

IRISH REGIONAL ASSEMBLY AND CONVENTION 2024

Introduction

This is a report on the Assembly and Convention of the Region of Ireland held in Dalgan Park, Navan from 15 to 18 January 2024. Outside temperatures reached -5° at night and daytime struggled to get above zero. Sixty two Columbans of the Region (with an average age of 77), one lay missionary and one co-worker attended all or some of the proceedings. Vicar General Brian Vale, Alvaro Martinez and Lay Mission Coordinator, Saniyana Tamatawale attended from Hong Kong. Amy Echeverria who had planned to attend was unable to do so. John Boles, Director of the British Region, also took an active part. Domestic arrangements in Dalgan were excellent as were physical preparation of meeting places.



Good preparation in the preceding months greatly helped the meeting. Encouragement from Fr. Tim Mulroy and his council and the work done by the General Assembly Preparatory Committee, which initiated monthly inputs and then the formation of local Dialogue Circles, bore fruit. This proactive approach was also carried through by the Regional administration in Ireland and by the preparatory committee for the January meeting.

While being relevant to Columbans in Ireland this report is also meant to inform Columbans in other Regions and Mission Units. This occasionally necessitates a small change in language or a clarification that does not appear in the original minutes or oral contributions.

MONDAY 15 JANUARY:

ASSEMBLY SESSION 1

The gathering opened with the recitation of the "*Prayer for the General Assembly*" and words of welcome from the Regional Director, Ray Husband. He explained that the process will be that of 'Conversation in the Spirit' that has been used in the Society (and in the recent Synod in Rome). A core element of this is small group sharing with an emphasis on listening. This meeting should have a *society-wide perspective*. Before the General Assembly there will be another meeting of the Region to reflect on more local issues.

A vote was then held to elect a chairperson for the days ahead. (Dermot Carthy and Gerry Markey offered their services as scrutineers). Alo Connaughton was elected. Ray then proposed that the Preparatory Committee (Ray, Tom O'Reilly and Angie Escarsaand Alo) become the Steering Committee. (Pat O'Donoghue, the other member of the Preparatory Committee was unavailable for health reasons). The suggestion was approved. Ray thanked Pat Colgan and Pat Raleigh for agreeing to be secretaries. Almost all of what follows is based on their extensive and clear record of proceedings.

Alo announced the membership and facilitators of ten Dialogue Circles that had already been preselected. He clarified that the principal topics/questions to be focussed on in groups have been adapted from those that came out of the IRMU meeting in Seoul in 2022, and modified by the (interim) Society-wide report of Carolyn Evans. (The final report was published the week after this meeting). Group sessions will be followed by plenaries in order to gather insights. He also emphasized that a primary role of the group facilitator is to ensure that the *Conversation in the Spirit* approach be followed. Key to the process is the discipline of listening and respecting the time limit (usually three minutes in the first round) for individual sharing. By nature our tendency is to half-listen and direct our attention more to preparing our next 'intervention' while someone is speaking.

The assembly watched short and very helpful video by Bishop Alan McGuckian (who was a delegate from Ireland to the Roman Synod) about the process and value of this 'Conversation in the Spirit' approach before going to join their groups. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-fgfy4WLA>)

GROUP MEETING: The group work started with **Question1** which read:

“One way or another, it has already become clear that big steps are ahead for the Society: either to choose the changes necessary to prolong the life of the Society, or to choose how to wind up the Society and close it in a way that is canonically, legally, and ethically sound? (Evans Report).

What thoughts and feelings arise in you as you reflect on this key statement in the independent review report? How do you see such big steps impacting on your life and to what extent are you ready and willing to face and accept hard choices?”

ASSEMBLY SESSION 2. Plenary

Reports from 10 small groups.

Groups were asked to report back with a few concise sentences or phrases convergences and divergences in the group sharing. While it is hoped that this is what happened, sometimes the points represent the opinions/beliefs only of individuals - not a group consensus on what is to be shared. No vote was taken. This is true for all reports that follow. Grey dots are used to separate points that are worthy of consideration..

Group 1 ● We are all struggling with questions about our future ● We wonder if our present model is relevant to mission today? ● Do Columbans just ask for money/prayers/vocations from the home churches but not give much in return?

Group 2 – ● Many experience feelings of anxiety and sadness ● Accepting vulnerability frees us to move forward with hope, both individually and collectively ● This can enable us to face up to the hard choices.

Group 3 – ● Even if we fade away as an organization, mission remains alive. ● There's a time for 'new wineskins.' Root and branch reform of the Society is needed. ● A collaborative strategic plan is needed and the views of the 59 Columbans ordained in the past 30 years should be sought when planning the future.

Group 4 ● Some people have optimism. ● There is a need to sharpen our focus. ● There was divergence in the group for example, with regard to options of dual incardination.

Group 5 – ● Convergence in group on ‘keeping going’ as a Society even when on a much smaller scale than we have been accustomed to (‘small is beautiful’) ● Do we have the courage to take the tough decisions? ● Convergence on maintaining hope even in situations which could produce hopelessness – Gaza, Ukraine, destruction of the planet etc. ● Hope is kept alive by continuous engaging in small groups (even if we can't go to the GA ourselves).

Group 6 – ● Broad acceptance that we are in the final chapter of our own history, but there is a desire to be part of the new chapter of mission. ● Strong ethical concern to protect rights and dreams of our younger members, both ordained and seminarians, and of our lay missionaries.

Group 7 – ● Prevailing feelings of sadness but also hope ● A sense of relief at finally naming things (speaking clearly about our situation); this engenders hope. ● There is a need to care for our younger members and lay people as we make plans.

Group 8- ● Convergence about our need to take the hard decisions for the survival of the Society but we need to have our eyes open as we do this. Failure to take these decisions is itself a kind of decision that will lead to closure. ● We need to refocus on the primary reason we are inviting young men to (missionary) priesthood. ● Interculturality brings both richness but also tensions – particularly if the leadership is going to quickly pass to groups who are culturally/linguistically distinct. ● A more severe pruning both of RMUs and ministries within RMUs can be expected – do we have the energy/generosity for it? ● Divergence on how we define co-workers. Are there rights/obligations/privileges attached?

Group 9 – ● Group convergence on sense of grief/loss that we can no longer continue as we were. ● Positivity is important, but we should also be cautious, because there are individuals/groups who may want to take advantage of our vulnerability (for example in the disposal of assets). ● Change is urgent, but a good level of consensus is important. ● Each RMU should try to widen their horizons to the work

of the wider Society and ask how they can support it. ●Some said tough decisions should be left to official leadership and/or younger Columbans; others say that all Columbans should be involved in these decisions.

