

This morning the first session of the chapter came to a close with a series of votes on various proposals (such as financial issues, the running of the international Office of Development, and the date of the follow-up session of the chapter to be held from July 5-9) and the election of the delegates to the General Chapter (delegates: John Franck, Bernard Holzer; alternates: Miguel Diaz Ayllon, Dennis Gallagher). The members of the Chapter also drafted a letter from all religious and lay participants concerning their experience at the Chapter and their wishes for future collaboration and development of the lay-religious covenant. The morning ended with an evaluation of the session. Overall, participants were quite pleased with the experience: with the fraternal, open and honest climate; the pleasant setting; the presence of new brothers; the substantial and broad discussions; the life of prayer and the rhythm of the schedule; the presence and presentations of lay partners; Fr. Richard's presence and contributions. However, there were some areas of concern: the need for more small group discussion, a more timely way to receive documents before the chapter, and more sensitivity to the question of simultaneous translation, to name a few.

The chapter concluded with a beautiful celebration of the feast of Epiphany presided by Fr. Richard, who, in his homily, spoke about the movement in the liturgy of the Christmas season from the birth of Jesus in the stable in Bethlehem to the arrival of the Magi, from the obscurity and relative privacy of an event shared by a nuclear family of three to the quite public revelation of Jesus as the Savior, from the presence of poor and rustic witnesses in the person of the shepherds to the witness of mysterious and international visitors with world-wide ramifications. Fr. Richard stated that he would like those present to take two thoughts with them: 1) to have no fear because a Light has been given to us; 2) that this Light is meant to be shared (Christianity is by its very nature missionary and shall we be). He ended by quoting Pope Leo the Great: "Be servants of the grace that wishes all people to find Christ." May we who attended this chapter be such servants.