



Institute of the Brothers
of the Christian Schools

Bulletin n° 251 - 2007

44th General Chapter

Rome, 30th April - 2nd June, 2007



The **Logo** for the 44th General Chapter has been designed by **Brother Felipe de Jesús Ocádiz Luna** from Cristóbal Colón School, Mexico City, Mexico. District of South Mexico.

"1. The lines that form the star are of varying degrees of thickness to signify the diversity of identities within the Lasallian Family: Brothers, Sisters, members of the Signum Fidei Fraternity, Catechists, teachers, partners, volunteers, students, former students, parents, affiliated members, benefactors, all those associated with us in various ways...The thicknesses are different, but all the lines are white, all the lines converge, they are all united by the same charism to build God's Kingdom together.

2. The star that is formed is not a perfect one. It is true that God has chosen us as a Lasallian Family to carry out one mission. In fact, the project, the "horizon" for this mission does form one, perfect star and we are trying to reach that star despite our faults. It is up to each of us (whom Capitulants will represent and then from the Horizons and the Lines

of action coming from the Chapter itself) to adjust, re-direct, and adapt our commitment to achieve that perfect star. The logo, therefore, is not finished; it is in process just as we are in our fulfilling the mission entrusted to us by the Church.

3. The meaning of the four colors in the background: green stands for Ordinary Time, the time of the Spirit, a time of hope, we go forward together in and with hope. The blue color stands for the sea, the wide-ranging sea in which we exercise the Lasallian mission. In this sea we raise sails, the logo itself is a bit curved to give the idea of a boat's sail filled by the wind, and we launch ourselves out to sea, "so that one commitment led us into the next one without having foreseen this in the beginning". The two green colors and the two blue colors show that the Capitulants come from the four cardinal points around the world

4. Above the sail propelled by the wind of the Spirit is the Lasallian star which also recalls Stella Maris...Mary always present in life and in the progress of the Lasallian vessel. "Associated to build the Kingdom of God, journeying together in hope."

November 2007

Brothers of the Christian Schools

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Some articles of this Bulletin were already translated by the translators team during the General Chapter.



Introduction

The 44th General Chapter was a deeply moving experience of God within the structure of the Institute. The enormous richness of this experience cannot be expressed only in the documents approved by the Assembly and reviewed by the General Council which will constitute *Circular 455*. We wanted to share, as far as possible, the richness of the process itself, which could be overlooked much like one may see only the tip of an iceberg and miss what is actually beneath: the quality of the Chapter preparation, the persons involved, the ideas that echoed, the tensions and conflicts, details small but beautiful, joy and sadness of our gathering.

Keeping in mind the enormous richness of thought, feelings, and experience, it was difficult to decide what should be included in this Bulletin. Those ideas that had a major impact in the Chapter process and that were expressed in the documents are what were included. An effort was made to show the human reality of the Chapter process, highlighting personal and community experiences that showed through in a special way in the sensitivity of the capitulants. In the process of integrating and drafting this Bulletin, we tried to make its reading enjoyable and we hope to capture the interest of the readers.

Thanks to technology and by means of the Institute web site, many Lasallians throughout the world were able to follow the development of the Chapter. It would be impossible to place here all the materials in terms of photographs, documents, chronicles, video, and news that appeared on the web site. Nevertheless, we did want to offer to the public in general an idea of what took place; to try to present those documents from the Institute web site to those who were not able to view them; to read, reflect, and to make practical the final texts presented in *Circular 455* available also on the Institute web site.

This Bulletin begins with a description of the preparation of the Chapter: the Preparatory Commission, the preparatory documents and the contributions of the

Brothers and communities. Following this, there is a listing of the persons who were involved in the Chapter: the Capitulants, the officers elected by the Chapter and the support personnel. This is followed by a section entitled "Behind the Scenes of the General Chapter" which provided useful and interesting information. A description of the central part of the General Chapter then follows: the opening addresses, the Chapter process phase by phase, the chronicle of the Chapter, Chapter outcomes, and an overview of the experience of the 44th General Chapter. The section on the Chapter process includes the work that was done during the first phase; texts, abstracts, or outlines of the conferences given during the second phase; the guidelines given for the period of discernment during the third phase; and finally the priority themes, elections, and other decisions during the fourth phase. The chronicle of the Chapter completes the vision of the Chapter experience from a more anecdotal perspective. The documents drawn up by the Chapter are presented in summary form since the texts in their entirety will be found in *Circular 455*. The final section of this Bulletin includes the words of thanks to the outgoing General Council, the farewell message and the words of commissioning by Brother Superior and the Prayer of the Chapter.

Rekindling the dream of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, being witnesses of hope, living passionately for Christ and for humanity, committing ourselves more deeply to the educational mission shared by Brothers, Associates, and partners was the grace that we sought for this General Chapter. May the Lord grant now to all Lasallians his Spirit of wisdom and strength, of boldness and fidelity, to make real that which our Brother Capitulants have so carefully and enthusiastically envisioned and which they now propose to us.

Fraternally,

Brother Lorenzo González Kipper
Secretary General

1

General Chapter Preparation – from its announcement to its conclusion

1. The Preparatory Commission

Appointment of the Preparatory Commission

In Circular 453, "Announcement of the 44th General Chapter" dated June 24, 2006, Brother Superior appointed the Preparatory Commission to insure the preparation of the Chapter as indicated in the Rule, 105a.

The members of the Commission were named:

- Brother Stefano Agostini, District of Italy
- Brother Francis Carr, District of the Midwest
- Brother Carlos Gómez, District of Bogota
- Brother Lorenzo González Kipper, Secretary General
- Brother Peter Iorlano, District of Long Island-New England
- Brother Armin Luistro, District of the Philippines
- Brother Jean-François Morlier, District of France
- Brother Edgar Nicodem, District of Porto Alegre
- Brother Pierre Ouattara, District of West Africa
- Brother Luis Timón, District of Madrid

The first task that was given to the Preparatory Commission was to "pay special attention to the numerous documents that, as available resources, Districts or Regions have sent or will send to Rome."

1st Meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the General Chapter. September 12 - 23, 2005

The Preparatory Commission discussed, at its first meeting, how to:

1. Generate in interactive preparatory process for the Chapter (Recommendation 37 from the 43rd General Chapter).
2. Propose an alternative Chapter model.
3. Choose a model of listening and dialogue, both with the Brother Superior and his Council and with the various areas and Brothers of the Institute.

By consensus, Brother Carlos Gómez was chosen as the Coordinator of the Commission and Brother Lorenzo González was selected as secretary.

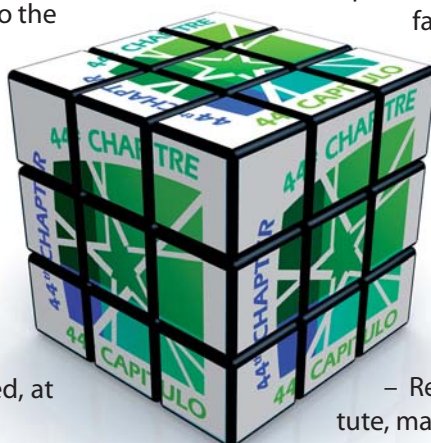
Discussion of the Commission during its first meeting.

The basic questions were:

- What processes have emerged to determine fundamental needs and themes?
- What are the most urgent themes and the greatest challenges that the Institute must face today?

The main ideas that emerged were:

- The identity of the Brother today.
 - Emphasis on the Gospel dimension, the Gospel face of our lives.
 - The quality of our community life.
 - Formation and accompaniment of young Brothers.
 - The basic guideline of "Together and By Association" in and for the educational service of the poor. A fresh look at the urgent needs of children and the young.
- Restructuring the Regions of the Institute, management on different Institute levels.



- Responding to a reality and an experience of an Institute that is aging.
- The Exodus approach, as a trait of our processes and our decisions.

The process envisaged:

- A central focus that would look upon Gospel discernment that goes beyond a strategy for decision making.
- An awareness that the world has changed, the Institute has changed and the conviction that today's world is the best space that God offers to us today.
- A process that includes having a perspective and a frame of mind regarding the Exodus experience: self-sacrifice, leaving the past behind, responding to challenges, discerning horizons.
- A process that fosters maximum participation and promotes consensus.

With all this in mind, two interactive methods were examined: The Jousse method and a method of theological reflection.

Dialogue with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

They were holding their own General Chapter in the Generalate. Their Liturgy Commission was an inspiration for the Preparatory Commission because:

- There was a daily dynamic in terms of spirituality and liturgy which responded to the rhythm of the Chapter.
- The centrality of the Word of God was an inspirational source throughout the entire Chapter process.
- Signs and symbols were used and they represented the dynamics of the Chapter.
- Attention was paid to inter-cultural awareness at times of prayer and liturgy.

The Process of Preparation for the General Chapter.

An alternative type of Chapter using consensus-building methods demands a new process for its preparation. The main ideas included listening to various voices, fostering broad participation, and dialogue.

The Preparatory Commission invited Brother Superior and his Council and those in charge of the various services at the Center of the Institute to dialogue about District trends, fears, hopes, need and challenges, and alternative methodologies used at District Chapters.

Thanks to these exchanges, the Preparatory Commission had a greater awareness of:

- The richness of Lasallian experience in today's world,



the importance of the mission but at the same time an awareness of the difficult situations due to the lack of vocations in various sectors of the Institute and the aging of the Brothers, especially in those places.

- The importance of taking an in-depth look at the identity of the Brother and his mission today which is shared with other Lasallians.
- The transcendence of the 2006 International Assembly.
- The need for preparatory documents for the 44th General Chapter, for discussion, exchanges, and the direct preparation for the Chapter.

As a result of these discussions, the Preparatory Commission decided to have its first contact with Brother Visitors in order to:

- Request information from them
 - on topics, needs, challenges, and trends in their Districts and in the Region.
 - on special Lasallian groups with whom to set up exchanges.
 - on their experience in applying a system of consensus-building in their meetings.
- Motivate and ask them for their support in fostering the participation of all the Brothers in the preparation of the Chapter and to request that they send their ideas to the Center of the Institute.

2nd Meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the General Chapter. February 12 - 25, 2006.

Theme and methodology of the Chapter.

Based on input from the Districts, the Commission drew up a first draft of slogan, theme, and icon suggested for the Chapter:

- Witnesses of Hope and Prophets of Solidarity

- What it means to be a Brother today: the identity of the Brothers
- The Exodus, symbol of our Exodal Lasallian journey to convert ourselves to the God of Life in our association for the educational service of the poor.

Discussion on the Exodus.

Brother Álvaro invited the Commission to reflect on how important it is that the Institute consider itself to be in God's plan, a people of God, called to have life, life in abundance, and to share this life. As an iconic image, to think about the Exodus tabernacle, the tent which expresses mobility, uncertainty, process, journey. The tent that indicates the relationship with God and with other persons on the journey.

On retreat at the Casa del Divin Maestro in Ariccia, Italy, the Preparatory Commission continued its discussion on the relationship between the Exodus experience and the life of the Institute:

- We are pilgrims, journeying together, there is still a great distance to be traveled, there is darkness and the road is not clear.
- We are travelers with God, with our brothers, and in service of both.
- The Exodus means going out, rooting up the old, it means uncertainty and incertitude. Going out of oneself in service of the Brothers.

We reached a consensus on some of the desired outcomes of the Chapter:

- To define the figure of the Brother today and for the future.
- To articulate the Brother's life with the other members of the Lasallian family.
- To act in faith. To nourish our zeal. To make decisions. To reorganize the Institute, to set up the leadership that is required, above all based on what the Brother is today and the mission in the Lasallian family.
- To perceive the inspiration of the Exodus, no so much as a response to this or that problem, but to reach a certainty that the journey is the response and not the goal to be achieved.

The Phases of the Chapter.

We looked for ways to articulate what we had received, heard, discussed and prayed over and little by little we fleshed out the stages or phases of the General Chapter.

Circular 454, "Convocation of the General Chapter" dated April 30, 2006, was published a few months after our meeting and it confirmed the Objectives and Phases of the General Chapter, as proposed by the Preparatory Commission.

3rd Meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the General Chapter. November 6 - 10, 2006.

The third meeting was briefer but it was rich in discussion and results. There was significant discussion with the General Council and major agreement on the points treated.

The Elements of the Chapter.

- The Chapter Slogan: "Associated to Build the Kingdom of God, Journeying Together in Hope."
- The Chapter's Biblical Icon: the theme of Exodus.
- A Prayer for the Chapter drawn up by the Preparatory Commission itself.
- Studying the Handbook for the 44th General Chapter based on the Handbook of the 43rd General Chapter. Suggestions were made and a first draft was drawn up.
- A Chapter Budget was opened.

Previewing the Chapter Activities and Chapter Committees

In particular:

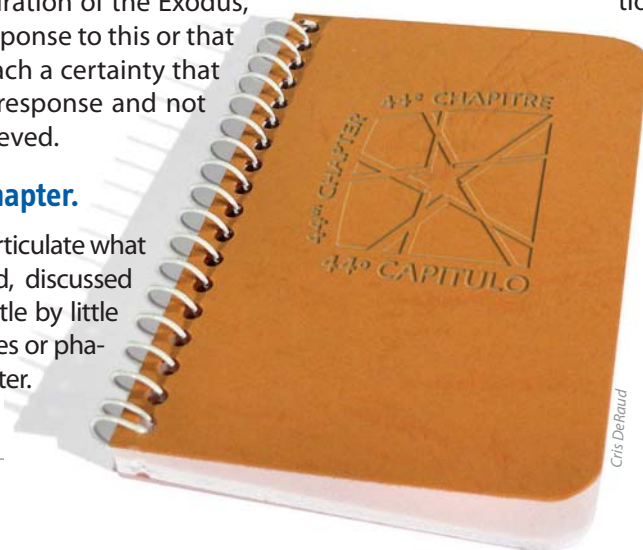
- Keynote speakers and their topics. The inclusion of the report of the International Assembly; how the third phase (discernment) will happen at the Generalate.
- Committees of Facilitators, Listening and Writing, Liturgy, Communication. Teams of Translators, Session Secretaries, and the Chapter Historian.

Representation in the General Chapter.

There was discussion on the importance of participation in the General Chapter of different sectors of the Institute and, in a special way, of young Brothers. Brother Superior was presented with suggestions regarding this point.

Procedures to ensure an interactive process in the preparation of the Chapter.

In addition to Notes, a system of Contributions and Shared Reflec-



Cris DeRaard

tions was envisaged and these could be sent up until March 30, 2007.

4th Meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the General Chapter. February 17 - 23, 2007.

At its fourth meeting the Commission benefitted from the presence of the recently appointed Facilitators and representatives from the Listening and Writing Committee and the Liturgy Committee.

Looking at the contributions from the Brothers for the work of the Chapter.

The Brothers on the Preparatory Commission summarized the Notes received and began to look at the Collaborations and Shared Reflections that were available to them.

The Phases of the General Chapter were decided and the schedule was revised.

The Handbook of the 44th General Chapter.

After looking at its previous work, the Commission decided that the Handbook needed to be rewritten in order to respond to the expectation of an *"alternative Chapter."* To do this rewriting, a small committee was appointed to rewrite the Handbook of the 44th General Chapter in six sections. These six sections were approved by the entire Commission.

Letter of welcome from the Preparatory Commission

1. The Chapter process.
2. Definition of terms.
3. Practical information.
4. Procedures for decision making.
5. Rule for the election of Brother Superior, Brother Vicar, and the Brother Councillors.

The Meeting with the Communication Commission.

Brothers José Antonio Warletta and Roch Dufresne presented the communication program. Along with them, we clarified and broadened the program: the visual presentation on the Exodus process; the Institute web site before, during and after the General Chapter; daily communication to the Lasallian world; videos and photographs, communication with outside media.

Practical Issues:

There was discussion about and planning for:

- a) The system to be used for various booklets that would serve as references for the printed materials that would emerge during the General Chapter.
- b) The content of the first booklets *"Information for Capitulants"* and *"Handbook of the 44th General Chapter."*
- c) Guidelines for the printing of texts: Minutes, Letters of Credence, ballots for voting...
- d) Some logistics: constitution of small groups and their location in the Generalate, places for recreation, seating and identification in the Aula Magna.
- e) Materials that would be given to the Capitulants.

After the Meetings...

The Brothers on the Preparatory Commission continued their work of preparation in March and April 2007 before the General Chapter. One week before the opening of the General Chapter the Brother Capitulants who were also members of the Preparatory Commission gathered at the Generalate to finish and to fine-tune some details as well as they could in order to complete the task that Brother Superior and his Council had entrusted to them.

2. Preparatory Documents

The 43rd General Chapter stressed the importance of an *"interactive process"* (Recommendation 37) in preparing for the following Chapter. To promote such a process, the General Council planned five documents in *"Toward the 44th General Chapter."*

– **Document 1:** a DVD entitled *"Together and By Association for the Educational Service of the Poor."* This was the result of discussions of the Brothers during the Intercapitular Meeting in May 2004. This DVD had as

its objective to promote individual reflection and group study on the theme of association for the educational service of the poor.

– **Document 2:** *"Regarding the work of the 'Ad Hoc' Committee on the Rule."* This document was published on October 31, 2005. This was a frame of reference for reflection prior to the 2006 International Assembly and General Chapter.

- **Document 3:** “*Being Brothers Today.*” This was offered to the Institute, not as a finished work or a



report, but as a working instrument, a text that is a “sentinel that urges all the Brothers to take stock of what is most important in their lives as Brothers,” as Brother Superior said in the introduction to the document. Brother Superior said that “the document ‘Being Brothers Today’ is not just a text, but a process that invites to look deeply at our certainties and our convictions about the mystery of being Brothers today in the Church and in today’s world.”

- **Document 4:** “*Report of the 2006 International Assembly.*” The report was published in January 2007 and it was presented by representatives from the Assembly to the Chapter Assembly on May 5, 2007.
- **Document 5:** “*Report of the Brother Superior General.*” was published in April 2007 and it provided new elements for community, District, and Regional reflection and exchange.

3. Notes - Contributions - Shared Reflections

“All the Brothers in the Institute are invited to take part in the work of the preparation for the General Chapter” (Rule 110).

To promote the *interactive process* in preparing for the 44th General Chapter, the General Council and the Preparatory Commission offered the following possibilities:

1. Notes for the General Chapter.

Circular 453, “*Announcement of the 44th General Chapter,*” recalled the right of all Brothers and communities to send notes or reports to Brother Superior or to Brother Secretary General for the preparation of the General Chapter. These notes could be sent up until September 1, 2006 (Circular 453, page 21). The notes received were summarized in the three official languages by the Preparatory Commission and they were made available to the Capitulants during the General Chapter.

2. Contributions for the General Chapter.

Regions, Districts and communities or groups of Bro-

thers had the opportunity to send their “*Contributions*” to the General Chapter.

The deadline for the reception of the “*Contributions*” was Saturday, March 31, 2007.

“*Contributions,*” while not translated, were summarized in the three official languages of the Institute, and they were made available to Capitulants during the General Chapter.

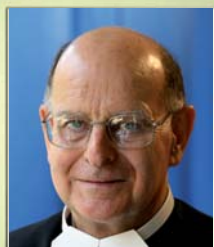
3. Shared Reflections.

Groups of Brothers were invited to share their reflections on Document 2 “*The ‘Ad Hoc’ Committee on the Rule*” and on Document 3, “*Being Brothers Today.*”

The deadline for the reception of the “*Shared Reflections*” was February 28, 2007.

The “*Shared Reflections*” were published on the Institute’s web site and they were printed to facilitate their reading during the General Chapter.

1. The members by Right



Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría
Superior General



William Mann
Vicar General



Miguel Campos
General Councillor



Victor Franco
General Councillor



Marc Hofer
General Councillor



Yemanu Jehar
General Councillor



Juan Pablo Martín Dueñas
General Councillor



Claude Reinhardt
General Councillor

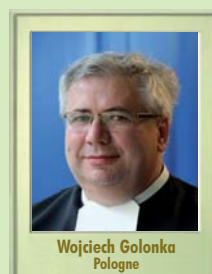
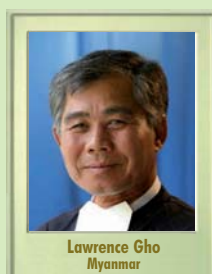
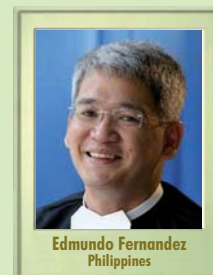
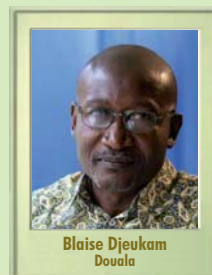
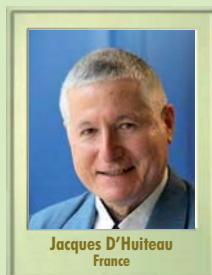
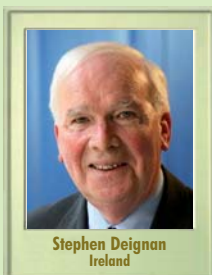
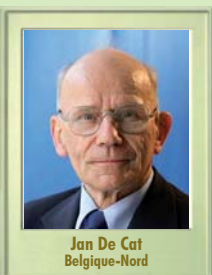
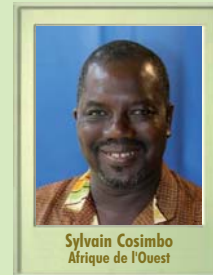
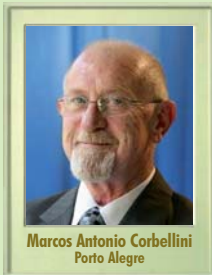
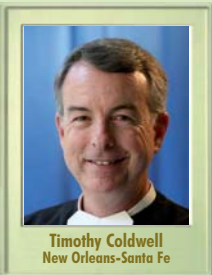
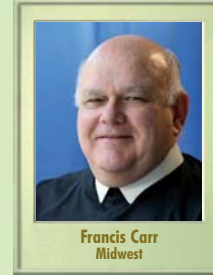
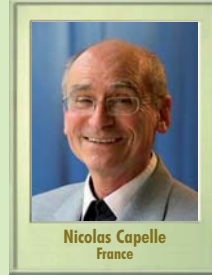
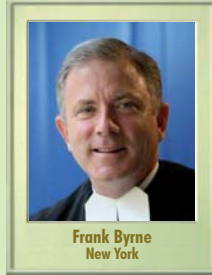
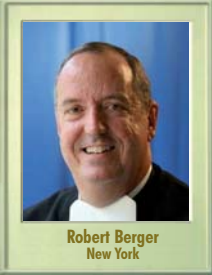
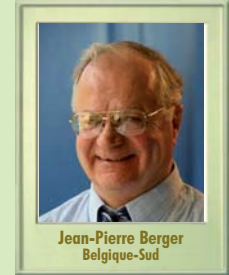
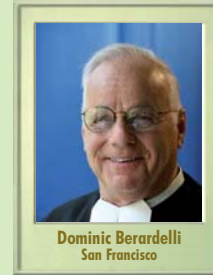
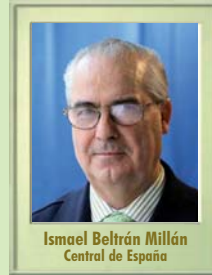
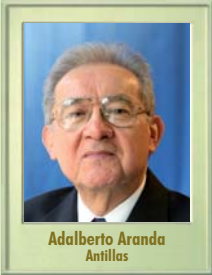
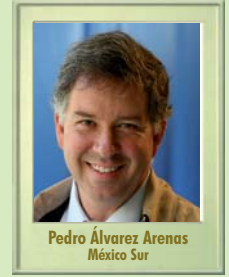


John Johnston
Ex-Superior General

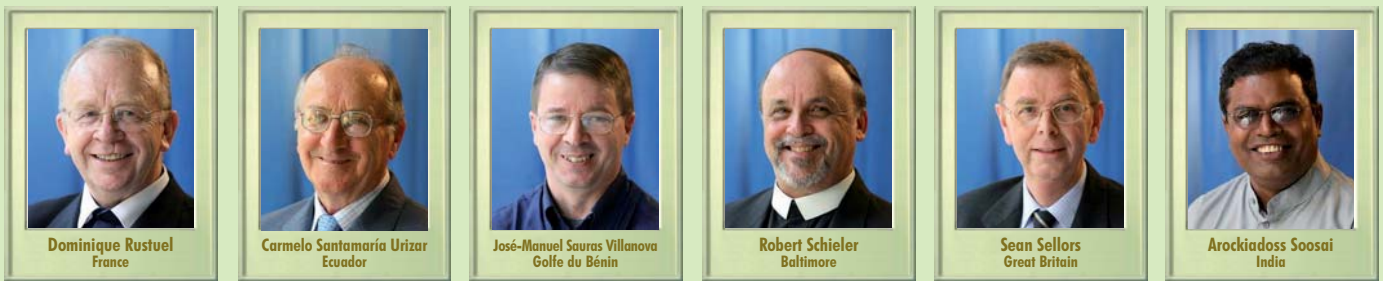


Lorenzo González Kipper
Secretary General

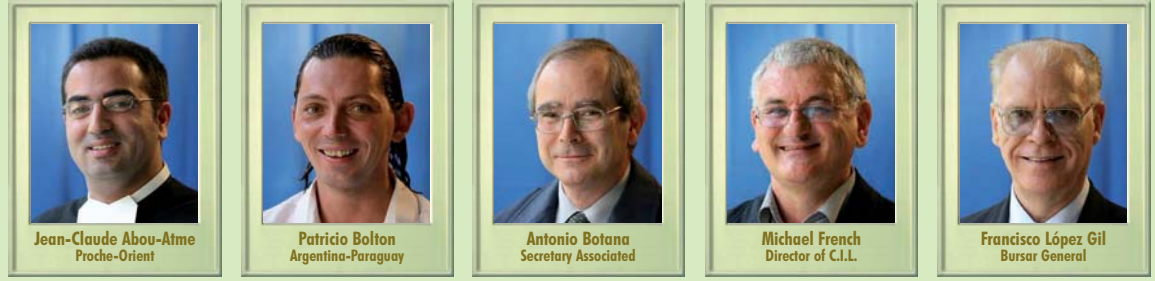
2. The Capitulants elected by the Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations







3. Capitulants designated by the Brother Superior and his Cuoncil



4. Brothers Consultants to the General Chapter, without vote, Designated by Br. Superior and his Council



3

Support Personnel for the General Chapter

1. Officers

1.1 President: Br. Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, Superior General.

1.2 The Central Commission.

On April 30th, 2007, Br. Superior, as President of the Chapter, presented the following Brothers as candidates for the positions of Provisional Coordinator and Provisional Moderators, to be in effect up until May 5, 2007:

- Br. Carlos Gómez, Provisional Coordinator.
- Br. Francis Carr, Provisional English-language Moderator.
- Br. Georges Absi, Provisional French-language Moderator.
- Br. Jon Lezamiz, Provisional Spanish-language Moderator.

The Assembly showed its approval of the proposed candidates with loud applause.

On May 5th, 2007, these same Brothers were accepted by the Chapter Assembly as definitive Coordinator and Moderators of the General Chapter and, therefore, as the Central Commission of the 44th General Chapter along with Br. Lorenzo González Kipper, Secretary General.

Besides these Officers, the Delegates of the three lan-



guage groups were members of the Central Commission for the first three Phases of the Chapter. In the Final Phase of the Chapter the Delegates of the Thematic Groups replace the Delegates of the three language Groups.

1.3 Delegates of the language Groups on the Central Commission.

- Br. Alberto Gómez, Spanish-language Delegate.
- Br. Mamy Olivier Rabarone, French-language Delegate.
- Br. Ambrose Payne, English-language Delegate.

1.4 Delegates of the Thematic Groups on the Central Commission.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Br. Esayas Tzegay Gabir | District of Lwanga | Community Life |
| 2. Br. Antonio Botana | Secretary for Association | Association for the Service of the Poor |
| 3. Br. Jean François Morlier | District of France | Service of the Poor |
| 4. Br. Hilaire Raharilalao | District of Antananarivo | Interior Life and Consecrated Life |
| 5. Br. Domenic Viggiani | District of New York | Pastoral Ministry of Vocations of Brothers and Lay Lasallians |
| 6. Br. Leonardo Tejeiro Duque | Procurator General | Government |

1.5 The following young Brothers were proposed and accepted by the Chapter Assembly as interim Scrutineers:

- Jean-Claude Abou-Atme, Middle East
- Michael Eamon Sanderl, San Francisco, USA/Toronto

- Vicente Ruiz Quintín, Andalucía, REL
- Mamy Olivier Rabarone, Antananarivo RELAF

On May 5th these same Brothers were elected as the official Scrutineers of the General Chapter.

2. Assistants

2.1 Central Office of the General Services for the General Chapter (located in the Library of the Generalate during the time of the Chapter).

- Br. Lorenzo González Kipper, Overall supervision.
- Br. Stephen Tuohy and Ms. María Eugenia González, Assistants for the General Services.
- Br. Peter Gilfedder, in charge of accommodations.
- Br. Jaime Dalumpines, Archives.
- Sister Margareth Avellar and Ms. Leda Simeoni, Secretaries.
- Mr. Fabio Parente, Documentation.
- Mr. Abramo Tesfai, Photocopies and ordinary mail.
- Messrs. Carlos Reveles and Adrián Marrufo, Lasallian Volunteers, internet and computer technicians.

