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AMASC World President

Final address to General Assembly
Friday, 19th April, 2002 •

Clare, National Presidents and Alumnae,

Introduction:

I feel I must begin with a preface to my address. As all those who know me know, I think and speak very quickly. I have "very considered" words as my finale as world president … and have been told that I must speak slowly for the translators. So I apologise if my address appears long as I speak as slowly as I can. To make it clearer, I shall break my address into several sections: • the presence of the spirit • AMASC in its historical context • AMASC today • highlights of my mandate • thanks to so many who have been on my AMASC board and the congress organisers and • a welcome to my successor.

I shall be thanking people throughout my address and I ask that you contain your appreciation of them (the usual way is to clap each one) until the end of my address when you can applaud them collectively. It is only to save on time, so that I can speak slowly!!!!!!

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The presence of the spirit:

It seems extraordinary for me to say this but I have to share with you how absolutely "blown away" I have been at this congress. On the few moments I have had to reflect over the last few days, it has just been brought home to me that there is a spirit at work which inspired us • in our choice of guest speakers; • in bringing Helen McLaughlin from Scotland to be our "reflector" to give us such

Amazing insights of our sharing each day; • who enabled the study plan team to touch you across cultures so that you could respond with such depth; and most importantly • there appears to be the spirit moving within you as an audience in the way you have all participated "at times as if one" in the reflections and discussions of the congress. I have never experienced such participation at any meeting of any kind before. To sit on the stage and look down on you listening with your hearts as well as your minds has had a profound effect on me. I have had a profound faith experience as a result of this congress and as a result of the privilege of serving you as world president. It has only really come home to me in the last few days. I also experienced some amazing "more than coincidences" during my term of office one of which I shall share with you in this address.

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So I begin ….

AMASC in the context of its history:

AMASC is about dreams and visions. And it is about the imagination and the creativity in making these dreams and visions become reality and come to fruition.

AMASC began with a vision of several European women who saw the potential of the collective world audience and participation of alumnae. It was just prior to the commencement of Vatican ii when Maria van Mierlo from the Netherlands instigated the first world assembly of alumnae

Which was held in Brussels to coincide with the universal expo in 1958. The theme of that meeting was "the mission".

The next meeting was held in Rome two years later at the invitation of the then Reverend Mother General, Reverend Mother de Valon, who asked the alumnae to share in the mission of the society. The theme of this meeting of 2000 alumnae from 29 countries was "the family".

The world association was born in 1965 at the first international council meeting which was held in Brussels where Baroness Coppee of Belgium was elected the first President.

AMASC has been a catalyst of inspiration to many as we on an international level have been able to share visions, experiences, and our stories.

Themes of world congresses have been

• "Alumnae in the world today" (Madrid 1970);

• "If you want peace, work for justice" (Mallorca 1972);

• "To be protagonists of the change" (Mexico 1974);

•` "Living our faith today" (Dublin 1978);

• "Our changing world" (San Francisco 1982);

• "Intercultural communication" (Tokyo 1986);

• "Routes to peace" (San Jose, Costa Rica 1990);

• "Vocation and vocations" (Genoa 1994);

• "Pray and work" San Luis Potosi 1998)

And brings nearly 600 of us to Sydney in 2002 from 29 countries who have participated in discussions and deliberations on reconciliation • "Matters of the heart: reconciling ourselves with our world" .

What is AMASC? Association Mondiale des Anciennes et Anciens du Sacre Coeur is a unique body of women and latterly men, all of whom had the privilege of receiving a Sacred Heart education based on the love of God andof one another;

Respect of the uniqueness of each individual, a deep respect for intellectual values; a knowledge that we all have certain gifts and talents and the responsibility to personally foster, develop and use them for the benefit of all; and a strong sense of social justice which compels us to action.

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AMASC today:

The aims of the world association have evolved over the years to its current expression:

• to be at the service of humanity for the construction of a more cohesive society with an increased awareness of its social responsibilities and in the name of a committed faith lived in its two fold personal and community dimension.

• to create and maintain friendship and solidarity among the national federations and associations, so as to bring about true international collaboration;

• to cooperate actively and effectively with the Society of the Sacred Heart in its different tasks and options

• to be present in international organisations with a constant concern for discernment and open-mindedness.

