



2015 General Chapter of the association of St. Mechildis

NEWS LETTER

Dear Prioress Generals/ Superiors/ Sisters and Friends

In this News Letter I would like to share with you about the annual meeting that was held at Imiliwaha in Tanzania on the 7th – 16th July 2015.

Attendance for this meeting was good because nearly all the Prioress Generals were present. Only the Prioress General of the Benedictine Sisters of Christ the King could not be present because of her congregational matters. There were 29 Sisters who attended and they came from Benedictines of St. Agnes, Benedictine Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, Benedictine Sisters of Oshikuku and Benedictine Sisters of Twasana. We are grateful to Mother Prioress Hilaria and Sr. Prioress Clothilde for arranging for those who needed to be fetched from Dar-Es- Salam. A minibus met the Sisters from South Africa and Namibia. It was nice to travel together in one bus.

On Wednesday the 8th of July 2015 the Executive met at 9h00 to review the Agenda and to allocate duties. At 14h30 all the members met at Subiaco Hall. Sr. Petronila opened with a prayer. Mother Hilaria Mkalawa of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Agnes welcomed all the members. The theme for the day was, BECOMING MORE ROOTED IN OUR BENEDICTINE TRADITION. Sr. Theodora Ntuli the moderator of the Association introduced all the four Prioress Generals. She expressed the joy of having the Prioress General of the Oshikuku Sisters together with her three Sisters in the meeting. Their application letter was read to the assembly. Everybody was happy to have Oshikuku back to the Association. Each Sister was invited to introduce herself to the group. After all this, Sr. Margaret Sibisi read minutes of the previous meeting. Review of the time table was done by Sr. Petronella. The purposes of our gathering were read to the group. At the end of each day we had evaluation and closing prayer. At 18h00 we had Holy Eucharist celebrated by Fr. Michael the chaplain of Imiliwaha.

On the second day Mass was celebrated by Abbot Anastasius of Peramiho. In his homily he encouraged us to stand in our two feet and be a sign of unity. Before each gathering we gave ourselves 00h45 for Lectio followed by an overview of the previous day. On Thursday the 9th of July 2015 the Theme for this day was; ROOTED IN OUR BENEDICTINE TRADITION WE STRIVE TO LIVE TRANSFORMED AND RADIANT LIVES AS WOMEN OF PRAYER. Sr. Sylvia Kilongo OSB gave us a talk on **PRAYER AND CHALLENGES OF TODAY**. In her preamble Sr.

Sylvia said, when we read Canon Law, our Holy Mother Church, puts prayer as one of the obligations and rights of a consecrated person. We owe God **adoration**, which is shown by prostrating our entire being before Him. We owe Him our **gratitude** for all His gifts and favours. We owe God **satisfaction** in the spirit of penance for our offences to His infinite majesty. We owe God **supplication** for the continuous needs of our present life, and for all that are necessary to attain our last end. She made us look at prayer in the scriptures and in the Holy Rule of St. Benedict. At the end she talked about the challenges of prayer today. She said challenges of prayer are: lack of faith, sin, idolatry, selfishness, to pray out of routine, our human relationship in community life, globalization, social communication, secularism, lack of love and forgiveness and lack of fraternal love. This talk was followed by group discussion. There were questions to be answered by each group. At the end Sisters met in their congregation to pledge as to what they are going to do to help their communities to pray better after listening to Sr. Sylvia's talk on prayer.

On Friday the 10th of July 2015 the Theme of the day was ROOTED IN OUR BENEDICTINE TRADITION WE SEEK TO WORK, THINK AND PRAY TOGETHER AS ENGLISH SPEAKING AFRICAN BENEDICTINES. (RB 3) On this day our moderator gave her four year report. After listening to the report Sisters were given a chance to ask questions and to make comments. The Constitution was read, corrected and at the end it was voted for. Financial report was given by Sr. Theodora. It was agreed that each congregation will pay R1000-00 registration fee once a year. In the afternoon we designed new letterhead that includes all five member Congregations of the Association. All Prioress Generals met together to share about how they deal with challenges they encounter in leadership. Councillors and formators met together to share about what they like about their work as councillors or formators.

On Saturday the 11th of July 2015 we were invited to witness perpetual vows of two Sisters of the community of Imiliwaha. It was a touching celebration when the two Sisters sang *sucipe* three times, we all renewed our vows to Christ silently. It was good for us coming from Southern Africa to see how African Benedictines in East Africa celebrate perpetual profession. We Africans when we celebrate we do not worry about time. After the celebration in church we all gathered into a dining hall for meals.

On the 12th of July 2015 although it was Sunday we continued with our Association meeting after Mass. The Theme for this day was, ROOTED IN OUR BENEDICTINE TRADITION, WE ARE READY TO BE GUIDED BY A NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM. We gathered in the hall at 10h30 to prepare for the election for the new leadership. We were going to elect a moderator and three councillors. Sr. Theodora reminded the group how this election was going to be done. According to the Constitution of the Association of St. Mechtildis the number of delegates per member Congregation is determined as follows: a) A congregation with members between 10 – 150 send six delegates. b) A congregation with 150 – 300 send eight delegates and c) Congregation with 300 – 1,000 send ten delegates. To be eligible for election as Association Moderator a Sister must be a Prioress General or X Prioress General with

experience. She must be one of the member Congregations. After all the explanation was done and questions regarding elections were answered, the Sisters were invited to go for tea. After tea there was time for reflection that was followed by nomination and election. Sr. Theodora Ntuli was elected as the Moderator assisted by Mother Magdalena Shetunyenga of the congregation of Oshikuku. Elected councillors are Sr. Redempta Dunguru from St. Agnes community and Sr. Christine Nujumba of the community of Oshikuku. The four elected members met to appoint two additional members, the secretary and the bursar general. Mother Caritas Swai of the Congregation of Mary Help of Christins and Sr. Sylvia Kilongo of Chipole were elected as additional members. Sr. Asteria Ndjekela of the Benedictines of Oshikuku was chosen to be the secretary and Sr. Hildegard Mthembu of the Benedictines of Twasana was appointed as the treasurer.

On the 13th July 2015 the Theme was: ROOTED IN OUR BENEDICTINE TRADITION WE LOOK TO THE NEXT FOUR YEARS. This theme helped the group to look to the way forward. Sisters went to their groups to discuss the task of the Moderator, assistant Moderator, the two councillors and additional members. Some of the things the Sisters would like to see done by the leadership team are to visit member Congregations. The Association Moderator to ask CIB Moderator that the Association of St. Mechtildis is represented in the CIB conferences. Other tasks of the leadership team are as in the Constitution.

Towards the end of our gatherings we chose the Theme for the coming year. The Sisters want to take Community Life in 2016 as their Theme. They chose Fr. Abbot President Jeremia OSB to be their invited speaker to give a talk on the above topic. We hope Abbot Jeremia will not disappoint us by not accepting to be the speaker. Next meeting will be in June or July 2016 at Ndanda in Tanzania. As soon as we know the dates for winter holidays we shall notify all the member congregations. The Association of St. Mechtildis has grown and there is hope that it will become a big tree where English speaking African Benedictines find rest.

On the 14th of July 2015 we had an outing to one of the small houses of Imiliwaha Priory. The following day the 15th of July 2015 we all rested and Oshikuku Sisters and Sisters from Ndanda left. On the 16th Sisters from South Africa were taken to Dar-Es-Salam so that they are in time for their flight on the 17th of July 2015.

Written on the 25th August 2015 by Sr. Theodora Ntuli OSB