2.2 Facilitators:

- Fr. Dennis Thiessen, SDS.
- Br. Armin Luistro, District of the Philippines.
- Br. Gustavo Ramírez, District de North Mexico.

The principal task of the Facilitators was to advise the Central Commission so that the Chapter, in its different phases, would achieve its objectives.

2.3 The Listening and Writing Committee:

- Br. Alain Houry
- Br. Esteban de Vega
- Br. Donald Mouton

The main task of the Listening and Writing Committee was to help the Capitulants be aware of the dynamics emerging during the Chapter, as well as of the obstacles, tensions, and positions helping or hindering the Chapter process.

The Assembly also asked the Com-

mittee to present Chapter texts in a uniform way, which would eventually be approved definitively by the General Council.

2.4 Liturgy Committee:

- Br. Georges Van Grieken.
- Br. Boniface Fernando.

This committee was aided in its work by Brother Paolo Petri, Timothy Coldwell, and Jean-Luc Lambert.

The principal role of the Liturgy Committee was to integrate the dynamics of the Chapter into the liturgies of the Chapter and to collaborate with the Facilitators in organizing the days of discernment.

2.5 Translators

The team of numerous assured accurate translations, both written and oral, into the three official languages of the Institute: French, English, and Spanish.

Brother Peter Gilfedder coordinated the team of oral translators while Brother Bernardo Montes supervised the team working on written translations.

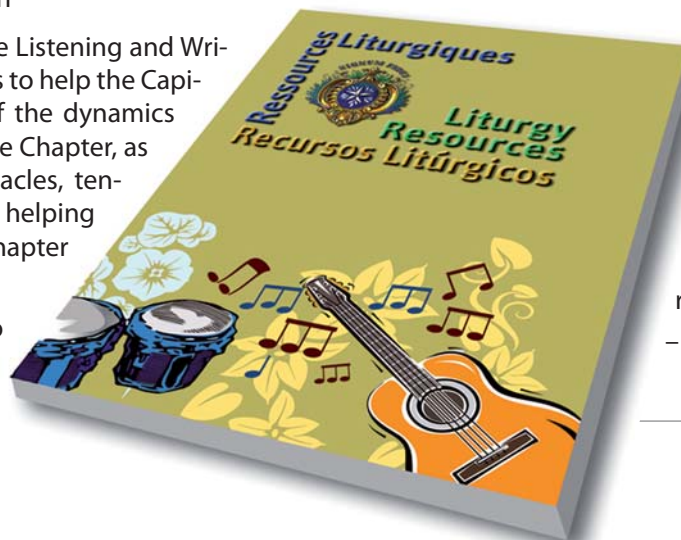
Translators:

- From English to Spanish: Brothers Francisco Martín, Agustín Ranchal, Edwin Arteaga, and José María Bourdet.
- From English to French: Brothers Alain Le Cocq, Jean-Louis Schneider, Philippe De Montety, and Ms. Daniela Persia.

- From Spanish to English: Brothers John Blease, Michael Avila, Gerard Rummery, and Martin Spellman.

- From Spanish to French: Brothers Constant de Wenckstern, Jean-François Morlier, and Leon Lauraire.

- From French to English: Brothers





Aidan Marron, John Guasconi, and Michael Murphy.

– From French to Spanish: Brothers José Martínez, César Pallares, and Jorge Bonilla.

2.6 Secretaries of Sessions, were the following non-Capitulant Brothers.

- Br. John d’Cruz, English
- Br. Alberto Prada, Spanish
- Br. Pierre Kerrien, French

The Secretaries prepared the drafts of the Chapter minute. It was the task of the Chapter Secretary to present the minutes to the Assembly for approval.

Minutes that could not be received by the Assembly because of lack of time were presented to the General Council in September 2007 for approval.

2.7 Communications Committee.

The Communications Committee was made up of:

- Br. José Antonio Warletta: Director of publications. He was in charge of written publications and contact with outside media sources.
- Mr. Luigi Cerchi who worked on written publications.
- Br. Roch Dufresne: photography, videos and the Insti-

tute web site.

– Mr. Paul Wolfing, photography and the Institute web site.

– Mr. Fabio Parente, Institute web site.

– Mr. Paco Fattinnanzi, Institute web site.

The principal role of this committee was to inform Lasallians throughout the world about the progress of the General Chapter.

2.8 Chapter Historian.

Brother Néstor Ferrera was proposed and approved by the Chapter Assembly as the official Chapter Historian. His task was to gather together the Chapter’s internal and external story, thereby recalling the events that marked the running of the Chapter.

2.9 Representatives of the 2006 International Assembly.

The Representatives of the 2006 International Assembly were Mr. Gery Short, Ms. Eveline Geoffroy and Br. Frederick Mueller.

Their main task was to present the work and outcomes of the 2006 International Assembly to the Capitulants.

4

Behind the Scenes

1. Number of Capitulants

112 participated in the 44th General Chapter – 10 by right, 82 elected, 10 appointed and 10 consultants.

2. Of the 82 elected Capitulants, three were unable to attend and they were replaced by their alternates who were:

- Santiago Rodríguez Mancini, District of Argentina-Paraguay.
- Jean-François Morlier, District of France (arrived on May 3rd).
- Dominic Berardelli, District of San Francisco.

3. Capitulants and Previous Chapters.

- Only Br. John Johnston, former Superior General, was participating in this 44th General Chapter as the 5th General Chapter he had attended. He has participated in the General Chapters since 1976.
- Six of the Capitulants who were participating in this General Chapter had participated in the three previous Chapters: Brothers Álvaro Rodríguez (Superior General), José Manuel Agirrezabalaga (Bilbao), Adalberto Aranda (South Mexico - Antilles), Pierre Mourier (France), Aloys Ndimukihe (Rwanda) and Hilaire Raharilalao (Antananarivo).
- 11 Capitulants were participating in this Chapter who had participated in the two previous ones (1993 and 2000).
- 22 Capitulants were participating in this Chapter who had participated in the previous Chapter (2000).
- 72 Capitulants were participating in a General Chapter for the first time.

4. From Consultant to Capitulant with vote.

Br. David Hawke who was participating in the 44th General Chapter as a Consultant, acquired the right of voice and vote at the Chapter on being elected General Councilor on May 30th 2007 at 5:00 PM.

5. Non-Capitulant elected General Councillor.

Br. Gabriel Somé (West Africa) who had not participated either in previous Chapters or in this 44th General

Chapter, was elected General Councilor by the Region of Africa.

6. Languages and interventions of the Capitulants.

Of the 112 Capitulants, 43 were Spanish-speaking, 37 were English-speaking and 32 were French-speaking. That means that 38.39% were Spanish-speaking, 33.04% were English-speaking and 28.57% were French-speaking.

During the Chapter there were numerous interventions (1134), of which 505 were in Spanish(44.53%), 344 in French (30.34%) and 285 in English (25.13%).

7. The Ages of the Capitulants

| Age | Number of Brothers | Percentage |
|---------|--------------------|------------|
| 30 – 45 | 20 | 17.86% |
| 46 – 60 | 53 | 47.32% |
| 61 – 69 | 31 | 27.68% |
| 70 – 75 | 8 | 7.14% |
| Total: | 112 | 100.00% |

The youngest Brother was Br. Jean-Claude Abou-Atme of the District of the Middle East, born on October 14th, 1975, who was 32 years old.

The Dean was Brother Fernando Lambert of the District of French-speaking Canada, born on June 27th, 1932, who was 75 years old.

The average age of the Capitulants was 54.85 years. It is to be noted that in the Chapter of 1984 the average age was 54 and in the Chapter of 1993 it was 55.33.

8. The Regions of the Institute.

From the beginning of the Chapter, mention was made of the five Regions of the Institute: PARC, RELAF, RELAL, RELEM (the new Lasallian Region of Europe and the Mediterranean which includes the previous Region of REL and the Mideast District, in accord with an agree-

ment made by the Brother Visitors of the Region with the support of Brother Superior) and USA/CANADA (although it has yet to be determined if the District of French-speaking Canada will be part of this Region). At the time of the elections, each of these five Regions gathered to specify needs and to define the role of the Regional General Councillor.

9. The Official Register of the 44th General Chapter consisted of 4 Acts signed by all the Capitulants. These were the Constitutive Act of the 44th General Chapter, the Act of the Election of the Brother Superior General, the Act of the Election of the Vicar General and of the Councillors for the Regions and the Councillors Resident in Rome and the Act of Closure of the 44th General Chapter.

10. The Minutes of the 44th General Chapter were 30 in all. The Capitular Assembly approved the first 14 Minutes and confided to the General Council the approval of the remaining 16 (Minutes 15 - 30).

11. The Biblical Icon which inspired the work of the Chapter was the icon of the Exodus: we are searchers who are walking towards the Promised Land.

12. The Opening Ceremony of the General Chapter.



April 30th, 2007 began with the three language groups walking from different points of the property and congregating in the Generalate vestibule. From there, after words of welcome and exhortation from the Superior General, they advanced like the ancient People of God, across the Red Sea to the "tabernacle of the Lord." Brother Superior carried a staff (a gift from the District of the Philippines), just as Moses did in earlier times. The central corridor was covered with drapes to symbolize the Red Sea. The Chapel was decorated as the Tabernacle of the Exodus. Assembled there, the Capitulants began the mission which the Lord had

confided to them.

13. The Handbook of the Members of the 44th General Chapter.

The Handbook presented by the Preparatory Commission contained five chapters:

1. The Chapter Process.
2. Definitions (of terminology and of responsibilities).
3. Practical information (for the development of the Chapter).
4. Decision making.
5. The norms for the elections of Brother Superior, Brother Vicar and the Councillors.

After some discussion and some modifications it was approved by the Chapter Assembly.

14. Report of Brother Francisco López, Bursar General.

Brother Francisco López presented – in a clear and lively manner much appreciated by the Capitulants – the financial situation of the Institute over the course of the previous seven years in regard to:

- The economic administration of the Institute.
- The budget and expenses of the Generalate.
- The documents prepared by the International Economic Council for the service of the Districts.
- The establishment of an Endowment Fund.
- Senior Brothers and retirement funds.
- Property and the administration of institutions.

15. The official Chapter Documents were 11 in all: eight documents on Priority Themes, produced by the Thematic Groups; three documents drawn up by the Listening and Writing Committee (messages to the Brothers and to the Lasallian Family and the Chapter summary document "*Being Brothers Today*":





With Eyes Open and Hearts Burning”). The 11 documents were discussed, worked on and finally approved by the Chapter Assembly.

16. The Eucharist occupied a central and privileged place during the Chapter.

- Festive celebrations in the Sanctuary of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

- More intimate celebrations organized by the language groups.
- Prolonged periods of nightly vigils, especially during the period of discernment of the Priority Themes and prior to the election of the Superior and the General Council.
- During the closing liturgy of the Chapter on Saturday, June 2nd, the Vigil of the Feast of the Holy Trinity, the Brother Capitulants – in language Groups – renewed their Vows.

17. Audience with the Pope.

Because of the current policy of the Vatican which does not have private audiences, the Capitulants went to the General Audience of Wednesday, May 30th. Brother Superior made a gift to the Pope on behalf of the Institute. Pope Benedict XVI personally greeted Brother Superior and stressed: *“Yes, the Brothers of the Christian Schools are very necessary for the Church.”*

18. The Feast of the Founder.

A festive Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Gianfranco Agostino Gardin, OFM, Secretary of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life. After Mass, in the Generalate gardens, there was the blessing of the Statue of the Holy Founder. The statue was a gift from the Brothers of the San Giuseppe School in Turin, Italy, and it was brought from Courmajeur.

19. Regional Festivities.

Aware of the universality of the Institute, the Capitulants enjoyed the evening celebrations offered by each of the Regions. Songs and dances, photos and visual presentations, regional costumes as well as typical beverages and foods helped to create friendship and solidarity among all the Regions of the Institute: PARC (May 2nd), RELEM (May 3rd) USA/Toronto (May 4th), RELAL (May 7th) with RELAF providing the perfect end on May 28th.

20. Two Joyful Evening Celebrations were provided by the Italian Brothers:

- One on May 5th was at Villa Flaminia, organized by the District of Italy.
- The other, on May 30th, was offered by the Brothers from the “La Salle” School and by Brothers Marcellino Zuccari and Roch Dufresne from the Generalate.

21. Outings and get-togethers allowed for informal meetings between the Capitulants. An outing on May

14th allowed for enjoying the natural, cultural and religious beauties of Italy, at the Cistercian Abbey of Casamari (XIII Century), the Benedictine Abbey of Montecassino (founded by St. Benedict in 529), at Gaeta and at Villa Tiberio (Sperlonga). There were other outings by small groups to Assisi, Florence, Siena, Pisa and Subiaco.

22. Some words of thanks.

- Brother Superior expressed his thanks to **Br. John Johnston**, before his return to the United States, for “his presence during the first week of the Chapter, his invaluable service, his kindness, his contributions,” and as a special sign presented him with a medal of St. John Baptist de La Salle. The Chapter broke out in applause and gave him a long standing ovation as a spontaneous display of profound gratitude to the former Superior.
- Br. Superior thanked Brothers **Joan Carles Vázquez**, Regional Coordinator of REL (Lasallian Region of Europe) and **Lawrence Humphrey**, Regional Coordinator of USA/Toronto for the work recently begun in their respective Regions. Their work ended on May 29th 2007 with the election of the new Brother Regional General Councillors.
- Br. Carlos Gómez, Chapter Coordinator, thanked **Br. Superior** during the closing ceremony of the Chapter and, on behalf of the Capitulants, presented him with a framed photo of the meeting between the Superior and Pope Benedict XVI, during the audience of Wednesday May 30th, 2007.
- The Delegates from the 2006 International Assembly expressed their thanks to the Brothers and they expressed their wish that *“the commitment that was begun together continue to be carried on and deepened.”* They repeated what a lay Lasallian had expressed at the 1993 General Chapter: *“The future of Association is irreversible and irresistible. Thanks, Brothers, for your enthusiasm and for your faith as you journey with us.”*

23. Birthdays.

The birthdays of Capitulants which fell during the days of the Chapter were celebrated in a fraternal manner: Brother Iván Mauricio Pinchevsky Vergara, Brother Michael French, Brother Carmelo Santamaría Urizar, Brother David Hawke and Brother José Bianor Gallego Botero.

24. Condolences.

The prayers of the Capitulants were raised to the Lord for those who were called to Him during the time of the General Chapter and for their families and friends:

- May 22nd, an aunt of Brother Santiago Rodríguez Mancini.
- May 23rd, the mother of Brother Antonio Botana.
- May 31st, the father of Brother Hilaire Raharilalao and the father of Brother Daniel Callis Morales of the District of Catalonia.

25. The new mission in the Sudan.

On Friday, May 25th, after supper, there was a presentation of the new project in favor of the Sudan. This project has a double objective: health and education. The Brothers will head the educational area aimed fundamentally at the formation of teachers and catechists.

26. Photos and videos

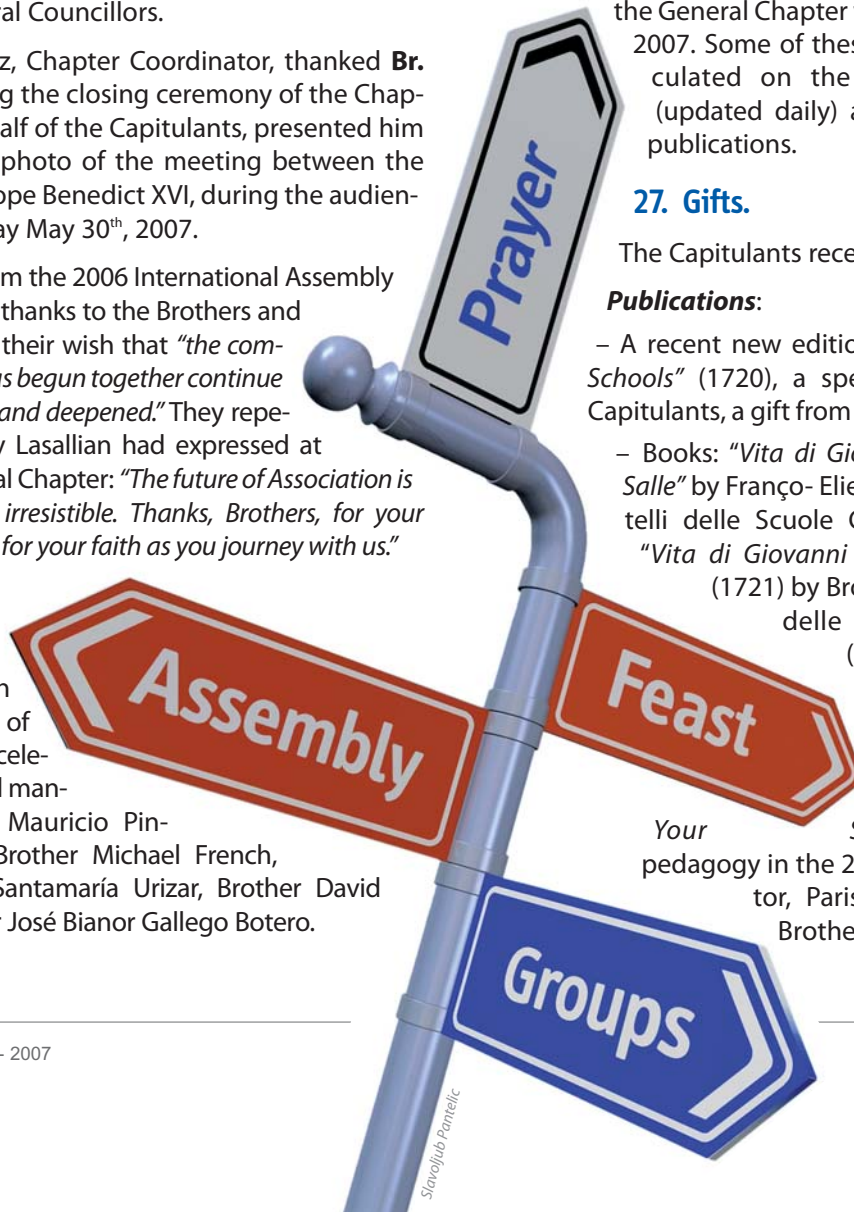
The Communications Committee assured the recording of video and the taking of photos during the General Chapter. The official photograph of the General Chapter was taken on June 1st, 2007. Some of these materials were circulated on the Institute web site (updated daily) as well as in printed publications.

27. Gifts.

The Capitulants received many gifts:

Publications:

- A recent new edition of the *“Conduct of Schools”* (1720), a special edition for the Capitulants, a gift from the District of France.
- Books: *“Vita di Giovanni Battista de La Salle”* by François-Elie Maillefer (1740), Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane (2007) and *“Vita di Giovanni Battista de la Salle”* (1721) by Brother Bernard, Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane (Second Edition 2007). Gifts from the Brothers of Italy.
- The book *“I Want To Go To Your School”* - Lasallian pedagogy in the 21st Century, Ed. Salvator, Paris, 2006. A gift from Brother Nicolas Capelle.



- The book "*Nicolas Roland*", a gift from Brother Rodolfo Meoli.
- The book of José Eijt "*Avec foi et zèle*" – *Le District des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes aux Pays-bays, 1908-2006* Ed. MacDonald/SNN Nijmegen (2006). A gift from the Dutch Brothers.
- The book "*A Passion for Hope , the Charism and Prophecy of the Consecrated Life*", by Brother Alvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, Ed. San Pio X (May 2007), published on the occasion of the 44th General Chapter. A gift from the Brothers of ARLEP (Region of Spain and Portugal).
- "*Reflections on Ageing Brothers*", by the District of Baltimore.
- "*Rivista Lasaliana*" of Catechesis edited by Brother Flavio Pajer.
- A little book with the names and basic information on the Saints, Blessed and Venerable of the Institute. A CD with explanations about the Brothers who have

been canonized. A gift from Brother Rodolfo Meoli, Postulator General.

Various objects:

- Briefcase, T-shirt and pen of the 44th General Chapter, on arrival at the Mother House.
- Artisan work , a gift from the District of Ecuador.
- A personalized pen from the District of Sao Paulo.
- A key ring made on the occasion of the 44th General Chapter and a medallion of Saint John Baptist de La Salle which contains a fragment of fabric which was in contact with the relics of the Founder. A gift from Brother Rodolfo Meoli, Postulator General.
- A CD with the Chapter Documents.
- An artisan key ring from Eritrea, District of Lwanga.
- Various souvenirs from the District of Argentina.
- A flash drive/pen drive with the La Salle logo, from the Region of ARLEP (Region of Spain and Portugal).
- Baseball hats from the USAT Region.







Opening of the 44th General Chapter

Opening address

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, Superior General.

Rome, April 29, 2007



Dear Brothers:

Welcome to our 44th General Chapter. It is wonderful for all of us to be able to meet today, April 29, on the eve of the 356th anniversary of the birth of our Founder – Chapter delegates, consultants and guests as well as another large group of Brothers who will help us in our work during these weeks. I am especially grateful for the presence of Father Dennis Thiessen, SDS, and that of all the lay partners who will help us in so many ways.

At this time I would like to invite all of you, along with myself, to thank the Lord for Brother John Johnston's presence during this first week. The Institute owes Brother John a debt of gratitude that is difficult to repay. Many of the paths that we travel today and many of the themes that will be part of our discernment were initiated or strongly promoted by him, with his openness to the future and his vision of our vocation and mission.

I thank the Brothers on the Preparatory Commission who, with dedication and effectiveness, have spent many hours and a lot of energy in order to facilitate our assembly as we will see in the coming days.

Finally, as the body of the society, we need to feel the spiritual presence of Brothers and so many other members of the Lasallian Family who, all over the world, will take part in the Chapter along with us. Their prayer and their interest in following our day-by-day activities – I am convinced – will be a wonderful support for us which will help us not to forget that we are here as capitulants who represent many Lasallians and we make visible the international character and the diversity of our Institute. We can really feel, as Saint Paul tells us in the Letter to the Hebrews, *that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, therefore let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith* (cf. Hebrews 12: 1-2).

The journey that we have traveled.

As you know, our Assembly has had a great deal of preparation and we have made an impassioned, interactive, and participatory journey. As I recalled in the Report which you have already received, we have many guidelines already, the result of the reflection and the work of many Brothers and Lasallian Associates. Allow me to recall them:

- The contribution of the Ad Hoc Committee that studied the Rule. Not satisfied with a mere cosmetic review, they invite us to consider greater changes

due to changes in the world, the Church, the Institute, in the very heart of the Church as People of God and Communion.

- The Intercapitular Meeting that assessed our efforts to respond to the new forms of poverty and to promote islands of creativity and pedagogical innovation.
- The process set in motion by *Being Brothers Today* which gave rise to a discussion on our identity, and which helped us to discover what it is that disillusion us today and what it is that impassions us.
- The International Assembly on Association for the Lasallian Educational Mission, which was preceded by District and Regional Assemblies, and which afforded us the opportunity to embrace a wonderful experience "together and by association" as Brothers, lay persons, and other Lasallians and which inspired in us new responses to the needs of the young today.
- The Report of Brother Superior and his Council that you may have had the opportunity to read during these last few weeks.
- Finally, I would not want to forget the individual, community, or District notes and reflections that provided us with many convergences and not a few questions.

Why and for what purpose are we here?

In recent years, we have said, and not without good reason, that for us Brothers our first association is the community. I think that a General Chapter, defined as it is in the *Rule as the ultimate expression of the communion that exists among all the Brothers (Rule, 103)*, constitutes the high point of our association. We know the importance that, since the time of the Founder and throughout our history, our assemblies and chapters have had as the most important expression of the body of the society. Therefore, the General Chapter is the privileged place for the manifestation of the Spirit.

A living community in dialogue is the locus par excellence for the presence and the action of the Holy Spirit. The General Chapter, above all, is the occasion when the Institute as a body, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can become aware of itself

and declare to itself what it really is (Declaration, 7), and we should add, what we ought to be.

Important events always generate structures, policies and texts on the one hand, and a spirit on the other hand. Both of these have an influence on the story of these events. But without spirit the event loses its energy and is diluted. More important than the texts from Vatican II, certainly containing a profundity that still has not been exhausted, is its spirit of respect, of dialogue, freedom, hope, solidarity, compassion, returning to Jesus, of the People of God. Today, perhaps, we do not recall many of its texts, but it would be regrettable to have lost its spirit.

Applying this to the history of our Congregation, we can recall that this truth is a part of our most authentic tradition. The two texts that the *Rule* of 1987 wanted to preserve from the original *Rule* of 1718 both had to do with "spirit."

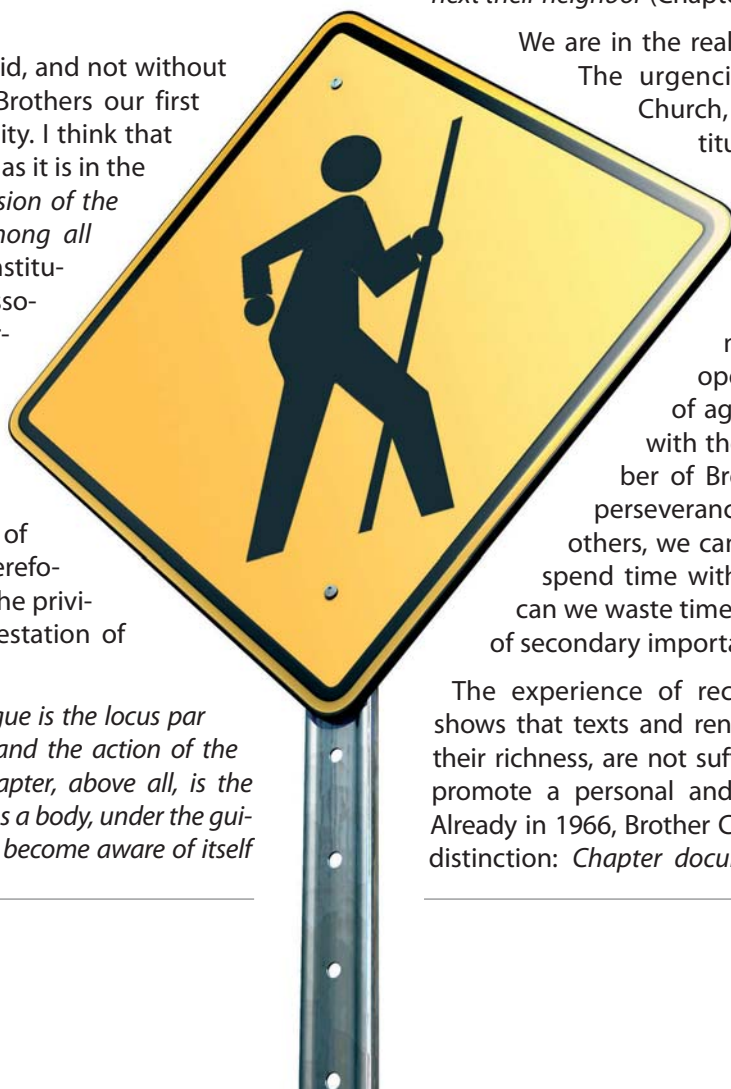
That which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in an Institute is that all who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it (Chapter II).

It is necessary that the Brothers take for the foundation and support of their observance of the Rule what Saint Augustine says at the beginning of his Rule: that those who live in community should, before all else, love God and next their neighbor (Chapter XVI).

We are in the realm of what is essential.

The urgencies of the world, the Church, the situation of the Institute, the change of paradigms we embrace today, the needs of the young, association for the Lasallian educational mission which are all opening up. Given the fact of ageing in certain sectors, with the decrease in the number of Brother vocations or the perseverance of young Brothers in others, we cannot allow ourselves to spend time with the nonessential, nor can we waste time in dealing with what is of secondary importance.

The experience of recent General Chapters shows that texts and renewed structures, for all their richness, are not sufficient in themselves to promote a personal and collective conversion. Already in 1966, Brother Charles Henry made this distinction: *Chapter documents and the General*





Roman Barekko

Chapter itself should not be confused with Institute renewal. Renewal remains to be done; it depends on the common effort of all the Brothers. Ten years later, the following was stated: The Declaration, the Rule and Constitutions seem to be fully valid but insufficiently assimilated and translated into action (Circular 403). Once again, the 42nd General Chapter recognized that we have no need of great and new documents but rather, to reduce the imbalance between what is described in the Rule and the reality that we live. Our last Chapter in 2000, for its part, invited the Brothers to question themselves continually on how, in practice, they are associated among themselves, so that this association may stimulate their growth as persons, their solidarity with others, and their listening to what God says about the community mission, the educational service of the poor, the reason for their association (Circular 447, pages 3 - 4).

