Dear Sisters,

Taking up again the theme of Religious Intolerance and Unbelief this month, I have some questions with which I want to develop this reflection.

The first one has to do with a temptation that we have, sometimes, in our pastoral work, which causes us to be satisfied with those who have come to the meetings that we programmed because they knew they were invited. People we know, Christians who often participate in the activities of the Church and who already belong to the Christian community. In the face of this, Pope Francis has a special challenge when he speaks of a Church reaching out. A Church that is not content with those who have already been evangelized and who must join in the missionary task and mission of the disciples. A Church that does not wait for those who come, but goes out to look for those who have not come. Let it go to the places where people are, to those who are not motivated by Jesus Christ, or who do not know him. The Church is missionary or it is not the Church of Jesus Christ, the Pope has repeated so many times.
The question that we must ask ourselves, in order to respond faithfully to the pastoral priority of the Apostolic Plan of the Congregation, is if our missionary spirit is being constantly nourished; if apostolic zeal is alive in each Territory, in each community and in each sister; if our heart vibrates with the mission that we have in this age and situation, in this service and apostolate, in this moment and in this reality. Pope Francis is clear when he says that a Church that is reaching out demands a constant missionary conversion... And each one must take care of this missionary attitude in her own life, keeping the flame of evangelization burning in every time and place, or as St. Paul says to Timothy, “in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2).

Another question that comes to mind is how we prepare for dialogue. A phrase of the theologian Hans Küng can serve to strengthen our belief in the importance of interreligious dialogue. “There will be no peace between nations without peace between religions. There will be no peace between religions without dialogue between religions”. If both unbelief and religious intolerance challenge us, we must be prepared to dialogue with people of different spiritual traditions, and with those who embrace none. Pope Francis, in continuity with the Second Vatican Council, does not cease to insist on this: in a pluralistic world like ours, he has said that “the Church is the servant of dialogue”.

The dialogue of which we speak is a relatively new challenge in the Church and one that requires adequate formation. Neither ambiguity in one's own convictions, nor the concealment of one's identity, nor conciliatory attempts that can lead to certain fading syncretisms, help true dialogue. All of us, believers and non-believers alike, always seek the truth. Authentic dialogue, respectful and humble, enriches us, because it makes us grow in a better understanding of the Word and of revealed truth.

Initial and Ongoing Formation will have to help us during this time to prepare ourselves for fruitful dialogue, missionary dialogue, dialogue that builds peace and communion.

*Patricia Villarroel Garay, ss.cc.*  
Superior General
Sharing with the Congregation

NEWS OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Formation in ss.cc. Spirituality
One of the aspects that the general governments of the Sisters and Brothers have worked on with great commitment is that of ss.cc. Spirituality. In the course of this reflection, the initiative to form people emerged so that they can approach the charismatic sources in a special way and be a support and resource for this service to the Congregation.

For this purpose, the General Government of the sisters has asked Sagaya Rani Samynathan, from India and Ana Lucia Gonzalez, from Colombia, to undertake this formation. They have generously agreed to do so. France, the cradle of the Congregation, will be the country that will welcome them. They will study French so that they can then go into the original documents of the Congregation and study its history and spirituality in depth. Ana Lucia will arrive in France at the end of January and Sagaya during the month of March.

ACTIVITIES OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)
Last Wednesday, January 8, the JPIC Commission held its first meeting of the year at the UISG headquarters, with the participation of Margarita Orozco on behalf of the General Government. The reflection revolved around the Message of Pope Francis for the celebration of the 53rd World Day of Peace, January 1, 2020. Five words were the key to the analysis: Hope, Memory, Listening, Reconciliation, Ecological Conversion.

We shared possible simple but concrete commitments that can be carried out in communities and congregations for each of the five points contained in the document. Some of them are:

- Sowing hope even in places or situations where obstacles seem insurmountable;
- Keeping memory alive, not only to avoid repeating history but also to form the root of decisions in favour of peace;
- Promote the culture of encounter that breaks with the culture of threat;
- Insist on the path of ecological conversion by appropriating five words: Recover, Reuse, Recycle, Reduce, Reject.

