WELCOMING REMARKS AND OPENING OF THE DELEGATES' PREPARATION SESSIONS.

Welcome to this stage of the journey on the Emmaus Road.

We begin by walking, getting to know each other, and recognizing each other as brothers. With all our cultural and ecclesial diversity, we are heirs of a Missionary Spirituality, a Spirituality of the Heart.

The disciples of Emmaus were walking from and with their realities, those they understood, and those they could not understand. They walked with their hopes, disappointments, broken expectations, and perhaps open wounds. Experiencing what they expected to happen in Jerusalem but did not happen, they chose to walk to Emmaus. Remarkably, they walked together even at that difficult moment, not allowing disappointment to separate, fragment, or divide them. This walking together made them experience the hope that Jesus brought them when He came and joined them as they were walking together. Thus, they changed their disappointment into joy.

A General Chapter is a living process, an open life system with different stages. Today we begin the pre-Chapter stage of preparation of the delegates. We come to this moment after a long journey of listening, discernment, and work, especially after the 2019 and 2021 General Conferences. This six-year process has included conversations, discernment, and listening at the community and provincial levels. Then, the respective commissions developed different means and tools to help us during this stage of the Emmaus Road.

As General Leadership, we have tried to make the last six years a time of Listening and Co-sensing (sensing as a process that is built together) throughout the MSC world. Listening and accompaniment allow us to make our Chapter process a time of Presencing (a profound time of transformative presence) and Conversion. We are on the doorstep of being able to contribute to the transformation, to the paradigm shift, and strengthening of our MSC Identity that our congregation needs so much. Let us not forget that we are here, delegated and elected by our confreres who trust and expect us to make real the transformation needed to respond to the challenges of today's world.

A General Chapter is also an opportunity to live out the participation, co-responsibility, and subsidiarity that our Constitutions strongly emphasize. We would say today is, or should be, a space of synodality. We, therefore, invite you to live these four sessions of preparation in this spirit of participation, which will lead us to co-build this journey together, co-discovering, step by step, Jesus' tender and prophetic presence. He joins us on our journey, as he did at Emmaus.

Dear confreres, Chevalier's dream was a missionary institute attentive to modern evils, attentive to the signs of the times, and ready to be with the pierced hearts that we find today in so many people who are victims of injustice and ambiguity, as well as in our Mother Earth who shows us the pierced Heart of Jesus as well. Let us make this Chapter process a living out of the prophetic and missionary inspiration Fr Chevalier had in his time.

Thus, our facilitators of this online process, Humberto and Chris, as well as those of the Chapter Gathering in September, Frances and Joe, and the staff teams and translators, will help us to make this journey of encounter, intimacy, conversion, and mission, which, as we will see in these sessions, are the movements of the Spirituality of the Heart.

Dear confreres, the ´J*erusalems*´ of today, our entities and communities, are waiting for us, in due course, to journey from Emmaus back to Jerusalem—the return journey to the gathered Community. For now, it is our responsibility and commitment to walk together towards Emmaus. There is no authentic way back to Jerusalem if we do not experience the tender and prophetic presence of Jesus on the road to Emmaus so that we can say: *Were not our hearts burning within us as we walked along the road together?* Let us live it as a living and missionary process.

Welcome, and thank you for undertaking this challenge for the sake and the future of the MSC Mission.

Thank you.