AMASC unites tens of thousands of alumnae of 35 nations:

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We are present in two major international Catholic organisations: •

Camille Farrell very capably represents AMASC at WUCWO [the world union of catholic women's organisations]. She has also been elected to the board of WUCWO. I asked Camille on our behalf to put forward a motion at the WUCWO board meeting in Senegal, West Africa that WUCWO support the Jubille Appeal to cancel national debt of many developing countries. This was accepted by WUCWO's platform. Camille has also spoken at regional meetings of WUCWO on women's health issues.

Dominique Archambeaud and Marita Casabonne have looked after the brief with OMAEC - the association of exstudents of catholic schools. They attended the regional meetings and Dominique and I attended the world conference of OMAEC in Lisbon in 1998. I thank you Camille, Dominique and Marita.

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AMASC has an active international hospitality network. This was one of my dreams which became a reality when I first became an advisor to AMASC in 1980. The philosophy behind this network is to give us the opportunity to meet each other … to share thoughts, ideas, ideals, cultural similarities and differences … to experience true internationality … to broaden our own and other's horizons. To make us realise how we are citizens of the one world, serving and loving the same God in many different ways.

Over the last 30 years my family has hosted over 50 young people from all over the world to stay and at least another 50 for a meal. It was such a rich experience for us all.

I see through AMASC the opportunities for deep international sharing. As the world keeps getting smaller … phone calls becoming cheaper and cheaper … email bringing instant communication and air travel enabling more and more youth to discover the earth, I see such opportunities for sharing of ideas, values, spirituality, concepts and practical suggestions for solving community problems. This is one of my visions which has become a reality for many. It is open to all as host or guest.

Thank you to Sue Lane who has had responsibility for the International Hospitality Network during my mandate.

Following on the decision of the AMASC Council at the 11th World Congress of AMASC in san Luis Potosi in 1998, an ad hoc commission of AMASC was established of two alumnae lawyers -- Jacqueline Klomp Verhoeven of the Netherlands and Australian Josephine Heesh. Their brief was to establish the legal requirements to give AMASC its own legal identity. This was achieved through our Belgian legal representative and on 16th august, 2000 it was ratified by the Belgian Crown. AMASC was always an entity but this gave it legal identity. By-laws were subsequently drawn up by Jacqueline and Josephine, National Presidents given the opportunity to comment, and the by-laws were adopted at the Meeting of National Presidents here in Sydney last Saturday, 13th April, 2002.

What does this new legal identity mean? It means that AMASC can have its own voice as a legally constituted association; it can also apply to outside bodies for finance to support approved projects.

This fulfilled the dream and vision of two outstanding AMASC advisors of the past, Denise Peteers and Filomena Luciani who foresaw how this legal identity could empower AMASC in the future.

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Communication was the second of the themes of my mandate.

During my mandate my Secretariate in Sydney established the first AMASC website. It was a start and it gave us the vehicle for instant communciation of information. Each night of this Congress, the papers which we have heard during the day have been shared with the world … and you will be able to download off your computers when you return home. You can then share these talks -- or their highlights -- to your constituencies through your own web pages or through your newsletters. I thank Antonia Hayes and Josephine Barcelon for establishing the website, and in particular, I thank Anne de Broglio for the magnificent way she was able to take over and regenerate it. Bravo Anne.

What this is going to mean to AMASC when the rscj's have their office in New York taking note of the discussions at the United Nations! I can see huge potential as we collaborate together. Perhaps we can receive precis of information which we can instantly share with our audience; and hopefully the rscj office can also be our watchdog for matters which are of particular concern to AMASC.

We can be mobilised as a force of individuals, as well as a collective force. To write to our politicians about issues of justice and human rights … not just to the United Nations, but in our own countries. We have heard here this week, we cannot in conscience be bystanders.

I saw it during the Timor crisis when I appealed to the world to put pressure on the United States to support the United Nations come into Timor to stop the bloodbath. Scores of people responded and we all lambasted our politicians and even the White House through emails. The world responded, not just AMASC, and things happened. This means of

Response has been shown by Hilary Charlesworth, Frank Brennan and Mark Raper to be having strong effect on our politicians. We have to be there … we cannot be bystanders.

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It is here that I would like to share an incredible story which happened to me as a result of modern communication technology. It is a story of networks … but one has to feel that God works in the most amazing ways.

