



Report to the Laity

Advent/Christmas

December 2022

I send greetings to all members of our Family on behalf of the International Council. We are such a diverse group reflecting many cultures and continents, languages and skin colours, all connected through our hearts. The International Council uses the phrase 'Heartbonded' to describe this connection between us all.

We hope that this mailout will not languish in your inbox but will be shared and read by as many members as possible. There is always a Report on our activities and a letter. This year the letter has been written by Peter Cheong from Korea, and we hope that you will use it in your preparation for Christmas and as a reflective activity for your groups and for yourself.

As I write this Report, the world is struggling with so many serious issues:

The war in Ukraine continues to affect the people in Ukraine and Russia directly, but also people in many other places who are experiencing gas and food shortages as a result of the conflict. The food shortages are particularly affecting people in our member countries in Africa, and the limited gas supplies will affect the people in Europe this winter.

We pray for an end to the hostilities and for the peace that came with the baby in the manger to spread through the hearts and minds of all people.

The COP Conference is underway in Egypt, with a major discussion item being the creation of a loss and damage fund so rich countries can support those poorer countries who are being directly affected by climate change. Those most seriously affected at present live on tiny islands in the Pacific Ocean. It was to this part of the world that Fr Chevalier sent his first missionaries, and there are many Chevalier Family members in this region whose homes and livelihoods are at risk.

We pray that a spirit of generosity and a recognition that we are responsible for each other may come with the baby in the manger and spread through the hearts and minds of all the world.

Our young people are struggling. They live in a digital world that is not always healthy for them, and COVID is still impacting their lives in many ways. We recognise the impacts of isolation and disrupted learning for our young people. In many of the rich countries, wealth is increasingly being concentrated in the hands of a few, stealing away from the young easy access to education, homes and travel that may once have been considered normal. In poorer countries, unequal access to education and the world's resources means the young never have a chance to thrive.

We pray that we never forget the rights of the young in every country to access education, a home, a job, and a life with meaning and purpose. May the baby in the manger remind us that all hearts are connected and that what happens to one of us happens to all of us.

For all the other ills of our world, we pray this Christmas:

Sacred Heart of Jesus, we place our trust in you.

New Appointments to the International Council

Since we last reported to you, we have made some important new appointments to the International Council.

As you know, Fr Hans has decided to retire from his role as Spiritual Companion to the International Council. He has been an extraordinary Companion, and we will miss him dearly. There will be a more formal thanks in the next edition of Encounter of Hearts and at the Assembly. The International Council, on your behalf, was invited by the Trigeneralate to prayerfully discern the name of the person we wished to suggest to succeed Fr Hans. We have submitted some names to the Trigeneralate for their consideration. We, in the Chevalier Family, are so fortunate to belong to a part of the Church that understands synodality and is true to the vision of the Founder regarding the central place of the laity in the mission. The process was transparent and respectful and demonstrated, in more than words, the importance with which the three Professed branches view the movement of the laity. In due course, we will announce the name of Fr Hans' successor.

We have also appointed two new people to Council, who we are calling Regional Coordinators. This role will primarily involve preparing all member countries to participate in the Assembly of Laity. This preparation during next year will allow all members to discuss and decide on the important decisions of the Assembly. You will all hear more from these people next year. Their names are Olguita Garcia Ocampo from Peru and Chris McDermott from Australia.

This is a short introduction to Chris:



I was born in 1958 in an Australian town called Goulburn in the state of NSW – about 3hrs south of Sydney.

When I left school, I trained to be a teacher of Mathematics whilst also exploring my faith position, having been raised in an Anglican family.

I commenced my teaching career in state-owned schools in some of the poorer areas of Sydney and Wollongong.

My faith journey led me to Catholic schools – still in the poorer areas, and after working in these schools, I eventually decided I wanted to join the Catholic Church.

My journey after that saw me leading three different Catholic schools as Principal across a 24-year period, with the last school being Chevalier College – a school owned and conducted by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and where I spent 15 wonderful years.

It was here I found and became committed to the way of being catholic that was shown by Fr Jules Chevalier and those who followed him.

I was fortunate to be invited to join the Australian National Council of the Laity of the Chevalier Family, and as I move into retirement from the role of Principal, I look forward to working with others in the international arena, as well as nationally, in Australia. I am hopeful that my small contribution remains true to the words of Fr Jules when he wrote, “*it is by the Heart we are Something*”.

This is a short introduction to Olguita:

I was born in Moyobamba, the land of the orchid, located in the Peruvian Amazon, two hours away from Lima by aeroplane.



I was formed in Christian values by my parents, Antonio and María Olivia; at home, there was always the image of the Sacred Heart with whom I felt identified from a very young age. I belonged to the group of the parish San Juan Masías, close to my home.

I studied psychology at a university in the capital, where I met Néstor Jesús, my husband, with whom I have been in love for 32 years and married for 22 years. Together we share the same passion for promoting mental health; he from the public administration and I from the school promoted by the MSC sisters, as well as in the care of patients in private practice. It is in this school that I came to know the charism and spirituality of the Chevalier Family, to which I have been committed since 2015, when the MSC sisters invited a group of people from the school, which allowed me to rediscover my childhood values and principles, strengthening my vocation to serve and help those most in need.

I began as a committed laywoman forming a new community called Corazón de Jesús in a district of Lima. Later I was elected as Coordinator of the National Council, and now I am the Coordinator of the Americas. My commitment is to make the heart of God known wherever I am and to be loved everywhere.