Group 10 – ●If we hope to attract new members or supporters we need a clearer identity, vision and focus. ●Our general practice these days is to let everyone do their 'own thing'... ●Everyone needs to feel involved. ●Today there are greater possibilities for both local and virtual (Zoom etc.) support groups for those interested in particular ministries ●We need to promote support groups for younger members in particular, so they do not feel alone...

Open discussion following the group reports on Q1

●The grief/anxiety we are experiencing is colouring the way we are talking and thinking – we need to acknowledge that, but not let it paralyse us either. ●We are not unique in this transition – it is an experience of the whole Church on the Synodal Path. This is our way of contributing to the synodal way, and thus the Kingdom of God. ●“I don't see/feel anxiety and sadness – I see it as a wakeup call”. ●Change is often portrayed as something negative –'hard', challenging etc. Change and decisions are often good. ... We shouldn't cling desperately to the survival of the Society, if something different would better serve God's kingdom. ●~~“I don't see/feel anxiety and sadness – I see it as a wakeup call”.~~ ●The days of the traditional Home Regions are basically over. ●We have lost our focus on priesthood/preaching Jesus Christ, and sometimes substituted it with 'climate change', JPIC etc... ●Without God, spirituality and hope, we are nothing. ●Even our best human efforts to keep the Society going will fail if we are not faithful to the charism of our founders. ●What precisely are the structures we will have to discard, if the Society is to survive or flourish? What geographical area/s will be prioritised, or deprioritised? ●We might consider a closer collaboration or even amalgamation with a like-minded Missionary Society, for example St. Patrick's. Kiltegan. Sharing of properties, vision.... It is worth exploring, and might be a positive witness to the wider Church/world ●We may benefit from consulting people OUTSIDE the Society about what our future could be. ●In the last 30 yrs, 59 priests have been ordained – only nine have come from Traditional Home Regions. The views of the other 50 must be given priority. ●We need to really turn over leadership to younger Columbans immediately that is at the upcoming GA and thereafter...

GROUP MEETING: The groups were invited to go on to **Question 3** (Q2 left for tomorrow)

Q3- “Taking into consideration the initial report on the independent review and assessment of vocations programs based on internal and external data, trends and other congregational plans, what steps do you feel need to be taken now with regard to the vocations and formation programs for ordained and lay Columban mission?”

ASSEMBLY SESSION 3. Plenary

Report back from Small Groups on Question 3

Group 1- ●We didn't have enough information (statistics/trends) for a serious reflection. We should have had input (about the state of Formation programs) ●What are we inviting seminarians/LMs in training to do? We need a longer training for LMs. ●Candidates need to know what work they will be doing – even include training for this work in their formation. ●Future focus of the Society is key for formation – is it a Society that is about to close, or a Society that is still focused on certain priorities?

Group 2 – ●Ethical questions- we are aware that both candidate and formator numbers are falling; ●Future of CLM is bound up with future of Society.

Group 3- ●Fewer young people (in 'the West') are choosing to enter the caring professions such as nursing and social work, hence no surprise that religious vocations are in decline. ●Vocations will only come from faith communities but many young Catholics seem to be ashamed to be seen in Church. ●SSC does not have networks such as schools as many religious orders have - hence lack of opportunities for promotion. ●Where would a man from Ireland do his formation today, if the case arose?? ●Should mandatory celibacy be coupled with priesthood?

Group 4 ● Continue promotion of vocations, both in Ireland and other RMUs

● Continue the joint Formation program, along with counselling.

Group 5 ● Men and women, lay and ordained, should be together in both vocation work and in formation.

Group 6- ● If viability into the future requires at least 13 ordinations per year. Since we have an average of just two we ~~we~~ must think of the duty of care to those who have already joined. Do we have enough personnel available to be formators? ● Is it ethical to accept candidates, if we cannot fulfil our duty of care? ● Can we guarantee a viable Society for candidates who are joining now, and whose formation will take at least 10 years? ● Something dramatic would have to happen now if the Society were to have viability

Group 7 – ● Divergence of opinion on whether we should keep or close formation programs. ● Lack of data re alternative models of formations. ● How have we passed on our understanding of mission to younger people? ● Most young people today are willing to give only short periods of time on mission.

Group 8- ● Is it ethical to continue to accept vocations now? ● If we make no changes, all our young people will be involved in leadership/administration within 10 years or less of ordination. ● What emphasis will be in our formation programs – JPIC/IRD or sacramental priesthood?

Group 9 – ● General agreement on remaining open to receiving vocations to priesthood and CLM, while not lowering our strict criteria for acceptance into such programs. ● Our primary mission remains ‘*missio ad gentes*’. Leaders need to be able to work with professionals. ● All candidates, and newly ordained, should be willing to support vocation efforts.

Group 10 – ● We need to clarify our specificity/uniqueness as a missionary Society.

● We are “missionaries first, clerics second” – however, we must be on our guard against clericalism.

● The possibility of dual incardination should be explored. ● Formation programmes must be fit for purpose – that is, shorter, with relevant content, based in a community, with training on how to share what is learnt with ordinary people.

SECOND DAY. TUESDAY 16 JANUARY:

The day began with the Synodal Prayer followed by a short video on the *Art of Listening* from the [synodalu](https://synodalu.org/synodal-u-jeanine-turner/) website. <https://synodalu.org/synodal-u-jeanine-turner/>

GROUP MEETING: Participants then went to their groups to reflect on **Question 2** :

“The findings of the independent review of the Society raised questions about our collective will and capacity to move forward decisively in implementing our mission priorities, due in large measure to continuing diminishment in personnel resources.

What is your sense of the present state of the Society? What practical steps do you feel need to be taken now in any strategic plan for the viable, sustainable and credible cross-cultural mission of Columbans going into the future?”

ASSEMBLY SESSION 4 Plenary

Plenary with input from small groups on Question 2

Group 1 – ● Some Regions have no future. ● Some have pockets of life, and these should be supported. ● Consult the younger Columbans to find out their views ● Lay missionaries should be sent to where there is a specific need.

Group 2 – ● Feelings of confusion, of being overburdened, and of feeling old and tired. How to deal with these? ● Create space for discernment and remember that we are not here discussing *aspirations* but discerning *practical steps*, like building up our willingness and confidence to change.

Group 3 – ● A root and branch assessment of the present SSC situation is needed. ● We should prioritise aspects of mission service, rather than geography. ● We should confront the *status quo* with Gospel values ● Discern the feasibility of dual incardination

Group 4 – ●There is hope. ●We should have one priority- Let the younger members articulate it.
●Review our mission spirituality.

