2013.

3. Funds and Budgets

- 3.1 Three funds will take the place of the former Development Fund.
 - 3.1.1 The Initial Formation Fund: \$1,000,000.00;
 - 3.1.2 The Ordinary Budget Fund for the Districts-in-Formation: \$700,000.00. Of this, \$100,000.00 will be used for vocation animation and preparatory programme;
 - 3.1.3 From the amount given to each District-in-Formation each year, 15% will be set aside at the Generalate towards a Retirement Fund for District-in-Formation members. This will be reviewed by the PC at the mid-mandate.
 - 3.1.4 The Prorata Fund: \$400,000.00
- 3.2 The Solidarity Fund will be renewed: \$200,000.00 per year for three years.
- 3.3 The Primary Evangelization Fund will total \$250,000.00 over the next three years.
- 3.4 The SMA Media Centre budget for 2014 will be \$50,000.00. This budget will be reviewed at each PC or by the Financial Committee.

- 3.5 The budget for the Generalate will be \$270,000.00 per annum.
- 3.6 The Inter-aid Fund will be calculated at 0.5% of gross income of Provinces and Districts.
- Inter-aid Investment Fund: 0.5% of gross income of Provinces and Districts will be set aside for long-term investment. Units may make further contributions to the long-term investment on a voluntary basis. Criteria for the management of this fund will be outlined by the Financial Committee.
- 3.7 The Archives budget for 2014 will be \$45,000.00. This budget will be reviewed each year.
- 3.8 The Construction Fund will be \$250,000.00 each year (2014, 2015 and 2016) and paid on a voluntary basis. These contributions can be made between 1st June and 1st October. Leaders who initiate such building projects should seek funding, in the first place, from development and evangelization agencies. Only after these sources of funding have been exhausted should an application be made to the Society's own resources. (cf. *Financial Directory*, p. 34, n. 16.3).
- 3.9 Special Formation Fund: GA 2013 establishes at the Generalate a fund of \$1,000,000.00 for extraordinary needs in the area of formation (e.g. extraordinary formation house maintenance, transport, special further studies ...). This fund is to be built up over three years on a voluntary basis.

4. District-in-formation Self-Sufficiency

- 4.1 Each SMA member will take responsibility for the development of the SMA in his area of work.
- 4.2 Each SMA member will endeavour to avoid excessive expenditure.
- 4.3 Each SMA member will sensitize the local Church to the needs of the new SMA units in Africa.
- 4.4 District-in-formation Superiors and Councils will appoint, as soon as possible, at least one animation and promotion director in each Unit/Region where the local Church is well established.

- 4.5 District-in-Formation Superiors and Councils will put in place, as soon as possible, a development committee which may include lay people.
- 4.6 Regional Superiors and Councils will establish groups of SMA benefactors in every Region by 2015 (cf. GA 2007, p. 93, 1.5.a).
- 4.7 Regional Superiors and Councils will seek to initiate new and/or strengthen the already established mission support groups and activities: for example,
 - 4.7.1 The production and distribution of calendars and diaries and other religious articles as soon as possible;
 - 4.7.2 Novena to St Theresa and other novenas with petition envelopes;
 - 4.7.3 Distribution of envelopes for SMA feast days and other special collections;
 - 4.7.4 Income from SMA parishes;
 - 4.7.5 Mass stipends;
 - 4.7.6 Retreats and pilgrimages;
 - 4.7.7 Sale of African artefacts;
 - 4.7.8 Mission appeals at local level.
- 4.8 The Offices for mission appeal and supply of the Districts-in-Formation in North America and Britain will continue under the coordination of American and British Provinces. These will require the sending superiors to sign a safeguarding document outlining the suitability of the member being sent.
- 4.9 Money raised for the SMA in a Region is for the Districts-in-Formation in Africa, unless specified by prior agreement between the Regional and District-in-Formation Superiors or for a house of formation (cf. GA2007, p. 93, n. 1.5.b).

