



ALL ARE WELCOME!

Chapter 2025 - Modes of Participation

November 4, 2024

Dear Sisters,

“ALL ARE WELCOME” to participate in Chapter 2025! As a Chapter Planning Committee (CPC), this has been our theme since the beginning. We hope *every sister* will find a place at the table that best fits her personal circumstances as well as the requirements for participation in the various Chapter processes. We want everyone to feel welcomed, know what is expected, and know how to select her desired “mode of participation.”

With these hopes in mind, what follows is a description of the initial step for personally selecting, and collectively affirming, everyone’s place at the table; that is, your mode of participation. In addition, we are offering some reflection questions and a suggested process that we’d like you to use in determining how you might best participate in Chapter. With this letter, we have also attached the following:

- the “Modes of Chapter Participation” form you will need to complete the initial step in this process.
- an “Outline of Steps for Selecting and Affirming Modes of Chapter Participation”

During this summer’s Congregational Gathering, you viewed a video describing the initial plans for Chapter. In the video, there was a section describing the modes of participation. In addition, you received a Chapter booklet (*Chapter 2025 and Its Transformative Potential*), which described the various modes of participation and expectations of each. Please review the video and booklet material before completing the Modes of Participation form. What follows is an abbreviated version of what was detailed in the video and Chapter booklet.¹ To view video click on this link: [Video on Vimeo](#). Password is fsachapter.

¹ Note that the following description of modes of participation, and the responsibilities for each, comport with your General Chapter Guidelines (see page. 3 – 4).

Modes of Participation: General Description

Supportive Participant

Participation in this mode indicates a commitment to prayerful support of the entire Chapter Process. As you are able, you are welcome to participate in the Clusters, Assemblies, and Chapter, with the exception of canonical voting. The mode of Supportive Participant is open to novices and all professed members.

Consultative Participant

Participation in this mode indicates a commitment to prayerful support and, as you are able, involvement in the work of Clusters, Assemblies, and Chapter, with the exception of canonical voting. The mode of Consultative Participant is open to novices and all professed members.

The expectation here is more extensive participation in the *work* of Chapter than is asked of Supportive Participants. Yet, because of personal limitations in your willingness, ability, or availability, you find that you either do not wish to be, or cannot fulfill all the requirements to be a Deliberative Participant. There may be times when Consultative Participants vote on non-canonical matters or provide leanings and consultative input to Deliberative Participants

Deliberative Participant

Participation in this mode indicates a commitment to be engaged in ALL Chapter work and gatherings. This includes individual prayer and completing Chapter tasks, as well as participating in Clusters, Assemblies, working groups, and Chapter. Additionally, the Deliberative Participant is required to be physically present at Chapter. This mode of Deliberative Participant is open to all professed members. This mode of participation allows participants to vote on canonical matters (e.g., elections).

Finding Your Place at the Table

What follows is a reminder of some of the caveats and conditions we've shared before, along with a suggested process for completing the Mode of Participation form. Please reflect, dialogue, and discern with others before completing the form.

Caveats and Conditions

This Chapter will be most effective to the degree that every sister participates as much as she is willing and able, not any more or less. This Chapter will be most effective, not if everyone is a Deliberative Participant who votes during the election, but if every sister finds her best place at the table and her most suitable mode of participation, whatever that happens to be.

We need your honest self-assessment regarding your ability and availability. Anything less will compromise your personal effectiveness and, hence, the overall effectiveness of Chapter.

Some people choose to be minimally involved in Chapter or let other commitments in their family or ministry supersede Chapter. This, too, will compromise the overall effectiveness of Chapter. We need everyone to participate to the best of her ability, no more or less.

According to the LCWR Reference Guide for Canonical Governance, to continue to hold a Chapter, a Congregation must make an honest determination if it has a critical mass of members who possess:

1. Skill sets needed for being a Deliberate Participant
2. Age, health (includes memory and hearing), and the energy, needed to be a Deliberate Participant
3. Ability to work with the chapter process and consensus building
4. Commitment and openness to act for the Congregation's common good instead of one's personal agenda or individual interests.

These are the kinds of caveats and conditions we would ask you to reflect upon as you consider how best to participate in Chapter.

In addition, as we shared in the video and Chapter booklet, we want to deemphasize "voting" and being a Deliberative Participant as the best way to participate. Instead, we

want to stress that the best way for you to participate in Chapter is in whatever mode works best for you. There are hundreds of ways for you to express your voice and contribute to Chapter. Voting is but a small fraction of Chapter participation. If you can find your place at the table and this maximizes your personal effectiveness, then this is what will improve the overall effectiveness of the Chapter.