Group 5 – ●We need to prioritise and name countries for future Columban mission. ●. Emphasize again mission *ad gentes* Restore the ‘special end’ of the Society, that is, proclaiming the Gospel ●Make canonical adjustments to enable lay people to become members of the Society. ●Our Society can be seen as a collectivity of individuals, all with honourable goals, but leading to the problems such as individualism, described by our present Superior General.

Group 6 – ●As an organization we are unsustainable! We have insufficient capacity to carry on ‘as usual’. The interim (Carolyn Evans) report is clear and its conclusions incontrovertible. Rather than being depressed, we should celebrate a “job well done”. ● Radical pruning of assets and overseas commitments. But even this is simply postponing the inevitable – either closure, dual incardination or merging with others are the options.

Group 7 – ●Change is coming whether we like it or not. ● We need to reduce commitments, both of RMU numbers and apostolates within RMUs ● We need a new ‘synodal’ model of leadership – with maximum participation.

Group 8 – ●Many see the Society future as fragile, static, dismal, and dying. Despite this, we are not pessimistic, because the Holy Spirit is working. ●Where are the green shoots? Pay attention to where the younger members are at. ●There is an openness now to discussing the options of closure of Formation, or a phased total closing of the Society.

Group 9 – ●Our problems are complex and difficult. ●We must not lose sight of one rich history of living the Gospel with and for others ● We need a visible plan to lighten the burdens many are presently carrying. ●We need to reshape our Society structures – reduce number of RMUs, numbers involved in Columban bureaucracy/administration and/or seek better forms of ministrie.

Group 10 – ●Overall feeling of anxiety, confusion ●Awakening to face our reality with courage; we need a structure that will bring all together for collective decisions and implementation (use of internet etc).

Responses from assembly members to reports from groups:

●I feel that we are getting more ‘real’ today – we are seeing the inevitability of change. ●We must have Christian hope. ●I also feel a greater sense of realism today – we are now discerning practical steps starting from the reality that exists, not the reality as we would like it to be. We must surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit, just like the early Church in Jerusalem; many were imprisoned, but the Gospel then moved out to the Gentiles. ●At the end of yesterday, I felt despondent; today I am encouraged by the reports’ openness to consider change. I would like to know how much Central Administration and others have engaged with congregations facing similar issues – and what they have learned from them? (●Brian Vale – clarified that Carolyn Evans has experience with at least three similar congregations. He is involved with an “Emerging Futures” group of sisters facing closure etc). ●We should concentrate on ‘what service can we offer to our retired priests’, wherever they may be?

●We should remember that we have lived through a pandemic, which has affected vocations and every other ministry. ●If we restructure and have only one or two Society priorities, then formation may be viable. ●In the Irish National Seminary, Maynooth, many new candidates are older, and their formation is shortened – can we explore such options? No young person wants to hear that their formation will be 8-10 years.

Towards the end of this session the chairman, in light of comments about lack of information, invited John Boles and Alvaro Martinez to update the group about the present situation regarding vocations and formation – especially in the light of recent reports.

John explained that Carolyn Evans has as yet produced only a summary of the *Draft Independent Review* of the Society, which is available at www.columban-irmu.org. We expect the full report soon. (Note: It was published in late January). In the summary, she points out that for viability, we should have been having five to seven ordinations per year, but we have only had one or two annually. Even if we were to get an ‘avalanche’ of vocations now, it wouldn’t substantially change the situation due to the length of

the formation process. The other report is a *Review of the Manila Formation Program* – also available online. The conclusion is that there is NO new generation of formators available after the present group finish up – unless we force the present formators to remain up to and beyond 2034.

Alvaro Martinez shared that we have 23 students in formation today. We have only had one new vocation in the past four years (in the Philippines). We need to remember that we have had 89 Columban deaths in the five-year period 2019 – 2023. We project ‘maybe one’ vocation – from all RMUs - within the next four years. In looking for future formators, this Central Administration has sent four for training and is searching for two more. "We have also tried every possibility to get local vocation coordinators, including doubling up the role (in Korea) with that of formator!" The Myanmar MU believes that there are many young men willing to join. A problem is the virtual dismantling of the education system since the Feb 2021 coup; there are no functioning universities, so it is unlikely that applicants would fulfil the entrance requirements for Manila (or most other seminaries). South America has had no intake for ten years. Oceania ‘may’ have one. So the future is rather bleak!

Before the afternoon session the Chair announced that members of the assembly had voted by a large majority NOT to change the membership of the small groups (as had been originally proposed by the organizing committee)

GROUP MEETING:

Groups were invited to reflect on **Question 4**

“What practical steps do you think are needed now to restructure the organisation and governance of Columban life and mission in a way that puts in place an authentic partnership between the ordained, lay missionaries and co-workers; that reduces demands on clerical leadership, includes lay missionaries and co-workers in leadership roles, and ensures that leaders have time to attend to future directions and not just manage the present?”

ASSEMBLY SESSION 5 Plenary

Reports from small groups to Assembly on Q4

Group 1 ● Some past efforts at streamlining were not successful, for example amalgamation into Zones about ten years ago. ● LMs as partners – we haven't enough clarity about what we are inviting them to do? ● New technologies offer new opportunities. We are not making much use of them. ● Co-workers: there is a difficulty in defining the term; different interpretations in different RMUs; are there other terms we can use?

Group 2 ● *Divergence* in the following areas: a) low energy for administration b) necessity of getting administrative structures right. ● *Convergence* in opinion that SSC structures have given us much freedom for mission. ● there should be more sharing/acceptance of responsibilities by members of Regional Councils (move in the direction of MUs). ● The employment of extern CEO when SSC talent is lacking may be necessary – but after discernment. ● There is need for clarity about the difference between official *authority structures* and unofficial *power structures* in the Society.

Group 3 ● Perhaps some outside management expertise is needed to clarify SSC structures. For example relationships in regard to ordained/LMs/co-workers. ● Basic need for strategic planning

Group 4 – ● In many respects the Columban Society is moving from 'West to East. ● We should make greater efforts to introduce people to Columbans and our charism. ● Financial matters of the Society should always be overseen by a Columban.

Group 5 – ● Could Ireland move towards a Mission Unit model? ● Transparency and good communication needed. ● Coworkers – a need to clarify how the term is interpreted in RMUs. Which Co-workers got invited to this meeting, and why?

Group 6 – ● Is there an opening for short(er)-term lay missionaries? ● More delegation by leaders, and professional advice sought more frequently would be positive. ● Hiring coworkers is a not an answer to longer term questions, it only postpones decisions.

Group 7 – ●Councillors should be elected on basis of their gifts and competence for the position.
●There is a hesitance of some priests to treat co-workers and LMs as equals. ●There is need for competent manager who has been given a clear job description, is well paid and bound to confidentiality.