5. Financial Report

- 5.1. In collaboration with the Financial Committee, the Bursar General will review, update and complete the system of financial reporting as given in the *Financial Directory*. (cf. *Financial Directory*, n. 22, and Appendix, n. 4).

- 5.2. Funds to the Units/Regions will be distributed only on receipt of financial reports from the previous year. (cf. *Financial Directory*, n. 22).
- 5.3. All accounts of Units/Regions are subject to audit. Each Unit/Region will propose a method of audit and present this to the Bursar General by 31st December, 2013. By PC 2015, the Bursar General's report will be supplemented by an Auditor's report.

6. Solidarity in SMA Teams

- 6.1. Members will be conscientized at Regional Assemblies regarding what is given to them for personal use and what is given for mission. They are expected to be transparent and accountable for funds received for their mission.
- 6.2. Members will pool together their mission financial support in a common fund for their mission. This will be coordinated by the leader of the team.
- 6.3. The team will agree on the mission plan and the budget for which this money will be used. This will be coordinated by the leader of the team.
- 6.4. For greater transparency in financial administration, the offices of Bursar and of Superior /Parish Priest/Regional should be held by different people in SMA teams.

7. Building and Development Projects

- 7.1. All SMA building and development projects must be submitted for approval by the SMA Financial Committee.
- 7.2. Where local Ordinaries are involved, their approval must be sought before a project is initiated.
- 7.3. Projects initiated by a Regional Superior must have the approval of the District-in-Formation Superior.
- 7.4. Building Projects are required to obey all civil laws and regulations about building and ownership. They are also subject to all ethical criteria.
- 7.5. A plan and an accurate professional estimate of the proposed project will be produced before the project is sent for approval by the Financial Committee.

- 7.6. A panel of at least three people – a building professional, the SMA local superior and someone designated by the Superior General and his Council to oversee the payment of money – will supervise and follow the work.
- 7.7. The approved budget will be strictly respected. This will be overseen by the local Superior and monitored by the Bursar General.
- 7.8. The Regional/Unit Superior will ensure that a regular progress report is prepared and submitted on time to the Superior General and his Council before any new money is released for the project.

Closing Address of the Superior General

It is just short of four weeks since we began the 20th General Assembly of the Society of African Missions. This Assembly has been the culmination of a long period of preparation that began at Plenary Council 2011. Each member of the Society was invited to share their perspective on the challenges facing the Society and the possible pathways to renewal. It was gratifying that so many of our members accepted this invitation. Their work was the background for our focussed attention to the challenges and priorities for SMA mission for the next six years. We have now agreed the action plans for mission, formation, spirituality and life-style, administration and finance. Our voting for these plans commits us to work towards their realisation. We are not only carriers of the message to those who elected us but we must also be apostles of the spirit of the message. This will be done by realising these plans through our own Units

We have committed ourselves anew to ‘the most abandoned’ in whatever milieu we live our mission service. We know that this is a challenging task. It will require of us patience and forgiveness; forgiveness of the other when we are offended, and forgiveness of self when we have satisfied our own needs rather than those of the ones we are called to serve. I quote from Pope Francis, in his last pastoral letter as Archbishop of Buenos Aires,

“Crossing the threshold of the faith leads us to forgiving and knowing how to break into a smile. It means approaching every person that lives on the edge of existence and to call him by name. It is taking care of the fragility of the weakest and supporting his trembling knees in the certainty that in what we do for the smallest of our brothers [and sisters] it is to Jesus himself that we are doing it.” [October 2012]

We have not come up with grandiose plans. Our plans are relatively straight forward and need to be lived in a spirit of humility. We challenged ourselves to be patient and not ape the worldly way of competition. Our psalm response on Wednesday asked the Lord to give

success to the work of our hands. The scriptures rarely speak of success, they speak more of fruitfulness. When our focus is on success then we easily fall into the temptation of trying to climb 'the ladder of success.' The danger in trying to climb such ladders is that we may indeed find ourselves climbing but very likely we will eventually find that all our energy has been consumed by climbing the wrong ladder.

