



Extraordinary General Chapter Concludes

The Prior General, Brother Donatus Forkan (picture right), brought the 67th General Chapter of the Order to a conclusion with his closing address on the afternoon of 20 November 2009. In his remarks he summed up the Chapter and its achievements.

He said, "This Extraordinary General Chapter had the potential to be divisive, like Babel, or to consolidate and strengthen the bond of unity that binds us as an international Brotherhood on the other. By the power of the Holy Spirit and each Chapter member's

willing cooperation with the urgings of the Spirit, it transpired that, in fact, the Chapter was a celebration of our Brotherhood. The membership of the Chapter was made up of 'Peters' and 'Pauls': Brothers who came from different realities, different backgrounds, different cultures, languages and professional preparation. There were Brothers from 25 different countries with very different experiences and marked contrasts in the challenges that they face each day in ministry.

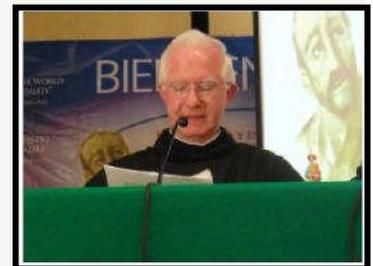
"This variety, instead of being a source of division, gave a richness

to our discussions and sharing that enabled the Chapter to agree on General Statutes that reflect the reality of the Order as an international institute.

"The Chapter's endorsement of the emerging image of the Order as a Family, the *Saint John of God Family*, was indeed a prophetic statement. All of this was evidence of the Holy Spirit moving over the Chapter like a gentle breeze. Chapter was a *Pentecostal Experience*, thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit and the openness of each of the participants to the gentle urgings of the Spirit."

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ◆ Year of the Priest
- ◆ Rural Health in PNG



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Asia Pacific Capitulars at General Chapter



The Asia Pacific Region was represented at the General Chapter by capitulars from Australia, India, Korea, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam.

Unlike most other language groups the positions of group chairman and reporter were rotated so that the maximum experience of Chapter life could be had by all.

The Asia Pacific Group was noted for its concise but frequently forward looking contributions to the plenary sessions. It particularly espoused the possibility of Provincial Delegates having the right to attend the General Chapter and the Meeting of Provincials.

John of God Family Consecrated to Mary



During the General Chapter the Order, as a body, presented the host Province of Mexico, Cuba and Central America with a statute of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a memento of the Chapter being held in Mexico.

The statue (depicted at left) was the focus of a consecration of the Family of St. John of God to the Order's patroness. The event took place on the vigil of the feast of the Patronage of Our Lady—20 November. This was 183 years to the day from

when the French Province 'appointed' the Blessed Virgin to the position of its Major Superior.

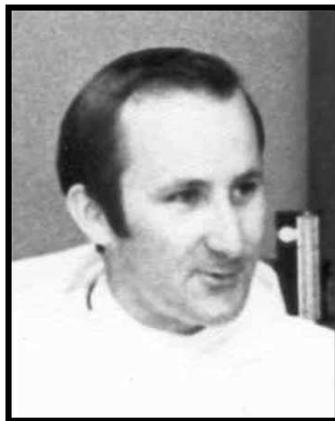
A long passed General Chapter had decreed that this Feast of the Patronage of Our Lady would be one of the principle feasts of the Order and every community in the Order was instructed to celebrate it with the greatest solemnity possible.

The consecration ceremony at the Chapter began with the statue being blessed by Brother Pascual Piles. Then each

Provincial was given an unlighted candle which was then lit by the Prior General.

With all the Provincials standing before the statue, holding their candles, the Chapter members recited a special prayer of consecration. The Provincials then placed the candles before the statue, to represent their respective Provinces, where they remained lit during the closing Eucharist.

Rural Health Training Opportunities in PNG



Brother Steven Richmond (pictured) was engaged in activities connected to his holding of that position when he died in an air crash on 5 November 1979.

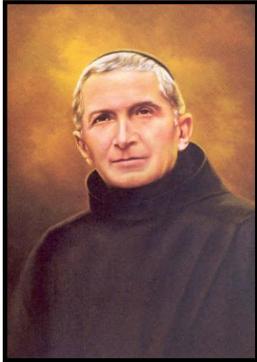
Today the position of National Director is held by Ms. Magdeline Dokup. In August she signed a K1.5 million project to upgrade administrative and medical knowledge for health workers around the nation. The 3-year project is supported by the Dutch NGO, Cordaid and it will enable 35 doctors, nurses and health administrators from rural health facilities to enrol in programmes at the Divine Word University and the University of Papua New Guinea.



HISTORY OF THE
ORDER'S
PRESENCE IN
PAPUA NEW
GUINEA

The history of the Order's presence in Papua New Guinea includes a close association with the Church's National Catholic Health Secretariat. In the 1970s and 1980s several Brothers occupied the position of the National Director of Catholic Health Services and

Saint Benedict Menni



Brothers of St. John of God care for the sick and those in need. For this reason, from the very beginning, the Hospitaller Order was recognized by the Church as a Congregation of religious brothers with exception of not more than one priest in each community acting as chaplain.