Group 8 ● Partnership: Coworkers are defined by Manual of Policies and Procedures. ●Remember that LMs are also anxious about their viability. ●Society *Invitation to Mission* (SIM)– is this the way to go?
●We should look again at the *2003 Structures Report*. ●(For Ireland), is amalgamation with Britain an option? Or creating an opt-in MU structure for those within Ireland (and Britain) to join?

Group 9 ●Any kind of restructuring has to involve canon and civil law, as well as Columban culture.
●We need more clarity around the terms ‘co-worker’, ‘partnership’.

Group 10 ●Roles within leadership need to be clarified and those who fill them selected/elected accordingly. ●In electing to roles the main consideration be given to their ability to perform rather than whether they be priests, coworkers or LMs. ●The responsibility is equal for all.

Reactions of members of the Assembly to the above

●Tom O’Reilly explained the genesis of the word ‘co-worker’ in the Society. It began at the General Assembly of 2012, where two “lay professionals” were invited for a week. LMs objected to the term, suggesting that it meant LMs were ‘unprofessional’... so co-workers are professional lay people who play key roles in leadership and mission in our RMUs (See *Manual of Policies and Procedures*, no. 908). Not every employee wants to be known as a ‘co-worker’, and that should be respected. ●The *2003 Structures Report* suggested that there be an umbrella body called “Columban Mission International’ which comprised ordained, LMs (and coworkers?) – the Acts of 2018 General Assembly did mandate that Central Administration reopen an examination of this. Did it happen? (Apparently not).

●A member expressed the hope that the GA in Lima will come up with definite answers to many of the above questions.

●A member expressed the important difference between leadership and (mere) management. There is need for ‘slack’ in all organizations to leave room for creativity.

●We have lacked mentoring of ‘Companions’ around Ireland – it is particularly evident when we do a Mission Appeal in a parish; there is no one to help us. ●It is important NOT to vote for Regional Director and his Councillors just because ‘he is a nice guy.’ Maybe! but he may have no interest in or gift for leadership. Competence should be the first requirement.

[Information from Ray Husband – co-workers in Ireland are those in managerial roles and all were invited. Evelyn Maguire (Regional Bursar) is on sick leave; Ruth (Manager of Mission Office) declined to be known yet as a co-worker; Sarah McDonald (FE Editor) was also invited but was unavailable due to prior commitments].

In summing up the Chair recalled the Chilean phrase: “You have to plough with the oxen you have” – we must keep an eye on the resources at our disposal. When it comes to voting, it is usually unwise to vote in favour of propositions we don’t understand. The recurring difficulty about what ‘co-worker’ means underlies the problem of inventing terms or introducing words into our commonly used vocabulary before we have clarified what they mean. Giving the appropriate space to realism and faith is not easy. The Brazilian pastoral theologian Jose Marins used to illustrate this with the story of the man who was warned by a local council worker that a dangerous flood was on the way – leave your house quickly. His answer was ‘No, I’m a man of faith; God will take care of me.’ Not long after a man in a boat urges him on board. Same answer. As he sits on the roof with water all around a helicopter drops a basket. Same answer. As he is being swept away he cries out ‘God why did you abandon me?’ The answer from Heaven was “I sent you a messenger, a boat and a helicopter. What more did you want?”
The Carolyn Evans report says more than once “Sooner rather than later” might be a lot closer than we think.” The ethical questions of what and how we do things has often appeared in reports so far. Financial foundations, which we haven’t mentioned much, may be another one belonging to the ‘sooner’ category.

THIRD DAY. WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY:

The day began with the recitation of the *Synodal Prayer in Preparation for a General Assembly*. Participants then watched another short video from www.synodalu.org by Julian Paparella, a young married man. <https://synodalu.org/synodal-u-julian-paparella/>

The chairman commented that there was always a danger, by the third day, that people might become less involved because of tiredness. Keep at it. One of today's themes will be accountability, both at the personal and institutional level. Outsiders often comment on and admire Columbans' freedom, but this involves responsibility and accountability.

GROUP MEETING:

Groups were invited to reflect on the following questions:

Question -5. "What practical steps do you think would help to create a culture of genuine accountability, co-responsibility, and collaboration in Columban life and mission; and to best convey our passion for cross-cultural mission in ways that reflect our faith commitment and resonate with the everyday lives and faith expression of people? "

ASSEMBLY SESSION 6 Plenary

Feedback from the small groups

Group 1 ● We should not demand of others what we are not prepared to do or give ourselves. ● There is a need to create a culture of accountability for Dalgan/the Irish Region. A small number appear to have little sense of the duty of accountability. ● This accountability is about more than money; what witness is the 'non accountable' one giving? Accountable to whom and to what? It presupposes a willingness or ability of superiors and ordinary members to challenge people. ● A change worth noting is that an earlier generations of Columbans usually had some income that gave them some financial independence; they were not totally dependent on the Society; this is less common today.

Group 2. ● At annual Regional meetings, time should be given to i) a personal/social audit or duty of care (community relationships) and ii) to a Mission Audit (relatedness of mission roles). We should use the methodology of this Assembly more often. ● We have not had the opportunity to be accountable to our own histories by sharing our stories

Group 3 Younger Columbans should be urged to share about what is important to them through Zoom etc or real life encounters. ● We should be better stewards of our resources by avoiding waste (heat, light, food...) ● Clear presentation of financial reports on income and expenditure to those who should know is important.

Group 4 Synodality is a new way of being in the Society. ● More accountability and co-responsibility is needed. ● Local bursars often need to inform those in RMUs about their donations from other RMUs.

Group 5 A need for transparency about finances, especially at Regional level (Ireland/Dalgan)

● Forums for accountability: this is common in other groups, and is helpful. ● We should make greater use of new technologies such as use of Zoom etc. ● Greater involvement in personal sharing in small groups (faith and life) would help accountability. ● Talk has its use but what's needed is a greater commitment to a simpler lifestyle.

Group 6 1. Since some accountability exists the question should not have the word 'create' but another such as *develop* or *nourish*. ● Accountability is not 'blameability' – it is about being able to give an account of myself, as having co-responsible (with you) for building the Kingdom, i.e., sharing our stories, and having these recorded. ● We need to have more honesty/clarity towards donors about how we are using their donations. ● Although we have stated mission priorities younger Columbans seem to prefer 'pastoral' mission rather than going into specific areas – Interreligious dialogue, Justice and peace etc.