As we begin the General Chapter today, it is important that we allow ourselves to be moved by the Spirit, in order to interiorize and embrace the Chapter more as a personal and a communal experience, as a vital, transforming impetus that as a simple exercise in reading texts or in making structural changes. We need to let ourselves be lead by the Spirit to better discover God's plan for our Institute, his Will for us, and the responses that we must give to continue being an instrument of salvation and *witness of hope* for young people, starting from those who are *poor, abandoned, or disoriented*.

It is about renewing our criteria, reviewing our personal and collective syntheses, in order to respond again with creative fidelity and with dynamism to the imperatives of being Brothers today, associated for the Lasallian educational mission, starting from the needs that the globalized world presents to us, respectful of diverse cultures, which today are more present than ever before in our Institute. I imagine that all of us think that fide-

lity does not deny change nor is it an excuse for not being what we ought to be. Fidelity, in fact, demands a firm commitment to the values that define us and direct us; at the same time, it gives us the ability to move ourselves freely, in order to go where we want to be if we wish to be faithful to the charism of our origin.

Our fidelity is the response to the ever-faithful God, who with wisdom and love, as our Founder said, conducts our story of commitment to commitment without knowing what the last word will be nor the last step taken. It deals with fidelity in an ongoing and creative search. It is about, deep down, making a vital synthesis between our *founding experience and historical reality*.

We cannot close ourselves in with the past and live with our backs turned to the realities of today. Certainly, we need to discover and to be faithful to our roots. At the same time, we need to make a similar effort to build up our "antennas" and to respond with creativity to the new problems we face today. Neither can we close in on ourselves and our problems, but we need to look ahead, to respond to the needs of young people today. This is the invitation which comes to us, on the one hand, from last year's Association for the Lasallian Educational Mission Assembly and, I am certain, from the presence of significant representation of our young Brothers.

Where are we willing to journey?

Some think that consecrated life and, therefore, our life as Brothers, is going through what may be termed the Titanic syndrome. Our life is compared to a splendid ship that is sinking and the task is to refloat it. Our Chapter, then, will be a privileged time for this. In an interview with Father Maccise, then President of the Union of Superiors General and Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites, he said that rather than refloating the ship, we have to leave in the lifeboats, taking with us only the essentials: *One saves the essentials when one cannot save everything; then we have to choose what is essential and take it to a safe beach and from there build something again that, in the light of experience, will not become another Titanic that accumulates traditions and institutions because the time will come when it is submerged again.*

For the Founder, as we have seen, what is essential is to keep the spirit which is proper to us alive; the essential is to love God and neighbor. The essential, we can add, is to embrace the Gospel and its values, giving our lives in the educational and evangelizing service of the young who are poor and all those who are entrusted to

our care. It is really about a true Exodal movement that unsettles us, certainly, but which opens us to new horizons and shows us a promising future.

Rather than a ship that is to be refloated, the Chapter asks us to be open and to let ourselves be led by the Spirit, which is like a wind that comes but we do not know from where nor where it goes. *The wind blows where it pleases, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit* (John 3: 8).

The Gospel also tells us that *it is the Spirit that gives life* (John 6: 63). The Chapter should be for us a fountain of living water. It is about choosing life and not death, it is about leaving here strengthened by and with Jesus, to see that all have life and that they have it to the full. It is about an impassioned adventure of love as our Founder and the first Brothers lived it; and as our saintly Brothers and so many Brothers who have preceded us lived it or continue to live it today.

Conclusion

A General Chapter does not automatically have the guarantee of the action of the Spirit. We need to let it act and to ask that it break the obstacles that impede our welcoming it, that it enlighten us in order to be able to discover the signs of God in history, and that it permit us to ask questions in light of its truth, like Mary who kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart (Luke 2: 19). May she accompany us like a mother throughout these weeks. Let us make our own the prayer the Founder invited us to make on the Feast of her Presentation in the temple: *Pray to her to obtain for you from God the grace that your soul may be so well-adorned and so well-disposed to receive the word of God and to communicate it to others, that you may become through her intercession tabernacles of the divine Word* (Meditation 191.3).

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría
Superior General

Homily of Archbishop Michael Miller, CSB

Opening Liturgy (Selections)

Dear Brothers in Christ:

Among the most significant and solemn occasions in the life of your religious community is its coming together in a General Chapter to fulfill the highest responsibility entrusted to you by the Church. Throughout the Chapter you will implore the Holy Spirit for the gifts of prudence and wisdom so that you will be able, with purity of heart and in prayerful discernment, to know what God's will is for the Brothers of the Christian Schools with your specific Lasallian charism of giving a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor, a mission which the Church has entrusted to you.

The Gospel: Jesus as the Gate and Giver of Abundant Life

Jesus came to provide a wayward world with the ultimate answer to the yearnings which God poured into our hearts when he created us. He is "the Life" (John 14:6). He came that we might share in that life (cf. John 10:10) which is the very life of God, a life – called "eternal" – which fulfills all the possible aspirations of the



human heart (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9). This is the ultimate aim of all our apostolic work: to introduce others to this eternal life or, in the words of your Founder, Saint John Baptist de La Salle: "You have been chosen by God to make Jesus Christ known and to proclaim him" (Meditations 87.2).

But if Religious are effectively to preach this liberating message to others in their various tasks of evangelization, they must first, as individuals and as a community, affirm through their prophetic witness the primacy of God and of eternal life. Since its origins, in fact, consecrated life has been marked by this thirst for God. Your first and supreme desire, therefore, should be to witness to the fact that God should be listened to and loved with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength, before any other person or thing. The identity of the consecrated person can only be understood starting from the totality of his commitment, placing everything, in the present and in the future, in the hands of God (cf. John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, 17).

The Reading from Acts: Openness to God's Action and Choice.

It is not difficult to see in this action of the apostolic Church, headed by Peter, an image of a community of consecrated life today – and the new challenges it faces in ensuring the vital identity and continuity of its charism in a global world and multi-cultural societies.

As in the Book of Acts, all depends on the Spirit. Only he can keep alive the freshness and authenticity of an Institute's beginnings, while at the same time stirring up the inventiveness needed to respond to the signs of the times.

Communion Within the Great Lasallian Family.

"To make the Church the home and school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings." (John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43). As Brothers, you are asked to be "true experts of communion and to practice its spirituality as witnesses and artisans of that plan of communion." (John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, 46).

If authentic spiritual and fraternal communion marks your Institute as a whole and the individual religious

houses which comprise it, you will more easily be moved to even greater openness to others, especially your students and fellow teachers. One of the great outcomes of the post-conciliar renewal in religious life has been this emergence of a new type of communion and collaboration within the various states of life especially between consecrated persons and laity. Your cooperation with the laity is based on an ecclesiology of communion, which ought to lead you to share Lasallian spirituality.

Education of the Poor.

From the foundation of your Institute you have dedicated yourselves "to the educational service of the poor."

In living this commitment you are fully in keeping with the Church's desire to serve the marginalized and neglected.

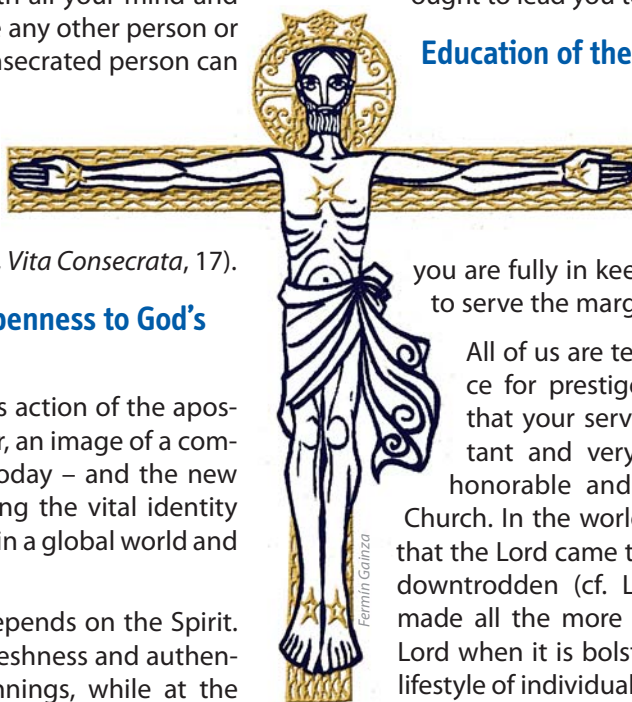
All of us are tempted to exchange this service for prestige and well-being. Be assured that your service of the poor is very important and very much appreciated. It is an honorable and urgent ministry within the Church. In the world of education you remind us that the Lord came to bring the Good News to the downtrodden (cf. Luke 4:16-19). This service is made all the more effective and pleasing to the Lord when it is bolstered by a simple and austere lifestyle of individual Brothers and the Institute as a whole.

Conclusion.

Never forget, Brothers, that your consecrated life is a divine gift, recognized by the Church, and that it is the Lord in the first place who ensures the success of your Institute in accordance with his plans.

Let us pray during this Eucharist that Mary will sustain your deliberations with her maternal care and that Saint John Baptist de La Salle will guide your choices to be faithful to the mission entrusted to you.

+ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Secretary Congregation for Catholic Education.



The 43rd General Chapter recommended: “to envisage and implement an alternative model, in order to encourage substantial interchange and to stimulate reflection by the Capitulants on the future of the Institute” (Circular 447, page 60, Recommendation 38).

The days of the 44th General Chapter are distinguished by four distinct but integrated “phases”: “Building Community”; “Looking at Reality”; “Seeing With the Eyes of Faith” (Discernment); and “Acting in Faith.” Using the biblical motif of Exodus, the Capitulants were invited, through prayer and liturgy, presentations by experts, and small and large group sharing, to consider how present realities have an impact on the Institute and its mission.

Thanks to an alternative method that fosters systematic participation and consensus-building, it was hoped that all Capitulants would have a voice and that this voice would be heard. The entire Chapter process, because it was carried out in an atmosphere of reflection and prayer, invited the Capitulants to be always attentive to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

First Phase: Building Community.

During the first phase of the General Chapter (Sunday, April 29th through Tuesday, May 1st) the Capitulants were welcomed and made to feel at home at the Generalate. The Capitulants engaged in various activities that helped them to become aware of other cultures, to get to know one another, to build trust, and to feel valued. From the beginning, the dynamic of the Exodus made Capitulants feel that they were on “holy ground,” aware of the presence of God and open to his will.

Second Phase: Looking at Reality.

The second phase of the General Chapter (Wednesday, May 2nd through Tuesday, May 8th) was designed for listening, reflection, and dialogue about what is happening in the world, the Church, Consecrated Life, the Lasallian Family and the Institute.

By means of presentations by keynote speakers that began each day, the report of the Brother Superior and his Council, the report of the representatives from the 2006 International Assembly, the preparatory documents for the Chapter, the Capitulants, personally and in groups, studied the real situations and their impact on the life and mission of the Institute. The rich contributions from this second phase helped to prepare for prayer and discernment in the following phase.

Third Phase: Seeing With the Eyes of Faith (Discernment).

The third phase was a time for personal and communal discernment. In the spirit of the Founder, the Capitulants prayed privately and in community, reflecting on the realities they sensed both in preparing for the General Chapter (by means of the preparatory documents for the Chapter), as well as what they sensed during the second phase. Considering all of this with the eyes of faith, in light of Scripture, in Lasallian tradition, and by sharing in faith, they discerned together the basic question: What does God want of the Institute today and in the coming years?

The Challenges, the Horizons and the Lines of Action that were identified at this time were examined and put into action during the fourth phase of the General Chapter.

Fourth Phase: Acting in Faith.

The fourth phase was the culmination of the Chapter process. First, the Capitulants worked identifying the Priority Themes (Challenges, Horizons, and Lines of Action which emerged during the accents of Discernment. These themes were the vital issues to be addressed by the Institute in the coming years and they were worked on and spelled out in Thematic Groups.

Then, the Capitulants took an in-depth look at the type leadership required by the Institute today in order to give impetus to these Priority Themes and to identify



and choose Brothers who will be engaged in the leadership and government of the Institute: the Superior General, the Vicar General, and the General Councillors. There then followed a dialogue between the newly elected Superiors and the Capitulants, so that together they could make the decisions that would foster an appropriate response on the part of the Institute to the call that God was making at this time in history.

The General Chapter concluded with a Eucharistic celebration and the renewal of vows, signs of association and of commitment to the mission confided to us by the Church and a sign of praise for the God of life and of the Kingdom, the God of the poor and of those who hope, "Associated to Build the Kingdom of God, Journeying Together in Hope."

The Chapter Process

| First Phase | Second Phase | Third Phase | Fourth Phase |
|--|---|--|---|
| April 29 th to May 1 st | May 2 nd to 8 th | May 9 th to 13 th | May 16 th to June 2 nd |
| Building Community | Looking at Reality | Seeing with the Eyes of Faith (Discernment) | Acting in Faith |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrival. Opening Ceremony. Welcome. Organization. Cultural Sensitivity Workshop. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of the Reality of the World, Church, Consecrated Life, Lasallian Family and the Institute. Presentations. Group Work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal and Communal Discernment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying priority themes. - Government and Leadership of the Institute. Elections. - Other decisions. - Closing ceremony. |

Consensus-building

The alternative model of the General Chapter favored the effort to achieve consensus through the discovery of the similarity of viewpoints on the part of the capitulants and the attitude of openness to what God is revealing in community reflections and for the good of the

Church, society, the Institute and "those who have been confided to us." Achieving support of the process of consensus was one of the important tasks of the team of facilitators.

1st Phase: Building Community

A Workshop on Building Community

Directed by Reverend Eric Law

On May 1st, Reverend Eric Law guided the Capitulants through a workshop on language and cultural sensitivity.

Reverend Eric Law, an Episcopalian priest, lives in Los Angeles, California (United States). He is the founder and director of the *Kaleidoscope* Institute, which was established to develop competent leadership in a diverse, changing world. Reverend Law is also a writer. His first book, *The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb*, is still a top seller nearly 15 years after it was originally published. His most recent book, *Finding Intimacy in a World of Fear*, takes a new look at the Christian faith in a world that breeds a climate of fear and anxiety for many.

Rev. Law is also a photographer, a composer of church music, and a playwright.

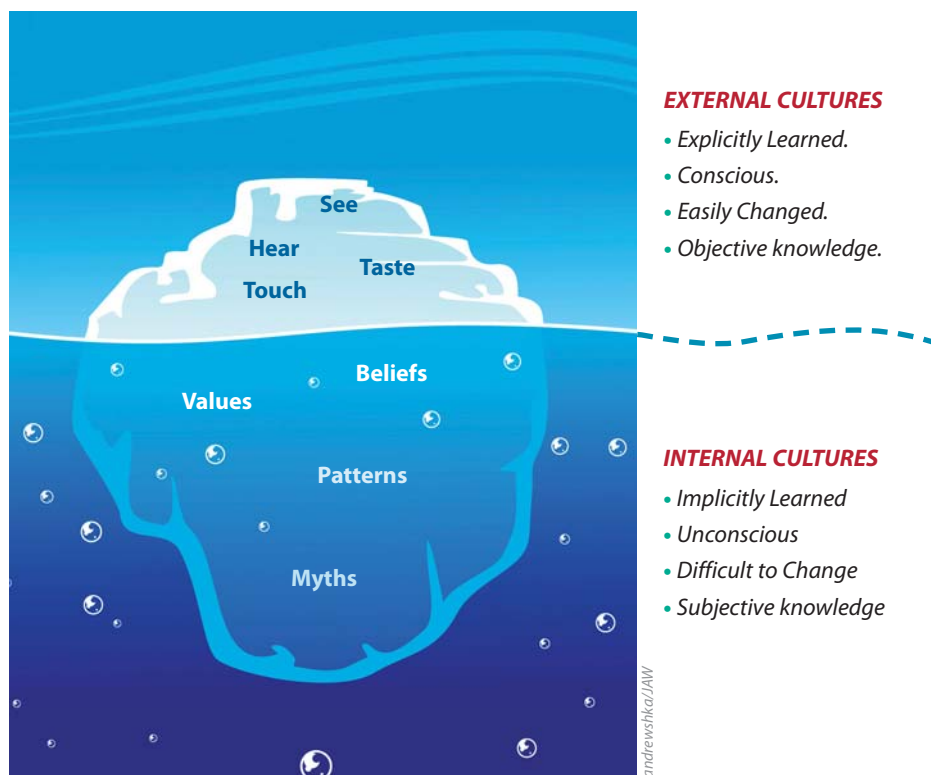
The *Workshop on language and cultural sensitivity* included four sessions involving theoretical presentations and practical exercises in which the following topics were looked at:

- Difficulties in communication (the cultural iceberg).
- The requirements for true communication.
- The perceptions of power.
- Decision-making.

Some of the materials used in discussions and in practical exercises included the following:

Respectful communication guidelines

- R** = take **RESPONSIBILITY** for what you say and feel without blaming others.
- E** = use **EMPATHETIC** listening.
- S** = be **SENSITIVE** to differences in communication styles.
- P** = **PONDER** what you hear and feel before you speak.
- E** = **EXAMINE** your own assumptions and perceptions.
- C** = keep **CONFIDENTIALITY**.
- T** = **TRUST** ambiguity because we are **NOT** here to debate who is right or wrong.



The Method of Mutual Invitation

The leader or a designated person will share first.

After that person has spoken, he or she then invites another to share.

Who you invite does not need to be the person next to you.

After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another to share. If you are not ready to share yet, say "I pass for now" and we will invite later to share.

If you do not want to say anything at all, simply say "I pass" and proceed to invite another to share.

This procedure continues until all have been invited to speak.

Iceberg analogy of culture.

The visible portion of the iceberg has to do with external culture and the portion below the waterline has to do with internal culture. By the word culture is understood the way in which a person looks at and experiences the world. It is important to keep in mind both the internal culture as well as the external culture in order to understand ourselves and one another culturally.



Questions posed by Reverend Law:

What are some of the problems that are raised when dealing with High-Context people?

And vice-versa, what are some of the problems that are raised when dealing with Low-Context people?

And for those in the middle, what are some of the specific behaviors required to communicate with those who are High-Context or Low Context?

Characteristics of Low- and High-Context Communication Styles

(Based on Beyond Culture by Edward T. Hall.)

| Low-Context | High-Context |
|---|---|
| individual-oriented | Group-oriented. |
| Rely on explicit coding of information being communicated; less aware of contexts. | Rely heavily on the physical context or the shared context of the transmitter and receiver; very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. |
| Linear logic. | Spiral logic. |
| Adjust to new situation quickly. | Take time for contexting in new situation. |
| Conflict may occur because of violations of individual expectations create conflict potentials. | Conflict may occur because of violations of collective expectations. |
| Deal with conflict by revealing. | Deal with conflict by concealing. |
| Direct, confrontational attitude. | Indirect, non-confrontational attitude. |
| Fact finding. | Face saving. |
| Focus on action and solution. | Focus on relationship. |
| Open, direct strategies. | Ambiguous, indirect strategies. |

Concluding Reflection:

– When was Jesus, High-Context or Low-Context? In fact, he was both. When he spoke in parables, he was High-Context, when he spoke to the sellers in the Temple, he was Low-Context. His cultural back-

ground was High-Context. His questions were both: to individuals and to groups.

– How do formation experiences impact one or another context? The impact is strong, nevertheless, each person can change context over the course of his life.

The Power Distance Societal Norm

(From *Cultures Consequences – International Differences in Work-Related Values* by Geert Hofstede.)

| Low Power Distance | High Power Distance |
|---|---|
| Inequality in society should be minimized. | There should be an order of inequality in this world in which everyone has his or her rightful place; high and low are protected by this order. |
| All should be interdependent. | A few should be independent; most should be dependent. |
| Hierarchy means an inequality of roles, established for convenience. | Hierarchy means existential inequality. |
| Subordinates and superiors are similar people. | Superiors and subordinates as beings of different kinds. |
| The use of power should be legitimate and is subject to the judgment between good and evil. | Power is a basic fact of society which antedates good or evil. Its legitimacy is irrelevant. |
| All should have equal rights. | Powerholders are entitled to privileges. |
| Powerful people should try to look less powerful than they are. | Powerful people should try to look as powerful as possible. |
| Stress on reward, legitimate and expert power. | Stress on coercive and referent power. |
| The system is to blame. | The underdog is to blame. |
| The way to change a social system is by redistributing power. | The way to change a social system is by dethroning those in power. |
| People at various power levels feel less threatened and more prepared to trust people. | Other people are a potential threat to one's power and rarely can be trusted. |
| Cooperation among the powerless can be based on solidarity. | Cooperation among the powerless is difficult to bring about because of low faith in people norm. |

2nd Phase: Looking at reality

The anthropological, cultural, political, and economic perspectives of our world

Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland

Introduction

Mary Robinson is the first woman to serve as President of Ireland and after that she served as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

She is currently the President of "Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative." Its goal is to bring the norms and standards of human rights into the globalization process and to support quality formation in good government in developing countries.

President Robinson will address "The World of Today – from the Cultural, Religious, Political and Economic point of view."

Points Covered in the Talk

- Ms. Robinson emphasized what a great honor it was to address this world meeting of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.
- She stated that the 21st century began well, with the Millennium Declaration, from which the *Millennium Development Goals* were drawn, namely:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.
- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

2. Achieve universal primary education

- Ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school.

3. Promote gender equality and empower women

- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

4. Reduce child mortality

- Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.

5. Improve maternal health

- Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality rate.

6. Combat HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases

- Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

7. Ensure environmental sustainability

- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources.
- Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.
- Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.

8. Develop a global partnership for development

- Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory that includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – nationally and internationally.
- Address the less-developed countries' special needs. This includes tariff and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction.
- Address the special needs of landlocked developing States.
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term.
- In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for young people.
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, pro-



These notes are also in the web site:
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vide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.

- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies – especially information and communication technologies.

Mrs. Robinson also emphasized the following points:

- Sadly, the focus on tackling poverty and promoting development shifted after the terrible attacks of 9/11 to a narrower focus on security and combating terrorism. Spain supported the fight against terrorism with the Madrid Declaration after the attacks in Madrid. Mrs. Robinson stressed that at the same time when there was talk of defending the integrity of human rights, there were the cases of Guantanamo Bay and the prisons in Iraq – both very negative ones – and the urgent need for laws that would protect the human rights of all.
- In recent years of the fight against terrorism, the cultural and religious divides have opened up, so that inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue is more needed than ever and this must be promoted in the educational arena.
- Our world needs shared values, and international human rights is one part of these values.
- Next year, 2008, is the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1948), and an excellent opportunity to renew the world commitment to Personal Rights. Mrs. Robinson said: “The importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (published on December 10, 1948) should not be considered only by governments, but by all individuals, societies, nations, and states. Human rights begin with each individual and are in each individual.” It is up to each individual and to each society to commit so that these rights are known, promoted, and respected.
- For the worldwide community of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, it is likewise a challenge for them to be promoters of Human Rights.

Some Reflections from the Brothers.

The Central Commission invited three Brothers to express their reflections on what they had heard from Mrs. Mary Robinson.



Brother Ambrose Payne

Most significant reaction to Mrs. Robinson’s talk was a sense of doubt which becomes a challenge. A doubt about our capacity to make full use of our resources in terms of Human Rights; doubt about coming to terms with the world in all its plurality; a doubt about depending entirely on reason. The need to use our imagination to find new ways of doing things for education and liberation; new ways to prepare young people for the world to come, to promote values and to give them a sense of the Gospel. Recognize the limitations of history, of resources, and to grasp the importance of using both reason and imagination in responding to the challenges presented to us.

Brother Nicolas Capelle

I believe that the hidden part of the iceberg was exposed. I was listening to this conference in relation to what the Institute has experienced since 2000. I want to stress four points:

1. Our concrete concern for minorities and for the at-risk population. We have given new, appropriate and adapted responses for these commitments: the creation of the “Justice and Peace” movement and interreligious dialogue.
2. Our weaknesses: We need to work more for the rights of the child. We have had scarce involvement in international organizations; there has been a weakness in programs of justice and peace; it has been difficult to create educational systems that are sufficiently flexible and adequate to face reality.
3. The areas of urgency



that call out to us: Migrations, the north-south relations among ourselves, especially in regard to Africa; to position ourselves in "hands-on" situations so as to achieve greater visibility; contact with others who work in education, looking to be in the most appropriate places.

4. The conviction that we have all the necessary elements in our hands to face the world of education: the Founder; the foundational texts; common formation programs; an organization that is at the same time central (but flexible) and with a controlled subsidiarity, multiple experiences, a good capacity to respond to needs.

Brother Antonio Botana

Mrs. Robinson expressed three different, but complementary, perspectives.

1. At the beginning, I listened to the conference as an educator who is waiting to hear a message.
2. Then, I grasped the message of the conference as coming from the outside.
3. However, as the talk continued, I discovered a profound message, solidly based: faith in the human person; sensitivity to interpersonal encounter; direct contact with the realities of poverty and injustice; attention to the signs of the times, arousing challenging questions; a reading of the connections between the various situations of injustice, the importance of the network today both for situations of injustice as for justice; the attempt to create something new; the importance of small actions; the call to develop the common treasure of human values when faced with fundamentalism.

Ecclesiology: Ecclesial Perspectives Today

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini



Introduction.

The presenter was Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Archbishop Emeritus of Milan, where he served from 1980 to 2002. Carlo Maria Martini was born in Turin and entered the Society of Jesus when he was

17 years old. He was ordained to the priesthood on July 13, 1952. In 1958, Fr. Martini was awarded a Doctorate of Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University. After some years of teaching at the Faculty of Chieri, Italy, he returned to Rome and earned a second doctorate in Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. He was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Scripture at the Biblical Institute and later was rector for nine years. In 1978 he was appointed chancellor of the Pontifical Gregorian University. In 1979, Pope John Paul II appointed Carlo Maria Martini the Archbishop of Milan, and in 1983 he named him a Cardinal.

Cardinal Martini is very much appreciated for the originality and style in his books on spiritual topics and he is credited with adding new light to the traditional model of the Ignatian Exercises. In his writings and presentations, he has highlighted the plight of the poor and the elderly, often calling for the church to take a greater role in combating social injustice.

Cardinal Martini has been candid in commenting on our Church, reminding Church leadership that we must attend to the problems of modern life. He has also called for greater collegiality in the governance of the Church.



See full text in the web site:
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Cardinal Martini remains a respected biblical scholar who has written more than 40 books, and is reputed to speak 11 languages. He was honored in being the only Catholic member of the ecumenical committee that prepared the Greek edition of the New Testament.

Following his retirement, he moved to the Biblical Institute in Jerusalem to continue his work as a specialist in the Bible.

Ecclesiology: perspectives for the church today. Synthesis of the conference.

1. The current situation:

1.1 The overall situation: positive aspects:

- A wonderful period in the Church, both in geographic dispersion and in unity, with the exception of the LeFevre situation.
- A rich and flourishing period, such as the past 20th century.

1.2 Overall view: Problematic aspects:

Introductory reflections:

- The overall crisis of humanity: hunger, violence, humanitarian crises, genocide, etc.
- The Church has not used its power "to bind and loosen," especially with the sacraments and with issues having to do with the family. A Council on penance would have much to say about reconciliation and marriage.
- The limits of civil law in understanding many problems. We live as if we were not contemporaries: some live in the century of Trent or in that of Vatican 1.
- The problems of education and teaching. We have not been able to be the pedagogues who bring the person of today closer to the Church.
- The postmodern world. The fragility which this brings with it. Mentality defined by its opposites, to be against the world as it is today. What are the characteristic signs?:
 - In metaphysics. To stand aside from the platonic world, from priorities. Now feeling has a priority over will, Priority for sensitivity. "I feel..." is given priority. Unlimited liberty in which man believes he is exercising his autonomy and lib-

erty.

- Protest against a certain Western imperialism. Rejection of the historical-critical method.
- Opposition to rationality, source of violence, they say. Dialogue is accepted above all. Christianity is not accepted as criteria of truth. "Don't tell me that Christianity is true...tell me that it is beautiful."
- The Primacy of technology over science.
- Rejection of sin and of redemption: "All human beings are equal." It is said that there is no essence of things.
- Non-acceptance of all that seems centralist, and all that is directed from above or from the center.

Christianity has today a great opportunity and possibility. The mystery of a God who is enigmatic and not available has its attraction. Christianity is more beautiful and more close to people today. The cross makes sense, like the Trinity, a source of meaning, like the Paschal mystery. When evil reaches the extremes of its evilness, then it leaves possibilities for good. We are men committed to the dialogue between the world and the message of the Gospel.

2. Pedagogical work requires promoting the following attitudes.

Not to be surprised by diversity. Consider it as a gift from God, without judging in a precipitous manner. Thus, young people begin to distinguish good from what it is not.

Accept risks, the risk of abandoning all for Christ. Life is a risk.