Our mission is not our own. It is God's mission, entrusted to the SMA through the Church. This ought to make us people of deep humility but also people of faith and hope. Another quote from Pope Francis is appropriate here,

"Crossing the threshold of the faith is to be active, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit present in the Church and who is also seen in the signs of the times. It is to join in the constant movement of life and of history without falling into the paralyzing defeatism that everything in the past was better. It is an urgency to think in new ways, to offer new suggestions, a new creativity, kneading life with 'the new leaven of justice and holiness'" (October 2012)

I believe we have honestly tried to think in new ways, to offer new suggestions and begun a path that seeks to knead into all of our lives a new leaven of justice and holiness. The new vibrancy of internationality that we live in the SMA today has opened up the possibility of new thinking and new possibilities. Coming together from nineteen countries with such diverse cultures, and electing for the first time two members of the General Council from the world of the south, is a great expression of life and energy in this Society. We told many stories at this Assembly – in the hall, in the chapel and, yes, even in the bar. Story telling in all traditions allows us to free ourselves from the sometimes crippling insularity of the mind and opens us to a greater breath of humanity. We are inheritors of the *Greatest Story Ever Told*. By virtue of baptism and special call to mission through SMA, we have been mandated to tell this Story of Jesus the Christ to all peoples, especially to Africans and peoples of African origin. We are asked to tell this story in an often hostile environment and to give reasons to those who question us for the hope that is within us.

Our being together these four weeks was characterised by fraternal warmth. The laughter in the refectory or TV room manifests a spirit of togetherness that is vital to the future of our mission. We don't all

have to agree always on every point; had we done so it would suggest an organisation of sycophants rather than a mature community struggling to renew our passion for a shared mission. In that struggle it was good that we were joined by Steve Phillips, representing all our lay associates. This Assembly re-endorsed the openness of SMA to the participation of laity in all dimensions of our mission. Through Steve I salute all SMA lay collaborators, whether they have a juridical link or collaborate on another level.

As we come to the close of this Assembly I want to pay tribute to the outgoing General Council. Six years ago we elected the team of Kieran O'Reilly, Jean-Marie Guillaume, Paul Ennin and Thomas m Wright. Half way through the mandate Kieran was called to service as bishop of the diocese of Killaloe in Ireland. Jean-Marie stepped into the breach and Thomas Curran was elected to fill the Councillor position. I thank you Jean Marie for the service you have rendered not only in the past three years but throughout your ministry in SMA. Your leadership throughout has been characterised by competence and unfailing courtesy. To Paul, Tom and Tom, the Society is grateful for your generous service and looks forward to this generous service being manifested in new ways. I remember here too the good work of Didier Lawson and his colleagues in the Bursar Department. Thankfully Didier will continue in this role with the new administration.

Ithank our animators, Sr Generose Sibay FSP and Fr Basil Soyoye SMA. You have shown your competence and there no doubt that you were up to the task. You were called to push us a bit here and there but eventually the task was accomplished. The delegates appreciated in a particular way the beautiful and creative prayer sessions that opened our days. The presence of the feminine was especially obvious and we are grateful to you Generose for sharing your time and gifts with us in such a gentle and womanly way.

My thanks too go to the backroom staff without whom this Assembly could not have completed its work: To Frank Wright and Francois Gnonhossou for the translation and to Derek Kearney, Paul Amegashie and Ghislain Inai for the secretarial backup and technological competence. You proved that it is possible to conduct a 'paperless' Assembly and to achieve the desired outcome.

My thanks also go to the redactors, Joe Egan, Augustin Houessinon, Paul Quillet and Francis Rozario who often worked late into the night and despite a seemingly thankless job refused to throw in the towel but persevered to produce a work of great quality. The moderators of groups are owed our gratitude and, perhaps in this 'paperless' Assembly more than in the past, the secretaries deserve our huge esteem. Their competence in the world of technology was the mechanism by which we reached our goal. Secretaries too worked long past the normal schedule and so we are indeed grateful. Technology was also much to the fore in the communication of the spirit of the Assembly. Thanks to Andre N'Koy, Donbosco Mawdsley and all others who contributed to the communication effort.