Group 7 – The general value of Dialogue Circles can be seen in the methodology we are using

● Mutual care like visiting the sick is a dimension of co-responsibility. ● Finding ways of sharing mission, e.g. diocesan appeals and family circles is another. Involvement in Liturgy and even 'Happy Hours'

Group 8 'Externals' such as meetings, words etc. need to be backed up by inner commitment. ●We should reflect on the gap between looser accountability practiced by some Columbans and that expected of those working in a diocese. ●What steps are available to Columban leaders in dealing with excessive individualism/lack of commitment to Columban priorities by certain members? ●Sometimes we over-emphasise that we are “not religious” as an excuse for never or seldom praying together.

●Communicating information and meeting members is an important element of accountability for leaders. ●The foundation stone of our motivation must be Christ's passion for the Kingdom ...

Group 9 Co-responsibility and accountability are key elements in a smaller and multi-cultural Society.

●This includes use of resources and lifestyle

Group 10 Communication and transparency are vital ingredients for a healthy society. ●Our accountability is both personal and group ●House (or local) Meetings are important, shouldn't be “optional” and should give space for personal sharing.

Additional reflections/responses from the assembly to the above reports

●Vocations in the English speaking countries have dried up. ●If we are looking for new candidates we should concentrate on other countries. ●The emphasis being put on personal transformation is correct; this is essential for corporate change. ●A new faithfulness to 'a synodal way' could be very healthy for us. ●Some lessons can be learned from our missionary experience. In Brazil, the group's commitment to mutual accountability kept them from that excessive individualism so prevalent in our world. In Korea, our supporters came to all our meetings; we brought our students with us on mission appeals etc – attempt to be inclusive. But things can be done at home too to 'evangelize' by telling stories. A member talked of the nieces and nephews of Owen O'Kane's putting together a most impressive exhibition on his life and imprisonment in China. Similar events could be held elsewhere because we have so many stories, and so many resources in our archives. ●One participant was unhappy with the unnecessary offence to worms, those vitally important little workers, implied by the use of 'can of worms' to describe a potentially disagreeable situation. ●Contributing to the Kingdom of God is what we are about – sometimes now we seem to be replacing it with 'synodality.' Columban Lay Missionaries have not received the appreciation they deserve in this meeting. ●Many Columbans seem to think that community means that we should live together. But Vatican II changed that to adherence to three vows (poverty, chastity, obedience) – so the primary community should be with the people with whom we celebrate the Eucharist. ●The Zoom sessions organized by the General Assembly Preparatory Committee have been inspiring and helpful for many, widening the horizons.

Final reflections by the Chair

Someone underlined that 'accountability is not blameability'- it serves mutual enrichment and harmony. We DO have a mutual duty of care, even with a busy life or in semi-retirement . John Blowick' never tired of reminding us about this. Note too what was said about our difficulty (or negligence) in challenging each other with regard to lifestyle, involvement, addiction, accountability. It is a duty that pertains to leaders, but not exclusively. (On the local level it was pointed out that Dalgan is a place where opportunities for fraternal life are plentiful, but a place where one can slide into an egocentric existence).

ASSEMBLY SESSION 7 Plenary

A report by Brian Vale, Alvaro Martinez and Sainiana Tamatawale.

This was a lengthy report from Central Administration. Their text is included as a separate document with this report. Additional input and comments 'from the floor' or responses to them are added here.

Responses and comments from Assembly members. These are individual comments - not indications of group consensus (Below the CA members are referred to as 'the panel.'

●The diversity of the membership of the Central Administration panel present today is a good sign. This report is informative report. It would have been good to have received it earlier.

- Part of the discussion centered around the Society's stated priorities and the actual practice of these. Is there a big difference in outlook between younger and older Columbans? Are younger members less interested in priorities Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation and Inter Religious Dialogue. (JPIC/IRD). Does this lack of interest also extend to '*missio ad gentes*'? (that is to be with Christians where they are persecuted, or in a minority) If that is the case, then we may have a real problem for the future in terms of our identity/viability as a cross-cultural missionary society.
- Related to the above, one might ask why our students **are** going to an institute (in Manila) where JPIC and IRD are only 'elective subjects'?
 - Another said the world in which our students have grown up largely subscribes to the "religion" of neo-liberal capitalism, so no wonder they are influenced by that as well as what they may hear in seminaries or from older Columbans.
 - The example of even a small number of committed Columbans in the field can have a big influence on younger members.
 - "Is there any openness in CA to be more flexible about mission priorities (i.e. not so tied to JPIC and IRD)?" By insisting on these we could be missing out on human need presenting in other ways and also on potential vocations of people with different abilities. Should Columbans be more free to choose priorities?
 - A member stated that younger Columbans should be given at least 10 years on mission before being asked to go into administration. He also believes that students should get a course on 'ethnic relationships'.
 - Ireland has a specific challenge – a number of younger Columbans (and not so young) in the Region take no part in it; to whom are these people accountable, and what are the consequences of it?
 - Care for the Earth has received relatively little attention. But it is a very new concept in the Catholic Church. One of the earliest mentions was the Pastoral Letter of Filipino Bishops in 1988). It is taking us a long time for us to catch up! Some spoke of their 'conversion' to a greater awareness of the issues.

Replies from the panel

- Priorities: By using this Synodal/Dialogical process we hope to shed more light on the question of our priorities. But if you have just 59 'younger' Columbans and 30 of them decide to choose their own priorities then what is the aim or charism of the SSC? We need to re-ignite the spirit of sacrifice that has long characterized our Society. "The Society is YOU; we should stop looking at others to do what we can or should be doing".
- Formation of students in Manila. The core academic demands on our students are already heavy, but the formation staff is trying hard to complement the programmes with, for example, JPIC-related pastoral placements and reflections; some of the younger Columbans are actively engaged 'abroad' with our stated priorities.
- Alvaro Martinez, who has the portfolio of communications, stressed the importance of a constant supply of stories, photos, reports and videos etc. to our magazine and social media editors - if we don't keep up this supply our 'digital footprint' will decrease rapidly, and we will lose existing and new supporters and donors immediately. Please send stories ...
- Safeguarding – it is one thing for a Region to have a good protocol, it is another thing for them to be made known widely among its membership ('create a culture of safeguarding'). We are accountable not just for what we do, but for what we don't know (e.g. not reporting a suspected breach of trust by another member).
- Mission experience In the Society we can no longer guarantee "10 years" mission experience before asking someone to take up an administrative post – but we can guarantee 10 years of uninterrupted intercultural experience in a Formation House together, most of whose residents are already out of their own country.

● Intercultural living: this is a stressful time, no less for young people. Some come from cultures where respect for the opinion of elders is very important. Others may find it difficult to get used to treating women as equals.

● At the present time, someone is doing a major study on the history of the Society in Korea. Maybe this could be replicated in Ireland? There is already a large oral history in our Irish archives”.