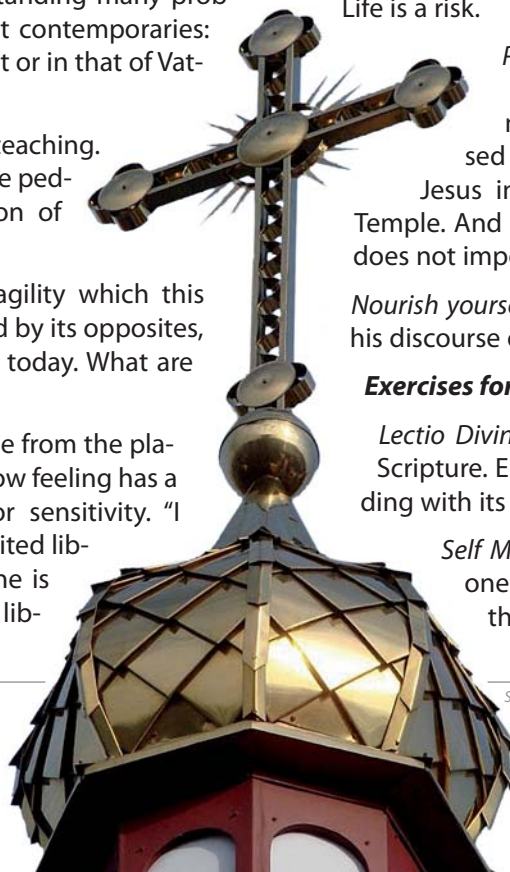
Put the poor in the center because they are the friends of Jesus, who made himself one of them. Surprised by the poverty and humility of Jesus in Nazareth, in Bethlehem, in the Temple. And even in the Resurrection, his glory does not impose itself.

Nourish yourself with the Gospel as Jesus says in his discourse on the Bread of Life.

Exercises for bringing about these attitudes:

Lectio Divina. Direct encounters with Sacred Scripture. Encourage the practice of bible reading with its diverse parts.

Self Mastery. True joy is found in giving oneself. There is more joy in giving than receiving.



The need to get away from noise in order to create silence. A half-hour of silence daily, a half-day of silence in the week.

Humility. We don't have to resolve the great problems of our time. Leave room for the Spirit to work better than we can and with much more depth. Do not stifle the Spirit in others: the Spirit is the one who is working. Remain attentive to the Spirit's simple manifestations, that is why silence is needed.

Openness to change. Our objective is scatological. We ought to renew the original inspirations of the Institute.

Questions and answers.

- *In a world where every announcement of the truth is considered authoritarian, can we give up proclaiming the Gospel as a truth about man and God?*

This topic involves many problems. The Gospel is truth. But Benedict XVI has said: *"one cannot reach the truth without the heart."* Truth includes everything – the heart, desire, the richness of the person, which is really what we are.

- *Could you tell us something about the way to approach the young, about the shortage of vocations in the Church, about the lack of sacramental life among the young and about the fact that they are turning towards charismatic movements or towards other Churches?*

Respect for diversity is an interior attitude, demanded by the Gospel itself: *"Do not judge and you will not be judged."* (Matthew 7:1). Avoid that fear, that distrust, since it is better to try to save what the other says. The Holy Spirit also speaks through others. We have to accept the decrease calmly, since it is a manifestation of the rejection of a Church and a Gospel which are seen as something imposed. This requires a lot of understanding in order to achieve the way we present the mystery of Jesus. There will be other signs as well.

It is true that there is a shortage of vocations in Europe and North America. Our Christianity is characterized by a clerical management of power. This ensures continuity and discipline. But one could envisage a greater distribution of power (including women). There will be no real or great changes with regard to vocations without this new distribution of power with lay persons, men and women.

In terms of opposition to life, young people are sensitive to the family and to life, I think that the discourse on the family in the Church is not explained sufficiently, it is not positive enough.

The young attracted by other movements: there are internal movements in the Church (Focolari. San Egidio...) and movements outside. There is something good in this: the young wish to be active, to have something to say. But we need to consider the dangers of these movements in placing themselves in the center (especially non-Catholic movements) and this is bad. We need to help the young to consider the Gospel as being open and rich.

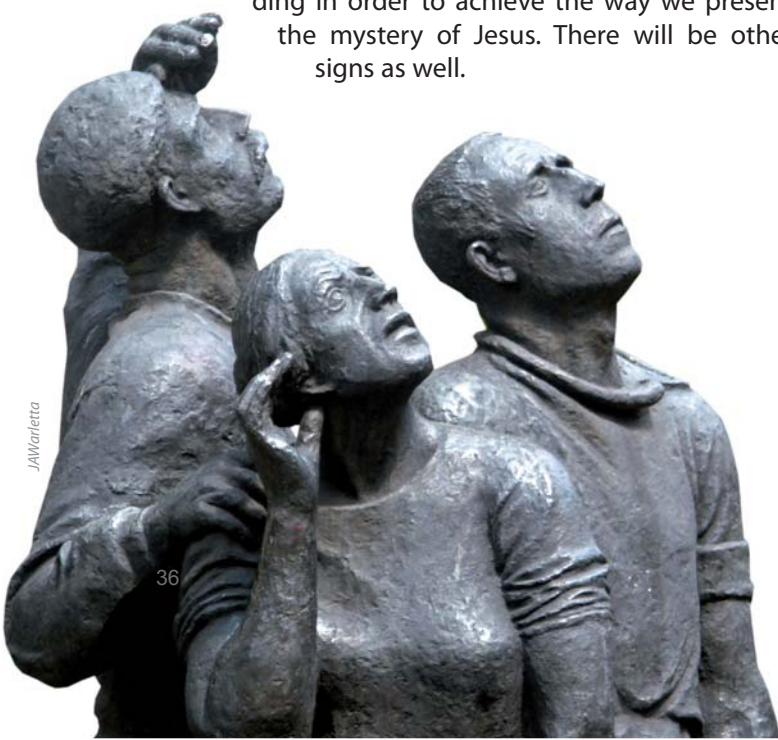
- *How do you see the traditional concept of religious consecration with regard to temporary commitment?*

We need to understand the difficulties of the young in making lifetime commitments. We need to act gently and with patience, but I am convinced that if we don't arrive at a definitive decision, life is not complete. We need time for preparation but we need to reach a decision, an abandonment to God. Otherwise we are playing with life. One argument is the following: commitment for life is so important that it is for that reason God has not spared us from physical death. There is need for an act of complete abandonment. You have to make the young understand how much richness of life they lose if they do not make this act of abandonment. I cannot see religious life for a limited period of time.

- *Could you explain the meaning of your words "to bind and loosen" as regards the Sacraments? Why the need for a future Council?*

The Church has the power to bind and to loosen, for example, as regards marriage. The Latin Church, like the Greek Church, can annul a marriage. When there is a shipwreck, you need to save the people who are swimming. As the Orthodox Church does, the Church can provide medicine for those from failed marriages. In this case, you can consider the union between the sacrament of penance and the sacrament of marriage.

In terms of a Council on this subject, because that has been proposed at all the Synods in which I have participated.



JAVanetta

- *Could you tell us something about the attention of the Church to the new ecclesial movements?*

A. Pope John Paul II effectively gave importance to the new ecclesial movements. But a certain number of Bishops are suspicious because they are too given to identifying their well-being with that of the Church, and this identification with their interests and “their movement” and this is not healthy and will not help the Church at all in the future. Personally, I am not very favorable to

the new movements, apart from those which give pride of place to humility and poverty, but not those which push themselves forward and like to be talked about.

- *What is at present the role of the laity in the Church?*

I think that Vatican II did a lot for the laity but not enough. If we don’t go farther, the laity will be suspicious of those who have power and will have to fight for their place in the Church. We need to change not by destroying but by sharing and expanding.

Consecrated Life Today: “Being Brothers Today”

by Friar Carlos Alfonso Aspiroz Costa op

I. Lasallian prophecy: “Being Brothers Today”.

The prophet is called by God and is likewise sent by him to accomplish a mission. *“Go, I am sending you”, “Do not be afraid”, “I am with you”.*

The double dimension of being a prophet:

- Seeks to read history in the light of the Word of God.
- Reads the Word in taking the pulse of history.

Each epoch has invited the Brothers to reflect in connection with their vocation – on religious life, programmes, school methods and activities – they have pursued their thinking within the context of each period, and faced with the questions of each period.



mind also those to whom his message is addressed.

II. Joseph, the dreamer: “biblical icon” who helps us pray, meditate, reflect and respond to the question: “Being Brothers Today”.



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The prophet (the Brother, the educator) speaks a word in the name of God which accords with the period and circumstances, keeping in

1. The dreams of Joseph and our dreams

Joseph is called “the dreamer” contemptuously. His brothers hate him. Joseph dreamed and recounted his dreams to his brothers but they did not understand and they rejected him.

Joseph’s brothers did not understand his dreams and were jealous of him.

“Go and see how your brothers and the flock are doing and bring me word.”

All of us entered the religious life with certain dreams. What have we done with those dreams? Why have we so readily given them up?

“Competitiveness” sometimes occurs in communities, preoccupied with always wanting to know “Who is the greatest?”

We have received someone like this in our communities, as one “sent” from a different country, school, work and District.

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| Joseph – like so many dreamers – <i>“was wandering in the countryside”</i> as though disoriented. Someone brought him back to reality asking him: <i>“What are you looking for?”</i> Joseph replied: <i>“I am looking for my brothers. Please tell me where they are ...”</i> | These are the questions that we are asking today and that the Chapter intends responding to: <i>“Where are our poor today, children and youth, those whom Saint John Baptist de La Salle endeavoured to seek out and welcome in preference?”</i> |
| Religious life offers everyone the chance to recount his dreams <i>“to the others”</i> because they are <i>“our brothers”</i> . | Do we share our dreams with our brothers? What is it that prevents us from doing so? |
| Joseph suffers because he had been rejected by his brothers and while he does not understand what is happening to him, little by little he will understand that God has not abandoned him. Joseph is guided mysteriously by Providence. | For what are we seeking vocations to the Brothers of the Christian Schools today? Do we have the courage to welcome vocations today like those brothers whom we revere with passion for God and for humanity which characterises them? |

2. The dreams of others (The dreams of our Brothers)

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| Joseph came to Putiphar who had put him in charge of his household. This step helped Joseph because he learned to bring his dreams down to earth, to make them realistic, and to give them flesh and blood. | The various tasks entrusted to us help us to bring our dreams <i>“down to earth”</i> even if they acquire a certain negative perspective. What have we done about the initial love? |
| Once again Joseph sees himself enveloped in deceit. His honesty is not rewarded. He suffers deceit and accusation. | What is our <i>“role”</i> regarding our brothers – are we their accusers or defenders? |
| For some time Joseph had stopped dreaming (or at least he did not recount his dreams to anyone). The experiences which had impinged on his life had brought him to a painful reality. | The Brothers of each continent transmit to us the realities of their situation. Some seem to be real nightmares; others demonstrate wonderful vocational experiences which broaden our minds and make us dream of a better future. |
| Joseph is an administrator. He administers <i>“for others”</i> and this bearing in mind <i>“the needs of others”</i> brings it about that Joseph too learns or discovers in this stage of his life, including prison, that others also have periods of sadness. | Daily community life makes us familiar with phrases that are pregnant with life: <i>“Give me to drink”, “What were you talking about on the way?”</i> |
| Joseph’s prison companions share their dreams with him so that he might interpret them. Joseph humbly demurs: <i>“Are not interpretations God’s business? Come, tell me.”</i> | How important it is to recognise the dreams of others – the dreams of our brothers, the dreams of others who live with us and of all who share our life in one way or another, including those of ordinary people. |
| Joseph suffers in his own flesh the forgetfulness of others. – He doesn’t make himself the victim. – He doesn’t nourish a tragic sense of life. – He doesn’t reduce what he is living through to a guilt problem. – He doesn’t nourish desires for revenge. – He doesn’t spend the day appealing to authorities to get them to do something. – He doesn’t opt for self-punishment. | Don’t we make a habit of always accusing others of being responsible for our misfortune? Don’t we make our fraternal life wearisome by grumbling out never-ending litanies like <i>“life has no meaning”</i> ? Don’t we make a habit of casting blame on all, thus seeking the compassion of others? Don’t we foment trouble at times by attitudes of physical or psychological violence in community? Don’t we seek to be the centre by trying to make others feel sorry for us? |
| Joseph places his trust in God. He makes himself available to his companions in misfortune helping them in every way possible to him. | We hide behind various ways of self-pity disguised as humility. |
| Joseph is called to interpret the dreams of the highest authority in Egypt. He retorts by insisting: <i>“I do not count. It is God who will give Pharaoh a favourable answer.”</i> | How many children and youngsters have dreams about their families, their towns, their countries! The work of the brother demands listening to, knowing and interpreting these dreams. What things or attitudes make this difficult? |

3. The dreams of God

Afflicted by drought and hunger in his land, Jacob admonished his sons: *"Go down to Egypt and buy grain for us there, so that we may survive and not die."*

Joseph possessed full powers in the country and distributed rations to all the people. Joseph is a just man.

The brothers of Joseph arrive in Egypt. Without knowing the identity of the one receiving them, they prostrate themselves before him. Joseph certainly recognised them but he treated them as though they were strangers.

Joseph did not imagine that in opening himself up to the possibility of feeling as his own the needs of others, God was leading him to know his own dreams for him, for his brothers, for his people: dreams of salvation and liberation.

Can we reduce "our vocation as brothers" or "being brothers today" to "surviving as brothers"? God desires life; he does not desire that we merely "survive".

Community life is not built on a base of mere commutative justice but rather in accord with distributive justice.

Something similar happens to us when we look in turn and "recognise" who are our brothers. He is my brother! They are my brothers (and not what I imagined him/them to be!)

In the case of our own vocation is it not the concrete expression of the dreams that God has for each one and for everyone? When God reveals his dreams to us he brings us to understand a vocational journey that exceeds all that others could dream for us.

III. That we may be perfect

The call of Jesus – our brother – is a call to perfection: *"Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."* How much time have we lost and how much energy have we dissipated running after a mistaken idea/image of perfection. We have identified it more with a "categorical imperative" than with an invitation to beatitude in God.

1. The word

At the beginning of the book of Genesis we contemplate how God created the universe by his Word. God said things and the things existed!

In Christ, God has sown in our hearts true perfection – that of being able to utter creative words that give life.

What words can we utter as Brothers of the Christian Schools to the world of today so that they may have life?

2. The listener

God listens: God is not deaf to what is happening or to what we say. He likewise invites us to do the same: *"Hear, O Israel!"*

There is an intimate relation between "to listen" (*audire*) and "to obey" (*ob-audire*).

How many human dramas in family or community arise from not listening!

For this reason in the religious life we are accustomed to meeting in community to listen together to the voice of God (community prayer) and to listen to it by means of the voices of our brothers (community meetings and chapters). We are likewise called to listen as a commu-

nity to those who share our mission and to those to whom the mission is directed (community mission). Are we listening to the voice, the weeping, the cry, the lament, the rage, the pain, the anguish of our brothers?

3. Mercy

Saint Luke translates perfection by a word dear to him – mercy. *"Be merciful as your Father is merciful."*

In the parable of the prodigal son, mercy is "the yardstick" by which the Father "measures" happiness, a happiness inseparable from that of his sons: *"My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours."* What is the "yardstick" of our fraternal vocation?

The synthesis which Joseph offers us, icon of true brotherhood, a type of Jesus Christ – creative words, listening and mercy.

Questions and answers session

- *You spoke of Joseph as dreamer. "Make us dream", a Brother Novice said to me. What are the most powerful and organised dreams that young people have?*

I think that the main dream is that which young people demand of us, sometimes in aggressive style – a fraternal life in community. However this dream is sometimes proportional to that which they offer. They have difficulty in reducing their dreams to flesh and blood reality. Previously there was a lot of talk about mission - today community life is the subject.

- *Can you help us with those who have dreams and those who have nightmares? How are we to avoid infecting those with dreams from those with nightmares?*

Those with nightmares can alert us. It is important for

us to understand mutual dreams and/or nightmares. We build one another up and help one another mutually by listening. It is impossible to be insensitive to nightmares – with hope however which is a theological virtue.

- *Today we are reminded, "Save yourself" How can it be that a young person enters a community where there are few young people with him?*

Today's vocations are those in the context of the world of today. Each one brings with him his own bags and their contents. The young person, if he is of today, is a young post-modern. It is with difficulty that he experiences equality but maybe being Brothers we recreate relationships – Brothers dads of others, Brothers granddads, Brothers confirmed bachelors, Brothers that we make little sons. Spiritual parenthood is being Brothers. The young person seeks an antidote to isolation. It's up to us to create something new and that demands change.

- *What is the biggest challenge to religious life today?*

First came reform, certainly from the XIV century there was a desire to return to the initial love. After the revolutions the desire was for restoration, to turn to remaking what was destroyed. Later on, in the second half of the XX century, the will was that of renovation. Vatican Council II sought more to renew than to restore. At the present time the talk is of making something completely new, of refoundation. To ensure the future there has to be rediscovery of the apostolic life, not of apostolates because we are tempted to look backwards in the search for community life. Fear of a certain intimacy and of religious fundamentalism. The new movements are in many cases dangerous "Trojan horses" because there is interference in the internal jurisdictions and in the search for prominence.

- *How are we to work at being radical and with definitive commitments in this context?*

Have we not made a mistake in the pedagogy of what a perpetual vow means? In its turn, being radical changes but being radical is there. It is important to distinguish different levels.

1. How many vocations do we have? My answer is, don't limit me to the number of those in formation but rather to the number of friars in my province, in my Order. The important thing is to care for the vocations that are there. Vocational promotion is not to be reduced to those who are going to enter.

2. The stoics – they have the dream of living this day. We're certainly not talking about the hedonistic aspect. Isn't the Gospel similar when it doesn't seek to live this day? Profession is not how long this Brother will last me, but living the eschatological, today. Perpetual profession is today and here.

- *How do we invite others to share our dreams? How do I invite someone with minimal energy? How do I invite those whose dreams have been frustrated? How do I invite those with living dreams?*

There have always been broken or frustrated dreams. However the result that usually happens is that these moments can be very fruitful. Helping a Brother who seems to me to be frustrated can result in listening to him, helping him. Listening has to be done by understanding the specificity of each Brother. Regarding age, I recall some religious who though old were significant as for example two Marist Brothers, my teachers, already advanced in age who were and are still for me a witness to a full and transparent life.

- *Vocations to the Dominicans are increasing. What strategies are they using?*

There are areas where we certainly increasing. In France we had almost no candidates for 25 years, now things are going better. The new generation is that which has lived the immediate post-conciliar period and thus has had a very good theological formation. There is no loss of the sense of creativity. Today young people relish challenges. Despite the difficulties young people are never lacking. All the same there are places where there are friars who are "broken", "divided", yet despite this a community has been built, a house for everyone. All the same however there are places where gospel radicalism is lived and there's plenty of room for intellectual freedom. Communities that are winning young people.

- *How are the characteristics of consecrated life to be defined for a Brother in community?*

The Brother and the Community are defined as experience of God. The world of today is clearly thirsting for brotherhood. This is what the Church must insist on. Why is the figure of Christ so striking? Because Christ is Brother. The richness of the religious life is Brotherhood. The religious life has become clericalised, hierarchi-



Ekaterina Boym

sed, whereas brotherhood demands equality, encounter, dialogue, recognition of the talents of others, participation. It's not easy for the young to understand brotherhood if they haven't experienced encountering one another as brothers, at least in some areas of their lives.

● *And the vows? A practical way of defining consecrated life?*

The explicitation of the three vows comes late (XI Century). The evangelical Counsels are more than the three of the vows. Juridically the words can be changed

without twisting the spirit.

● *We live in a migrant world. What can we do to help immigration?*

This is the biggest challenge to politicians and likewise to the Church. Apostolic mobilisation, being itinerant to attend to them. Not reproducing linguistic, cultural and social "ghettos". With respect to our Brothers the important thing is to prepare them to confront this challenge.

Religious life today

Sr Sujita Kallapurakkathu SND

Presentation

Mary Sujita has just finished nine years as Superior General of her congregation, which has 2,400 members in fifteen countries. She was born in Kerala, India, studied social science and mass communication, then put her studies into practice by working many years among the poor and in promoting Women's Rights in India. She has followed various United Nations programmes on women; was in Beijing as representative at the conference on Women; was an observer at the Bishops' synod in October 2001 and is a member of the Executive Committee of the International Union of Superiors General. Sr. Sujita is an inspiring leader with a simple and strong faith. "I am a firm believer in God's Providence", she says. "My prayer is: "Remember me Lord, and look after me": and that is what God does".



Reflections on the Consecrated life.

Main ideas (extracts)

Introduction

I am absolutely convinced that the Consecrated Life will always be important, significant and prophetic, provided we have the courage to live it with a passion for Jesus Christ and a creative compassion for all the children of God.

On the 4 January this year I received a message to see my mother who had just had a fall and was gradually moving into a coma. After a few days she could say nothing. After two weeks of this going backwards and forwards to see my mother, my sister-in-law continued asking my mother the usual questions about how she felt and things like that, but she received no answer.

Finally, she said: "Mother, can you see Jesus?" and then a miracle occurred. Mother answered with a charming smile and with a very strong: "Oh yes". All of us around her were so surprised that we could not suppress our tears. We had the impression that a new life was being born, a new hope, even though death was approaching, because Jesus was present there. On the 24 January my mother peacefully entered the house of God to enjoy the eternal beatific vision.

Since the death of my mother I have often reflected on the beautiful answer she gave to our question: "Can you see Jesus?" I believe that the consecrated life will always have a deep meaning as long as we continue making Jesus our centre, seeing and living the real Jesus of the Gospel.

The future of religious life depends on our ability to see Jesus Christ and to be so attracted by Him and for his mission that others too will be able to see and experience Jesus in us.



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Espiritualidad

Only our being rooted in Jesus and his Gospel will enable us to give the answers that we need for today and for the future.

Sharing in the liberating mission of Jesus needs a radical and living spirituality and a full understanding of the Gospel.

Interior energy and spiritual authenticity transform the consecrated person into a wise guide capable of inspiring and challenging others to live life to the full.

The radical liberty of Jesus made him completely intrepid. The basis of radical liberty is confidence.

The real problem which confronts religious life today is, above all, spiritual lethargy and a lack of faith.

For us consecrated people, the challenge of this millennium is to be seen and experienced as people of God, who can be spiritual guides and prophets of a new world order.

Communion and Community

Community must be seen within the context of a shared spirituality, centred on a shared mission and a shared route to the future.

True communion is possible when we take the risk of leaving our own comfort zones to become involved in the difficulties of our local community as well as in the complications of society outside.

Sharing experiences with the poor, even if only occa-

sionally, nourishes our compassion and urges us to work for justice and peace in union with those poor.

A lived experience of *communion* is the source of real solidarity within the religious community and with others.

Simplicity, compassion and profound respect are the essential ingredients of true communion and community.

Mission

In a period of cultural disarray, relativity in morals and social disintegration, where the law of the strongest rules and the future is uncertain, we need real sanctity and an abundance of creativity and imagination of heart, so that all our ministries be sources of change.

How often are we recognised by a life which is saintly, simple and prophetic? How often by a life which is opposed to present-day culture? Let us ask awkward questions first of ourselves, because it is first of all within the Church and in society that the desired transformation will take place.

What counts is our ability to tell the truth, even the most uncomfortable and least popular truth, but truth which is essential and life-giving, and which can come only through the support we receive from our being founded on the divine.

Unless religious life becomes an adventure, we are not being guided by the Spirit of God, but have been tamed, domesticated and have undertaken too much of the obvious, instead of being tempestuous followers of our mothers and fathers in the faith.

We must undertake a spiritual search in order to discover how much of our apostolic energy is being used merely on the status-quo, and how much on the mission.

The ministry of Education in the present millennium.

Our success as professional religious educators will depend on our ability to be contemplatives in action by living an appropriate spirituality.

Are we giving our students what is really ours, resulting from our having seen, heard and touched it with our own hands... experienced, believed and lived it in our own lives?

Today we need to teach as He did and that is possible only when we are touched by the power of the Spirit and when our life, our life-style, our choices and priorities are echoes of the life and mission of Christ.

We are called to foster a world-wide love, a deep inte-



Thorben Ziemek/PhotoCase



rest in others everywhere, in justice and peace. Can our institutions become agents to make the Good News of Jesus worldwide?

Education and all our ministries will have a future only if our way of educating and exercising our ministry is profoundly influenced and motivated by the same active interest that Jesus had in his time for society.

Open up a future full of hope in God, "who makes all things new"

As religious men and women we work together with God in deciding what the future will be, when we dare to believe in the impossible and when we persist in our search, in our questioning, in our efforts for and witness of another way of being religious.

As religious of the third millennium we cannot take half measures aiming at comfort, if we want to collaborate with the Spirit in the birth of a future full of hope for the consecrated life.

An new way of being brothers or sisters is being born and we need the ears, eyes and heart of a mother and midwife waiting to see, hear and help in the process of this birth.

The formation of our members must have a deeper spirituality and prepare for a life of radical innovation: this is urgently needed today.

A new religious life is required today, characterised by a greater spirituality, a radical simplicity, poverty of the Gospel, and a commitment embodied in the struggles of the marginalised of our world.

The future of religious life depends on our commitment to the challenge of the Gospel to be more and to have less.

As long as we believe that the Spirit can transform us and that God is acting in our world, we can continue to hope for the future as a gift of God to us.

Question and Answer session

- How would you explain the crisis of vocations?

This crisis is first and foremost not one of numbers but of motivation: why should one enter or not enter religious life? If people see us as passionate for Christ and

his mission, they will come. We have to be islands of hope for the world and not place so much emphasis on numbers. We shall never be very numerous, though there will always be people who follow us, even if they aren't so many.

- You say "We have to be filled with passion and fire and not worried about how many vocations we have". Is this connected with the process of restructuring?

We also are in the process of restructuring our three provinces in Germany as one province. We want to focus not on numbers but on the quality of our presence. We want to become islands of hope by the quality of our lives. At first there

were tears and I told the sisters: "Do not die before death comes", and if they accept this, the passion within each sister becomes visible and is transformed into joy. We have to be alive with passion to the end.

- What criteria can you give us to assess asceticism and austerity?

Our chief concern today is our effectiveness and its outcome, and this has overshadowed our presence and visibility. We have lost our simplicity and the balance between success, technologies etc, and we must go back to our original charism. Let us be recognised by our simplicity of life. We are too pre-occupied with our effectiveness and with our being accepted by the world. I am not talking about appearing wretched, but about not fearing about our choice of what is sufficient, for simplicity, about having less in order to BE more.

- You say: Have less in order to be more. Can you comment further?

To be more is to be and live the Gospel more fully; to believe and radiate what is in us: Christ. We cannot keep Him locked up and buried. Having more possessions prevents our being more. Of those who love, Jesus says: "My Father and I will be with him and the Holy Spirit will live in his heart". Being more means having more love among ourselves and for Him. Experience of Providence is easier and more possible when we practise not possessing things, since we discover that in spite of all our limitations, God looks after us and makes Himself present. Having too much prevents our truly living the experience of Providence, and this having more goes together with negative attitudes which are seen in the way we live.

- *Have you noticed a clash between the professional life and the message of the Gospel? How should we combine them?*

It is true that to link professional duties with the Gospel is a great challenge. I think that the Gospel teaching shocks people. Because of that we are not attractive, we answer the needs of the world with the world's means. We must be radical and commit our students to foundations of justice. Our sisters feel overwhelmed by the needs of the people, they feel that they should be more numerous, have more establishments. How then can we continue to be optimistic? It is not a matter of increasing our establishments or maintaining them. We should hand over to others some of our work. Prophetic inspiration surprises us. Jesus says to us: "Don't carry on here, if it is not based on the Gospel. We need to form little creative groups, inspired, committed and daring".

- *What would you suggest for initial and continuous formation, so that life can be an adventure and so that we can face it as an adventure?*

It is essential that we be touched by poverty in the context of our mission and our formation, we should be modelled on poverty, experience life with the poor, have a heart and compassion like Jesus'. I suggested to a former Superior General that those in formation should have greater contact with the poor and with poverty. She disagreed, because the young recruits would put themselves in danger. Later we experimented with this idea, and when we said our prayers together in the evening and asked one another where we had met Jesus, and we trembling and fearing for the girls, saw that nothing harmful had happened and they were well look after by God. However that was just a small experiment, not a real one, because they returned to the safety of their house. My advice is to keep firm contact with the hard realities surrounding us, and in that way we shall never lose our way and these regular doses of meaningful living with the poor are necessary for our permanent formation.

- *How can we transform our life into a*

spirituality of sufficiency? (sufficiency is explained below)

For me there are three levels. One is personal, which comes from Jesus, spirituality of sufficiency and of simplicity. To allow oneself to be won by Jesus. In the second place, that of community, reaching decisions together. Decisions must be discerned: the community must reflect on its decisions and on its spirituality of simplicity. We should not reject the attitude of others out of hand, but try to understand them. And in the third place, the level of poverty, discarding anything which we don't need, sharing as much as possible. Poverty, liberty and joy go together.

- *Can you explain the expression "spirituality of sufficiency"*

It means just being satisfied with what is sufficient. Having just what is enough and no more. Enough is enough.

- *Wherever we are in the Institute we need to awaken our passion for Jesus and for humanity. What do you suggest as practical steps to reach those objectives?*

A genuine commitment to spirituality and to the call to be spiritual. Time for meditation, for mental prayer, for celebration. the ability to share in depth our experience of God, without fear. Sharing our dreams, our fire. Liberty to share with anyone, with simplicity, without fear or trembling, with authenticity.