ACTIVITIES OF AURELIA COMMUNITY

Christmas celebration with immigrant women at the CPR in Ponte Galeria (Rome)
As in other years, some sisters from the General Community went to celebrate Christmas with the women of the Ponte Galeria Detention and Expulsion Centre. The following is the testimony of Sister Eugenia Bonetti, coordinator of the group.

“Mary gave birth to her first-born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and put him in a manger, because there was no room for them at the Inn”.

Mary gave birth to her first-born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and put him in a manger, because there was no room for them at the Inn.”
As every year, on the Saturday before Christmas, the international group of Sisters belonging to different Religious Institutes and from different countries went to bring the happy proclamation of the birth of Jesus to “our women” locked up in the Centre of internment and expulsion in Ponte Galeria.

In this context and in this situation, how can we not remember the words of the Evangelist Luke who speaks to us of a rejected God, of a God born in a stable because there was no room for them in the inn? The stable is the 'house' where God chooses to be born and, in this same 'stable' is the place where each one of us is invited to contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. How can we not remember so many places in the world that still welcome Jesus in simplicity and poverty today? How can we not think that, in a symbolic way, this stable could have been the Centre at Ponte Galeria also this year?

In this place, surrounded by so much exterior silence, we have "touched with our hands / realized" that God is not ashamed of man's lowliness; we have seen how he stoops down to what, in the eyes of the world is considered despicable; that nothing and no one escapes God; in fact, he never loses sight of what man /woman easily consider insignificant, unworthy, despicable, small, lost, discarded.

Maybe someone is wondering if all the women here are Christians. Some are, but most are not; they profess another faith. Nevertheless, all the women were present at this time of prayer and celebration because Christmas is a time that unites hearts, a time in which what separates has been healed by the presence of God who in Jesus became Man for all of us and for each one of us in particular.

After preparing a warm and welcoming place, as Joseph and Mary would have done in the stable where Jesus was to be born, we began our ecumenical prayer meeting at Christmas time, evoking, through song, prayer and reflection, the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God.

We also united in a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the gift of redemption, offered to the whole world. During the celebration, many of the women had tears in their eyes, while Monsignor Gian Piero Palmieri, auxiliary bishop of East Rome, blessed the statuettes of the Child Jesus.

Despite consumerism that has been created and develops around Christmas, when one is away from family and home and lives in places like these, Christmas regains its true meaning, where the heart opens up and knows how to welcome God's presence. This is what we read on the faces of these women when each one opened her hands to welcome the little baby Jesus. I would say that this moment was the central moment of our prayer and of our presence: to bring Jesus and to say once again that God loves them and does not forget any of them! This is how our women welcomed
him because, as they looked at the Child Jesus, in their faces you could see attentive glances full of silence, with tears of trust and hope, an attitude of confident surrender and abandonment to Him who can do everything.

We hope that this Christmas also the experience of the presence of God, made man in Jesus, will make us more and more available to choose the options that will make us closer to the little ones and the poor, loving what is lost, considering the insignificant, the marginalized, the weak, in the certainty that love overcomes indifference because "God has chosen what is foolish in the world to confound the wise". "God is not ashamed of man's lowliness but enters into it and turns his gaze to those from whom men and women are accustomed to push him aside. (D. Bonhoeffer).

The indelible memory of a special day remains in our hearts, a day marked by the meeting of so many different faces and so many sorrowful faces and broken hearts.

Sincere thanks and best wishes to all the Congregations to which the Sisters from various countries belong, who every Saturday open the doors of this place of suffering to let in a ray of sunshine and communion.

Sr. Michaela Balaucă and Sra. Eugenia Bonetti

OTHER NEWS

ZONE EUROPE – AFRICA

TERRITORY OF AFRICA: TESTIMONY

“Religious Unbelief and Intolerance”
Since time immemorial, Africa in general and in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been a land of religious tolerance, traditions and wisdom. It has also been renowned for its philosophy, and receptivity to diverse religions, such as Christianity, Islam, African churches and religions...

