



### **Update on the Project of the Archives of the General Administration**

**ROME** - In December 2016 the project concerning the archives of the General Administration has started. Noortje Lambrechts, an archivist of KADOC, the Documentation and Research Center for Religion, Culture and Society of KU Leuven (<http://kadoc.kuleuven.be/english>), has been assigned to the project, which is centered around two main parts.

The first part entails the making of an inventory of the historical archives and also includes the so-called historical library. The main aims are to increase the accessibility of the archives for members of the Congregation worldwide and also to insure that the heritage will be preserved in good conditions for future generations. The second part of the project focuses on the functioning of the current administration. Standardization of work processes and the application of some rules and guidelines for the management of the digital archives are crucial here.

As soon as the works began, attention was given to the historical archives. In December last year the archivist started exploring the archives in order to distinguish its different parts. This is an essential step in the making of an archival scheme, a kind of classification, which functions as the base of the inventory. This archival scheme is based on the historical functioning of the General Administration of the Congregation. The final product of the work will be an inventory. In order to come to this point, however, all archival records have to be described and are given a unique number. During the process the archivist makes use of specialized software and is applying international archival standards. Besides describing, attention is also given to the physical condition of the archives. For long-term preservation all materials that can cause damage to the archives (such as plastic, metal etc.) have to be

removed. Subsequently, the archives are being packaged in acid-free materials, such as folders and boxes, specifically intended for the protection of archives.

Another aspect is the digitalization of important parts of the archives, for instance the manuscripts of the founder or different versions of the constitutions. Importantly, the digital copies of the original archival documents will be opened up to the members of the Congregation worldwide. Access will be much easier and at the same time the original archival records don't have to be handled anymore. A final step concerns the historical library. Its content will be listed by a volunteer and later on decisions will be made regarding the destination of the books.

The second part of the project is focusing on the functioning of the current administration. A lot of attention will be payed to the digital working environment. Right from the creation of documents measures can be taken which will facilitate work and which will also simplify the transfer of documents to the archives in the future. It is recommended to follow some general rules and guidelines during the phases of creation and of saving documents. These rules and guidelines refer to the naming of the document and also to the place they are digitally saved on the computer. For the latter, we make use of a central classification system based on the functions and activities of the General Administration. The advantages of such a classification are that it is logical and stable over time. It is a lot more clear if all members work according to the same classification, instead of using their own personal system. It is possible to apply this classification of the General Administration (after some adaptations) to the lower levels of the Congregation, such as the Provinces. Special attention will be given to e-mails. These messages form part of the archives of the Congregation and as such they should be preserved for the future. Concerning the digital archives, a manual with rules and guidelines will be written by the archivist to put at the disposal of the members of the General Administration.

Overall the project will take about two years to finish. At the General Chapter in May a more detailed explanation about the project will be given, focusing on software, digitalization, the archival scheme... The project is being monitored by a Steering Committee consisting of representatives of the Congregation (Superior General F. Santino, Secretary General F. Bala, F. Rey and F. Efrem) and of KADOC-KU Leuven (Director Jan De Maeyer, Head of the Archival Department Godfried Kwanten and archivist Noortje Lambrichts).