Dearest Sister,

The day of the Lord has come, a day of light for our holy Institute. A day of strength and joy! How good it is that you come with your heart open in order for God to act in our Congregational Assembly! How many graces!

I think your heart is permeated with love for God. How happy we are to be called to participate in the great work! Let us remain united till death and we will see great things. Remember, we should not be caught up by the difficulties; the day will come when you will enjoy the fruits of your labors! The Lord continues to bless the Congregation! With great tenderness, in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, I send you all my love and affection. Be firm, may God bless our holy mission! Receive my blessings; I love you with all my heart! In the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, Superior
In an atmosphere of joy and celebration, Contemplative and apostolic sisters (including mission partners) from different parts of the world gathered in Quito Ecuador to participate in the CACS (Congregational Assembly for contemplative sisters).

The first day was mainly a time of meeting, rejoicing and getting to know each other. The Sisters were personally welcomed with a letter from St Mary Euphrasia placed in each room.

The chapel, meeting room dining room etc. were adorned with magnificent colourful bouquets of flowers. Ecuador is a place famous for flowers especially roses of various types. The floral arrangements were made by our Contemplative sisters.

Each participant received a beautifully embroidered bag with the logo of the Congregation chapter of 2015. These bags were made by the women in Cenit Centre, a centre run by our sisters.
Opening Ceremony

At 9.30 a.m, all the participants gathered at the chapel for the Eucharistic celebration which was celebrated by Father Nestor. Music and singing accompanied the participants throughout the whole celebration.

At the beginning of the Mass, several members of the assembly entered in procession wearing traditional costumes. Different symbols were presented while an explanation was given to the assembly.

The first symbol carried by Sister Brigid Lawlor was the PASCHAL CANDLE, symbolizing the mystery of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we see the Paschal Candle, we recognize the living Jesus who calls us daily to continue his redemptive mission in the Church.

The second symbol was The LOGO of the 2015 CONGREGATIONAL CHAPTER. “Energized by the Spirit, we risk together for mission”.

The original intuition of St. Mary Euphrasia encourages us to be energized by the Spirit who comes forth from the Heart of God and flows continuously through all Creation.
The third symbol was the Holy BIBLE which is a love letter that God has given us in order for us to be happy and saved. The Bible is a guide for our life.

It truly is the most important book in which we find the instructions that always guide us towards the will of God. During the great amen three sisters presented an arathi (an offering with flowers and incense) to the Lord.

At the end of the mass the sisters were given a lighted candle, symbolizing themselves and their full-hearted presence at this Assembly.

They then proceeded in silence to the gathering space and placed their candles near the icon of St. Mary Euphrasia and John Eudes.
Sister Clemencia Unit Leader of Ecuador then addressed the assembly with words of welcome recalling the importance of warm relationships for this congregational meeting and the necessity of living in a climate of communion. This was followed by a celebration of drinks and delicious cakes prepared by the Sisters of Ecuador. After the celebration the sisters proceeded to the Assembly hall to the tables assigned for different groups.

Sr Janice the facilitator introduced herself and reminded the participants that it was important to be relaxed and open so as to give of their best for this important meeting of the congregation. She presented the agenda for the meeting and after reflection called for approval.

The CACS Committee was presented to the assembly and appreciation was expressed for all the work they had done in preparation for this meeting. They gave some practical details for the smooth functioning of the assembly.

In her opening message Sr Brigid said: “My contemplative sisters, welcome! You are here because you have been elected by your sisters and Unit Leaders to enter into a process of evaluation of the directives from your 2008 Assembly document “Focus for Our Future”. Additionally, you are here to stretch your imagination and go beyond what was proclaimed in 2008 and build upon what has been lived over these past five years. You are here to create a new present and to creatively plan for the future of contemplative life in our Congregation. You are here to discern wisely and elect your delegates to the Congregational Chapter. You are here to consider more fully the role of your Congregational Council. Most importantly, you are here to make known to the whole Congregation, as well as more in depth to yourselves, the response to the question: What does it mean to be a contemplative sister in an apostolic Congregation? This is a unique challenge!“
Report of the Congregational Contemplative Council. (Focus for our the Future)

Sister Brigid addressed the contemplative sisters and told them that the document FOCUS FOR OUR FUTURE presents the work done by the Contemplative Council since 2008. She said: “So my dear contemplative sisters, I invite you to ‘position’ yourselves as Contemplatives in an apostolic congregation! And my dear Province Leaders, I invite you to use this opportunity to renew your understanding of contemplative life today in our congregation.”

Sr. Reina helped us to remember the THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS. She reminded us that: The 1st Theological Reflection was an analysis of Focus for Our Future which challenged us to:

1. Continue to clarify our identity  
2. Promote and celebrate our missionary call; and  

The contemplative council shared a PowerPoint on their visits to communities. The question that followed was: What do you most value and appreciate from these visits?
The Councilors and the participants shared their experiences of these visits and the Contemplative sisters expressed their appreciation of having contemplative councilors who could understand and share their lifestyle.

