The elections are over. Over three days we prayed and discerned. As the time went on it became more and more clear who the Lord was choosing to lead the Institute for the next six years. There were tears of joy and tears of humble acceptance; there were noisy congratulations and there was some ‘bubbly’ and a very large cake! But most of all there were prayers of gratitude and expressions of support! Let us introduce our new General Council:

**Brigitte Flourez (Superior General)**

Brigitte was born into a farming community in the north of France; her close-knit family, now of four generations, meet regularly to celebrate and support one another. She likes cooking and gardening. As an IJ, Brigitte has lived all her Religious Life in small communities; she especially likes to be among the ordinary people, especially those on the margins. Brigitte studied Psychology, Theology and Catechetics; despite her workload as Provincial of the French province, she has continued to teach French to migrants and be involved in dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Brigitte is very familiar with the working of the General Council. She served on the team from 1983 and was our General Superior from 1989 – 1995. Brigitte believes that our main challenges in today’s world are the following: migrants, care of the earth, a deep renewal of the Church and international harmony. One of her hopes could be summed up as: ‘Que la sève de nos origines donne de nouveaux fruits’ ('May the sap of our origins rise to nurture new fruits').

**Felicia (Tarena) Bethuel (Councillor)**

Felicia is Nigerian of the Bwatiye tribe in Adamawa state and is the third in a family of eight children. She had a happy and simple childhood in a small village. She loves singing, listening to music, and enjoys dancing with others to celebrate life. Felicia also enjoys crop and animal farming.

She is a trained teacher and loves being in the classroom. She made her first profession in 1994. Felicia has worked with the Pontifical Missionary Association of the Holy Childhood and also with the Catholic Women’s Organisation at diocesan and province levels. She is currently the Vice-Province leader of the Infant Jesus Sisters in Nigeria and a member of the Conference of Major Superiors. Felicia regards the challenges in today’s world as ‘enormous and ugly’. They range from global warming to migration of people - both legal and illegal, overwhelming violence, and confused and lost generations of young people who do not believe in God. Felicia is very conscious that ‘the harvest is rich but the labourers are few’ and her hope and prayer for the Institute is that we continue to grow and survive for many generations and are open to having a wider outreach for effective mission.
Jane Sinprayoon (Councillor)

Jane was born and brought up in Bangkok, Thailand. She has spent most of her life as an IJS, teaching or in the management of schools. She has been in Province leadership a number of times and in the early nineties, Jane was co-ordinator of an inter-congregational formation centre. At the moment, she is community leader and director of an IJS school in Prakanong, Bangkok. When she has time, Jane loves to listen to soft music, go for a walk in the garden or read. Jane believes that in an ever-changing world, our main challenges are: migration, human trafficking, and ecological issues. She is happy with the positive advantages of modern technologies which are enabling much better communication locally and around the world. Jane’s hopes and dreams for the Institute are that IJ Sisters may be able to find effective ways and means to make our charism alive in today’s world and that we will come to know the hope and joy that God dreams for us.

Marina Motta (Councillor)

Marina was born into a deeply christian Italian family near Milan and was the first of 5 children. Her hobbies include music, reading and walking in the mountains. She went to Milan University and then worked in a bank. She joined the IJS in 1979, having been drawn by our charism. Marina has worked with young people all of her Religious Life, especially those who are marginalised and at risk. She began in Milan, then Bergamo and later in Rome where she was a director of the school and also worked with Caritas in developing training projects for teachers and students. She has been provincial of the Italian province since 2015. Marina believes that in a changing world, marked by poverty, conflicts and meaninglessness, we are called to awaken hope. These painful realities can become the opportunity to return to the essentials of the Gospel. Fr. Barré invites us to have a contemplative gaze and rediscover the presence of Jesus in our realities. He invites us to be women of hope and compassion and to recreate fraternity in our daily lives. Interculturality, interreligious dialogue, and care of the earth are some of the challenges that IJS face today. We are a small body in the Church, present on four different continents. Living in "union of heart, mind and mission" and collaborating with lay people, we can be bridge builders working together towards universal fraternity.

Former General Council

The Institute owes a huge debt of gratitude to our ‘retiring’ general council who have served us so well over the past six years. They received a mandate from the last Chapter and worked tirelessly to ensure that every sister, community and country were enabled to live it out. They travelled to provinces to facilitate discernment and to offer support; they arranged international meetings; and they became very efficient in their use of modern technology which meant that they were ‘available’ at all times! We thank God for their great love and generosity and wish them many blessings as they discern where the Lord is now calling them – but first they need a good rest!
A word from Marie

‘It has been an honour and a privilege to serve the Institute as a General Council; we feel greatly enriched and blessed. What a joy to visit you in your countries and to meet those with whom you share your mission. We have been inspired by your wholehearted commitment to God’s call throughout the Institute. A sincere ‘thank you’ to each one for your tremendous support and for your love and your prayer. You will always have a special place in our hearts; we thank God for you and ask Him to fill you with his hope and joy.’

And, finally, the delegates! The Chapter candle has been extinguished and many papers shredded! We now have a mandate for the next six years! It only covers four pages and it may be hard to believe the hours, days and late nights which were spent refining and refining it! Finally we identified the essential directions of the new paths the Lord is calling us to tread. Moving forward requires fidelity, courage and freedom but we are full of confidence because we know that our God journeys with us; we have each other and many other friends and lay companions. We’ll leave the final word to Nicolas Barré:

‘Whatever happens, be always at peace and trust in God.’ (Letter 61)