- *What is your reflection on an Institute which has long-lasting traditions and what do you believe is our responsibility for the future?*

Institutions cannot change from top to bottom entirely; but small communities, here and there can arise, after community discernment. They are like the seed of continuous renewal. And this kind of thing gradually results in a whole forest flourishing from those seeds. Together with new ministries which are springing up, one can see the continuous creation of the Holy Spirit. I don't believe in change for itself, but I do believe in the transformation of what already exists. I see in this transformation every hope for the future.



Ivaylo Georgiev

Report of the Brothers General Councillors

The General Council, as a community, presented its report in accordance with the directions of the Rule about *“the manner in which [the Superior] and the Council have carried out [their mandate] This report also includes the activities of the General Services of the Institute”* (Rule, #111). The Report had already been published on March 29th 2007 and was one of the preparatory documents for the Chapter. Of course, each Brother on the General Council spoke, in order to give an account of those matters within his area of responsibility. In the first afternoon session of May 4th Brothers William Mann, Vicar-General, Claude Reinhardt, Juan Pablo Martin and Marc Hofer spoke. In the second session it was the turn of Brothers Miguel Campos and Yemanu Jehar.

Br. William Mann, Vicar General, presented the participative process which they followed in drawing up the Report of the Superior General and the General Council and the meaning of this document in the collection of preparatory documents for the Chapter. He dealt with the themes of Young Lasallians, the structures of Government and the importance of a more deliberate and multicultural discussion as regards the implications of Association and the Lasallian Family on the government of the Institute. He emphasized the tasks for the future and concluded by stressing the importance of formation in faith and in the educational service of the poor in the Lasallian Education Mission.

Br. Claude Reinhardt presented what he considered the most important and urgent themes corresponding to the Commissions in which he worked: the Permanent Committee for the Lasallian Education Mission and the Government Commission. He also commented on the accompanying which he carried out as Advisor to the Executive Committee of UMAEL (World Union of Lasallian Past Pupils).

Br. Juan Pablo Martin centred his presentation on the area of formation. He referred to three key ideas which guided the work of the Formation Commission. 1) How the assignments of the 43rd General Chapter regarding Formation had been developed: Regional meetings on the Pastoral Ministry of Vocations, the formation of formators and the orientations on association for the educational service of the poor applied to formation. 2) Understanding formation as a continuous and ongoing process of human and spiritual growth. 3) Situating formation in the reality of the life of the Districts.

Br. Marc Hofer talked about Finance and Solidarity. He spoke about the International Economic Council and



the Solidarity Committee, about the commitment of support for administrative sectors with “weak” economic resources, the policy of financial self-sufficiency, the Formation Fund, the Solidarity Fund and SECOLI. He suggested lines of action for the future and thanked the Districts of the Institute for their generosity.

Br. Miguel Campos in reflecting on the Report covered four areas. With regard to the Education Mission he emphasized the awareness of a world with new forms of poverty. On the theme of Association he stressed the urgency of the revision and re-foundation of our “Being Brothers in Community”. With regard to Lasallian Studies he pointed out the importance of the search for and preparation of Brothers and Lay Lasallians capable of carrying out and promoting these studies. Finally, in regard to Government, he declared himself in favour of styles of discernment in which priority is given to subsidiarity and collegiality.

Br. Victor Franco spoke about the Government Commission. This Commission focused its efforts on four general areas. One: the organization of some meetings of the Institute such as the sessions for new Visitors, the Inter-Capitular meeting and the support of the Council for the integration of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Rule. Two: the preparation of some Institute documents, especially circulars and the new edition of the Rule. Three: themes relating to the functioning of the Mother House and the General Services. Four: the processes concerned with restructuring.

Br. Yemanu Jehar dealt with the theme of Communications. He spoke about the members of the Commission, the International Council for Communications and the team of translators. He referred to the importance of communications and to the Workshop on Communication carried out in RELAL. He ended by talking about his responsibilities as Councillor for RELAF.

Message of Br. John Johnston

Former Superior General



Intervention – May 5, 2007

In true Lasallian fashion I have three points, all of them referring to association from different perspectives.

1. Since last October I have come to understand and appreciate association in a new way. I had previously experienced association as a communion of persons united in their commitment to Lasallian mission. But during the past seven months, I have had an experience of association that I have never had before. The number and content of e-mail messages, letters, cards, telephone calls, visits, from Lasallians, both Brother and lay, have astounded me. The expressions of loving concern of so many have moved me profoundly.

I have been deeply touched by the concern of Brother Alvaro, Superior. He visited me in December and maintains regular contact by email. Brothers Bill Mann, Vicar, Miguel Campos, Gerard Rummery and Rodolfo Meoli, Postulator, have all visited me in Memphis, visits I profoundly appreciate. Brother Frank Carr, my Visitor, has manifested consistent concern and has accompanied me through these months – and through this week.

And what can I say about Brother Alvaro's beautiful tribute in his opening address and your warm response. I thank you sincerely. I now have a much deeper understanding of association because I have experienced it in a new way.

What I have asked from you from the very beginning is that you pray that I am able to say YES to whatever the Lord asks of me now and in the future. I ask you to pray that I can drink the cup the Lord asks me to drink. That to me is what following Christ is all about

2. We Lasallians live in unity, a unity very evident in this Chapter, but we live very different realities. A number of you represent areas that are blessed with vocations. You look at your institutions and are confident that their future is assured.

Others of you have had few or even no vocations in the last decade or several decades. You have numerous Lasallian institutions. What is your plan? Do you intend to turn the schools over to others who will conduct them without direct reference to our Lasallian heritage? Or are you in the process of creatively, dynamically, courageously creating structures that will assure that our institutions continue as Lasallian – with Brothers we hope, but without Brothers if necessary. To create such structures of governance and of Lasallian formation is a formidable task. We have no time to waste.

It is my hope that the delegates consider this question seriously, inform themselves on initiatives in process, give their recommendations, and, above all, their encouragement.

3. My third point touches Evelyn's observation this morning on the confusion surrounding the meaning of association as distinct from the Brothers' vow. My comments will not resolve the confusion. Nevertheless, I am convinced that clarifying the meaning of the Brothers' vow of association is very necessary and will contribute to an understanding of association in general. Whether we are enthusiastic about the generalized use of the word "association" in the Institute or whether we have reservations, it is clear that the vow of association is something very different.

Our magnificent, theologically profound formula of consecration is as clear as clear can be. Nevertheless, a faulty and superficial interpretation over the centuries has led to a watered-down understanding of our consecration and of the vows that express that consecration.

Our Founder and the early Brothers understood the three vows they professed. In a sense the first paragraph of the formula, which expresses their act of total consecration to the Trinity said everything, because the Brothers knew what was coming later in the formula.

But each paragraph of the formula makes explicit and unambiguous the meaning of the preceding paragraph and makes more explicit the meaning of their total con-

secration. The second paragraph begins, *Pour cet effet*, for this purpose – what purpose?: living the consecration to the Trinity just expressed. For this purpose they promise **and vow** to unite themselves (association for mission) and remain in the Society (stability) with Brothers who are associated to educate youth, poor youth especially, gratuitously. They then express their total availability for service. The following paragraph begins. *C'est pourquoi* - that is why, wherefore - we make the vows. The early Brothers vow association for mission, and render the vow more precise by the vows of stability and obedience.

At the time of the Bull of Approbation, the Brothers adopt vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, counsels lived by the Brothers from the beginning, but not expressed by vow. Stability and teaching gratuitously are added in the next paragraph. Association is no longer at the center of the Brothers' consecration. In fact, it is not listed as a vow.

Two words in the original formula are precious to me. In the second paragraph each Brother said *I promise and vow* to unite themselves and remain in the society with a commitment to mission.

The words **and vow** remained in the formula until the early 20th century. Why they were removed, I do not know. But from that time, the Brothers say only *I promise*. Instead of professing four vows in view of association for mission, the integrating dimension of our vocation, the Brothers make vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, stability, and teaching gratuitously. The notion of vowed association, probably already meaningless to most Brothers, is simply ignored.

Today, instead of vowing association explicitly in the second paragraph, we *promise* association. We then proceed to profess vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, association for the educational service of the poor, and stability. Association is now an extra vow, our



4th vow, instead of the integrating vow of our consecrated life.

My personal view is that it is possible canonically to revise the formula by adding the **and vow** and by editing slightly other parts of the formula. The addition does not add another vow, but does in fact place our other vows at the service of association for mission. It is my experience that when we can show the Holy See that a change is fully justified in the light of our heritage, we succeed in effecting change.

It is my sincere hope that the delegates will consider the possibility of this change with documentation that will help our present and future Brothers understand the profound significance of the vow of association for the identity of the Brother.



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International Assembly 2006

Presentation to the General Chapter, Eveline Geoffroy,
Gery Short and Frederick Mueller, fsc



The 43rd General Chapter (2000) planned to have an *international meeting of Brothers, Partners, and Associates* (Proposition 3) and an *International Assembly on the Lasallian Educational Mission* (Proposition 7) before the following Chapter. The Commissions of MEL (Lasallian Educational Mission) and "Associated for the Educational Mission" designed a process with a view to having one event: the 1st "Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission International Assembly." The entire Institute followed a detailed and beneficial process of having local and Regional Assemblies and these resulted in the 2006 International Assembly.

The work accomplished over the course of five years in local Assemblies, in which more than 1,000 Lasallian educators from around the world participated, was summarized in the report presented at the 1st International Assembly that was held in Rome from October 23 to November 4, 2006. There was broad participation by lay Lasallians, Sisters, and Brothers from some 50 countries. The 42 different languages among the participants showed clearly the international dimension of the Lasallian world.

The report of the 2006 International Assembly to the 44th General Chapter was given by:

- Brother Frederick Mueller (from the Long Island-New England District, USA, who spoke on the topic of Mission,

- Ms. Eveline Geoffroy (France) who spoke on the topics of Association and Formation, and
- Mr. Gery Short (San Francisco, USA) who spoke on the topic of structures.

Each of them used a similar outline to organize their presentation.

- First, the gaps or distances between lived reality and our current responses.
- Second, the tensions or points of tensions between two opposing poles that are before us.
- Third, the conclusions or results of the discussion for each of the topics.
- Fourth, the challenges we need to confront.

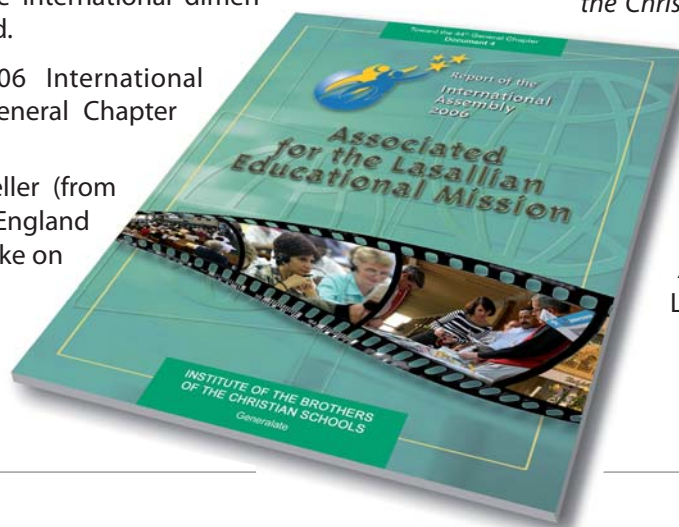
After their presentations some questions were put forward to be discussed in small groups. The questions invited discussion and were focused especially on the role of the Brothers:

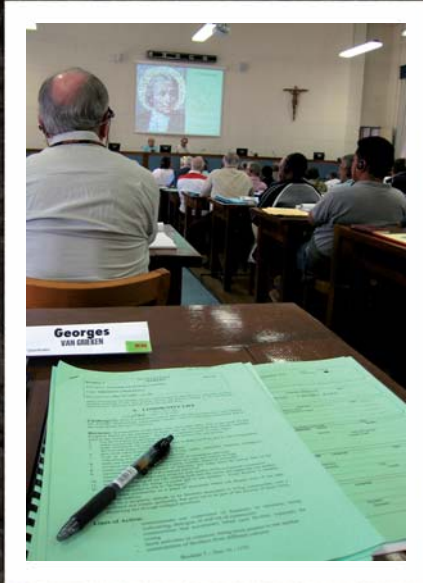
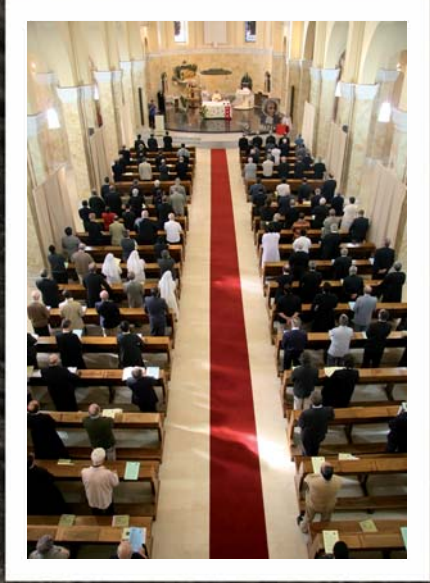
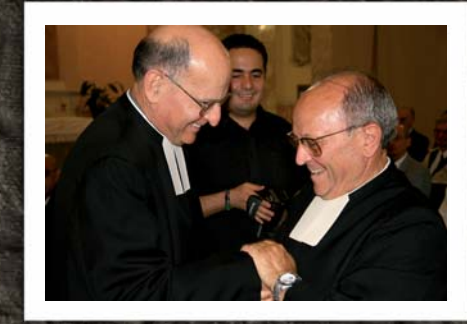
1. What are the principal challenges or obstacles presented in the Report?
2. What is the role of the Brothers with respect to suggested concrete actions?
3. What do the Brothers need to do to ensure that both they and lay Lasallians take the initiatives to realize these actions?

During the Chapter there was constant reference made to the results of the Assembly and later on the Listening and Writing Committee was asked to express the Chapter sense of the Report on the 2006 International Assembly in the Message to the Lasallian Family: "*More than just as a point of reference, the 44th General Chapter has accepted this report for the Institute of the Brothers of*

the Christian Schools; it calls upon the

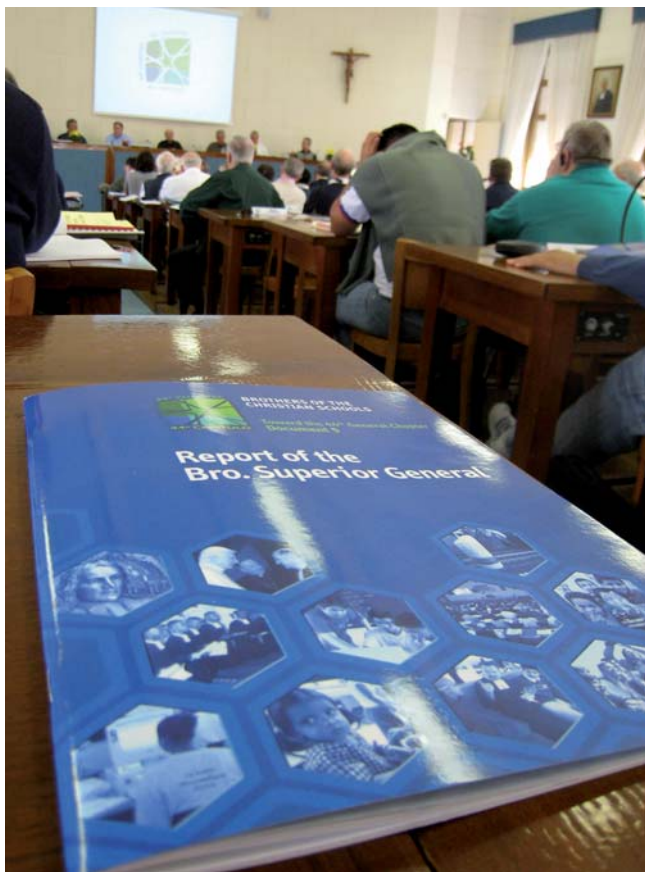
Center of the Institute and all sectors of it, each one according to its own circumstances, to give impetus to the fundamental Guidelines and priority areas proposed by the International Assembly" (Message to the Lasallian Family).





That which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in an Institute... (Rule 1718)

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, Superior General



Note: **Brother Superior's report**, Document 5 "Toward the 44th General Chapter," was published on March 29, 2007 and distributed to each of the Capitulants at the beginning of the General Chapter. On May 4, 2007, in the time allotted for his report, Br. Superior opted not to repeat what had already been in the written report, but he presented to the Chapter Assembly his convictions concerning "That which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in an Institute."

*Thus says the Lord,
who opens a way in the sea,
and a path in the mighty waters...
Remember not the events of the past
the things of long ago consider not;
See, I am doing something new!
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*

Isaiah 43:16-19

Introduction

In the Report to the General Chapter I made reference to those certainties that I sensed and I made mention of them in my first words after my election as Superior at the 43rd General Chapter in 2000. These certainties have sustained and guided me over the course of these seven years.

In this presentation I do not intend to deal with the topics that were already presented in writing in the Report of the Brother Superior and his Council which you already have had the opportunity to read. Seven years after my appointment as Superior, I would like simply to share with you what seems to me to be "the most important" at this time in history when we are holding the 44th General Chapter. I would like, therefore, to share with you the convictions that have been affirmed or consolidated in me during these years, based on the work of the General Council, International Commissions, Secretariats, and especially the knowledge of the Institute that I have gained during the pastoral visits to all the Regions. My observations are also based on my role as President of the Union of Superiors General (USG) and my close relations with the feminine branch of Superiors General (UISG). Both Unions, and especially the Congress on Consecrated Life, held in 2004, *Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity*, broadened my horizons about the present and future of Consecrated Life today.

Drawing inspiration in the texts from Isaiah and from the words of the Founder which I cited above, I have divided my presentation into three parts:

1. The signs that "something new" is happening.
2. The "movement" that propels us to leave the past, to go through the desert in order to embrace what is new which points toward the future of God's Work.
3. That which is of the "utmost importance" in an Institute.

1. The most noteworthy signs that something new is coming to life.

Obviously, there are thousands of clear and visible signs of new life in all the Regions throughout the Lasallian world. This was made clear to me so many times during my pastoral visits as I was in direct contact with Brothers and lay persons, on an individual basis or in community, as well as in my meetings with District Councils, Lasallian Educational Mission Councils, at projects and works of our administrative organizations and especially in the new initiatives in favor of the young who are poor.

I will limit myself here to recalling some signs that resonated within me in a special way during three international events over the course of the past 7 years and in which it would have been difficult not to take note of new things coming to life: I am talking about the Inter-capitular meeting in May 2004, the workshop on "Being Brothers Today" in which the Visitors and representatives of nearly all the Districts participated. This was a special CIL session which took place in May 2006. Finally, there was the 2006 International Assembly "Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission."

1.1 The transparent sign of God's action in our history in the faces of so many men and women, young people and children who suffer the effects of impoverishment, caused by significant economic upheaval, by corruption, by violence and war. The three events I just cited clearly recalled the new urgencies that affect the family life of millions of people on all continents. Likewise, and in the midst of all of this, there is the awareness that God hears the desperate cries of the poor and he calls us and summons us to participate in his Work.

1.2 The powerful sign of the strength of the Spirit that summons us, together any by association, to the mission entrusted to us by God.

An association made up of very diverse groups, communities and individuals, animated by thousands of Brothers who reinvent the Lasallian educational program to respond to these new needs by means of an enormous diversity of works and projects, from the university level to popular and technical education, both formal and non-formal. A project that evangelizes from within and for life. Our innovations are not limited to the creation of new works, but old works which seek to renew themselves, drawing near to the needy, the abandoned, rejected, and the marginalized. Associated with God's work, we are his ministers in the world and



Mark Goebel/Ivan Castro/Simona Ballint

in history.

1.3 The vulnerable sign of the Brothers' community, the first form of association.

Brothers who live in fraternal communities as signs of the presence of the risen Jesus. Christ "in our midst" joins us together based on a common trunk, and he gives us his Spirit so that each might be a living member who participates in his liberating and evangelizing mission. Signs of apparent death in a very small number of communities, in Districts that seem to be facing extreme or irreversible situations. Nevertheless, within that context, a mission is emerging with new vitality, shared by thousands of educators, and many Brothers are beginning to renew their community and District relationships with their own Brothers, based on this experience of "the first form of association," and they are open to searching for new forms of embracing association also with other Lasallians, individually or in groups, who identify with the charism and the spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

1.4 The sign of a "small church" (The Founder defines our community as a small family and Church of Jesus Christ in Meditation 169, point 3): that encourages us to live in communion based on our educational mission to liberate and evangelize the poor. A Church, the People of God, in which we are all called to be stewards and servants: consecrated Brothers and baptized lay persons, we are impelled to sincere dialogue with men and women of other Christian denominations, of other religions, of good will...to build together a civilization of love. Toward that end, there is the difficult stri-

ving that demands restructuring of Districts and new government structures in Regions and in central government, aspiring toward a more collegial and participatory type of leadership.

1.5 The sign of new and generous vocations, of prophets in today's world that have a passion for humanity for the plan of God's Kingdom mysteriously present in history. Of young Brothers who, in spite the contradictions present in our culture, live with a passion for Christ and for children and young people that God has entrusted to them. Vocations of young teachers, men and women, of volunteers, of former students and parents, of young Lasallians who are excited by the charisma, spirituality, and mission within the Lasallian Family.

1.6 The sign of solidarity, seeking to embrace financial interdependence, helping one another, searching for an economy of communion that is closer to the Gospel demand of poverty in order to live by modest means and to share the goods of the earth.

No doubt you will be able to identify other signs. These have been recalled in order to better establish the revitalized and revitalizing context of an Institute which, although it lives day by day under the threat of death, at the same time it experiences shoots that are powerfully alive, signs of the ever new charismatic irruption of the Gospel in history.

2. The movement that propels us to leave the past and to embrace what is new that God is delivering in our midst.

In the report, I spoke of the tensions that we experience in the present as strengths that keep opposite poles and directions in balance and that encourage us to grow. Now I would like to talk about the dynamic forces that are emerging as a requirement for embracing those tensions.

2.1 A first dynamic force propels us to rediscover the meaning of our vocation as Brothers.

He appointed twelve that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach (Mark 3: 14).

Our vocation as Brothers is a call to be with Jesus and to carry his word to young people. It is about a vital synthesis that we need to bear witness to which will make our vocation ministry credible. The Founder expressed this in these words: *Every day you are with the poor and you are commissioned by God to clothe them with Jesus Christ himself and with his Spirit. Have you*

been careful, before undertaking such a holy ministry, to clothe yourselves with him in order to communicate this grace to them? (Meditation 189.1).

We cannot deny the reality of the decrease or total lack of Brother vocations in some Regions and, at the same time, there is hope offered to us by sectors that are growing even though real growth is mitigated by a perseverance rate that is not always consistent. Along these lines, I make my own the words of Father Carlos Azpiroz, the Master General of the Dominicans: *In the Old Testament, justice is measured by long life, descendants, and earthly goods. Jesus, in the Gospels, preached something else: he died poor, young, alone, naked, without means...In places where vocations are really scarce and there is a crisis, I think that is exactly what God wants to tell us, because we must not be conceited. But I would never say that we are better where there are vocations and worse where there are not* (Father Carlos Azpiroz, OP, *Vida Nueva*, July 2006).

In the Bible it is not numbers that count but faithfulness to God's plan. *The Bible considers the "remnant" to be a grace because it is made up of a group of "poor people," of "faithful ones," who place their strength in God, who trust in the power of the Lord in difficult times. It is a group that, having returned to the Lord, decides to do his will. Their prophetic strength is to be a part of the Lord for his saving mission* (Father Aquilino Bocos, CMF).

A young Brother, last year, as he made his final profession, shared his motivation for doing so in his response to the question *What has touched my heart?*, and he said that first of all, it was children and young people, especially the weakest and the poorest; secondly, it was my community of Brothers, through their simplest acts of affection and fraternity and by means of their Gospel simplicity. Finally, he said, I allowed my heart to be touched by "that Love," beyond myself, by this God who breaks through my self-sufficiency, who takes me by the hand and accompanies me even though at times I do not see him.

It seems to me that this testimony goes right to the heart of the matter. Our vocation as Brothers is a vocation of love. It is based on the love of God that we have, the mission to make it visible in our works by dedication to the young, being witnesses of his mercy and tenderness. It is, above all, about a faith conviction. Might it not be for that reason that the Founder considered dead members to be those who do not live this faith? Might it not be our principal challenge to be men of faith? Have we not allowed ourselves to be too much affected by prevailing individualism, secularism, and consumerism?

I believe that we should make our own the observation made Don Luigi Cuccini, SCJ: *We have spent enormous resources in restructuring works and training personnel. There have been results: the works and services offered by religious function well, and some are even exemplary; but, as often happens, people use our services and for reasons for living, they look elsewhere. Then perhaps we have the wrong goal?* It would be very sad if we Brothers ourselves look for other wells because we are incapable of drinking from our own well, the rich spirituality offered to us by the Founder, and if we were incapable of inviting others to drink from this marvelous source. If that were the case, we would be deserving of God's complaint to Jeremiah: *Two evils have my people done: they have forsaken me, the source of living waters; They have dug themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that hold no water* (Jeremiah 2: 13).

2.2 A second dynamic force invites us to not cling to the past, nor to become lost in a false dream, but to embrace the demands of the present.

Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he bore. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come (Hebrews 13: 12-14).

The invitation to go outside the camp as Jesus did and as the Founder and the first Brothers did in their following of Jesus, is an invitation to not content ourselves with making the present do nor dreaming of a utopian future. The future cannot be the result of efforts we make in planning the present by restoring the past, nor can we seek refuge in an unreal and imaginary world which is remote from history.

The Holy Fathers speak to us of the Church that is holy and sinful. Our Institute, as part of the Church, reflects the same reality. We are encouraged by the outcomes of holiness which, throughout our history, have come to fruition in the educational and evangelical service of young people. At the same time, we humbly recognize our mistakes of yesterday and today. The future for us is not a question of

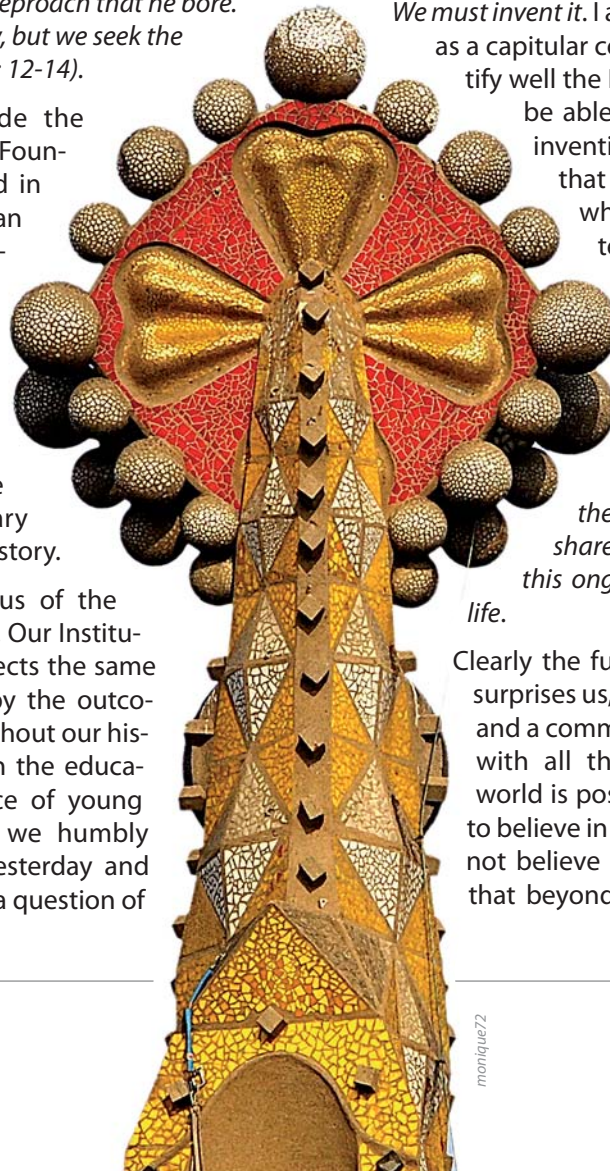
merit but of hope. It is hope that will enable us to go outside the camp with Jesus and to go forward without fear in seeking God's Will, at this time in our history, carrying our present with all its ambiguity in order to transform it.

We are living in a present that is for us a *kairos* of God, a time of grace and of profound change, similar to that lived by the Church in its moving from Judaism to Hellenism, or like that which we embraced in the Institute at critical times marked by one-hundred year periods; in 1804 with its rebirth in France after the Revolution and in 1904 with its transformation from a French Institute to an international Institute. I think that today, one-hundred years later, we are also embracing another fundamental step that asks us to open our gate and to go outside the camp, sharing our charism and broadening our mission thanks to our association with lay persons, and re-situating our being Brothers in this new context. We have in our hands, as capitulants, the opportunity to re-create our Institute, based on the Gospel and a reading of it made by the Founder and the first Brothers, which is our charism.