Soon after taking on the presidency, I was approached by Ana Elena Reyes Retana, my advisor from Mexico, asking for my support in sending a report on the plight of the peoples of Chiapas in Mexico to Mary Robinson at the United Nations Human Rights High Commission. I replied immediately that I would certainly be prepared to do so particularly as Ana Elena was asking support for people in her own country. I insisted that the article must be signed. She sent the article, written by two teachers from the

school, who had recently visited Chiapas and were shocked at the situation there. I recommended that the article should be developed further and sent it back to her.

A day or two later, I heard on the radio in my car as I was driving to my office at the Curran Foundation that a Bishop of Chiapas was visiting Sydney and would be speaking that evening at a Catholic worker's club in an industrial suburb of Sydney. So that evening I took myself to the meeting and afterwards I met with Don Samuel Ruiz, the Bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas, and asked him: "What could the international community do to help him?" He said four things: • to pray;

• to encourage people to make a pilgrimage to Chiapas where a large group of his parishioners were executed; • to support Caritas as it supported his people; and • not to take any notice of official news from the Mexican Government of the time but instead to read the web sites of the Dominicans.

I came home and immediately emailed Ana Elena in Mexico City with my news and this information. She was stunned.

Then a week later, I received an invitation to the opening of Ngalia, an aboriginal legal support group with which I am involved which was to be held at the prestigious Law Society of New South Wales the following week. The guest of honour was to be Dr Julian Burger from Geneva, the Officer Responsible for Indigenous Peoples at the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights. Again I emailed Ana Elena and urged her to have the rewritten report to me within days. It arrived by email, I was able to produce it and personally hand it to Dr Burger as well as have discussion with him. He wrote to me later from Geneva expressing his appreciation for the report. How can one explain those incredible events. It was just meant to be. The hand of God was there.

Thank you Ana Elena for your contribution to the human rights brief which you undertook for AMASC during my term.

Highlights of my mandate:

One of highlights of my mandate was being able to represent the alumnae of the world at the General Chapter of the Society held in France in 2000.

Collaboration has been spoken of so much, particularly since the Society's General Chapter in 2000. It was the raison d'etre of AMASC's beginnings in the 1960's. There is moral collaboration and project collaboration. We have the tools now for both.

I see AMASC having the potential to work hand in hand with specific rscj projects in developing countries and addressing justice issues. We can be such a force for good in the world; to be people of justice, compassion and understanding; to be men and women of hope; to be ambassadors of love,

openness and integrity … to see the reflection of God in the other. By supporting rscj projects and our schools, we can ensure that the values of St Madeleine Sophie continue to be sewn in hearts and minds.

At the meeting of National Presidents held last Saturday, Sister Patricia Coyle addressed us on the issue of landmines. Many of us will commit to working for the eradication of such terrible tools of war … both the production and the laying.

That AMASC will seek funds to support an rscj project in either Chad, the Congo or Uganda was endorsed at this meeting. This will be our first project … hopefully the first of many.

AMASC will become visibly relevant. This happened with the International Hospitality Network and I feel this will also be a side effect of funding a developmental project in a Third World country.

And beyond, I know others see the opportunity to develop a young volunteers programme within AMASC to support some projects with hands as well as finance.

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The focus of my mandate has been reconciliation and communication.

What a joy it has been for me to bring Ireland and Egypt back into active participation of AMASC. …. And for the National Presidents to vote the newly formed association of alumnae in Havana, Cuba as a member of AMASC, whilst also respecting the right of the Cubans in Miami to continue their association. We are all the richer for these three associations being full and effective members of AMASC.

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Reconciliation is a very important goal for an Australian at this time in our history and how important for a Korean. It is a value which means so much to so many. This has come out in responses and reports from around the world from the discussion groups. There have been some spectacular personal responses to this question. It brings forth many justice and human rights issues as well.

Reconciliaton of my country is one of my deepest dreams. I am constantly realising more and more issues which need to be addressed both personally and collectively.

To have had my dream to address reconciliation on a world wide level has meant so much to me. To have my dream interpreted by those I invited to take on the responsibility for the study plan -- Alex Fernon, Patrice Beirne, Penny Sturrock and Josephine Barcelon -- was wonderful. They took this theme and developed it to a much greater extent and then offered it to the alumnae of the world. The depth to which the world responded has been magnificent as we heard from Alex's report on Tuesday but what she could not say,

what none of us could say, is how it influenced each one of us in our hearts and minds personally.