Saint Benedict Menni was

one exception, being an ordained priest in Rome on October 14, 1860. In those years, the Spanish branch of the Hospitallers Order died away as a consequence of some Masonic laws issued in Portugal in 1834 and in Spain in 1835. Saint Benedict was sent to Barcelona on April 6, 1867, to restore the Hospitaller Order in these countries.

After a long struggle, oftentimes risky, he was not only able to gather many vocations - almost a thousand from 1867 to 1903 - but also founded in Spain, Portugal and Mexico, 22 hospitals for every kind of sickness, especially for mental patients and handicapped

children. Those conditions were the most neglected by the public health care at that time.

He also founded a female branch of the Order, the Hospitaller Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Today, the Sisters are present in 20 Countries with almost 80 communities.

What is amazing in the life work of Saint Menni is the number and complexity of the undertakings he faced; but, even more so is their validity, tested for more than a century. The secret lies in his true, heroic detachment by which he always considered himself a docile instrument in the hands of God, without

giving room to his personal ambitions or human plans.

His feast day is April 24, the day he died in Dinan, France in 1914.

HE FOUNDED
THE
HOSPITALLER
SISTERS OF THE
SACRED HEART

The Work of Fernando Aguilo



The "JOSEP PARERA 2009" is awarded in recognition of outstanding dedication by individuals and organisations to the service of community development in terms of

its social, humanitarian and/or solidarity dimensions. Brother Fernando Aguilo, a Hospitaller Brother of St John of God, who graduated in Medicine and has worked for more than 20 years with commitment and humanitarian dedication to improving the social and health conditions of the people of Sierra Leone, has now been awarded with this recognition.

In the words of the awardee, " I shall devote the cash prize to a new installation of solar panels which, linked to our generators, will provide the whole Centre with continuous power, 24 hours a day, and make it possible for the medical teams to continue working without the power cuts to save fuel oil.

"In Barcelona 'a hospital without light' is unimaginable, but unfortunately this is a reality in ' - Africa where the vast majority of the

rural hospitals have no electric power... This new solar panel installation will considerably improve the quality of the medical care they provide, as well as the comfort and security of our patients."

Bro. Fernando Aguilo was nominated for the award by the team of Volunteers of the Sant Joan de Deu Hospital in Barcelona and other professionals acquainted with his dedication.

Pope's Act of Hospitality



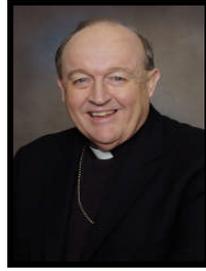
A spirit of Hospitality that leaves home and reaches out to people in need can be seen in the actions of Pope Benedict who on 'Boxing Day' last year went to a soup kitchen in Rome's Trastevere neighborhood. There, he shared lasagna, meatballs with lentils and mashed potatoes with the poor and later gave Christmas presents to about 30 children at the centre.

Among those sitting at his table were a 34-year old homeless Afghan refugee; a 35-year-old Nigerian who arrived in Italy four years ago after gruelling travel across the Libyan desert; a Somali woman, 63, who came to Italy to give her disabled son better care; and a 90-year-old Italian who receives food supplies from the community.

The pontiff said he had heard tales of human suffering during the meal but told the poor and homeless that he was close to them and loved them.

"I was moved because I'm not a Christian and I'm not Italian, and I've come from far away," Qorbanali Esmaili, the Afghan refugee, said after the event. "The pope sat down at the table with all of us; he is a father but also a friend."

Bro. Edward Collins Celebrates Golden Jubilee



On Saturday 21 November, 2009 the feast of the Patronage of Our Lady, Brother Edward Collins celebrated 50 years of religious profession with confreres, family and friends at Cessnock.

For a variety of reasons, not all members of the Province could be present at the celebrations but the reports that have come in tell us that some 90 persons were present on the occasion—some of the Brothers having travelled from Sydney by bus.

The chief celebrant of the Thanksgiving Eucharist was the a relative of Brother Edward, the Archbishop of Adelaide, Philip Wilson (seen above).

In his occasional remarks Brother Edward paid a tribute to the support that he had received in his vocation from his parents, family and others.

Born at Cessnock in 1933, he began his formation in the Order in March 1958 and made first profession on 22 November 1959.

The Order and the Year of the Priest

In his concluding address at the recent General Chapter the Prior General addressed himself directly to the Brother priests of the Order. He did this in the light of the Church's celebration of the Year of the Priest (19 July 2009-2010).



In recent communications from the General Curia attention has been drawn to an invitation from the President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health-Care Workers to priests who work in the area of Pastoral Care to participate in a special pilgrimage that will take place this year (14 to 18 April) to Lourdes and Ars. This pilgrimage is part of the programme of events by which the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health-Care Workers will celebrate its 25th anniversary of foundation by Pope John Paul II on 11 February 1985. The focus of the Pontifical Council's anniversary celebrations will be in the Vatican from 9 to

11 February. The Prior General's message to Brother priests of the Order included the following.

"Speaking directly to our confreres who are priests I wish to say that the ministry that you exercise in our centres and services is of enormous importance because people come to us at a vulnerable time in their lives. They are often weighed down, not just by their physical or psychological needs, but by matters that weigh heavily on their conscience. They need a listening ear, an open heart and a spiritual blessing that will bring them inner peace and the courage to face the future."

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