Over time, religious harmony has been an authentic mark of African tradition. All these religions coexist in a perfect way, and the Congolese population is growing as a nation and as a people, despite their differences in religion. Christianity, which is a religion with more members, is a religion of tolerance, as are its followers. But, by force of circumstance, the situation has changed. Religious unbelief and intolerance are becoming more and more noticeable because of the poverty caused by wars that affect the political, social and economic situation of the country. More and more, the Congolese people are immersed in unbelief, wanting to see their situation change. The
need for God is no longer felt when they do not find a solution to their problems. They turn to God not because they believe but because they want to see a miracle happen. We are witnessing practices such as the sciences in cults or exoteric practices that make promises of happiness without suffering.

We are witnessing a kind of reappearance of certain African religions or churches that target Christians in general and followers of the Catholic Church in particular. These factors which have contributed, directly or indirectly, to religious unbelief and intolerance now call for a change that is needed: in our attitude, in our reflection, as well as in our charism. In the face of all this, we need to move from the conversion of souls to that of persons. It is well known that one of the stumbling blocks to a relationship with other religions remains the understanding of salvation. The early missionaries were convinced that there was no salvation outside the Church, but now the Second Vatican Council recognizes the universal saving will of God (Lumen Gentium, 16). It is because of this same will that the works of God are to be found in other religions. We can see this in the ways of behaviour and life of the people, also in the precepts and teachings of religions. The conciliar declaration Nostra Aetate perceives the floundering of a ray of truth; that is, of Christ who enlightens us.

The document published jointly by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, recalls, once again, the thinking of the Second Vatican Council that it is possible that through divine providence people belonging to different religions, through various religious efforts, may attain salvation (Second Vatican Council, Ad Gentes, 3 and Lumen Gentium, 16). In terms of challenges, we underline here the importance of dialogue as a mission, of salvation as a mission, and above all of the visibility of our charism through the witness of our life.

Dialogue as mission
Taking into consideration the pluralistic context in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in the light of Vatican II, we need to rethink our mission. In a pluralist context, inter-religious dialogue is part of the evangelizing mission of the Church. Moreover, the Council invites dialogue with non-Christian religions. Dialogue has its roots in the very concept of religion, which is a dialogue between man and God (cf Paul VI, ES,70). It follows that dialogue should be a mission for every religion, for every member of our religious family. In short, of the Catholic Church. This dialogue should always aim at mutual respect and understanding. Dialogue is therefore one of the means by which we can reach out to non-believers. As a body we must "work on evangelical attitudes which give meaning to our fraternity, taking special care of dialogue, good conduct, mutual appreciation" without forgetting prayer and social works (charity and solidarity). In short, to be the voice of the voiceless.

The Kingdom as mission
Firstly we cannot identify the Kingdom of God with the Church, because it is greater. The Church is a sign of the Kingdom. The Kingdom we are talking about here is not simply an earthly reality.
That is why we must make efforts for the realization of the Kingdom in human society, its full coming must be eschatological within/beyond history. Through dialogue we recognize the presence of the Kingdom in other religions and in every member of our religious family. It is therefore a question of building a society based on the values of justice, love and truth. We must, in fact, establish a community of communion and fraternity. We must therefore work together against all inhuman structures, to have a just society envisioned by the Kingdom of God. We are convinced, therefore, that our Charism which has as its mission to "contemplate, live and proclaim to the world the Love of God incarnate in Jesus" (cf Const,ch I, §2). We can promote the need for God and religious tolerance as members of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar only by becoming witnesses of the love that springs from the hearts of Jesus and Mary. It is therefore a challenge for us: "to live the dynamism of the Saviour's Love and to be filled with Zeal for our Mission".