More questions/comments from the assembly and replies

● Will the Columban Lay Mission group (CLM) discuss a five year suspension of recruitment at their upcoming meeting? If so, does this basically include a decision to close down CLM gradually?

(Reply – because of the gravity and emotion around all these issues, that is why we are having a face-to-face meeting in Manila of all LMs, in order to discern what to do).

● Can we involve some CLMs as Formators of our students?

(Reply – Beth Sabado is involved in the Manila Formation Program and a number of LMs are on Rectors’ Councils).

● Perhaps Hong Kong is now an unsuitable place of residence for Columban leadership groups because of political changes, surveillance etc. Time to move to one of our “mission countries”? Another suggested Rome?

Reply – is China/HK not a mission country? “We have bigger issues than moving house”. “we don’t feel that Rome suits our style of living/Church”; plus, we are looking at selling the Rome house.

“What is the health of our Society finances as we look at the next five to ten years?”

Reply: we did receive a Bursar General report at last year’s IRMU; she is rightly cautious about figures being taken out of context. However, I can say that we are ‘comfortable’ for the next 2- 4 years; we need \$26 million per year to keep the Society afloat, and we have a 2-year Reserve Fund in case there is a crash. However, we are dangerously dependent on bequests, which are not predictable. We have to constantly look for new ways of fundraising, particularly digital. We continue the initiative of the last GC in producing an Annual Report which gives an overall breakdown on how we are using our funds, and this is published online. We still have ongoing work to do regarding where we invest our money.

Final Remarks

In his closing remarks, Ray Husband asked, what is God’s dream for the Church and for the Missionary Society of St Columban? We should be very grateful to God who has accompanied us and still continues to do so. We are facing many challenges, but this is part of our Columban history. We are a people of faith who are open to the Holy Spirit.

Ray thanked Alo Connaughton for his chairing of the meeting. He also thanked the Preparatory Committee of Pat O’Donoghue, Tom O’Reilly, Alo Connaughton, Angie Escarsa. (Ray himself was also a member of the Preparatory Committee). He also thanked the two Secretaries, Pat Colgan and Pat Raleigh. He expressed great appreciation for the manner in which those who attended participated in the small groups and plenary session.

Attach: CA Report

Irish Regional Convention 2024

The Convention began on Thursday morning with our customary morning prayer followed by a motivational Thought for the Day audio clip. An average of about 48 SSC members attended the sessions of the Convention.

At first sight the agenda appeared to be a complex one because of the number of proposed changes to the Constitutions and Directory. The preparatory Committee organized these into a standardized forty-page booklet to simplify reference. In what follows the proposed change to an article of the Constitutions or Directory is underlined where possible. It is in red when the original was red. In the vote for proposals this report shows those in favour and those against. As this usually accounts for almost the total (48) the rest are considered abstentions.¹

1. C.310. Proposed Change:

Members of the General Assembly GA are either “ex officio” or elected delegates. “Ex officio” members are the Superior General, all members of the Superior General’s Council, Regional Directors and Coordinators of Mission Units whose combined number of Columban Lay Missionaries and Society members is ten or more. Elected delegates are chosen as determined by the Society Directory.

If the MU Coordinator is not a member of the Society, she/he cannot presently be an “ex officio” member or elected delegate at the GA. Voting rights in elections of delegates to a GA are tied to membership of the Society, not membership of the MU. For the GA 2024, a member of the Society (Salustino) has been elected as the delegate from the Taiwan Mission Unit.

VOTE: *In favour of the change 13;. Against the change: 26. PROPOSAL IS REJECTED*

2. D.310.1 Proposed Change:

¹ Because of the packed agenda, limited time and the amount of 'coming and going' the Chair decided, in order to save counting time, to count only votes for and against - not abstentions.. Totals usually came to near 48 but it retrospect it would have been better to count abstentions. This might have helped to distinguish the uncertain from the uninterested among those who didn't vote.

The number of elected delegates to the General Assembly is fixed in principle as at least one delegate for each Region and Mission Unit. A Region or Mission Unit may elect an additional delegate if its combined number of Columban Lay Missionaries and Society members is more than forty.

All these questions are intertwined. The proposed change would mean that lay missionaries are included in calculating the number of electors in a RMU, which is contrary to the present provisions of Canon Law that restrict the calculation of the number of electors to members of the Society. ***VOTE:*** *In favour of the change: 13. Against the change: 29 Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED*

3. C.311.2 Proposed Change:

All permanent members of the Society and long term Columban Lay Missionaries are eligible for election to the General Assembly, except “ex officio” members, diocesan bishops and their equivalents in law (Can. 381 §2).

The proposed changes in C.311.2; C.311.3 and D.311.1 distinguish between *long term LMs*, who can cast a vote (active voice) and are eligible for election (passive voice) in elections for delegates to the GA, and *short term LMs* who can only vote but are not eligible for election as delegates. Again, the basic canonical distinction for participation (be it active or passive voice) in an election for a delegate to the GA is *member/non-member (of the Society)*, not ordained/lay, nor male/female, nor long-term/short-term.

VOTE: *In favour of the change: 15. Against the change: 28. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED*

4. C.311.3 Proposed Change:

All Columban Lay Missionaries and permanent and temporary members of the Society may vote for delegates to the General Assembly, except “ex officio” members of the Assembly, diocesan

Bishops and their equivalent in law (Can. 381 §2) and members covered by Cc. 228-229.

VOTE: In favour of the change 10; Against the change: 29. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED

5. D.311.1 Proposed Change:

At least nine months before the General Assembly is due to meet, the Superior General will publish for the purpose of the election of delegates to the Assembly, a list of long term Columban Lay Missionaries and Society personnel according to the Region or Mission Unit to which they are assigned. Members not assigned to a Region or Mission Unit, e.g., Central Coordinators, will be included in the Region or Mission Unit to which they were last assigned.

VOTE: In favour of the change 14; Against the change 33. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED

6. D.311.3 Proposed Change:

Not later than six months before the General Assembly, the Regional Director or Mission Unit .Coordinator or a member appointed by her/him shall preside over the election. The presider shall select two scrutineers and a secretary who shall count and record the votes. They are strictly bound in conscience not to reveal for whom a member of the Region or Mission Unit votes.

VOTE: Since there are so many interlinking and constitutional questions involved, this Assembly decided to leave further discussion and decisions to the GA.

General comment on TMU proposals re participation of LMs in the GA as “ex officio” members or elected delegates: The bigger question is what direction we want the Society to move, in order to develop partnership. The strong feeling of the

Convention is that we want partnership, but this is not necessarily the way to do it, because we will run into obstacles with Rome regarding membership of laity in clerical organizations. Some members felt that rather than continue with ‘no’ votes (which will be seen as discouraging by the TMU and CLM) we just issue a general statement of support for partnership, but recognition too that we are bound by our Constitutions.

