

# General Chapter Opening Ritual

Calgary, Canada  
Montag, 14-Okt-19



The opening day of the Chapter, 13th October, was composed of a number of beautiful moments, each of them highly significant in their own right. At the beginning of the day [Chantal Chagnon Greyeyes](#), a Cree Ojibwe Métis singer led an [acknowledgment of the land](#) before welcoming the sisters into a circle of relationship through song and drumming. ([More...](#))

The group then moved into a prayer ritual that opened the Chapter. You can read below the text of the prayer. [Sr Claire Sykes fcJ, General Superior addressed the delegates](#) in words both inspiring and moving before formally opening [the 2019 General Chapter](#). ([More...](#))

Having completed some necessary formalities the delegates then spent time formulating the values that they want to embody during the Chapter.

## Opening Prayer Ritual

As we prepare to enter our General Chapter we have received the welcome of our ancestors, the First Nations who lived on this land, the traditional territories of the Nitsitapi – Blackfoot – people. Taking this blessing and the offering each one has made in the pre-Chapter retreat when we prayed the *Suscipe – Take, Lord, and receive...*, we now offer ourselves again in song and dance as we sing

*I am – that I am has sent me to this now moment  
Here I am to be the voice and to be the heart  
through which Heaven is made known on earth*

This offering is responding to God's call as God listens to the cry of the people in the Book of Exodus (3:7,9,11,12)

*And God said: 'I have seen the miserable state of my people. I have heard their appeal to be free. And now the cry of the children of Israel has come to me and I have seen their oppression. So come, I send you to free my people.... I shall be with you. I am who I am is sending you...'*

In our sacred space we have placed a jug with water from different parts of the world where the Society is on mission. Ten sisters will now come forward, read a prayer of intercession, articulating the cries of our time. They will then pour some water into the basin – reminding us of the thirst of Christ in our world. After each action we will sing *We are thirsting, we are thirsting*.





*Alongside people longing for peace and reconciliation, we are thirsting, we are thirsting.  
Alongside asylum seekers and refugees...  
Alongside workers longing for a living wage...  
Alongside people striving for inter-religious dialogue...  
Alongside people who are working to speak across political, economic and religious divides...  
Alongside people living with political instability...  
Alongside the victims of injustice...  
Alongside people who are victims of human trafficking and sexual abuse...  
Alongside students and young people longing for accompaniment...*

*Alongside indigenous people...*

[Marie Madeleine](#) in responding to the Thirst of Christ was led by God to found the Society of the Faithful Companions of Jesus – [200 years ago](#). We will now listen to her story as recorded in the *History of the Constitutions* (pg. 133)

*Marie Madeleine wanted to make it crystal clear that the foundation of the Society and its subsequent development was that the foundation of the Society was not her work but God's alone; her role was (to borrow Sister Patricia Grogan's words) to be God's faithful instrument. She could have said, quite simply, that God did everything himself, and that is the way we often translate her words into English. But in her mother tongue, she chose to say that God, le bon Dieu, led her; carried her through the rough times and the smooth as she followed her call to found the Society. The French verb 'conduire' means to lead, to guide, to direct, but it also holds other nuances that include to 'shepherd', to accompany, to counsel, to drive forward. When writing the Memoirs, she knew she needed to use a word that would have a considerable breadth of meaning, for the rough times, what she called 'les adversités' had not been lacking in the early years. When we turn to le bon Dieu, when we entrust our lives to God's providence as Marie Madeleine plainly did, do we touch the hand of the eternal?*



In response to the reading, we now invite each person to dip your hands in the water that has been poured into the basin, to symbolise our desire to entrust this Chapter to God. While we are doing this, we will sing:

*Le Bon Dieu a tout conduit lui-même  
Le Bon Dieu conduit tout avec nous.  
God has done everything.  
God is doing everything with us*

Let us listen to Gospel of John (19:25-28), reminding us that Marie Madeleine – and each one of us today are not alone in responding to God's thirst:

*Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother 'Woman this is your son. Then to the disciple he said 'This is your mother'. And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home. After this Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, and to fulfil the Scripture perfectly he said: 'I am thirsty'.*

We now take a moment of silent prayer

- for all our desires,
- for all our sisters at home,
- for the grace and courage to listen to God's call to us now.

Prayer for Sr Claire, and Our Lady's Blessing

Let us now stand, and where possible hold hands, as we bring all our prayers to God – as each person prays the Our Father in her own language.

Concluding prayer

*Provident God, we stand before you as we begin our FCJ General Chapter. Trusting in you, our Bon Dieu, we pray for a free spirit and a discerning love. May the dreams you placed in the heart of Marie Madeleine, two hundred years ago, come ever more alive in the hearts of your faithful companions.*

*Lead us to springs of living water; inspiring us to respond generously to your thirsting world. Strengthen our bond of union with you and with one another; give us the grace to live and work together as friends in the Lord. Walk with us through the coming days so that we may live this Chapter with fidelity and joy. We make our prayer through your Son Jesus, our ever-faithful Companion. Amen.*

## Final Hymn – God of Abraham

*God of Abraham, lead us, lead us to your kingdom, into fruitfulness, lead us, lead us together; lead us to freedom.*

*God of Sarah be with us, lead us to your kingdom. Through our laughter and labour, lead us together; lead us to freedom.*

...

*God of Mary be with us, lead us to your kingdom. Into trusting you lead us, lead us together; lead us to freedom.*

*God of Marie Madeleine lead us, lead us to your kingdom, into faithfulness, lead us,...*

*God of Marie Madeleine, lead us, lead us to your kingdom, in our thirsting world, lead us,...*

*God of Jesus Christ lead us, lead us, lead us to your kingdom, into your new creation lead us,...*

*Lead us now and for ever; lead us to your kingdom, give us now a new future, lead us together; lead us to freedom. Lead us to freedom now.*

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

More on our General Chapter on the [Chapter News page](#) and on social media [#FCJChapter2019](#).



**“ Unsere kleine Gemeinschaft hat das Ziel, mit allen Mitteln ihrer Macht das Herz Jesus zu ehren. ”**

*Marie Madeleine d'Houët*

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## Treue Gefährtinnen Jesu

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