As Dennis Gabor, the Nobel prize winner for Physics in 1971, tells us: *We cannot in any way predict the future.*

We must invent it. I am personally convinced that if, as a capitular community, we are able to identify well the Institute's mission, then we will be able to "invent," to take the risk of inventing new, significant initiatives that respond to current needs and which embody our vocation better. I believe that young people can give us important help with their new language that makes us discover new ways. As CLAR (Latin-American Religious Conference) tells us, they have a new voice that wants to be heard, *they have a story that wants to be shared, they demand of us a place in this ongoing task of renewing religious life.*

Clearly the future is a gift and a grace that surprises us, but at the same time it is a task and a commitment that pressures us along with all those who think that another world is possible and that faith is not only to believe in what we do not see, but also to not believe in what we do see, convinced that beyond all appearances, good is gai-



ning ground. We ought to make our own the question raised by Moltmann: *“Do we Christians have a “vision of hope” for this world or, on the contrary, has established Christianity faded in such a way in our society that we share the ambiguity and contradictions of it and we no longer have a message of hope to offer to our contemporaries?”* (J. Moltmann, *La Justicia Crea Futuro*, Sal Terrae, Santander, 1992, page 12). Hope should propel us to mobilize all our strength in building the Kingdom, which was the central message of the preaching of Jesus.

As the Brazilian Jesuit Carlos Palacios tells us: *The future, in Christian terms, cannot be “planned” because we do not control it; it is an advent, something that comes to us as a gift, as a grace that surprises us, something that comes to us, something that is about to come. It arrives as something totally unprecedented: a true creation, the outcome of responsible openness to human freedom and to the promise and the gift of God.*

2.3 A third dynamic force impels us to joyfully embrace the Gospel demands of the charism.

No one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3: 11).

The invitation to go outside the camp with Jesus is an invitation, one that is certain to unsettle us, but above all it invites us to embark upon a future path. As we begin our Chapter, the Spirit spurs us to go outside the camp of our security, our comforts, plans and alliances, because our life has a counter-cultural dimension that we cannot forget.

The Founder speaks to us of resembling Jesus Christ as the basic condition for our ministry to be effective in the sense of the Gospel. It is about resemblance at a deeper level than merely that of copying an external model (cf. *Meditation* 196.3). This concern for an internal resemblance with Jesus Christ should lead us to feel that we are *sacraments of Christ* for our disciples: *It is Jesus Christ himself who wants your disciples to see him in you and receive your instructions as if he were giving them to them, convinced that your instructions are the truth of Jesus Christ who speaks with your mouth* (*Meditation* 195.2).

When I was a young Brother I was a little bit shocked by the Founder's last recommendations that are found at the end of the Collection: *If you wish to persevere and die in your vocation, never have any intercourse with people of the world; for, little by little, you will acquire a taste for their habits and be drawn into conversations with them to such an extent, that you will no longer be able, through policy, to refrain from applauding their language... Cer-*

tainly we know that the term “world” can be interpreted in different ways, and that after Vatican II the apostolic religious life decisively opened itself up to dialogue with the world through the double activity of giving and receiving. But it is still true that the words of the Founder do contain an important idea which today we express as being counter-cultural when we face images, speech, and criteria that the world presents to us. As Jesuit Benjamín González Buelta tells us: *Images made with the most advanced technology have the ability of entering within us, intensely impacting our affective universe and becoming part of our “inner core,” and these images travel around and secretly form our deepest emotions, so that they take over the small and the greater decisions of our lives.* This is a good reason to take seriously the Founder's words.

3. That which is of the utmost importance...

That which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in an Institute is that all who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it... For it is this spirit that should animate all their actions, be the motive of their whole conduct; and those who do not possess it and those who have lost it, should be looked upon as dead members, and they should look upon themselves as such... (Introduction to Chapter 2 of the Rule of 1718).

The dramatic character of these very categorical statements of our Founder has always impressed me. This text, along with the introduction to the chapter on regularity, are the last fragments that were added to the Rule in the edition that was compiled before his death. It sounds like a warning, after the many years of sharing life with the Brothers, and like an invitation to consider what was for him the most important: To embrace the spirit that is proper to us, loving God and neighbor unconditionally and with passion. Our Rule of 1987 wanted to keep this double treasure. It is here where we find the essential.

This warning could not be stronger. De La Salle makes reference to the possibility of Brothers looking upon themselves, or being considered by others, as dead members. This is a call to Brothers of all time to examine if we really are living the spirit and if we are effectively moved by that double passion for the God of salvation and for those to whom he sends us.

3.1 To be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self (Ephesians 3: 16).

The Rule tells us clearly of what that spirit consists and it does so with action verbs: to do all, to see all, and to

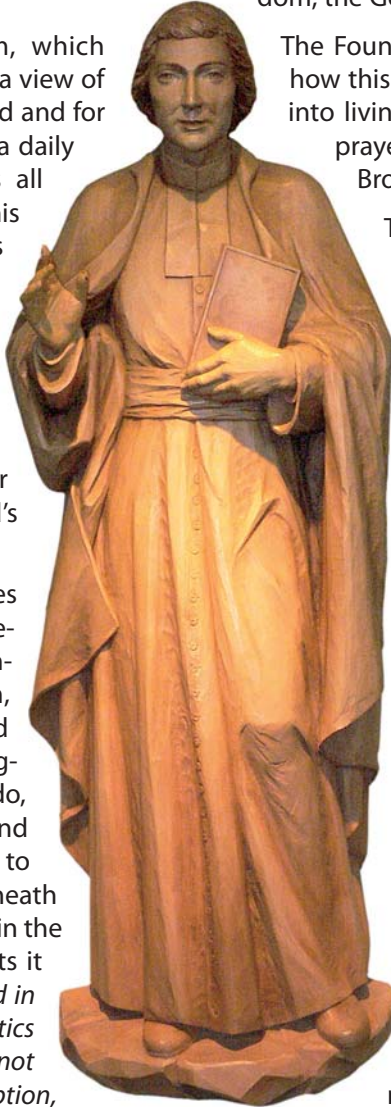
attribute all to God. Verbs that reflect the mystical and prophetic realism that De La Salle embraced and which should characterize this community of Brothers. To look at everything, to do everything and to interpret everything from God's angle, God present in history, accepting in obedience God's total plan, even when it demands a total kenosis, getting rid of possessions, and complete abandonment.

This mystical and prophetic realism, which impels us to consider everything from a view of faith and with a passionate love for God and for the poor, is maintained and grows by a daily reading of Scripture which animates all daily actions by faith. To embrace this more authentically, De La Salle invites us to a different kind of practice: that of the man who lives in the spirit. That is to say, a man who considers all his senses and who attentively keeps watch on all his inner movements in order to, as far as possible, do nothing out of human motivation but only for the demands of the Kingdom, God's plan, God's orders.

For the purpose of instilling in Novices and Brothers that mystical and prophetic view, De La Salle favored the attention, recognition, and celebration, throughout life, of the presence of God in order to think only about the Kingdom, what God wants and wills us to do, that is to say, concerning our duties and work. A presence of God that opens us to the presence of his face reflected beneath the rags of the poor children we teach, in the words of the Founder. Today, Metz puts it this way: *The experience of God inspired in the Bible is not the experience of mystics with closed eyes but with open eyes: it is not related only to one's individual perception, rather, it is intensified by the perception of the suffering of others.*

De La Salle could not have given us a more integrated spiritual path, nor could he have directed us more decisively in the midst of professional life to that which is most important. De La Salle does not put mystical vision and prophetic action in opposition. Nor does he make any distinction between the interior life and apostolic obligations. But neither does he subordinate one to the other. They go together, which is what brings unity to a man who is truly evangelical, who lives

an active faith in practicing impassioned love. The center is that God acts and he includes us in his action as collaborators and ministers, as disciples, ambassadors and angels, as apostles and messengers of the Kingdom, within the Church and as prophets, stewards, and servants. It is for that reason that we feel profoundly associated with the God of live, the God of the Kingdom, the God of History, the God of the poor.



The Founder's teaching on interior prayer shows how this unifying force works, how it changes us into living members, into interior men. Lasallian prayer has three movements that unify the Brother's spirituality.

The first movement is the attention we give to God's presence in the very heart of life, which elicits within us that sensitivity to look upon everything in history in such a way that facilitates recognizing the signs of God's movement. That movement, based on life, leads us progressively, day after day, to a more profound center, which we reach in and through signs recognized in light of Scripture, in the heart of an apostolic community, gathered to work and to pray. Filled with the presence of the living God, the second movement in prayer consists in reading the liturgical Gospel of the day, to contemplate on the words and actions of Jesus, to admire and to affirm how he acted towards his disciples, to learn how to do the same with ours. In light of the Gospel, a third movement emerges that leads us to face the reality that we live with the contemplated Word, to open ourselves and to welcome the transforming force of the Spirit that identifies us with Jesus. This third movement draws us out of our prayer to embrace each day's reality, where the Lord's mystery, word and action are now present in the daily, professional practice of each Brother.

These three movements, then, do not oppose mission and prayer, professional life and community life. On the contrary, through God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the center, we see all of life and we are impelled again towards it, in order to transform it. The prayer which the Founder proposes to us transforms the Brother into a living member, into a mystical prophet who lives history, from his inner core intensely and with passion.

3.2 That which is most important in our current context.

On the eve of the 39th General Chapter, Brother Michel Sauvage stated during a conference he gave in Troyes in 1965: *First of all, the finality of the Institute according to the Founder cannot be understood and the Institute cannot be faithful except by being open to the Church and to the world, to its needs and calls... Our efforts in adaptation cannot reach their objective if we focus too much on ourselves. It is significant that the Founder spoke little about the development of his congregation, but he never tired in speaking about the needs of the young, the growth of the Church, the advancement of the Kingdom of God.*

This also was the message of the Intercapitular meeting, the document on *Being Brothers Today*, and the 2006 International Assembly, which spoke to us of the importance of association for the educational mission and which asked us above all that we be Brothers, active members, interior men driven by impassioned love. With this indispensable backdrop, I think that we can ask ourselves: What is most important in our current context if we want to respond to the needs of the young, to be living members of the Church, and to work for the Kingdom of God?

My personal conviction is that the answer can be none other than that of being interior men, moved by the Spirit. This assumes a change of direction towards interiority and the imperative need of interior work. Archbishop Gardin, Secretary of the Congregation of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, raised a similar question on the general level concerning religious and he gave us an answer, which seems to me should be our answer: *What are we, what do we represent in the Church? The response to these questions can be summed up in words such as spirituality, a sound relationship with God, the search for the primacy of the divine. I tend to call this the monastic soul of all consecrated life: centering on God throughout life* (Archbishop Agostino Gardin).

Our life as Brothers has meaning when the Lord's passion for his people runs through our veins and we are



able to carry his merciful and saving love in our service to the young, especially those who are poor and those who are at risk, when we are bearers of a freely received gift that we cannot attribute to ourselves and which we must share. In that way, we will avoid the danger that is always waiting for us: *The greatest danger is that, from the lack of spiritual sources, we let ourselves be seduced by living in the small world of our immediate interests and satisfaction, of our minds and our thinking,*

determined by the individualistic and subjective model of the dominating post-modern culture (P. McSweeney).

It is up to us, then, during this Chapter, to face the reality in which we live as Brothers and to ask ourselves if we embrace our consecration as Brothers as mystics and prophets, if we are living or dead members, if the Gospel or the world of business is predominant in us. As a Chapter, we need to discern in the Spirit what the signs are of new life that allow us to be living members; to reject vigorously all that leads to the path of death and to discover the new role that it will be up to us to play as Brothers for the young people we teach and among the laity who ask us to be signs and guarantors of the Lasallian charism in today's world. We need to feel that we are sent forth from the burning bush and propelled by the presence of the Risen One to carry in our history the Love that dwells within us and the passion of Christ for humanity.

Conclusion

Enlarge the space for your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly; lengthen your ropes and make firm your stakes. For you shall spread abroad to the right and to the left; Your descendants shall dispossess the nations and shall people the desolate cities (Isaiah 54: 2 - 3).

I will conclude by sharing the certainties that I sense within me at this time of our 44th General Chapter.

- It seems to me that we are living at a time when we are called to be **men of hope**. A hope that is born out of faith, but which has its origin in the enormous ability that our Institute has had to begin again. Jesus Christ is our hope. We should build our future

on this cornerstone. A hope that is supported in God's faithful word and in his plan of salvation made visible in Jesus. That hope to which we have been called, as Saint Paul tells us, thanks to the resurrection of Jesus (cf. Ephesians 1: 18 - 21), which has made God's face visible, a God who can only love us and search for us tirelessly.

- We are called to be **the human face of Jesus** for young people, for the poor, for today's world that tends to impoverish human reality and to reduce it only to the technological dimension. *We need to build a society in which we can thrive as human beings. Our world is becoming a cultural desert with the triumph of consumerism. The cultural poverty of this predominant perception of the human being is devastating the entire world, and **without prophecy the people become demoralized** (Proverbs 29: 18).* There is a hunger not just for food but for meaning (Timothy Radcliffe, *Sing a New Song*, page 77); and we are called to be **the human face of the Church**, for laity who share our charism, helping them, starting from our being as Brothers, to live in a Church, the People of God, a Church that is fraternal, humble, compassionate, and in solidarity.
- The Lord has chosen us to be *witnesses and sentinels*. Witnesses of the gratuitous love of the Father, of his unconditional pardon, his close presence, his maternal face made manifest in Jesus. Witnesses, as Brothers who live fraternal life in community, of an alternative model of society founded in Gospel values. Witnesses, by our vow of association for the educational service of the poor, of the preference which they enjoy in God's Kingdom, and witnesses of that Kingdom we are called to make present now, with our lives and our mission. At the same time, we are called to be sentinels with a future vision that will allow us to respond, from our vocation, and associated to all those who want to share our charism, to the needs of young people today, through the proclamation of the Gospel and ecumenical or inter-religious dialogue and to react to all that is opposed to God's saving plan.



Hughes Leglise-Baraille

Our challenge is to achieve **a vital synthesis**, on the personal and community levels, between Jesus and the Kingdom; the mystical and the prophetic; being witnesses and sentinels; spirituality and mission; hope and historical commitment; Gospel and reality, young people and the poor; fraternal life in community and shared charism, Christian formation and human education. I am convinced that if we live this synthesis with Gospel creativity and gratuity it will be, no doubt, a link for a Brother's life lived with enchantment and able to raise questions and, why not new followers as well?

3rd Phase: Seeing with the Eyes of Faith

Between May 9th and 13th the Third Phase of the Chapter “Seeing with the Eyes of Faith” took place. The central theme was personal and community discernment. The document of Br. Miguel Campos: “Fidelity to the movements of the Spirit: the accents of discernment” served as motivation and general orientation. These were days of study, reflection and prayer, as well as liturgical moments in harmony with the rhythm of the Chapter. In the evenings the Capitulars shared their reflection and prayer in small intercultural groups.

Each of these was centred on a theme:

- “Putting ourselves in the presence of God”;
- “Interiorizing the Founder’s spirit of discernment”;
- “Remembering the history of our Institute”;
- “Identifying the challenges facing our Institute”.

Br. Armin Luistro, Facilitator, described the stage of discernment and motivated each one of the days with the following words.

Description:

This Third Phase is not a personal retreat but a time to “wrestle with God” as Jacob did and discover our shared dreams as Joseph did with his brothers. It is not a time for pietistic devotions but of active silence, serious study, critical reflection, and authentic prayer on the pre-Capitular and Capitular experiences lived up to now.

This Third Phase is a critical transition phase between the pre-Chapter preparation as well as Phases One and Two up to Phase 4 “Giving Life to Faith” (decision-making). The aim is to see with the eyes of faith what has been experienced up to now, make a synthesis of its meaning for the Institute today, and arrive at a consensus on the major challenges and horizons which need to be deepened during the Fourth Phase of the Chapter.

Essential Features:

- **Praying our experiences** taking as a base the re-reading of documents, notes, pre-Capitular reports and what was experienced in Phases 1 & 2, engaging especially those themes that *burn in my heart* and which *move me deeply*.
1. **Study:** review of all pre-Chapter documents as well as presentations, group/plenary discussions and personal notes; optional group study.



2. **Reflection:** identifying key issues that emerged in myself and in the group and allowing these to dialogue with my own experiences in order to arrive at a critical awareness of the realities of our time.
 3. **Prayer:** spending time in meditation and contemplation in order to allow God’s Story in the Scriptures to speak to us about our Lasallian Story today.
- **Discerning as a community** by actively listening to the Holy Spirit speaking in our hearts and through each Brother as they share the fruits of their study, reflection and prayer.
1. Nourished by the Word and the Bread of the Eucharist.
 2. Sharing in small or medium groups.
 3. Sharing by means of cards on notice boards: prayers, challenges/horizons and priority themes.

Orientations for each day.

May 9th, First Day.

For more than a week now, we have lived our experience of community with its own share of joys and hopes, anxieties and fears. Today, we especially remember that we have gathered here as the “principal Brothers of this Institute” for a future that is not our own. We are called to confront the major challenges facing our 327-year old Institute. But none of our efforts however wise or creative will bring life to our fraternity. Only God will.

The first question we dare ask is “*Lord, what do You require of us NOW?*” That is the same question we will

ask of ourselves the whole day as we prayerfully review our experience of communion during the first 9 days of this Chapter.

Today, like Moses, we leave our comfort zones and enter the Tent of the Lord's Presence. Today, despite our imperfections, we continue to journey together in hope. Today we really hope the Lord will speak with you "face to face, just as a man speaks with a friend."

May 10th, Second Day.

Yesterday, we immersed ourselves in the holy and loving presence of our God. We dared speak with him "face to face, just as a man speaks with a friend." We engaged our God in an attitude of "simple attention" and "total openness". And we recognized God "present in all those things that surround us along the way."

In today's reflections, we "make use of this light to judge all visible things". In this light we also enter John Baptist de La Salle's Spirit of Discernment as we look at the realities in our world and in the Church in the light of God. We ask the Lord to convert us into "disciples of Jesus Christ enlightened by God's Spirit" as we prayerfully become aware of the critical concerns which have the greatest impact on our Institute and the challenges which face it.

We are invited today to consider all the material related to the reality of the world of today from the perspective of the poor and marginalized. We wish to see the world from a new perspective. We especially ask for the grace to see the world with the eyes of faith and from the perspective of the poor.

Today, like Hosea, we return to the desert in order to hear God's words of love calling us back. Today, like the rich young man in the Gospel, we search for what is necessary so that we may respond to God's invitation to choose life for ourselves, the world and the Church.

May 11th, Third Day.

We imagined the young canon De La Salle standing at the foot of the steps of the Cathedral of Rheims, in quiet discernment of what were the next steps to take. Br Miguel Campos describes it as "a discernment that had at its core and ultimate purpose the quest for the 'glory of God' and the 'good

of the Church' " which at the same time "was based on the reality of the poor and the masters with whom he was living." From that first crossroads experience of the Founder, we participated in examining the realities of the Church and of the world of the poor.

Today, we listen to that same voice, gentle and wise, so that we may see with the eyes of faith our story of over three centuries guided by God's Gentle Spirit, almost by the hand, from one crossroads experience to another.

Today we will especially focus on the realities of our consecration and those same realities that we share in common with other religious in the Church. We invite you to make a list of these critical concerns:

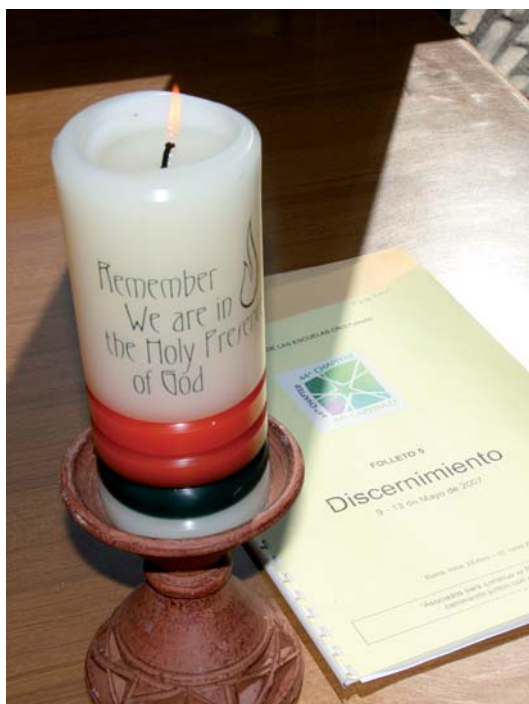
- regarding our vocation as Consecrated Persons and what the Lord inspires in us as a response to those concerns;
- regarding the Institute itself –the lived reality of communion in mission, our identity as Brothers and the emerging role of our Lasallian Partners, the vocation and formation landscape, the structures of governance, and all other issues related to the guarantee of its dynamism, continuity, stability and efficacy– all considered from the integrating vow of association for the service of the poor through education.

Spend some time in prayer as you consider these realities and then list down the most critical concerns confronting the Institute today and what the Lord inspires in you as you pray about those concerns. Today we pray to the Lord that we will have an experience of real communion as the first Christian community did. We also pray

that we will be able to enter into the same spirit of association that Nicolas Vuyart, Gabriel Drolin and John Baptist de La Salle committed themselves to during our foundational years.

May 12th, Fourth Day.

Today we have reached the heart of our discernment process. We are at exactly the same crossroads as the disciples in the Gospel today. We could send the crowds away –the poor, our students and all those whom we serve– so they can fend for themselves. Or we could do the unimaginable: give the little that we have so that the Lord can bless it, break it, and then give it back to us so





May 13th, Fifth Day.

For the past four days of our Discernment Phase, we shared our fraternity in small communities to discuss and talk about those passions and fears. We built “14 tents” (small groups) to share our experiences each day. Each night we would gather in this Tent of the Lord’s Presence (The Sanctuary) as a community of the 44th General Chapter. It is here in this Sanctuary in an attitude of simple attention that we continue to hear even today that one voice which proclaims: *I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... I am the God of Vuyart, Drolin and De La Salle... Do not be afraid!*

Today, we culminate this discernment phase only to continue our journey in the next phase as a community of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In this Fourth Phase we bring with us the hopes and dreams of the Lasallian Family scattered in 5 continents and 83 countries in the world. We move from this Tent of the Lord’s Presence back into our respective regions so that there we can share the passions and the energies that were awakened in us during the past three phases. May the God of the Journey continue to live in our hearts forever!

that we could share it with those entrusted to our care. We can choose to do what is safe and secure or we can be part of God’s miracle of life.

Today, the Lord sets before us “life and prosperity, death and adversity”. Choose well what you will leave as a legacy for our Institute. *“The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart...”* We will listen to the Lord in our hearts which will guide us as we lead the Institute into new horizons of hope.

4th Phase: Giving life to faith

Priority Themes

Saturday May 12th was a definitive day in the Chapter experience, a day devoted to identifying the main challenges to which the Institute is called upon to respond in the coming years. To study these challenges Thematic Groups were formed.

To identify the themes we proceeded in the following manner: To start with each Capitulant was given three cards. Each Capitulant had to reply to the question: “What are the most urgent challenges facing the Institute in the coming years? They had to identify three. Then he would write one on each of the three cards received. Next he had to prioritize them and at the end of the morning he was to put only the first one of these on the notice boards provided for that purpose.



Before one o'clock the Capitulants could go round eh different notice boards and get an initial idea of what would be the main challenges for the Institute. But it was only after this, at the beginning of the afternoon, that the Coordinators of the Intercultural Groups came together along with the Listening and Writing Committee, to put the cards in order. Their work consisted in grouping the challenges according to what they had in common and discovering the central theme which the Chapter had to deal with.

In the middle of the afternoon the Capitulants would return to the notice boards and pin up their two remaining challenges.

The Listening and Writing Committee in this way picked out the following 10 Priority Themes (indicating the number of cards in favour of each Theme). They then presented the Challenges which they had identified, the statement of Horizons and some Lines of Action.

A. Community life

(72 = 31 + 41)

Challenge 1: There is a manifest concern about our life in community: our fraternal life, friendly relationships, community witness...and it is precisely community that is the main dream for new vocations.

Horizons: Communities of Brothers who love each other, live in the hope of the Kingdom based on the presence of Jesus, who are welcoming and simple, available, open to the world and its needs.

Lines of Action:

1. Communicate our experience of fraternity in openness, being welcoming, dialogue, in and out of community.
2. Communities that accompany better each Brother, especially the young.
3. Program more activities in common; being more present to one another.
4. Communities formed of Brothers from different cultures.

Challenge 2: While injustice is present in the world and we witness the pain that this causes around us, religious life is lived more and more turned in on itself.

Horizons: Prophetic communities that live radically the option for the poor to which the Gospel calls us.

Lines of Action:

- Make our communities places which are

open to receive young emigrants or those in need.

Challenge 3: We have almost no vocations. We do not manifest a community witness that could awaken in the young a desire to follow Jesus radically, in whatever life option is chosen.

Horizons: Authentic community life, an expression of our passion for Jesus and his Kingdom that could be significant for the young who come to us.

Lines of Action:

- Awaken in Brothers and Lasallian colleagues a more vigorous witness of Christian community at the center of the educational community; this is realized in catechesis, the explicit proclamation of Jesus and in welcoming all in the name of Jesus.

Challenge 4: There are clear symptoms in us that Jesus is not the center of our lives as he should be: activism, consumerism, lack of contemplative capability...reflect the fact that we need a profound spiritual renewal.

Horizontes: Community life in which we help one another to put in the center that which is most important: the presence of Jesus and the desire to follow him, individually and in community.

Lines of Action:

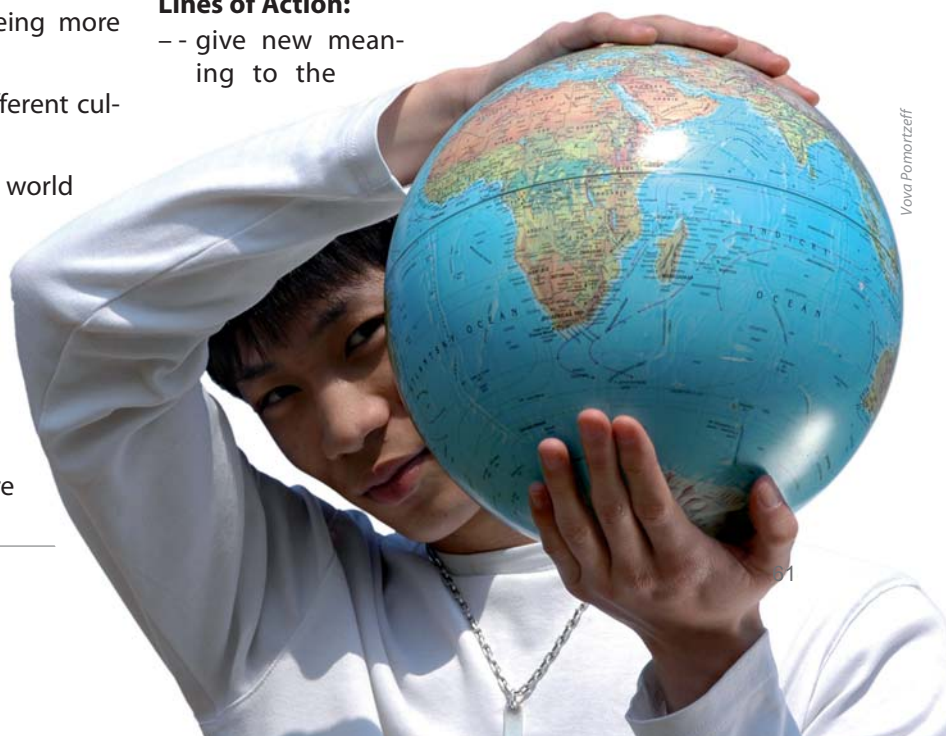
- Be more creative in our celebrations.
- Celebrate fraternal correction and reconciliation.

Challenge 5: Growth of individualism among us, mission and community are separated, we do not live the mission as community, but more as individuals. Our students do not have any idea of what our communities are, they do not see them.

Horizons: That it be our whole community which nourishes and animates the mission and that each Brother feels sent by the community.

Lines of Action:

- give new meaning to the



vow of association as that which gives integrity and meaning to others.

B. Service of the poor

(48 = 8 + 40)

Challenges: *Problem of emigration, new forms of poverty and exclusion.*

- Non-recognition of the *Human Rights* and those of children (see Lines of Action 3).
- *The Brothers* have more or less abandoned service to the poor; we speak of “returning to the poor”.

Horizons: A determined return to the poor by *associating with the God of the poor* in a radical and prophetic way.

Lines of Action:

1. Promote *education* for justice and lasting development, for *social justice and Human Rights* – as well as *Duties* – of men, women, minorities, children the young.
2. Put into practice *the conclusions of the International Assembly 2006*.

C. Association

(47 notas: 10 + 37)

Challenges 1: The lived experience of recent years and the study and deepened understanding of the original vow of association challenge us to see the centrality of the vow of association in our Institute.

Horizons: Deepening of the significance of the vow of association as a fundamental component of our consecration and as a defining element of our identity.