Step 1: Assess your own willingness, ability, and availability for engaging in the work of Chapter.

Willingness

Your personal desire to participate is most important. Where do you find yourself on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being apathetic, and 5 being highly motivated to participate? Reflect on your motivation and the reasons for your ranking of your motivation. Be honest with yourself and then rate your personal level of motivation.

Ability

If you are motivated to participate, it is also important to assess your ability to participate. No one likes experiencing or even acknowledging their limitations. Yet it is essential for you to accurately assess your abilities so that you can be personally successful and contribute to the success of the entire Chapter body. You will need to have the *emotional* and *physical stamina*, as well as the *cognitive capacity* to carry out certain tasks of Chapter.

Emotional Stamina: Reflect upon your recent experience of the Congregational Gathering, Cluster gatherings, or other meetings. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you assess your emotional stamina, with 1 being highly stressed and overwhelmed, and 5 being completely at ease and resilient in handling whatever stress may have emerged. Maybe you shut down, ate or drank too much, became irritable or couldn't sleep, or maybe you took it all in stride.

Physical Stamina: Reflect upon your recent experience of the Congregational Gathering, Cluster gatherings or other meetings. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you assess your physical stamina, with 1 being highly exhausted and worn out, and 5 being energized, or perhaps tired from the work, but overall handling well

whatever demands may have emerged. Maybe you got sick or had a hard time recovering, or maybe you took it all in stride and recovered quickly.

Cognitive Capacity: This is perhaps the most sensitive and subjective of all areas of ability. Most of us hate to admit that we aren't as sharp as we used to be. Yet, the effects of aging are as real and relevant here as they are with our physical and emotional stamina. We know that normal aging is not a disease, but normal aging does impact our vision, hearing, memory, attention span, speed of processing, ability to learn new and complex tasks, or to abstract, organize, and plan, just to name a few changes that occur. The question here is what your own assessment is of your own cognitive capacity?

Once again, be as honest as you can. Reflect upon your recent experience of the Congregational Gathering, Cluster gatherings, or other meetings. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you assess your cognitive capacity, with 1 being significantly less than it used to be and making it hard for you to follow, understand, and make solid sense of material used at gatherings, and being nearly as sharp as you've always been (perhaps with a little slower processing time).

Availability

Whatever your willingness and ability might be, what challenges might your calendar present with regard to your availability to do the personal work of Chapter and participate in the gatherings? Here is a list of currently scheduled Chapter related gatherings. In addition to these gatherings, there will be personal homework involved before and after each gathering.

- Cluster/Small Group Meetings: September 15 – November 1
- Regional Gatherings: November 22 – 23
- Regional Gatherings: January 10 – 11
- Invitation to Discern Leadership: February
- Discernment Retreat I: March 6 – 9 in Tampa
- Regional Gatherings: March 27 – 30
- Discernment Retreat II: May 15 – 18 in Tampa
- Local Community/Small Group Meetings: May 21 – June 8
- Chapter: July 27 – August 3

Step 2: Discern with at least one other person

Recall that, in the introductory video and Chapter booklet, we emphasized the value of *communal discernment*. This is not to deemphasize the need for personal discernment. Rather, this is to add the gifts and wisdom that are particular to communal discernment. It is for that reason we are encouraging you to meet and discern with others.

After you have done your own prayer and reflection about your own *willingness, ability, and availability*, gather with one or more sisters and/or others. Alternatively, you might wish to meet with someone in leadership, a councilor, or spiritual director. Share the fruits of your reflection, ask for their “feedback” (recalling the CARE skills), and invite a conversation to further your discernment.

We recognize that this kind of conversation invites you to be open and vulnerable with others. This initial discernment exercise regarding your mode of participation is the first of many such efforts in communal discernment we will be using throughout the journey of Chapter. May your efforts build trust, bring wisdom, and strengthen your sense of being in-it-together.

Step 3: Send in the form

Please complete this process and send in the attached Modes of Chapter Participation form.

Complete this form by November 18, 2024 by entering the information in the Chapter 2025 Portal ([2025 Chapter Portal](#)) or send by email to Claire Majot at claire.majot@fsallegany.org or mail to the attention of Claire Majot at P. O. Box W, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778.