7. C.330. Proposed Change:

The General Council will decide issues of its residence based on the exigencies of the Society’s governance and mission.

Comments/questions: One member asked whether we want individual members of the new council to be using a lot of energy in missionary work in a particular RMU, or getting on with the challenges of together leading the Society at this time of major transition for us.

VOTE: In favour of the change 23; Against the change 15. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED

8. Proposal: Delete D.330.

D.330. The Society conducts its business with the Holy See through the Procurator General who resides in Rome. The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, appoints the Procurator General.

Rationale: The Society Leader has conducted Society business directly with the Holy See since November 2020.

VOTE: Unanimous vote in favour.

9. Proposal: AMEND D 404.3

Present D.404.3

The Superior General or his Vicar and the Bursar General are members of all the boards of legal entities holding Society property. The approval of the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, is required for all decisions that are referred to in C.407.1 and C.408.

Proposed Amendment to D. 404.3.

The Superior General or his Vicar are members of all the boards of legal entities holding Society property. The approval of the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, is required for all decisions that are referred to in C.407.1 and C.408.

Rationale: The current Bursar General is not a member of the Society and this may be the norm into the future.

VOTE: Unanimous vote in favour.

10. Proposal: Replace the present C.101 in our Constitutions.

Present C.101.

The Missionary Society of St Columban is an exclusively missionary Society sent by the Church “to preach to the nations”, to proclaim and witness to the Good News in Jesus Christ of the full Christian liberation and reconciliation of all peoples.

New C.101 Article

“Our general aim as members of the missionary Society of St Columban is to give glory to God and strive for sanctification, following the charism of our founders, through our preaching of the Gospel through word and example (witness), principally to the unevangelised, where the Gospel is not yet known or recognized. We cannot ignore the fact that the original title of the Society, given by our founders, indicated that its special purpose was the preaching of the Gospel among the Chinese people. While our circumstances have changed, our specific aim is to continue reaching out to the Chinese people especially in their homeland, as well as to other peoples in Asia, such as Myanmar and Pakistan.

Our approach will be governed by sensitive listening to the Spirit speaking through peoples of other religions and cultures and our awareness of the Christian values to be found there; by awareness that wherever we go as missionaries, God has been there before us; by sensitivity to the deep longing found in all peoples for authentic human values and an authentic living witness to these values”.

Questions/comments:

The new proposal too wordy; we could simply amend C 101.1 by adding “especially to the Chinese”. Specifying our *finis specialis* may unify us. Naming China/Chinese is not meant to exclude anyone else (that is why

Myanmar/Pakistan were mentioned). Better not to name places for our mission in C.101, but rather in our Society strategic plan for a particular time. Leave explanations to the Directory. Does this connect with our alternative name of “Maynooth Mission to China”?

VOTE: In favour of the change: 14; Against the change: 21. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED

11. Proposal to change C. 314.1

Proposed Change:

‘Priests who have been permanent members of the Society for at least ten years and have experienced at least nine years on overseas mission are eligible for election to the office of Superior General or Vicar General or Councillor’.

Comment: 1. This might be better included in a Directory.

VOTE: In favour of the change 18; Against the change 20.. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED

12.Proposal to change D 206.1

- that the words “Society of St. Columban” be replaced by the words “Missionary Society of Saint Columban”.

Comments: Might belong in the Directory. Word 'missionary' not welcome in some cultures.

VOTE: In favour of the change: 8. Against the change: 33. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED

13. Proposal to Amend D. 330

Refer to voting taken on Proposal #8 above.

14. Proposal to Amend C.338

Present C. 338. “Besides his vicar, the Regional Director is assisted by at least two other Councilors. The Regional Director shall seek the advice of the Council in all serious matters.”

Proposed new text: “Besides his vicar, the Regional Director is assisted by at least one other Councillor. The Regional Director shall seek the advice of the Council in all serious matters.”

VOTE: In favour of the change: 8. Against the change: 28. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL

IS REJECTED

15. Proposal to Amend D. 405.1

Present D. 405.1. *'The General Council and each Region and Mission Unit of the Society has a Financial Council as prescribed by Can 1280. At each level it is composed of the Superior/Coordinator or his delegate, the bursar, and at least two other persons notable for their expertise in financial and legal affairs and familiar with the Spirit of the Society'.*

Proposal: - that the words "his delegate" be deleted (and replaced with a gender-sensitive term)

Comments: 1. If we vote 'yes', it seems to delete the need for an (ordained) Columban to be on the Financial Council. 2. Finance Councils appear not to have just consultative but deliberative rights, e.g. in the area of alienation of property (Clarification from CA member – with regards to alienation of property, it is the Superior General with the consent to his Council [not his Financial Council] which takes final decisions).

VOTE: *In favour of the change: 22. Against the change: 4. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED*

16. Proposal to change D.405.3.

Present D. 405.3 *'Meetings of the Financial Council are called and presided over by the respective Superior/Coordinator or his delegate'.*

According to some Mission Unit structures, the Mission Unit Coordinator can be a female lay missionary.

VOTE: *Unanimous vote in favour.*

17. Proposal to change C.410.3.

Present C 410.3 - "The Bursar discharges the duties of his office under the direction of his superior'. ,

Proposal- "The Bursar discharges the duties of the office under the direction of the Superior."

Rationale: In some RMUs, the bursar is a female lay missionary or female co-worker.

VOTE: *Unanimous vote in favour.*

18. Amend Appendix 2, Articles of Procedure #12.

Proposal - that the words "lay volunteer" be amended to read "lay missionary".

Unanimous vote in favour.

19. Amend Appendix 2, Articles of Procedure #1. It states that each "Region or Mission Unit of the Society is to establish a Board of Reconciliation ..." However, in many sections of the Articles of Procedure it only makes reference to the Region, e.g., 4 (g), 8, 11, 29. This is the same in the sections 'Dispute Involving the General Council' and 'Recourse Provided' in the Constitutions.'

VOTE: *Unanimous vote in favour of tidying up these references.*

20. Amend Appendix 3. I propose that the words "Society of St. Columban" be amended to read the "Missionary Society of Saint Columban" so it is in keeping with the language used in the Constitutions and Directory.

Comment: 1. It may be dangerous in places like Pakistan to be publically called 'Missionary Society'

There was no vote taken on this (but take note of the negative vote on Proposal #12) ; we understand that there are discrepancies in our official documents and that these should be tidied up; however there didn't seem to be a strong feeling in favour of this proposal at this meeting.

21. Proposal:

"That the Society of St Columban become a Society of men and women committed to Cross Cultural Mission."