We have come to the end of our reflection which has shown us that in the face of religious unbelief and intolerance, we have the duty to make present the Kingdom of God by working for the transformation of the human heart and by striving to be artisans of communion in the world. In solidarity with the poor, we will continue to work for a just and reconciled society: through sensitization and formation in integral ecology that implies a simple lifestyle and committing ourselves to concrete actions, being more attentive to the use of resources, recycling and the adequate use of goods in each community and each work; discerning as a Territory, community or personally, on the possibility of responding to current needs, according to the priorities indicated by the General Chapter; by promoting the education of pupils in interiority, going deeper and contact with the realities of marginalization, making our centres spaces that make possible the experience of God; becoming more and more women who work for the advancement of women; participating in actions to fight for justice and dignity, together with other organizations; drawing up lines of prevention and protection for minors and vulnerable persons, put into practice according to the reality of our Territory or Country.

Olga Lumbidi, ss.cc. (R.D. Congo)

**TERRITORY OF ESPAÑA: TESTIMONY**

The situational context outlined in the Introduction to the Apostolic Plan of the Congregation (PAC) includes the questions posed by our current reality and names five areas that the last General Chapter, with the participation of all the Sisters of the Congregation, has agreed upon and prioritized.

Among these priorities is the religious phenomenon that is manifested in an ever-greater religious indifference and unbelief, which substitutes God and the sacred for the apparent security of science, technology and self-centeredness. There is also a fundamentalism based on ways of understanding and living what is religious with fanaticism and radicalism which comes shows itself in attitudes and gestures that are imposed without respect for differences and dialogue with other ways of seeing and thinking, those who are being persecuted, massacred and annihilated in an inhumane manner.

The call of Pope Francis to **pastoral and missionary conversion** urges us to live and to put into practice new ways of offering the Charism received to situations that, at the present time, need to be repaired and healed.
CAP also invites us to “seek with zeal new ways of announcing God's love and to generate spaces of communion, reconciliation, reparation”... that respond to the challenges that today's world throws at us.

Making the Charism real always involves: “CONTEMPLATING, LIVING AND PROCLAIMING THE LOVE OF GOD MANIFESTED IN CHRIST, JESUS”, listening to the urgencies that characterize the different stages of history and humanity and that are not in accordance with God's Plan.

“In a world of intolerance and exclusion, our open, welcoming and flexible communities, with their diversity of ages, cultures and nationalities, give a witness of international communion. Attentive to the Word of God and faithful to the Eucharist, we revitalize reparatory adoration for the life of the world this makes us grow in availability for the mission”.

Personally and communally we have to renew the practice of contemplation and our contemplative outlook towards humanity and reality. To see as God sees. The great challenge is the ability to continue 'seeing God' with the eyes of faith in a world that ignores his presence.

To live with attitudes of tolerance, dialogue, mutual respect, acceptance of differences among us in the environment and situations where we are. For this we need to be always trying to overcome our egocentrism, self-centeredness as Pope Francis says, and to enter into harmony with ourselves, with the other members of the great human family and with Creation.

To proclaim: “Our Consecration calls us to live the dynamism of the Saviour's Love and fills us with zeal for our mission”. The new face of the Congregation calls us to be more and more part of intercultural, international and intergenerational environments. The living out of the “inter” is a challenge that has never been fully met and needs the constant support of ascetics and mystics, putting into practice the attitudes, feelings and choices of Jesus and witnessing to them with gestures of inclusion, welcome, compassion, active respect...

The areas in which we carry out the mission also offer us opportunities to encounter what is different: How many of our tasks are carried out with people of different cultures, religions, mentalities and how much richness is discovered and put in common? “For God's Reign to be present, we seek the transformation of the human heart and seek to be agents of communion in the world” (Const. 6).

“We all desire peace; many people build it every day with small gestures; many suffer and patiently endure the fatigue of trying to build it up” (Pope Francis, Bethlehem 25 May 2014).

Lets walk in that direction!

Lourdes Fernández Loeches, ss.cc.
As a child I lived in a region of France where we were born Breton and Catholic, it was Christian practice that shaped consciences and mentalities, that permeated and unified all dimensions of family, religious, moral, social and even political life. Today, Christianity is still present in France, but unbelief and religious indifference are growing and at the same time multiple currents of thought and religions, particularly Islam, are coexisting.

