

Letter 246a

General Chapter news



I turned to switch off my alarm clock on Wednesday morning, only to experience my bed collapsing. The taping attached to the slats had given way and with each attempt to lift myself high enough to get over the 17 centimetre side, resulted in falling back and more slats separating. Eventually I managed to 'get out of bed'. Very kindly, the Rector here, Fr Natale and a maintenance man had fixed the bed by 11.30am.

Aurelian Walls



I thought it worth sharing something about the amazing Aurelian Walls, especially because one section is close to us here and walking near them can provide good shade! They are a line of city walls built around 275 CE during the reign of the Emperor Aurelian. They enclosed all seven hills of Rome and the Trastevere district. In the 4th century, remodelling doubled the

height of the walls to 16 metres and by 500 CE, the circuit possessed 383 towers, 7,020 battlements, 18 main gates, 116 toilets and 2,066 large external windows.

Aurelian's constructed the walls after an invasion in 270 CE. It was by far the largest building project that had taken place in Rome for many decades, and was left to the citizens themselves to complete as Aurelian could not afford to spare his military personnel. legionary for the project. The walls were built in just five years, aided by incorporating existing buildings into the structure. An area behind the walls was cleared and sentry passages were built to enable it to be reinforced quickly in an emergency.

The Aurelian Walls continued as a significant military defense for the city of Rome 1870, when the Kingdom of Italy the breached the wall and captured Rome.



Between elections

There was a wedding in the Sts John and Paul's basilica on the morning of our General elections. The basilica is very popular for weddings because it is so beautiful. It was originally built in 398 over the home of two Roman soldiers who were martyred in 362. It was damaged on three separate occasions and restored, especially in 1099 when a monastery and bell tower was added to it.

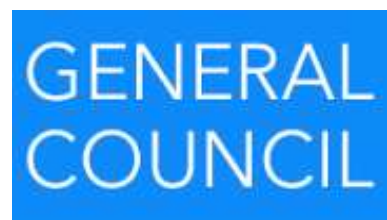
During 19th century excavations, a series of Ancient Roman rooms were discovered under the nave of the church. Some of these date back to the first and fourth centuries CE. It is believed these were dens in which wild animals were kept before being used in entertainments held and a low vaulted passage connected to the Colosseum allowed them to be used for entertainment. Twenty decorated underground rooms belonging to at least five different buildings dated between the first and the fourth century CE were discovered in 1887. They are the best example in Rome of a 'house church'. The original frescoes can still be seen, with scenes of the martyrdom of John and Paul.



The wedding in the basilica was completed by midday, so we gathered there in the chapel of Paul of the Cross, so that Giuseppe could take the oath of office and engage in a sign of peace with those present. It was moving when Giuseppe took himself to kneel in front of where Paul of the Cross' remains are underneath the altar. No doubt his prayer included that he faithfully exercise the roles of leadership in a way that is faithful to our founder.

The chapel features this large portrait of Paul wanting to on the cross with Jesus. This was a strong devotion of Paul's to express his desire to experience what Jesus experienced as the result of outpouring love, so that he might imitate that love.

We had a nice lunch and a break until 4.00pm, when we met with Giuseppe, the new General to learn his understanding of the kind of Council he would like to have elected tomorrow, and how many 4 or 6. He indicated he would prefer people to be elected according to talent related to the four areas we had identified: Laity, Formation (for professed and laity), Mission (and New Ministries) and Configurations. He was advised that people with particular gifts could more easily be identified within Configurations, so he accepted this advice and suggested we meet in our Configurations and nominate 3 persons for the next General Council, and advise whether there be 4 or 6 members.





The point had already been made by Denis Travers, that Configuration Presidents (such as himself) were already part of an extended Council and usually Provincials of their Province, inferring here was no need for such persons to be elected to the General Council. Giuseppe agreed with this point and appreciated it.

Francisco Validez mentioned that the CJC Configuration (essentially of North America and Brazil) has a proposal waiting to be voted on, that they separate into North and South Configurations. In anticipation of this he said the recommendation of the Configuration was that someone from the South be elected.



When PASPAC met, we recommended 6 General Consultors and we nominated Paul Cherukuduth, Chris Monaghan and Gwen Barde. Both Chris and Gwen indicated their willingness to 'stand' but their preference was to return to their Province, so Paul was our first nomination.

The Chapter elected 6 consultors according to the lists given from each Configuration

CCH: Paul Francis Spencer from Ireland

CJC: Aurelio Miranda from Brazil

SCOR: Eddy Varquez from Spain (current General Consultor)

MAPRES: Jose Valentin who is Portuguese - born in Venezuela

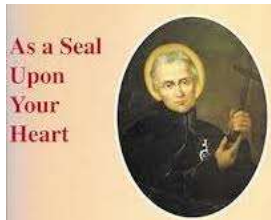
PASPAC: Paul Cherukuduth (from India)

CPA: Aloysius Nguma from Tanzania (current General Consultor)



Paul Francis. Jose Valentin, Paul, Eddy, Giuseppe, Aurelio, Aloysius

The election showed a lot of trust was respected in the names proposed. Four were the first names on the nominated list and two were the third name listed.



After these elections, Paul Francis was elected 1st Consultor. Paul Francis has been 1st Consultor in his Province and parish priest in Dublin. He has a few other irons in the fire, but can probably manage some of them. A flight to Rome is only three hours so it is a lot more convenient than travelling from Australia. Many would remember Paul Francis' wonderful contributions to our Passionist Institutes and on his very helpful book, 'As A Seal...'

It has been a difficult week for Chris and a little less so for Denis, because they were obviously recognised for their abilities. Chris was elected to the CCC and that has meant quite a few extra hours of work. Both secured votes for General, but then had to wait to see what would happen with the vote for Council members. Once Denis' suggestion regarding Configuration Presidents was recognised, he was safe. He has already served two six year terms on the General Council and his importance to Holy Spirit Province is highly significant. Chris had more need to be concerned, but after yesterday's PASPAC meeting he could afford to be more relaxed, because Gwen is popular, and Paul is well known and skilled. It does mean that Paul relinquishes the role of Provincial, but he has served his Province for quite some time.



We returned for more work at 4.00pm and considered some of the many proposals that have been submitted. We finished at 6.00pm and re-gathered at 7.15pm for Vespers in the St Paul of the Cross chapel. This was followed by the usual 8.00pm dinner.

Saturday 19th October was the feast of St Paul of the Cross. We continued our work on Chapter proposals until 1.00pm. This work will be taken up again at 8.00am on Monday. We had a free afternoon but unfortunately after a wet morning, the weather was very threatening so I didn't have a walk. We are having Mass at 6.00pm and no doubt there will be another (not as big as lunch) meal. We have a welcome free day on Sunday, which I am looking forward to.

There will be one more report late next week

From Rome

Brian