Lines of Action:

- Organize continuing education in formation programs for the Brothers so they can understand and appreciate better the value of this vow.

Challenge 2: Many Brothers do not feel they were prepared to live association of Brothers and colleagues and show some reticence about this form of association.

Horizons: In-depth formation of Brothers and colleagues that will help to advance the process of association.

Lines of Action:

- Assure the quality of formation and of the formatters for all groups and all levels of the Lasallian family.
- Develop formative itineraries for all Lasallian, not just for Brothers, with proper adjustments for different groups.

Challenge 3: The process of association has made progress, but the reality of this in the Institute is quite disparate.

Horizons: Lasallian colleagues assume leadership roles; the creation of new structures that guarantee shared reflection and decision-making.

Lines of Action:

1. Adopt the implications of the International Assembly 2006.
2. Accept the fact that the Brothers are not the only owners of the mission.
3. Share the responsibilities and the decision-making capability of the distinct organisms related to association.

Challenge 4: There are Brothers who are concerned about their identity and their specificity as Brothers in the context of association.

Horizons: A profound sense of our identity as Brothers and of our specific contribution to our mission.

Lines of Action:

- Be convinced that the Lasallian Family is a “house of the school and of communion” based on the Lasallian charism of service to the poor.

D. Interior life and consecrated life (Spirituality)

(31 = 15 + 16)

Challenge 1: Lack of congruity between our rich spirituality and our living witness.

Horizon: Our Brotherhood is grounded in the centrality of God and on a radical return to Jesus and his mission.

Lines of Action:

1. Base our lives on the Gospel, “our first and principal Rule.”

Challenge 2: Need for renewal of our life of interior prayer (mental prayer), “our first and principal exercise.”

Horizon: An interior life rooted in prayer and the Word of God.

Lines of Action:

- Rediscover the sources that nourish our interior life (prayer, the Eucharist and the Word of God).

Challenge 3: The difficulty of living the consecrated life in a world which is so secularized and consumerist.

Horizon: A credible life of the Brothers, prophetic and attractive.

Lines of Action:

1. Nourish the contemplative aspects of the consecrated life.

E. Identity as Brothers*(21 = 10 + 11)*

Challenge 1: Lack of a clear vision of the specificity of our identity as Brothers today in the Lasallian family.

Horizon: Living the richness of our lay spirituality as Brothers.

Lines of Action:

- Develop a better understanding through effective formation programs of our vows and of the uniqueness of a lay spirituality for Brothers.

Challenge 2: Risk of dilution of our identity as Brothers in the context of our vow of association for the educational service of the poor.

Horizon: Understanding our identity in the context of association for the educational service of the poor.

Lines of Action:

1. Give priority to evangelization and catechesis.

F. Pastoral Ministry of Vocations*(19 = 4 + 15)*

Challenge: The disappearance of Brothers from the educational scene. What would the Institute be without Brothers? They are the heart, memory and guarantor of the charism!

Horizons: To look for, motivate and encourage vocations of Brothers in the context of association and the Lasallian Family.

Lines of Action:

Witness of a life of hope; change our mentality about association; have significant experiences of faith, fraternity, and service.

G. Formation of the Brothers*(18 = 4 + 14)*

Challenges: The reality of an Institute that has changed in recent years, the fragility of our new candidates, and the new context of association...this necessitates a new form of initial and ongoing formation.

Horizons: Formation to form Brothers prepared for modern times that continues throughout their lives and helps them to be aware their specific identity in the context of association.

Lines of Action:

1. Design a more in-depth initial formation program, longer, centered on God, with extensive study of the Bible.
2. Pay attention to the formation of formatters.

H. Governance structures*(15 = 2 + 13)*

Challenges: Lack of structures and of a new style at all levels of the Institute to meet the challenges of the life and mission of all Lasallian forms of association.

Horizon: A "Servant Leadership" style of governance that is responsive to the growing responsibilities at the Regional and local level.

Lines of Action:

- To develop structures which favour unity in diversity, subsidiarity and responsibility between the Centre and the Regions.



The Thematic Groups

Once the Priority Themes were defined and accepted by the Chapter Assembly, 6 Thematic Groups were formed around the following Themes: Community Life, Association, Service to the Poor, Interior Life, The Pastoral Ministry of Vocations of the Brothers and of Lasallians and Government and Animation.

Some days later, on may 25th 2007 it was proposed and

accepted that a new Group be formed on the Theme of “Accompanying the Young Brothers”. In the evenings the Young Brothers Capitulants met to deepen the Themes which especially concerned them: they formed a new Thematic Group.



Members of the Thematic Group:

A. Community Life

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Ismael Beltrán Millán | Central Spain |
| Robert Berger | New York |
| Nicolas Capelle | France |
| Jan De Cat | Belgium-North |
| Stephen Deignan | Ireland |
| Francisco E. Dionisio Pérez | Central America-Panamá |
| Alberto Gómez Barruso | Andalucía |
| Lawrence Humphrey | Regional USA/Tor |
| Yemanu Jehar | General Councillor |
| Joseph Klong Chaiphuak | Thailand |
| Louis-Paul Lavallée | French-speaking Canada |
| Juan Pablo Martin | General Councillor |
| Jorge E. Molina Valencia | Bogota |
| Grégoire Nguyen Van Tan | Vietnam |
| Felipe Pérez Gavilán Torres | Mexico North |
| Paulo Petry | São Paulo |
| Edmond Precourt | L.I.N.E. |
| Carmelo Santamaría Urizar | Ecuador |
| Salvatore Santoro | Italy, REL |
| Jean-Baptiste Tran Dinh Hiep | Vietnam, PARC |
| Esayas Tzegay Gabir | Lwanga |
| Aad Van Bentem | Central Europe |

B. Service of the poor

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Stefano Agostini | Italy |
| Pedro Álvarez Arenas | Mexico South |
| Patricio Bolton | Argentina-Paraguay, RELAL |
| Paul Cornec | France |
| Sylvain Cosimbo | Afrique de l'Ouest |
| Michael French | Director of C.I.L. |
| Lawrence Gho | Myanmar |

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Jean-Luc Lambert | France |
| Francisco López Gil | Bursar General |
| Juan C. Maldonado Jordán | Bolivia |
| Jean François Morlier | France |
| Pierre Mourier | France |
| Frederick Mueller | Secretary of MEL |
| Pubudu Rajapaksha | Colombo, PARC |
| Vicente Ruiz Quintín | Andalucía, REL |
| Arockiadoss Soosai | India |
| Joan Carles Vázquez García | Regional REL |
| Jesús Miguel Zamora Martín | Valladolid |

C. Association

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Solomon Abebe Deaso | Lwanga, RELAF |
| Jean-Paul Aleth | France |
| Adalberto Aranda | Antilles |
| Mikel Balerdi | Bilbao |
| Antonio Botana | Secretary Associated |
| Miguel Campos | General Councillor |
| Andrés Corcuera | Valladolid |
| Victor Franco | General Councillor |
| José Bianor Gallego Botero | Medellín |
| Wojciech Golonka | Poland |
| Carlos A. Jamade Hirmas | Chile |

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Paul Kaiser | Central Europe |
| Fernando Lambert | French-speaking Canada |
| Thomas Lavin | Penang |
| Dennis Malloy | Baltimore |
| Aloys Ndimukihe | Rwanda |
| Donato Petti | Italy |
| Michael Eamon Sanderl | San Francisco, USA |
| Sean Sellors | Great Britain |

D. Interior Life and Consecrated Life

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Georges Absi | Middle East |
| Jean-Pierre Berger | Belgium-South |
| Frank Byrne | New York |
| Gerardo A. Castillo Trujillo | Venezuela |
| Timothy Coldwell | New Orleans-Santa Fe |
| Jorge Gallardo De Alba | Japan |
| Marc Hofer | General Councillor |
| Vincent Keating | Australia-NZ-P-NG |
| Jon Lezamiz | Bilbao |
| Josep Martí I Roca | Catalunya |
| Edgar Genuino Nicodem | Porto Alegre |
| Alfonso Novillo Aranda | Madrid |
| Hilaire Raharilalao | Antananarivo |
| Santiago Rodríguez Mancini | Argentina-Paraguay |

E. Pastoral ministry of Vocations of Brothers and Lasallians

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Jean-C. Abou-Atme | Middle East |
| Aquilino Bravo Puebla | Madrid |
| Marcos A. Corbellini | Porto Alegre |
| Luis A. Dávila De León | Mexico North |
| Shahzad George Gill | Pakistan |
| Vicentiu Ghiurca | Europe, REL |
| Josep Guiteras i Llimona | Catalunya |
| David Hawke | PARC |
| Thomas Jones | San Francisco |
| Miguel Luna García | Peru |
| Francis Manning | Ireland |
| Roger Masamba Kinkuma | Congo-Kinshasa |
| Denzil Perera | Colombo |
| Mamy Olivier Rabarone | Antananarivo, RELAF |
| Dominique Rustuel | France |
| Lucio Tazzer De Schrijver | Mexico South |
| Domenic Viggiani | New York |

F. Government

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| José Manuel Agirrezabalaga | Bilbao |
| Otto René Armas Bonilla | Central América-Panamá |
| Dominic Berardelli | San Francisco |
| Jacques D'Huitemau | France |
| Blaise Djeukam | Douala |
| Edmundo Fernandez | Philippines |
| Ghebreyesus Habte | Lwanga |
| Thomas Johnson | Midwest |
| William Mann | Vicar General |
| Rafael Matas Rossello | Valencia-Palma |
| Ambrose Payne | Australia-NZ-P-NG |
| Mario Presciuttini | Italy |
| Iván M. Pinchevsky Vergara | Ecuador, RELAL |
| Claude Reinhardt | General Councillor |
| José M. Sauras Villanova | Gulf of Benin |
| Robert Schieler | Baltimore |
| Leonardo Tejeiro Duque | Procurator General |

G. Accompanying the young Brothers

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Juan Pablo Martín | General Councillor |
| Edmond Precourt | L.I.N.E. |
| Iván Mauricio Pinchevsky | Ecuador |
| Mamy Oliver Rabarone | Antananarivo |
| Santiago Rodríguez Mancini | Argentina-Paraguay |
| Thomas Jones | San Francisco |

H. Reflections of the Young Brothers

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Solomon Abebe Deaso | Lwanga |
| Jean Claude Abou - Atme | Middle-East |
| Patricio Bolton | Argentina-Paraguay |
| Francisco E. Dionisio Pérez | Central-America Panama |
| Shahzad George Gill | Pakistan |
| Vicentiu Ghiurga | Central Europe |
| Iván M. Pinchevsky Vergara | Ecuador |
| Mamy Olivier Rabarone | Antananarivo |
| Pubudu Rajapaksha | Colombo |
| Vicente Ruiz Quintín | Andalucia |
| Michael Eamon Sanderl | San Francisco |
| Salvatore Santoro | Italy |
| Jean Baptiste Tran Dinh Hiep | Vietnam |

Reflections from Young Brother Capitulants

Introduction

The following reflections are the result of various meetings of the Young Brother Capitulants to the 44th General Chapter that occurred in the first three weeks of the Chapter. We share them with all Chapter Capitulants for reflection, discussion, and input with regard to the work of the Chapter and Theme Groups.

Community Life

Hopes

Support for new styles and types of communities that respond to the educational needs of the world today. We wish to live in communities with Brothers and lay people, who have the same passions and desire for the God of life; who wish to build community as a place, home and school of fraternal brotherhood; who wish to engage in education and pastoral ministry preferably in impoverished sectors.

We have hope in:

- The community life which we live as well as the mission that we share and sharing our community life with the young people that we minister to.
- A community wherein one can experience closeness, affection and where one is able to share one's frustrations, joys and problems.
- A community that is centered on mission.
- An open community, that is simple, visible and serves as a true witness.
- Communities where people feel free to visit us, see how we live and share their lives with others.
- A community where we can live the gift of our brotherhood.

Fears

We fear living a lonely life in community without being able to share the gift of our brotherhood with other Brothers.

Spiritual Life

Hopes

We have hope where there is a life of prayer in the community. We appreciate the witness, depth and quality of the spirituality of a number of Brothers and lay people. We have the hope that our communities will be living signs of association, transcendence and radical witness, where community values will prevail over individualism.

As an Institute, we are traveling an interesting path as Church community of communities. We feel like consecrated people in an Institute that shares its life with

other consecrated religious, priests and lay people.

We are motivated by the search for a religious life that is simple, attentive, united to Jesus Christ and that does not abandon following Christ. A religious life that will continue reading the signs of the times

Fears

The shallowness into which our lives and the lives of some Brothers may fall into. We worry about spiritual emptiness, total independence, individualism, activism, consumerism, moral relativism. We fear that by allowing ourselves to be taken in by modern fads, we will lose the ideals of our Founder and not be able to respond to the signs of the times and thereby fail to be authentic and faithful witnesses. We are convinced that if we do not have an authentic spiritual life we will not be able to do anything of value.

Vocation Ministry

Hopes

There are Brothers who continue to be models and mentors to other Brothers in the Mission. We hope that other Brothers will come for whom we will be models and mentors in their Mission and communal life. We intend to present the Brothers' vocation to young people and to renew the structures of our communities. This openness comes from our commitment to the poor and from a profound spirituality among Brothers that invites others to become one with us.

We feel very happy by the resurgence of vocations in some Districts, particularly in Europe where the work of vocational ministry is so difficult.

Fears

How do we respond to the reality of aging Brothers and decreasing vocations while trying to maintain our existing institutions?

How do we address vocation ministry in ways that are intentional and creative so that there will be other young Brothers with us in community and in the future of our Mission?

Educational Service to the Poor

Hopes

We have seen the rich and glorious history of the Institute's past. This leads us to desire to have Brothers to continue the Lasallian Mission in the world. People continually ask for Brothers and Lasallian schools that will address educational needs. This is a sign that the Brothers continue to contribute positively to society and to the Church.

Another sign of hope is that our institutions continue to



We see hope in the opportunities that allow us to continue to be open to and foster association with one another and with our Partners, despite our decreasing numbers. We appreciate opportunities for companionship, friendship, and fraternity that emerge between Brothers and lay people. We experience a dynamic of encouragement and enthusiasm with our youth and vocation ministry in association with the laity.

It is a sign of hope for us when we have opportunities as Brothers to be with other Brothers; especially opportunities at an international level for young Brothers to come together from all parts of the Institute. In this way, we are able to appreciate the international character of the Institute.

Fears

Not knowing the emerging role of our lay Partners and the need to strengthen and clarify their relationship with the Brothers, as well as the role of each in the Mission.

Our Partners are very dedicated to the mission. How does this impact the role of the Brothers, who are aging and fewer in number?

Brothers and Partners who look/talk down to us, who at times are patronizing or turn us into tokens and remnants of the Mission; not being listened to or taken seriously.

That we will not take advantage of this historical moment and not be able to read the signs of the times which are inviting us into association, to create structures of association, to create mixed fraternal communities in order to share our spirituality. That we will stop cultivating the consciousness which the Spirit is creating within us that the Mission does not belong to the Brothers, but rather to Jesus and his Church, and consequently, that the Brothers and the Laity must work together to administer and animate our common mission.

Two transverse themes

Brothers' Identity

Hopes

Our very lives are a sign of hope, "the gift of my life, God, my male and female friends, my family, the students, and young people".

Another sign of life as Religious life changes is the way in which the laity is helping us to construct our identity.

Fears

The relevance of our identity as Brothers in the world and in the Church today. We are neither priests nor bachelors with vows.

Brothers who are negative and pessimistic. Those among us, whom we live with at times, who are "dead before they have died".

focus on the poor. The poor need us. The Brothers as well as the Lasallian Mission are a vital educational service of the Church. Service of the poor through education is at the heart of our vocation and identity. We also appreciate the personal and community freedom that we have to speak, participate and work in educational and pastoral projects that deal directly with young people, children and the excluded. The freedom that we are given with respect to structures as well as the respect that we are accorded when we are invited to help create new projects. These are signs of hope in our lives.

We see the vitality of this Institute and the openness to new challenges as a sign of hope. And we experience hope in the witness of Brothers and lay people who are happy in the mission.

Fears

Tememos estar atrapados en grandes lugares donde la institución es más importante que la persona. Temor de tener que vivir y mantener las glorias del pasado del Instituto dadas las diferentes realidades del presente. No deseáramos pasar la vida arriba en un coche, solamente por garantizar la presencia de Hermanos en todas las obras. Deberíamos crear proyectos sencillos que respondieran a necesidades concretas que son fáciles de proponer con objeto de seguir a los pobres.

Tememos tener que llevar adelante puestos administrativos porque no hay nadie más que pueda hacerlo. Somos pocos en número y uno termina cubriendo todos los puestos que tienen que realizarse. Tememos aquellas ocasiones cuando seamos empujados por el Distrito a puestos de administración. ¿Cómo somos líderes en la Misión pero no atados a despachos, alejándonos de la misión y del servicio a los jóvenes?

En ocasiones, estamos demasiado sobrecargados para llevar adelante la misión.

Association for Educational Service to the Poor

Hopes

Lack of serious or deep reflection on chastity, affectivity and sexuality in religious life and in our Institute.

The clericalism of the Church. It used to be easy to be a religious, society encouraged it. That is not the case today. Our society does not support our vocation.

Fear of speaking up, participating, offering to help, risking oneself, of saying anything

Formation

Hopes

Continued development and strengthening of programs for young Brothers and opportunities for young Brothers to meet.

Formation opportunities for Brothers and Partners in common that will benefit each other's role in the Mission and in our relationship with each other.

We experience hope when the younger Brothers are

taken care of; when structures and the necessary space are given for them to meet, share, listen, and interact with one another.

Fears

Formation programs that manipulate people rather than form them.

*Bros. Solomon Abebe Deaso,
Jean Claude Abou-Atme,
Patricio Bolton,
Francisco Efraín Dionisio Pérez,
Shahzad George Gill,
Vicentiu Ghiurca,
Iván Mauricio Pinchevsky Vergara,
Mamy Olivier Rabarone,
Pubudu Rajapaksha,
Vicente Ruiz Quintín,
Michael Eamon Sanderl,
Salvatore Santoro y
Jean Baptiste Tran Dinh Hiep*

The Elections

The election of Brother Superior and of the new Council

The election of the Brother Superior (Rule 112) took place on Monday, May 28, 2007.

- Community prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament preceded the election.
- Only the Capitulants with the right to vote were permitted to remain in the Chapter Hall.
- Brother **Álvaro Rodríguez** quickly obtained the absolute majority of the votes.
- The enthusiastic applause of the Chapter members confirmed the result, manifesting to Brother Alvaro Rodríguez Echeverría the gratitude and complete confidence of the members for the renewal of his mandate as Superior General.
- Br. Luis Miguel Fernández, Director of the Casa Generalizia, was informed immediately as well as the Communications Commission so that the news could be transmitted as quickly as possible.
- The procession of the Chapter members together with the entire personnel of the Casa Generalizia accompanied Brother Super-

rior to the Chapel for a prayer of praise and thanksgiving, and to ask the Lord for his blessing.

- A fraternal agape and banquet continued the festive air of the re-election of Brother Alvaro.
- Brother Leonardo Tejeiro, Procurator General, communicated the notice to the Secretariat of the Vatican State and to the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, while at the same time the Communications Commission spread the news to the whole world.

The election of the General Council

The following day, May 29, saw the election of the Vicar General and of the General Councillors. From the 25th of May the General Chapter had decided on “an important change in the configuration and constitution of the General Council”, which would be composed of “a Vicar General, three General Councillors to reside in Rome and five General Councillors for the Regions” (Document of the Group for Government and Animation 3.1.1).

The General Council has “*the mission to assist the Brother Superior General in the government and animation of the Institute*” (Rule 120). The General Council “*The Regional Coordinator fosters communication among the Brother Visitors of the Region*”



and supports them in their mission. He ensures that the Region remains in contact with the Brother Superior General. He follows up the application of decisions and programmes adopted for the Region as a whole. He also encourages cooperation and interdependence within the Region and between it and other Regions of the Institute.” (Rule 127e). Some of these functions are common to all the General Councillors as a group while others, in the new model of government and animation, concern more directly the General Councillors for the Regions.

The election of the Brother Vicar General

- On May 28, Brother Superior requested that sondages for the Brother Vicar would be held on the 29th of May, before the actual election.
- On May 29th a first sondage was held to identify the candidates who could form part of the General Council.
- The same morning, a second sondage took place in which only the name of one Brother for the candidacy of Vicar General was to be listed.
- Having in hand the results of the two sondages, the Capitular Assembly proceeded to the election of the Brother Vicar General.
- Brother **Thomas William Johnson** (24/10/1946) of the District of the Midwest obtained the absolute majority of the votes.
- Brother Superior General, approached Brother Thomas, as he would do afterwards with each of the elected General Councillors, to ask if he would accept the election that had just taken place. Brother Thomas responded affirmatively, accepting the mission that the Institute was entrusting to him.

Election of the Brothers Councillor for the Regions

After prayer and reflection on the desired criteria for this position, the Capitular Assembly proceeded to the election of the General Councillors for the Regions.

The scrutators distributed five ballots for the vote to each Capitulant, indicating on each one of these ballots the Region that was being referred to.

The scrutators went on to count the votes and then announced the results for each one of the Regions. The results were as follows:

- PARC Region (Pacific/Asia Region):
Brother **David Robert Hawke** (13/05/1950) of the District of Australia-New Zealand-PNG.
- RELAF Region (African-Malgache Lasallian Region):
Brother **Gabriel Somé** (27/08/1957), who was not a Capitulant, of the District of West Africa, having



obtained the absolute majority of votes, was called by Brother Alvaro Rodríguez, Superior General, who asked him if he would accept the election that had just chosen him. Having answered affirmatively, Brother Gabriel Somé became General Councillor for the RELAF Region of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.



The election of the General Councillors residents in Rome

Brother Superior reminded the Assembly of the criteria for the election of the three Brothers Councillor Residents in Rome.

He made clear, first of all, that the Brother Vicar General would be in charge of the Lasallian mission and of the Association.

He then described the work of the Resident Councillors:

- the formation of the Brothers,
- the support for the sectors in difficulties,
- the coordination for the revision of the Rule,
- the organization of Lasallian studies,
- the attention to the Casa Generalizia,
- the animation of the encounters with the Brothers Visitor,
- and, very especially, the accompaniment of the Brothers Visitor which is a priority for the General Council.

The several votes taken for these elections followed one after the other in order to reach the absolute majority for each one of the elected Brothers.

The Brothers who were elected as General Councillors with Residence in Rome were: **Claude Reinhardt**, **Jorge Gallardo de Alba** and **Alberto Gómez Barruso**.

- RELAL Region (the Latin American Lasallian Region):
Brother **Edgar Genuino Nicodem** (29/12/1959) of the District of Porto Alegre.
- RELEM Region (the Lasallian Region of Europe and the Mediterranean):
Brother **Jacques-Ives D’Huitemau** (12/12/1947) of the District of France.
- USA-Toronto Region (The United States and Toronto, Canada, Region):
Brother **Robert Schieler** (28/04/1950) of the District of Baltimore.





The Community of the Government and Animation of the Institute

Superior General



Br. Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría
Superior General
District of Central America

Vicar General



Br. Thomas Johnson
Vicar General
District of the Midwest

General Councillors for the Regions



Br. David Hawke
General Councillor for the
PARC Region
District of Australia-NZ-PNG



Br. Edgar Genuino Nicodem
General Councillor for the
RELAL Region
District of Porto Alegre



Br. Gabriel Somé
General Councillor for the
RELAF Region
District of West Africa



Br. Jacques D'Huitemau
General Councillor for the
RELEM Region
District of France

The General Councillors in Rome



Br. Robert Schieler
General Councillor for the
USA/TORONTO Region
District of Baltimore



Br. Alberto Gómez Barruso
General Councillor
District of Andalucía - RELEM



Br. Claude Reinhardt
General Councillor
District of France - RELEM



Br. Jorge Gallardo de Alba
General Councillor
Delegation of Japan - PARC

Remarks by Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría upon being reelected Superior General.

Dear Brothers:

I would like at this time to speak to you with the first words that sum up the sentiments that I have while postponing for the last day of the Chapter a more complete message based on the contents of the Chapter that we are celebrating now. And to do that I plan to consult with the Brothers who will be elected in these days as Vicar General and Councillors in order to initiate a new style, that the Spirit, through the body of the society that you represent, has permitted us to catch a glimpse of, a style more collegial and more community based.

My personal sentiments at this time.

I wish to thank you with all my heart for the confidence that you have shown me and at the same time I am fully aware and convinced that there are many Brothers with more merits, capabilities and gifts. As our Ecuadorian Brother, Saint Miguel Febres Cordero, used to say in his last years in Premia de Mar, when someone would express regret that owing to his infirmity he was not able to continue contributing his valuable services, and he, with humility, would respond, *"Others will do it better than I..."* (Br. Miguel). It consoles me to know, as Saint Paul tells us, that God makes use of weak instruments to accomplish His work and it encourages me that Scripture also affirms that a brother, helped by his brothers, is a wall that cannot be breached. The future of the Institute is in our hands and together we can do many things, because, as the saying goes, one person's dream is just a dream but the dream of many becomes a reality, especially because we know that by faith, as the Founder told us, we are committed in the work of God and He is always with us and directs everything with wisdom, love, and tenderness.

In the month of December of last year, when I was with the Brothers of the General Council at our day of recollection, we shared an article by Sister Kathleen Hughes about the time when she was about to leave a ministry of government. In that recollection I very much took to heart the counsel that the Founder gives in Meditation 134 for the Feast of St. Barnabas: *Trust in the Providence of God like the man who puts out to sea with neither sail nor oars*. It was in this way that I have tried to live these weeks, disposed to respond to the body of the society and open to the two possibilities that were before me.



And I ought to confess to you that to return to a very small community, possibly to the novitiate or to a new work for the poor that will open in Costa Rica, would have permitted me to go for the first time to my homeland to work, seeing that in December I will complete 50 years of having left my country where I have never labored.

A special thanks to Brothers William Mann, Vicar General, Claude Reinhardt, Juan Pablo Martín, Marc Hofer, Miguel Campos, Victor Franco and Yemanu Jehar, who have fraternally accompanied me during these seven years that are now ending. We have journeyed together and, as with any intercultural group, the challenges have been many at the level of relationships. But there are two things that I do want to emphasize. First of all the efficiency that they have, made possible that practically all the propositions – and they were many – from the 43rd General Chapter have become a reality. The report that we presented to the Chapter is proof of that. Secondly, I want to thank them profoundly for having assumed by unanimity, in spite of all the doubts and risks this project of the South Sudan which, as Brother Amilcare said, at the rational level it is simply crazy. Thanks then to Brothers Bill, Claude, Juan Pablo, Marc, Yemanu, Miguel and Victor. May God reward them for their dedication and generosity in the service of the Institute.

The community as a theme of highest priority.

Possibly the theme that awakened most interest

among the Capitulants has been that of our fraternal life in community. There is a text of the Rule that seems basic to me to understand what a Lasallian community is at the international, regional, district and local levels: *“John Baptist de La Salle was led to found a community of men who were enlightened by God to have a share in his plan of salvation. They associated together to respond to the needs of young people who were poor and far from salvation. Even today, each of the Brothers’ communities finds in this historical event a fundamental source of inspiration”* (Rule, 47).

This text of the Rule presents to us the three fundamental elements of every community which must animate the renewal that we intend and need to make:

First of all, the Founder and the first Brothers lived an experience of God, they felt a **passion** for God, so much so that the “to procure your glory” became an existential objective; they experienced an emptying out of themselves in order to contemplate the world and the history of mankind, with the eyes of God, of the God of Jesus Christ who took on himself that history. We are dealing here with an indispensable **mystical** dimension.

Secondly, there is a view of the world, in which specific forms of the denial of the Kingdom can be found. This view is a freely given, compassionate and transforming approach to the world. It is a **passion** for the world. It is the mission, the **prophetic** moment in which we can discover that the greatest glory of God is a man or woman, fully alive, and that the young may have life and life in abundance.

Thirdly, a community answer is given in which a body comes to life and organizes itself in order to energize the world to follow the plan of God, *“He bought these teachers together in a community and subsequently founded with them the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools”* (Rule, 1). This would be the moment of **organization** which ought to spring from the fusion of the mystical with the prophetic.

We must not forget how the Founder and the first Brothers were fully conscious of the importance of the community as the basis of apostolic action. For that reason, according to Blain, the Founder, after the abandonment of almost all the teachers and faced with fear of seeing the work destroyed, found the solution in 1691 in the renewal of the community: *“After long reflection on the adequate means to shore up a building that was in danger of crumbling even at the time when it was being built, De La Salle was inspired:*

1. To associate himself with two Brothers, whom he considered the most willing to sustain the nascent com-

munity and commit themselves with him, by means of an irrevocable bond, to continue the work in order to consolidate it.