Comment: 1. This is aspirational. Is it appropriate therefore to vote on it? It would need a lot of work on Constitutions.

An interesting outcome might be that the Society may in time become majority female!

VOTE: *In favour of the change: 9. Against the change: 21. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED*

20 Proposal: "That co-workers be listed also as Companions in Mission".

Comments: 1. When we are already unclear about who are co-workers, this will add to more confusion.

VOTE: *In favour of the change: 1. Against the change: 16. Rest are abstentions –*

PROPOSAL IS REJECTED

21. PROPOSAL – to change some phrases in Chapter 1: Nature, Purpose and Spirit

of the Society

On page 1, the second Scripture quotation (LK.4:18) could be changed to ensure gender sensitivity in relation to God/Spirit: -“The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the Good News to the Poor”.

We propose that it be changed to “The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, and has anointed me. The Spirit has sent me to bring the Good News to the Poor”.

Comments: The positive vote indicates that people favour inclusive language where possible. But there are problems with translations. For example in Spanish a masculine or feminine pronoun must be used. Some felt it was not appropriate to be voting on this?

VOTE: In favour of the change: 29 Against the change: 3 Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED (with above qualifications).

22. Section 2: C 111.2 (Spirit of the Society)

C.111.2 last two lines.....”and the annual retreat make us more aware of the mystery of God and the movements of His Spirit in our own lives and in human history”.

PROPOSAL: We propose that it be changed to “and the annual retreat make us more aware of the mystery of God and the movements of God’s Spirit in our own lives and in human history”

Please refer to vote and notes re. 21 above.

23. Chapter 2: Membership in the Society - Section 1: Admission to Membership

In C. 204.2, C.207, C.208, C.211, & C.212.1, the “**Regional Director, with the consent of his Council**” is mentioned as has having the authority to make decisions in relation to temporary members.

In the event of a temporary member being from a Mission Unit, should **the Mission Unit Coordinator and Coordinating committee** not also be mentioned alongside the Regional Director in the above five highlighted articles? For example we have temporary members (seminarians) from at least one MU, the MMU.

Comments: 1. This event is already catered for by D212 (c). Constitutionally and canonically,

only those with “ordinary’ authority (i.e. from the Constitutions, rather than from a superior which is “delegated” authority) have such rights. 2. (Clarification From CA member) – Admission to temporary membership in a Mission Unit is the responsibility of the SG, having heard the recommendation of those responsible in the Mission Unit.

VOTE: In favour of the change: 6. Against the change: 25. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED

24. Amend D 233.1

Present D233.1 reads “The Regional administration also has a responsibility for the ongoing education and formation of members”

Proposal: that it be changed to “The Regional/Mission Unit administration also has a responsibility....”

VOTE: In favour of the change: 34. Against the change: 0. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED

25. Amend D 233.2

Present D233.2 reads: “The Regional Director, with the consent of his Council, gives approval for courses of one year or less”.

Proposal: that it be changed to “The Regional Director/Mission Unit Coordinator, with the consent of his Council/Coordinating Committee, give approval for courses on one year or less

VOTE: In favour of the change: 34. Against the change: 2. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED

26. Amend C 407.2

Present C.407.2 reads, “The consent of the Regional Director is required for the acquisition by any title of immovable property or movable property to which some onus or condition is attached”.

Proposal - be changed to read: “The consent of the **Regional Director/Mission Unit Coordinator** is required...”

Comments: 1. There should be a check on such decisions by the SG, particularly if we are talking about immovable property, which can often involve big money. Even Regional Directors do not have such freedom. The Pakistan Mission Unit has misquoted C 407.2, which does NOT mention immovable property...

only movable property.

VOTE: In favour of the change: 4. Against the change: 33 Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED

27. Proposal to Change C. 313.3 (b), (c), (e). Voting Practice.

Present C313.3 reads:

C.313.3 (b) at the fifth ballot, votes can be cast only for the three persons who obtained the most votes at the fourth ballot. If after the fourth ballot more than three candidates remain because of a tied vote for third place, an election is held between the tied candidates. If a tie remains, this election is decided by seniority of aggregation, ordination or age in that order,

C.313.3 (c) at the sixth ballot, votes can be cast only for the two persons who obtained most votes at the fifth ballots. If after the fifth ballot more than two candidates remain because of a tied vote for second place, an election is held between the tied candidates. If a tie remains, this election is decided by seniority of aggregation, ordination or age in that order,

C.313.3 (e) if the seventh ballot is inconclusive, the candidate who is senior by aggregation, ordination or age, in that order, is declared elected.

Proposed Change: What is underlined above be changed to junior of aggregation, ordination or age in that order.

Comments: † One member pointed out that in Canon 119, there are only 3 ballots mentioned, so why are we going to 6 or 7? ‡ He proposed that the whole issue of number of ballots be examined at the GA.

VOTE: In favour of the change: 4. Against the change: 16. Rest are abstentions – PROPOSAL IS REJECTED

Time up?

At this point of proceedings some participants pointed out that the time allotted for the Convention was near an end. We had not yet touched on proposals/amendments etc. from page 24 to 40 of the booklet that had been prepared for the Convention. These had been presented by Fr. Joe Hargaden, a canon lawyer who had made several useful clarifications up to this point. Joe intervened to say that his proposals were not all of equal weight and he could deal with them in the time

remaining. . He also said that he agreed with some of the observations of Sr. Mary Wright, the canon lawyer invited by Central Administration to comment on all the proposals. He wished to draw the attention of the General Assembly to a number of matters; he singled out the following in his comments. (There was no comment or discussion in our Convention on the points Joe raised in his presentation).

i) Delegates might usefully discuss the present method for the evaluation of students on and after FMA. Also, the rule that a spiritual director should not (soon afterwards) be appointed to the formation staff in charge of the same students, still holds – but presents more challenges because of the decline in the availability of formators.

ii) Another item is the technicalities and canonicity of a new Society Leader being elected while the post is not yet vacant, as will be the case for a number of months in 2024. (The present Superior General's term of office extends beyond the date of the Lima General Assembly).

iii) We often use misleading language when writing/talking about decisions. It is usually incorrect to say 'The council decided ...'. The superior makes decisions with the advice of the council.

iv) Need for Columban oversight, at different levels, in the management of financial affairs.

A copy of pages 24 – 40 is attached to this report from Ireland

The Convention ended at 12.35pm with a word of thanks by Convention Chair Alo Connaughton to the participants and all who had helped.

The Regional Director, Ray Husband, spoke briefly and declared the Convention officially closed.

The submissions by Fr Joe Hargaden are included in this 'package' from Ireland.

Attach Fr. Joe Hargaden's submissions