Another of the highlights of my presidency would have to be the way you have all responded to the content of our congress. This is not just something I have felt … people are telling me this every hour of the congress. I am so uplifted, as I know are all our team. Every thought we have put into this Congress, every effort, every dream has been fulfilled. It has all been so worthwhile. I thank you all for this. Thank you to every member of our Congress Committee for their part in making this congress happen.

The formal directional statements which we presented to you today on • personal commitment • collaboration • communication and • spirituality are the fruit of the preparation and the subsequent deliberations during this Congress. We ask you to take them back to your National Associations for further reflection, discussion and action. I thank my AMASC Board Member, Mary Brennan rscj, for the support she has given me over the last four years and now for leading the reflection committee to produce these formal directional statements.

I would also like to thank here, Helen McLaughlin rscj and Michael Mullins sm. Helen has been our reflector and she and Michael have worked together as a team. . I am sure you all agree that having the "spirit of the day" has added an extraordinary dimension to this congress. My deepest thanks to you both.

I also thank our translators who we brought in from overseas as we felt that they not only had skills in simultaneous translation, but also understood the language of our congress. Thank you Anunciata Bonatti from Milan, Toya Gonzales rscj from Granada, Margaret Phelan rscj from the United States and Mary Cavanagh rscj from Ireland. Thank you also to Dominique Archambeaud and Anunciata who so willingly and quickly undertook the written translations for AMASC over the last years.

And nothing would have happened without the leadership of our Congress Convenor and my Vice President of AMASC - Vickie Greig. Vickie Greig would have to be one of the most wonderful persons on this earth. She was born with a beautiful nature. She has extraordinary organisational skills. Vickie has led us with precision, attention to every detail, a wonderful balance between intellectual content and play, and she has executed all with the greatest of charm and care of people. Vickie has cared for me over the full four years of my mandate and another of the highlights of my mandate is the wonderful friendship which has forged between us. Vickie, how can I thank you?

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National Presidents, you have offered me such hospitality as I came to visit you. Over the last four years I visited 29 of your countries. You organised occasions where I could meet hundreds of alumnae, rscj, school pupils and staff in your countries. I so appreciated your hospitality and warmth of welcome. I am so thrilled that so many of you and members of your associations were able to take up my invitation to come and be here with us in

Sydney; and moved by the numbers who became involved in the study plan on reconciliation.

Thank you for being great communicators. I shall miss my daily intake of emails … but look forward in the future to long leisurely chats together instead of the frenetic responses as I swept through my daily mail.

I also particulary thank Suzie Scanlan and the Australian Sacre Coeur Association, and Helen Clugston and the Sydney Sacre Coeur Association for the support they have given me in hosting this Congress. We have been a great team and our efforts have been so rewarded. Thank you to you both and everyone of your teams. I also thank the Victorian, Queensland and New Zealand Associations for the support they gave us.

I thank my Board … those I have not already mentioned … • Kumiko Oshima who has had the responsibility for the associations of Asia and also produced the short history of AMASC; • Charlotte Bardenhewer who has been so active with the young alumnae of Europe; and • Olga Rome for taking responsibility for the United States and Canada and also liaising with Sue Lane with the International Hosptiality Network. To Past President of AMASC and current Archivist, Maria Franca Migone, I owe deep thanks as a mentor and for her advice.

To my Australian Secretariate on the Board • Secretary General Maryanne Pidcock, and Treasurer General Tricia Ho. Thank you for keeping me on "the straight and narrow".

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So my time has come to its conclusion. I have loved my role but I am so looking forward to the future with some time to develop the relationships I have neglected as I have been so preoccupied over the last years in trying to balance AMASC and my career. And I am also looking forward to learning to paint and to play a musical instrument!!!

I am so indebted to my family and friends for the support they have given me. My sons and my mother have been so undemanding of me when they realised my workload of the last years. It is now time for me to support them. I have been so proud of my family during theCongress … my sons, Philip and Richard, and my mother joined us for the opening Mass; my elder brother, John, organised the sheep dog demonstration and my other brother, David and his wife Louise, hosted a magnificient dinner for 20 on tuesday night.

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Now I pass the reins of office to Olga. I hope you enjoy the role as much as I have done, and I wish you every possible success.

You will be a wonderful president. You have the ability to communicate and to give strong leadership. You have a great team around you and we expect great things of you. I

love the theme of your mandate which follows on so naturally from the formal directional statements from this congress. You have my total support.

Thank you.