



Continental Drift?

To the surprise of many Chapter members, the first step in the reform of our “community organization”, dealing with the competencies and the functioning of the General government, was adopted by the Chapter without any difficulty (see numbers 7 and 10 of the Chapter Diary). But this reform has a second part, dealing with the territorial reorganization of the Congregation. And here, things seem to be less easy.

Currently, our little family is organized in seven Provinces and Vice-Provinces which have considerable autonomy. A progressive reduction of the Provinces of the “old world” is accompanied by the rapid growth of those of the South, in particular in Africa, Madagascar and in Asia and, to a lesser extent, in Latin America. This demographic shift, but also the concern to decrease the weight of the structures greedy for personnel, lead us to turn to a regrouping of structures until now independent, by turning towards a continental model, which would leave us with four or five large structures.

At this point, only Europe seems ready to take the step. The Provinces of Spain and Northern Europe have indicated their assent to move, with France, towards the constitution of a single Province of Europe. But when the question arises of reuniting the two actual Provinces of Latin America (Chile-Argentina and Brazil), or the Province of Africa and the Vice-Province of Madagascar, or again, to place our communities of Asia under a single authority, serious hesitations are expressed.

To advance on the question, the Chapter Steering Committee imagined an original way of

proceeding which, at our current position, promises to produce some results. To begin with, an oratorical contest refereed by the Chapter Promoter was organized. Two or three religious “volunteers” designated or not, were invited to exchange the arguments for and against the unification, for each of the concerned continents. Then all the Chapter members were grouped by continent, the more numerous groups being subdivided in two or three to respond to the question: “Let us suppose that the Chapter is to pronounce itself in favor of the unification of our continent. Our problem would be resolved if ...”

The concerns, conditions and requests thus expressed were turned over to the Chapter commission entrusted with the communal organization. It is to present the Chapter with a document formulating orientations for each of the Continents. To be continued, in two or three days...

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