We are in a secular country that does not recognize any religion but where freedom of worship is recognized and therefore "No one should be concerned about his/her choices, even religious ones, provided that their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law." (Art 10 Declaration of Human Rights). It is therefore possible to live religious tolerance, to respect believers of whatever kind. However, in the course of our history this has not always been the case, let us remember only the revolutionary period which led to Henriette Aymer being imprisoned for having hidden a priest and to Pierre Coudrin being ordained a priest in secret, outside his diocese without a bishop, on the 4th of March 1792 and, immediately after his first Mass, to live hidden in the attic of the Motte d'Usseau and to dare to go out to proclaim the Gospel at the risk of his life. Let us not forget that 84 sisters and 11 brothers were imprisoned during the Paris Commune, 4 of whom were executed. Closer to us are our brothers martyred for the faith in Spain in 1936 and beatified in 2015. And many others, even today the list has grown longer with the assassination in 2019 of Brother Landry in Mozambique.

From the beginning and throughout its history, the Congregation has experienced hatred towards the faith and religious intolerance and this, far from hindering its missionary daring, has rather strengthened it in its zeal to proclaim the Gospel. At present in France and in Europe the Church is not confronted violently with intolerance but insidiously by slander and more or less insidious criticism, especially on social networks. We are witnesses through the media of intolerance which is manifested everywhere in the world by terrorist attacks, violent Islamism, anti-Christian persecutions, arbitrary arrests, racist acts, discrimination, attacks and desecration of places of worship and cemeteries.

In community we can read newspapers and some magazines that make us aware of persecuted Christians, especially Iraqis, Syrians and other Middle Eastern countries. We know the fear that our sisters in India experience when Hindu nationalisms persecute Christians and demolish their churches. We take all this into our prayer of adoration especially our elderly sisters. Sisters are informed by the ACAT magazine of the persecution and torture of certain victims entrusted to their prayers. A sister from Picpus is involved in literacy work with Muslim and sometimes Christian refugees who have suffered religious or political persecution in their country of origin. To welcome them in their distress and poverty, to help them in their difficult journey of integration and to pray for them, does not this already show them compassion and the light of the Good News of Christ?
Europe is increasingly populated by Muslims. We meet them every day on the construction sites of Picpus and Poitiers. In our communities and our houses for the elderly in Poitiers and Mende we have more and more personnel from the Muslim religion who create bonds of friendship with the sisters as these two photos illustrate (Sr. Thérèse and Alexise, Sr. Hortense Marie and Kala). In our primary school in Boissy there is a good proportion of Muslim pupils and their parents are involved in the school in the same way as other parents, Christian or not. These simple exchanges allow us to get to know each other and to respect and appreciate each other in our different rites and our respective convictions, especially during the holidays and Ramadan.

I believe that these simple and open relationships are within the reach of each one of us, it is also a way of evangelizing each other and the best way to fight intolerance and to build “a just and reconciled society” (Constitutions 6).

As disciples of Jesus first and foremost and as Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary we are called to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God in a world marked by religious intolerance and unbelief. This is truly a great challenge for pastoral ministry and sometimes, under the pretext of respect, we lack the faith and spiritual boldness to dare a word or an action. We do not really know how to do it. Perhaps we could find out what the Church offers in our dioceses as formation and meetings to promote dialogue with other believers. The challenge for us in Europe is to become more aware and, if possible, to form ourselves and take our part in inter-religious dialogue, especially Islamic-Christian dialogue, the two most represented religions, because "our reparatory vocation challenges us to collaborate with all those who, animated by the Spirit; work to build a world of justice and Love, a sign of the Kingdom. (Constitutions N°4)."

Sr M. Gabrielle Renou, ss.cc. (Poitiers – France)

LATIN AMERICAN ZONE

TERRITORY OF PERU-BRASIL-MEXICO-BOLIVIA: ANNUAL RETREAT

This image is reminiscent of the what this year’s retreat has been for me, for from beginning to end I experienced it as a great gesture of God’s Tenderness.