My thanks to the staff of the house: to Alexis Bassoma, Tom Wright and the kitchen and support staff. Each day people spoke of the excellence of the meals. Many of us will need to go on a strict diet for some months to come. The Presentation Sisters are due a huge debt of gratitude; not only is there service to the community always of the highest standard but what makes it particularly lovely is that it is invariably offered with a smile.

The Society has a new leadership team for the next six years. I along with Antonio Porcellato, Francis Rozario and Francois Gnonhossou will do our best to continue the leadership of service that has characterised administrations in our Society from the beginning. The new mandate agreed at this Assembly asks a greater co-ordinating role of the General Council. We seek to carry out such a co-ordinating role in a spirit of collegiality.

This Assembly has inaugurated a new phase of our Society. We have challenges before us and we have good plans to meet those challenges. Working together we can find that energy to make such plans and such a vision a reality.

May the blessing that Pope Francis imparted on our Society at Wednesday's audience fill us with courage and faith. May Our Lady of Africa keep an ever watchful eye on all our undertakings. May Melchior de Marion Brésillac, Servant of God, continue to intercede for us.

With this prayer I now declare this 20th General Assembly of the Society of African Missions closed.

Rome, May 3th 2013
Fachtna O'Driscoll SMA

SMA General Assembly 2013

Participants

Ex-officio members

Jean-Marie	GUILLAUME	Superior General
Paul	ENNIN	Vicar Councillor
Thomas	WRIGHT	General Councillor
Thomas	CURRAN	General Councillor
Pierre	RICHAUD	Provincial Superior, Lyons
Fachtna	O'DRISCOLL	Provincial Superior, Ireland
Jos	PIJPERS	Provincial Superior, Netherlands
Michael	MORAN	Provincial Superior, USA
Patrick	McGUIRE	Provincial Superior, Britain
Lionello	MELCHIORI	Provincial Superior, Italy
Tiburtius	FERNANDEZ	Superior, District of Canada
José-Ramón	CARBALLADA	Superior, District of Spain
Jean-Pierre	FREY	Superior, District of Strasbourg
Reginald	NWACHUKWU	Superior, Bight of Benin District-information
Nelson	ADJEI-BEDIAKO	Superior, Gulf of Guinea District-information
Thaddeus	OGATO	Superior, Great Lakes District-information
Patrikson	FRANCIS	Superior, Indian District-information
Alan	DE GUZMAN	Superior, Philippines District-information
Wacław	KRZEMPEK	Superior, Polish District-information

Elected members:***Lyon Province***

Paul QUILLET
 Daniel CARDOT
 Gabriel NOURY
 Laurent ORE

Irish Province

Michael McCABE
 Malachy FLANAGAN
 Maurice HENRY
 Joseph EGAN
 John DUNNE

Dutch Province

Koos JANSSEN

American Province

Brendan DARCY

Italian Province

Antonio PORCELLATO

Strasbourg District

Justin KETTE

Gulf of Guinea Df

Fabien SOGNON
 Paulin KOUASSI

Bight of Benin Df

Augustine ONWUZURIKE
 Augustin HOUESSINON

Polish Df

Janusz MACHOTA

Great Lakes Df

André N'KOY
 Bernard ASUKA

Indian Df

Francis ROZARIO

Invitee

Steve PHILLIPS, Lay Associate, USA

Animators:

Basil SOYOYE,
 Sister G n roise Ngandju SIBAY

Secretariat:

Derek KEARNEY (Secretary General)
 Paul-Marie AMEGASHIE (Francophone Secretary)
 Ghislain INA  (Assistant Secretary)

Translation:

Fran ois GNONHOSSOU (Translation, English / French),
 Frank WRIGHT (Translation, French / English)

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