On your behalf, we thank Olguita and Chris for their willingness to take on this important role.

Commitment to *Laudato Si*

The Lay Family continues to actively support our shared commitment as a Chevalier Family to work for Ecological Conversion. Pope Francis uses this phrase, and it reminds us that justice, peace, and mindfulness about the environment and how we personally draw from the environment are all interconnected; and are at the core of *Spirituality of the Heart*.

We have signed the *Declaration*, which invites us to commit personally to specific actions, both as individuals and as groups.

The *Declaration* can be accessed here:

English: <https://1drv.ms/w/s!AmTqno0pbTh7j-98oTqBQdO6bPvOwA?e=i5r3wB>
Portuguese: https://1drv.ms/w/s!AmTqno0pbTh7j_BSjWqlCafhcfZ3Aw?e=zY28uK
Spanish: https://1drv.ms/w/s!AmTqno0pbTh7j_BTdtXhgEme8RYCHQ?e=mOFDoA
French: https://1drv.ms/b/s!AmTqno0pbTh7j_Be-qh_CCD7mpGuJQ?e=zOdbAK
Indonesian: https://1drv.ms/w/s!AmTqno0pbTh7j_BVhipXvhYlMvJP6g?e=XFd5mc
Dutch: https://1drv.ms/w/s!AmTqno0pbTh7j_BWZ-UzuQRT6M1X2A?e=SJHZyV
German: https://1drv.ms/w/s!AmTqno0pbTh7j_BZVIm6LAlcc5MqDA?e=8yLpja

We hope that the First Friday intentions do not just sit on Facebook or in your inbox.

They are designed as visual reminders of the responsibilities that flow from our own journey to our hearts, so we hope you are putting them into your newsletters and on your noticeboards and actively encouraging people to draw from them as a way of participating in the healing of creation.

The planning committee for the Philippines Assembly has committed to the Assembly functioning in an ecologically sustainable way, and we hope that you, too, are ensuring that your groups and gatherings operate sustainably and reflect our commitment to *Laudato Si*.

International Assembly of Laity

Planning is well underway for the upcoming Assembly. The program is being developed, and the official invitation will be sent out very soon. The International Council congratulates the Philippines Organising Committee for all their organisational work.

We have agreed that the Assembly will utilise the following Operating Principles:

Environmental Responsibility

Consistent with our commitment as laity to *Laudato Si* and to the Chevalier Family Declaration, we agree as far as possible the Assembly be environmentally responsible (e.g., no single-use plastics, paper cups, no giveaway trinkets, and responsibility with paper).

Prayerfulness

We acknowledge that we cannot do anything but for the grace and presence of the Spirit, and we will ensure that the preparation for the Assembly and our time together will reflect the prayerfulness required to enable the Spirit to be active.

Reflection of the Diversity of Membership

As far as possible, there needs to be a balance of presenters that reflect both lay and professed, male and female, regional and cultural diversity and differing ecclesiologies – being careful to ensure that lay voices and expression have a significant place in the program.

Ensuring as Wide a Participation as Possible

We recognise that the Assembly is for the whole of the global lay family and that the participants stand in for and represent the entire Family. Thus, we must ensure that:

- We work very hard to ensure that as many countries as possible are represented in person.
- The pre-assembly preparation and formation is for all laity (e.g., a formative edition of *Encounter of Hearts*) and connects the whole Family (Including professed) to the Assembly.
- Participants recognise that they stand in place of their people and their professed branches and perhaps could be symbolically and ritually confirmed as the representative of the group in national gatherings next year. They are also challenged at the Assembly to take the commitments made in the Philippines home to their respective countries.
- We utilise Zoom and other digital technology to transmit the Assembly globally and to include those not physically present.

We remind you:

The theme of the Assembly:

One in Heart in Caring for our Common Home.

Dates:

21st – 29th January, 2024

Arrival from 20th January to midday 21st January

Departure after lunch on 29th January

Cost:

\$1,000.00 US.

Subsidising Funding

We have been very busy sourcing funds to subsidise participation at the Assembly. So far, we have:

Australian MSC Mission Office	\$3,000.00	Au
Australian Chevalier Laity	\$5,000.00	Au
Korean Laity man	\$3,000.00	US
Korean MSC Sisters	\$3,000.00	US
European Laity	\$1,000.00	eu
European MSC and FDNSC	\$1,000.00	eu
Belgium Laity	\$3,000.00	eu
Total	\$16,000eu	

We encourage countries and regions who are able to actively seek funds to assist with subsidising those who cannot pay to attend.

Meetings Held by the International Council in 2022

We met with the following countries and regions by Zoom:

Indonesia:	9 th July
Europe:	29 th October
Papua New Guinea:	25 th November

We met with the Trigeneralate and the Philippines Committee to plan the Assembly:

5th February, 6th August, and 5th October

We held our regular I. C. Business meetings:

13th March and 22nd October

We held extraordinary meetings to discern the names we have suggested for the new Spiritual Companion:

3rd June and 26th June

Next year will be a very busy year for the International Council, and we look forward to our ongoing connection with the whole Family as we prepare to gather together in 2024.

We wish you God's great peace and blessing on you and those you love and on all who cross your paths.

Heartbonded,

Alison, Doris, Rita, Peter, Maria-Olimpia, Olguita, Chris, Fr Hans, Fr Wahyudi and Fr Richard (our translators), and Hannie (our Minutes Secretary)