The theme of the retreat was an invitation to prepare oneself to encounter Mercy, “Forgiveness, generator of Life”, the guidelines of our sister Goyi Marin favoured the spaces of intimacy with God; the silence of the sisters, the pleasant temperature of the city, the simplicity of the priest who celebrated Mass, the liturgy prepared in detail, everything as a whole was a welcoming embrace.
The image accompanied us every morning, every afternoon. I looked at it while listening to Goyi’s insights. I saw arms that welcomed, a breast that is protective, a lap that cradles. I perceived the rhythm of a heart that is calm, like God the Father-Mother who invites me to enter into myself to be calm, to stop, to listen to Him.

The texts and the questions proposed for personal reflection helped me to become aware of my fragility, of my vulnerability. I felt the need to be healed. I let myself be wrapped by God the Father-Mother, in whose arms are also my Sisters in the Community, my Sisters in the Congregation with whom I celebrate adoration, deep communion.

We are loved, we are sent like Damien of Molokai and like so many sisters and brothers who experience God’s mercy have become caught up in the tender and compassionate embrace, full of redeeming love.

Laura Isabel Morales, ss.cc. (Mexico)

PACIFIC-U.S.A. – ASIA ZONE

TERRITORY OF ASIA: TESTIMONY

Sharing experiences
Community of ss.cc. Sisters Bandung Indonesia is domiciled around Muslim society. Three years and six months I worked to serve the children in our Paud, namely the Holy Heart, the number of students consisting of more Muslim, Christian and Catholic families. But his children were more of a Muslim family than Christians and Catholics. Many of my experiences come into contact with them. Every year in the admission of new students almost 60 percent of students of the Sacred Heart of Islam and the rest of students who are Catholics and Christians or Protestants. We work together in many ways. We involve parents in the cleanliness of the classroom and school location, cooking food for the children of Paud. They are also involved in the celebration of Indonesian independence, the day of Mother Kartini Women’s education and Valentines Day.

Each year the sisters’ community of Henriette Bandung held creativity for the school children who were Muslims during the fasting month. The activity is called Ngabuburit. They wait and spend time before breaking the fast with the family. It is called Ngabuburit, spending time before Iftar. Ngabuburit lasts for a week and ends with Iftar together at the Susteran. Children get religious teaching from a Muslim-based coach. The event ends with a meal...
with the children. In addition, we held a BAZAR before Eid is selling food and other goods at a cheap price. The goal is to help the community around especially for those who cannot afford it in finance.

I am currently working in Bandung Diocese since June 2019. In this diocese it is very open to conduct activities for children of play group age until elementary School of various religions. Activities: Watching children's education movies, introducing plants and inviting them to plant vegetables. After that the children drink sweet tea together. Children are taught to realize and feel the presence of the Lord through the crops and drinks presented to them.

_Morta Sihite, ss.cc. (Indonesia)_

### Agenda of the General Government

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<td>Retreat Sisters of Ecuador – Aurora Laguarda</td>
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<td>February 5 – 10</td>
<td>Asian Mision Seminar – Margarita Orozco</td>
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<td>Assembly and visit to the communities of India. Margarita Orozco</td>
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<td>Learning Languages – Aurora</td>
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<td>March 10</td>
<td>Canonical visit to the Territory of Africa – Patricia and Goyi</td>
<td>Mozambique RD Congo</td>
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<td>Pacificco/USA – Asia Zonal Assembly – Aurora</td>
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<td>March 20</td>
<td>Days of reflections General Governments Sisters and Brothers.</td>
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### Chronica Congregationis

#### JUBILEES

**JANUARY**

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MONTECINO Marta Amelia 24/02/1995 Silver Chile/Para

MARCH
FLORES Teresa 25/03/1995 Silver Pr/Br/Mx/Bol

**In Memoriam**

LAZO Luisa Mercedes 31/12/2019 Guayaquil Ecuador
PERREÑO Marfa Odilia 12/01/2020 Quito Ecuador

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**REMEMBER THIS IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION:**
INFO NO. 69 WILL BE PUBLISHED IN MARCH

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