In the afternoon Sr Jude Ellen spoke about the different formation sessions that contemplative sisters participated in. The sisters were invited to reflect on the first question listed under Spirituality sessions. And sisters were asked to write some words of Hope for the future on newsprint available at each table and these were displayed around the room.
Internationality
There was a sharing on the development of missionary awareness since the last assembly and all those who had missionary experiences were asked to share some personal stories.

There have been so many developments in recent years, the foundation of new communities, the exchange of sisters between provinces and the international experiences of long and short duration. While some of the situations have been very challenging the overall experiences shared by the sisters were very positive.

An awareness of belonging to an international Congregation has been appreciated and deepened among contemplative sisters.

Returning to the source - Original Inspiration of St. Mary Euphrasia in Founding the Sisters of St. Magdalen.

A drama was presented by the Contemplative Sisters representing the Original Inspiration of St. Mary Euphrasia in Founding the Sisters of St. Magdalen.
Sr. Janice invited the sisters to reflect upon significant shifts and changes that have occurred through the years and how they may have caused identity confusion and lack of clarity, how they have had an impact on the way the Contemplative Sisters see themselves, and also how these challenges may have instilled new life and energy.

There were personal reflection then sharing in groups and finally feedback in the large assembly. There was also clarification on different questions; one point was initials for the sisters, we no longer use CGS. All sisters use RGS.
LIVING ARTICLE I
What Does It Mean to Be Contemplative Sisters in an Apostolic Congregation?

The Cacs Committee presented the Summary Report from the reflections of the sisters in preparation for the Assembly:

- Apostolic Incarnational Prayer
- Enclosure of the Heart
- Mission of Reconciliation

Reflection questions as follows were distributed to participants.

What happens inside me as I ponder these responses? What are my reactions?
What calls or challenges do I experience?
What questions arise from inside myself?

Below are some of the reflections from the participants.

⇒ Balance between prayer and mission, necessary,
⇒ Deepening of the Constitutions.
⇒ Be attentive to our Prayer time, do not miss the essentials.
⇒ Balance in the use of technology.
⇒ In contemplative Communities when we are asked to welcome people, take care of the balance between Community life and prayer.
⇒ Avoid activism, find the balance between prayer study.
⇒ Vocation promotion, does not mean, we have to go out, motivate our lay partners to do this for us.
⇒ It is important to promote the spirituality of Creation.
⇒ Good communication between apostolic and contemplative sisters is important.
⇒ How do we prepare young sisters to face the future?
⇒ The enclosure of heart and prayer for the mission of reconciliation is not only for contemplative sisters but also for apostolic. This is an aspect of our complementarity.

Table Groups—Sisters had group sharing and reflections according to tables.

There were sales of different products made by women in our programmes.
Thanking Sister Brigid and the Contemplative Council for their support and service over the years.

Sr. Brigid, Congregational Leader, Sisters Reina, Jude Ellen and Teresa received a Bouquet from the Contemplative sisters

Full Update of the CACS (Congregational Assembly for Contemplative Sisters) Click Here
We were invited to recognize the kingdom of God deep within us and we were helped to go deeper inside ourselves and in the silence and tranquility to commune with God. She also explained the principles of the universe namely: Diversity, interiority and communion.

As human beings we are intimately connected with one another and the whole universe.

She presented a PowerPoint on “Life in Two Halves on the human-spiritual journey”

The first part of life is about building the sense of ourselves as individuals.

The second half of life is about going deeper letting go. Jung calls it “transcendence.” The first half of life is about the self, me and mine; the second half of life is about all that is more than me – a move towards Oneness.

But this process from the first half to the second half is not linear, rather it is circular, it is somewhat like the snake shedding skin over and over again.
Continued from page 2

Eco Spirituality

We let go of the old in order to grow into the new, not once, but many times throughout our lives.
The invitation of the second half is to throw our nets into the deep (John 21)

“I have come not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.” …to serve its intended purpose. (Matt. 5)

As we grow and develop, new images come to mind, we were invited to reflect on our images of God and how they have changed over the years.

We continued the reflection of the awareness of God in all of creation and the importance of living in the present moment. We are spiritual beings but live through our human reality. So much of ourselves and others is mystery and we were challenged to let that mystery reveal itself to us.

We were invited to include our body in prayer and we took part in a free dance using our hands to accompany the music.

We continued with an exercise in body awareness, letting go of all tensions and we were led into the depth of ourselves where we meet God.

During the CACS Meeting we had the opportunity to have two performances from two different Equatorian musical group who entertained us with the typical local dances.
Outing to Otaballo and its surroundings

We had a marvelous sunny day and we saw the Laguna Yahuarcocha

Sincere thanks to the following for the translations
Daniella Persia, Adriana Perez, Claudine Fargeix, Nicole Bastien and Marie Hélène Halligon.

My deep appreciation and Special thanks to Sister Evelyn Fergus
For her continuous support and help during the Assembly