- 2. To locate, close to Paris, a house that could serve to reestablish the health of the Brothers, some of whom were exhausted and sick.*
- 3. To unite all of his sons there during the vacation times, in order for all to follow the spiritual exercises and return to them their first fervor and the spirit and grace of their state.*
- 4. To establish a novitiate for the formation of his subjects.”*

The Synod on Consecrated Life has brought about a significant change that it is important not to forget. What happens is that it proposes to change the accustomed terminology used for lay institutes for the term *Religious Institutes of Brothers* for the purpose of avoiding any ambiguity and, even more, to bring into relief what is essential to our vocation, reminding us of the words of John Paul II, words that constitute a whole program for life: *“They are called to be brothers of Christ, profoundly united to Him, the first born among many brothers (Romans 8: 29), brothers among themselves through their mutual love and their collaboration at the service of the good of the Church, brothers for all of mankind by the witness of the charity of Christ toward all, especially for the very smallest, the very neediest; brothers to cause greater brotherhood reign in the Church”* (Vita Consecrata, 60).

We are called to be witnesses of that brotherhood. As Archbishop Gardin reminded us at the Eucharist for the Feast of the Founder this past 15th of May: *“Permit me to say something more: within the consecrated life for men, where we find that the greatest number of the religious institutes is clerical, you constitute a solid exponent of the worth of religious consecration in itself: you assist us to understand that this way of living is capable of imparting a profound meaning to the existence of the ordinary ministry, even without having something superimposed, so to speak. The condition of being ‘brothers’ thus is converted into a strong and efficacious testimony to the value of fraternity... Proclaiming to the world the ‘gospel of brotherhood’ by means of communities rich in authentic and heartfelt relationships, joined together around Jesus, constitutes an important mission that the Church confides to the religious life.”*

In my opening message I made an allusion to the young Brothers, who are our hope, together with all the young men who are following our steps in the process of formation. Today, I would like to make not only an allusion but to give thanks with all my heart to our senior Brothers. One of the most beautiful experiences that I have had in the seven years that today come to a

close has been the visit to the communities of the senior Brothers. Their witness of fidelity is priceless, their religious spirit an inspiration for all, the fraternity that they live from day to day continues being a very important mission for the divided kind of world in which we are living today. Thank you, Brothers, you are a gift from God. To count on you is a grace.

The paschal time in which we have lived this chapter...

The readings from the Acts of the Apostles have accompanied us throughout the time of Easter in which we have lived the Chapter. Each day the liturgical reading made me compare it to the process we are undergoing. And it seemed to me that the Spirit was inviting us to live an experience much like that of the first Christian communities. The Council of Jerusalem signified the dawn of a new universal reality and without cultural impositions... We and the Holy Spirit have decided... Later on Apollos, who knew about Jesus in a rudimentary way, is not condemned nor rejected; rather the doors swing wide open for him, he is given to know the message in its fullness and he becomes an evangelizer. The same occurred with those disciples who only knew the baptism of John, far from being rejected they are welcomed and they complete their instruction. Openness to what is new, dialog, respect for persons, flexibility... in a word, letting yourself be carried by the Spirit Who is like the wind that we know not from where it blows nor where it is going.

I believe that this is what we are invited to, leaving fears behind and opening ourselves to hope. We can make our own the words of Gamaliel as we face the new paths that we have begun to travel, particularly in the area of association for the mission in the educational and evangelical service to the poor and other young persons and adults: *"Because if this idea or this work is of men, it will fall all by itself; but if it comes from God you will not be able to destroy it. Do not be fighting against God"* (Acts 5: 38-39). The words that the Lord said to Paul are good reason to be faithful to what the Lord asks of us at this moment in the history of our Institute: *"Do not be afraid, go on speaking and do not be silent, for in this city I have reserved for me many people. I will be with you and no one can harm you"* (Acts 18: 9-10).

Each one of us can picture those many people that the Lord has reserved for us. Those children, youngsters and adults who form part of our lives and whom we must make happy by bringing to them the unique and nontransferable gift that each one of them has gratuitously received from God in order to place it at the service of others and which at the same time we share

with our Brothers to enrich us with their gifts and give to them our own. We are called to make visible the loving tenderness of God and for this, as Anthony Bloom tells us: *"We can at least help a person when, on seeing him, we see the beauty that there is in him. A person is not helped by pointing out what is wrong with him, what is ugly and deformed. Christ gazed fondly on all the persons that he encountered, the prostitute, the thief and he saw the hidden beauty in them. Perhaps it was a twisted beauty, in shambles, but beauty nevertheless and he did it in such a way that the beauty rose to the surface. This is what we must learn to do for others. But to do so we must above all have a pure heart, pure intentions, an open mind, something that is not always so... to be able to listen, look upon and see the hidden beauty. Each one of us is the image of God and each one of us appears to be a damaged icon. But if we were to be given an icon deteriorated by time or by events, or profaned by the hatred of man, we, with a pained heart, would treat it with tenderness and reverence. Little would it matter to us that it is shabby precisely because we would be sensitive to the misfortune that had damaged it. We would give importance to what remains of its beauty and not to what has been lost in it. And this is the same way that we must learn to act with each person"* (Anthony Bloom).

My greetings to the Lasallian Family.

It is a great joy for me that this message is being transmitted live. I want to conclude by sending a greeting to the entire Lasallian Family. To the Guadalupanas Sisters of De La Salle, to the Lasallian Sisters of Vietnam, to the Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, to the members of the Signum Fidei Fraternity, to all our associates who have made a formal commitment or an unconditional gift of themselves lived out from day to day, to the International Movement of Lasallian Youth and to all who in one form or another are part of this wonderful Lasallian Family. Together and by association the Lord has entrusted to us a beautiful mission – to make his face visible to children, youth and all those with whom we work. I have always admired, and even more now that I have visited the Institute and the Lasallian schools and works all over the world, the quality of the relations to be found in our institutions. As Lasallians we have a common commitment: to defend the rights of children and to construct a world in which all persons can feel themselves, beyond our differences, as sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters among ourselves. Brothers and Lasallians, let us all be faithful to the Spirit.

Br. Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría
Superior General



CONGREGAZIONE
PER GLI ISTITUTI DI VITA CONSACRATA
E LE SOCIETÀ DI VITA APOSTOLICA

Vatican City, October 26th, 2007

Dear Superior General:

I thank you for having sent to this Congregation, in conformity with Can. 592 § 1, the Report presented by you to the 44th General Chapter, which had as its main theme for study: *Associated to build the Kingdom of God, walking together in hope*, in continuity with the preceding Chapters.

Before anything else, let me express personally my sincere sympathy on the death of Br. John Johnston, your predecessor, remembering his generous dedication to the Institute and also his collaboration with this Congregation.

The Report, by means of an illustrated publication, presents a complete and objective panorama of your religious Family starting out from the work carried out by the International Commissions and the Secretariats and fundamentally based on your personal lived experience with all the Regions of the Institute during this period.

We are happy to note the renewed vitality of this large and distinguished Institute which, in spite of the drop in numbers in some areas, does not lessen its efforts to strengthen its important mission of educating young people and especially poor young people and training teachers dedicated full time to this task, rekindling the desire to turn to the fount of the Gospel and of the Charism, walking with courage in the steps of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

It is a question of revitalization in fidelity to your origins and we are pleased to note the criteria employed for this purpose in the Institute and that they are related - as is expressed in the Report - with leadership capabilities, with possibilities in the field of initial and ongoing formation, with the richness of community life, with the mission and spirituality shared with your Lay Lasallians, with the capacity for serving the poor and evangelizing the young, with financial autonomy and above all with a strong spirit of interdependence and solidarity.

The Institute remains faithful to the works which arose with the foundation charism and they continue today to be promoted in the new communities - more and more in countries with Christian minorities - and updated in existing communities. The challenges of the present-day world are enormous and multiple are the horizons which help to bring out your mission, which as it is expressed in Vita Consecrata 72: *"consists in making Christ present to the world through personal witness. This is the challenge, this is the primary task of the consecrated life! The more consecrated persons allow themselves to be conformed to Christ, the more Christ is made present and active in the world for the salvation of all"*.

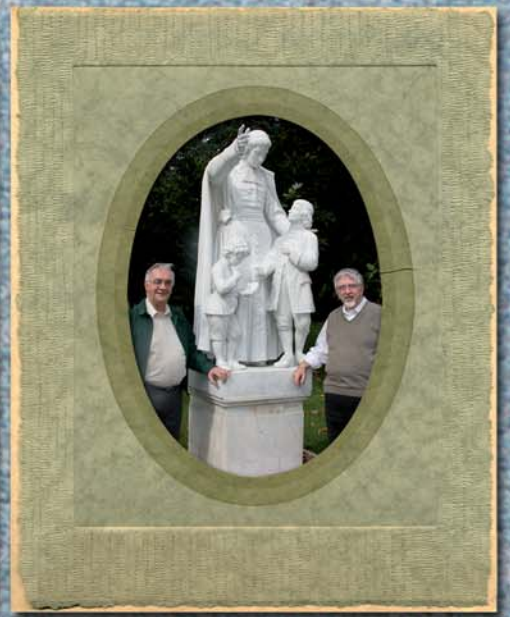
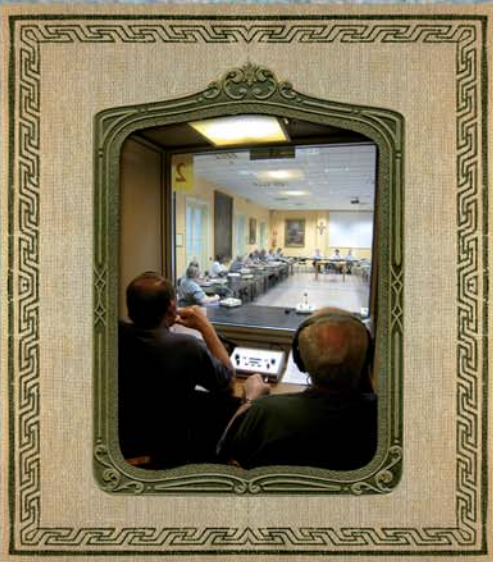
I encourage you, therefore, to continue to give emphasis to your rich patrimony from a profound interior life so that the Works of the Institute will continue to grow according to the Kingdom, between the men and women of today. You could say that the 44th General Chapter of the Institute has begun a new page of history. This has called upon you for a new effort. It is expressed very well in the biblical icon of the Exodus which inspired: *"Being Brothers Today: with eyes open and hearts burning"*. *"I have heard your cries....I will send you...."* (Exodus 3, 7-9).

It is our wish that the Chapter decisions should constitute an excellent premise for looking at the future with hope, building your community with the active collaboration of all the Brothers of the Institute as well as your those who collaborate with and are associated with the Lasallian Family. Towards this end I unite my prayers with you and repeat the esteem and gratitude of this Congregation.

Finally I offer my congratulations to you on the coming Beatification of the 58 Spanish Lasallian martyrs. The witness borne by your Brothers is, without doubt, an inspiration for living with full availability and renewed enthusiasm, the vocation of Brothers in the service of the Church.

With cordial greetings.

Franc Cardinal Rodé C.M. Prefect



7

44th General Chapter: History

By Br. Néstor Ferrera

Welcome and building community.

Sunday, 29.04.2007

All is in readiness in the “Casa Generalizia”. In the Chapter Hall the name-labels of the 112 Capitulants are already in place. The seating is in alphabetical order. Towards the back in the second last row is Br. Alvaro, Superior General. Further back there are some work-tables reserved for some helpers who will be witnesses of what occurs in the Aula Magna and will communicate the news.

Hugs, greetings, Brothers meeting each other again, an atmosphere of fraternity: it is impressive. The Capitulants are getting settled into the house. Everything is clearly signposted. There is the widespread comment that everything has been well organized.

Among the last to arrive is Br. John Johnston, member by right as a former Superior General. He will be here only for the first week; the serious illness which he has been enduring will not allow for longer but he wished to come and share the beginnings of the Chapter. Everyone greatly appreciates this gesture. The Institute is greatly in his debt.

1st Phase: Building Community

We are writing another page in Lasallian History

Monday, 30.04.2007

April 30th 2007, 9.00 am, the 112 Capitulants take their places in the Aula Magna. There is a special atmosphere. It is not easy to imagine that those who are sitting down are going to be the protagonists of a rich experience. Between them all, in the coming weeks, they are going to write new pages in the History of the Institute.

Traveling light and ready to set out

The Capitulants are invited to leave everything in the Hall and in an attitude of search, traveling light and ready to set out, they begin the Rite of Exodus.

The 44th General Chapter begins

In the afternoon Brother Alvaro officially inaugurates the Chapter with some beautiful words giving us much to



reflect on. He begins by introducing Brother John Johnston, former Superior General, and warm applause for Brother John resounds in the Aula Magna.

Mgr. Miller presides at the Eucharist

The intense work of the first day was crowned by the celebration of the opening Eucharist, presided over by Archbishop Michael J. Miller CSB, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education.

During the Mass, 112 Brother Capitulants were called forward, one by one to sign the Official Register of the General Chapter. This concluded the initial Rites of Inauguration.

2nd Phase: Looking at reality

Mary Robinson, Defending human rights

Wednesday, 02.05.2007

She arrived from New York and at the end of her morning presentation she was scheduled to fly to Thailand. There was anticipation in the Chapter Hall as she was the first woman to give a presentation at this Chapter. Her name was Mary Robinson, the first woman President of Ireland and former High Commissioner of Human Rights for the United Nations.

Her contributions at the beginning of the Chapter, condemning fundamentalism, the recruitment of child sol-



diers, manipulation by the media, and the inconsistency of governments who sign agreements to uphold the rights of children and then fail to carry them out, were very helpful and informative.

Carlo María Martini addresses the Chapter

Thursday, 03.05.2007

Another eagerly awaited intervention...that of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, 80 years old but with a very clear mind. The Brothers received him with a friendly standing ovation.

Cardinal Martini presented a vision of the situation of the Church today and the manner in which it is present to the contemporary world. The Capitulants have had the great opportunity to listen to one of the most authoritative voices in the Church.

The General of the Dominicans speaks to the Chapter

Friday, 04.05.2007

Carlos Azpiroz Costa, born in Argentina in 1950 has been the Master General of the Dominicans since 2001. The written text of his presentation came to eighteen pages but his words were so enjoyable since he is such an excellent communicator and has a marvelous sense of humor.

Br. Alvaro again addresses the Chapter

Eritrea, Spain, France, USA, Costa Rica, Cuba, Switzerland, the Philippines—eight countries—eight Brothers who were elected at the previous General Chapter in 2000 for the animation and government of the Institute. On completion of these seven years, Brother Superior and his Council presented their report on their stewardship and the global vision of the Brothers and our educational establishments.

Later the Capitulants listened to the Superior General who addressed to them words of profound content “That which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in an Institute...”

Report of the International Assembly 2006

Saturday, 05.05.2007

The 1st International Assembly “Associated for the Education Mission”: Mr. Gery Short, Ms Eveline Geoffroy and Br. Frederick Mueller spoke to the Capitulants.

Gery (structures), Eveline (formation) and Br. Frederick (mission) talked about what took place at IA 2006, laying stress on the fruits of the quality and commitment of the participants and on the challenges for the future contributed by the International Assembly 2006 which they offered for debate at this 44th General Chapter.

Economic Report for the Chapter

Brother Francisco Lopez, Panama, Econome General, presented a detailed and clear report to the Chapter on the financial situation of the last 7 years. This report contains external certification of 7 audits (one for each year).

Electronic system for voting

After approving the functioning norms of the Chapter Capitulants proceeded to the first elections. On this occasion all the newly elected were those proposed to the provisional Central Commission by Br. Superior and they were now accepted again by the Chapter Assembly on the first vote.

The voice of Asia, the voice of contemplation

Monday 07.05.2007

We heard the voice from Asia... the voice of contemplation. Sister Mary Sujita Kallupurakkathu, of the Sisters of Notre Dame, addressed the assembly. She was born in India and has been for nine years the Superior General of her congregation which has 2,400 Sisters working in fifteen countries.

Sister Sujita is an inspirational leader in the new fields of spirituality, with a renewed commitment for the poor. Her words challenged the Capitulants.

The Capitulants with the General Council

Tuesday, May 8, 2007



In language groups, Capitulants shared their reflections with the community of the government of the Institute and they did this in three separate sessions: with Brother Superior, with Brother Vicar, and with the Brother Councillors. All kinds of questions were raised during these sessions.

3rd Phase: Seeing with the eyes of faith: Discernment

Silence and prayer...a time of discernment.

Wednesday, 09.05.2007

Silence and prayer... the Chapter Hall is deserted, the microphones have been turned off, the simultaneous translators are having a break...the atmosphere of the corridors, gardens, and the dining hall have changed. The whole of La Salle house, on Via Aurelia in Rome, has become transformed into a temple of prayer. The 44th General Chapter has entered into its 3rd phase – Seeing with the eyes of faith.

The Capitulants are praying their experiences and re-reading the abundant amount of documents and conference papers that they have received. They are not doing individual retreats, but rather five days of walking with the Lord and with the Brothers in order to enter more deeply into the challenges that the Institute faces at this time in its history.

Facilitators and Listening and Writing Committee

Friday, 11.05.2007

The Chapter approved the Preparatory Commission's suggestion to have "Facilitators" and a "Listening and Writing Committee". Both are present in the Chapter assemblies and they meet every day.

Beside the relics of the Founder

Saturday, 12.05.2007

From a very early hour the Capitulants are praying in the Sanctuary beside the relics of the Founder, at night, up to quite late, the same thing is happening, meals in silence, during the day personal reflection by the Capitulants, now the feeling is of great peace.

An alternative Chapter

Sunday, 13.05.2007

An alternative Chapter, it is an expression which we have heard during the first weeks. The 44th General Chapter has organizational elements different from previous Chapters.

The three Facilitators speak to those present in the three official languages of the Chapter. This is a very important intervention because they are making a synthesis of the road travelled in the first three Phases. It is the moment for offering to the Lord all the activity carried out since the beginning and to give thanks for all that is happening during these weeks in the Mother House. The singing of the Alleluia sounds with a very special force.

We celebrate our Founder

Tuesday, 15.05.2007

15th of May, a special day for Lasallians all over the world. We celebrate our Founder. For us, who are at the Casa Generalizia, this feast has a special significance. This morning the gaze of all was directed to the reliquary in the sanctuary that contains his remains. And the prayer of the Capitulants had added meaning, "St. John Baptist de La Salle, pray for us".

We gathered in one of the central gardens of the Mother House for the unveiling and blessing of the new statue of De La Salle which will become part of our memory of the 44th General Chapter.

4th Phase: Giving life to faith

The taking of decisions over the next three weeks

Wednesday, 16.05.2007

"Moved by faith, the exodus continues" were the first words we heard in the Chapter Hall. The Listening and Writing Committee has presented to the Chapter a broad report in synthesis of the views of the Capitulants. This committee has been a somewhat 'invisible' group but the quality of its intervention and been recognized and appreciated by the Chapter.

From the chair there has been a request for some voting on the acceptance of the 4th Phase as foreseen by the Central Commission; a vote on a Thematic Group which will study the Rule, a vote on beginning with six Thematic Groups without including that on the Rule. With the results known (the first and third were positive) and after meeting in Regional Groups, to ensure the richness which





will result from work shared by Brothers who come from very different geographical areas, the Capitulants have indicated in writing their options re belonging to Thematic Groups. The Central Commission is now working on forming these groups and the results will be known by evening.

We get down to business

Thursday, 17.05.2007

We have got down to the matter in hand. Six working groups have been constituted by the Capitulants after having expressed their particular preferences and taking into account the geographic distribution of origin. There is no precise definition of names for the groups. The thematic schema is related with: Community Life, Association, Educational Service for the Poor, The Interior Life and Consecrated Life, Pastoral Ministry of Vocations, Government.

Serious and essential work

Friday, 18.05.2007

A day for the Thematic Groups. It is the time for specific classifying of the abundant documentation available, according to the thematic nucleus of each Group. Work was begun by seeking an initial consensus about the Challenges. In view of the pluralism which exists this requires a significant effort on the part of the Capitulants.

Serious and essential work is being done. "Being Brothers Today" will continue to be an inspiration for all.

Writing the first drafts of the texts

Saturday, 19.05.2007

The Brothers working as translators have had their work doubled as they run back and forth between the translation cabins and the written work that results from the oral sessions. The support services are kept at their posts until well into the night.

Daily summaries are translated into the different languages. In this way everything is ready for the first hour of

work the following morning. We are into the "production" phase. First drafts are being written up and then they are subjected to internal debate in the respective groups as they strive for the best expression of their ideas.

A week of discussion on the reports

Sunday, 20.05.2007

The Groups have written the first drafts. To reach consensus it was necessary to have many hours of dialogue. Strength in numbers is well-known and this was reflected in the good atmosphere which one could feel.

Presentation of Report "B" on Association

Monday 21.05.2007

From the early morning hours the work of the Chapter was renewed in the Chapter Hall. The Capitulants were reminded that this time, between the Feast of the Ascension and Holy Trinity Sunday, are very meaningful for the Brothers. It was in 1694 when the first Brothers made their vow of association.

And Association was, as a fact, the central theme of Group B which occupied the first and second sessions of the morning. This Group was coordinated by Brother Antonio Botana of Spain.

The presentation was made by Brother Adalberto Aranda (Mexico/Antilles) who, in his introduction, brought out the richness of the Group for its members—differences of ages, geographical contexts, cultures and even ethnic groupings.

Presentation of Report "E" on Pastoral Ministry of Vocations

The Group which worked on Theme "E", the Pastoral Ministry of Vocations, is composed of 16 Capitulants from 11 different countries.

The presentation to the Chapter Assembly was made by Br. Dominic Viggiani (New York) and in it there is an analysis of the present day reality of this theme, with elements common to other Institutes.

In the Report it was highlighted that our life is significant for the Church, we are necessary in our time, serving society and the Church, three centuries afterwards, the initiative of St. J.B. De La Salle still has a reason for continuing in our time.

Presentation of Report "A" on Community Life

Monday 21.05.2007

According to the Listening and Writing Committee, the Community Living theme is the issue which is most in demand. This was evident in the number of cards that were placed on the bulletin boards during the days of discernment.

Brother Alberto Gómez (Andalucía, Spain) is the reporter for this group. The context in which this theme is being

developed is the reality of the world today, with all of its contradictions and its attempt to eclipse God, the Church in which we live and the religious life of the Institute.

Presentation of Report “C” on Service to the Poor

Tuesday, 22.05.2007

The dimension of service to the poor has been a topical subject during the 3 centuries of the history of the De La Salle Order. The words of the Founder “the abandonment of the children of artisans and of the poor” continue nowadays to be a call for Lasallians. This was the initial message which Br. Jean-François Morlier (France) gave to the Chapter Assembly as Group Reporter for Group C.

Presentation of Report “D” on Interior Life

The reporter to the Assembly was Br. Josep Martí (Spain) who recalled the origins of the Institute and the great importance which the Founder gave to the spiritual life of the Brothers.

The life of the Brothers has to be situated in the reality which people live today and from the ‘here’ and the ‘now’ we must lead lives that are spiritually significant and rooted in the present as well as in each of the countries where we are present.

Presentation of Report “F” on Animation and Government

The last of the 6 reports presented was from Group F (Government). All the regions of the Institute were represented by the 17 members that comprised this group. The reporter for this group was Br. Jacques d’Huitema (France). The themes which continue to surface have to do with animation and the government of the Institute. Concrete proposals are being made concerning the structure of the General Council.

A well-prepared liturgy

Wednesday, 23.05.2007

One of the most carefully prepared aspects in the development of this 44th General Chapter has been the organization of the Liturgy. The celebrations of the Eucharist, prayers, moments of prayer in the Chapter Hall, the use of symbols, the local surroundings, use of percussion instruments, readings in the many different mother

tongues, the basic choir of the Capitulants who have volunteered for this service, all of this work is appreciated by the Capitulants.

Evaluation of the discussions by the Listening and Writing Committee

Thursday, 24.05.2007

The Reports were presented in an unfinished form since the intention of the Groups was to receive suggestions to enrich the texts in the subsequent draft which will be presented to the Assembly. This also was seen as positive.

Drafting the final group reports

After listening to the reactions of the Capitulants, and receiving written notes, the Thematic Groups are rewriting the final reports to be presented to the Assembly for further discussion.

Contribution of the Young Brothers

Saturday, 26.05.2007

The presence of young Brothers from the five continents in this Chapter has been noteworthy. Their valuable interventions, especially in the working groups, has been an enrichment. These are promising moments for the future.

Second Straw Vote

The procedure adopted for the election of the Superior General is going forward. With the result of the previous vote known, the Capitulants have just put their ballot papers in the ballot box. First to do so were the Scrutineers. For this vote only a single name was written.

Three New Documents Approved

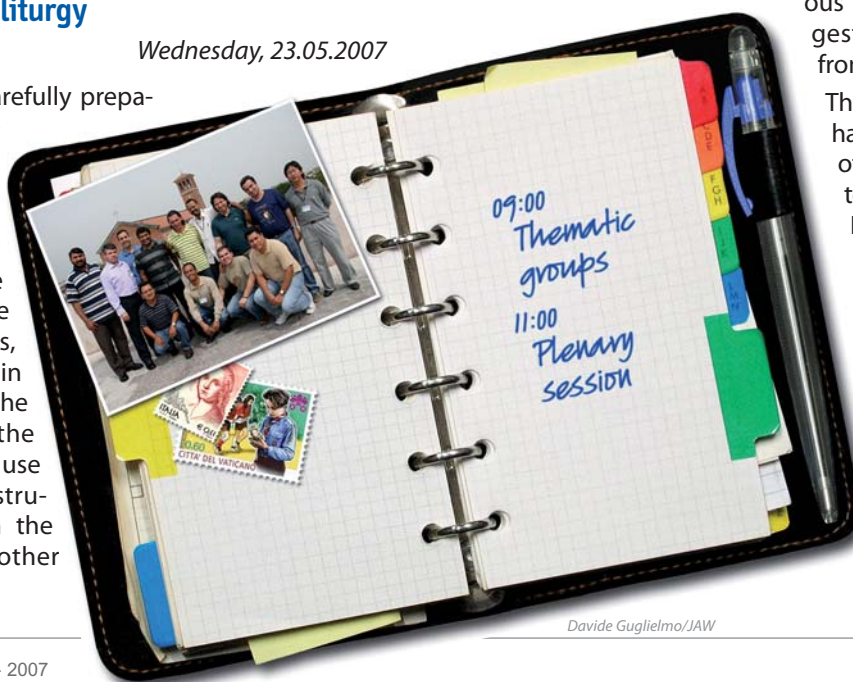
After presenting their initial reports to the Assembly, each of the groups rewrote their report, incorporating the various oral and written suggestions they received from the Chapter.

The Chapter Assembly has approved the reports of three Groups: “Service to the Poor”, “Spiritual Life and Consecrated Life”, and “Vocation Ministry”.

Young Brothers’ Suggestions received

Sunday, 27.05.2007

As a result of their shared reflection



Davide Guglielmo/JAW

these past weeks, the young Brothers at the Chapter produced two documents for the Assembly.

The first, deals with their challenges, horizons and lines of action for the future. The other, which is more wide-ranging, deals with their "hopes" and "fears" and pertains to two of the transversal themes that the Chapter has been addressing – the Identity of the Brother and Formation.

Election of the Superior General: the Hall is closed

Monday 28.05.2007

The Assembly Hall will remain closed to the outside during the voting. Only those who are authorized to vote will be allowed to remain in the Chapter Hall. After taking photos of the first ten to vote, the members of the Communications team will be the last to leave. According to tradition the doors are then closed. Everyone waits outside. Applause will be the signal that a Superior General has been elected.

Brother Alvaro reelected

Loud applause is heard. The 44th General Chapter has elected Br. Alvaro Rodriguez Echeverria as Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools for the next seven years. He continues as the 26th successor of the Founder.

Br. Superior receives the seal and the book of Rules of the Institute, given to him by Br. Carlos Gómez, Coordinator of the Chapter.

Praying before the Relics of the Founder

Without any doubt we are experiencing the most emotional moments of this 44th General Chapter. The personnel of the House have gathered in the vestibule, the bells on the Sanctuary tower ring out, pupils arrive from the nearby La Salle School. Everyone moves towards the Chapel which is colourfully decorated with petals strewn around the altar area. The organ rings out majestically. In the centre there is a prie-dieu where Br. Alvaro will pray.

More than 800 log on Via Internet

Tuesday, 29.05.2007

There was an air of expectation in the Aula Magna as they waited to hear Brother Alvaro's Address, following his re-election as Superior General. In his address, he said, "you are a gift from God, counting on you is a gift". The Superior was interrupted twice by applause. His last words were: "Brothers and Lasallians, let us be faithful to the Spirit", this was followed by a prolonged applause. The Address was rich in content.

The Superior's address was followed by more

than 800 via the internet. This was an historic moment, as this is the first time that Lasallians all over the world were able to view the interior of the Aula Magna. We continue to receive messages of congratulations for the timely and informative coverage of this Chapter.

The Election of 5 Regional Councilors

After the election of Br. Thomas Johnson as Vicar General, the Chapter proceeded to voting for the General Councilors for the Regions.

All were elected on the first vote. Due to the fact that Br. Gabriel Somé, of the District of West Africa, who was elected Councilor for RELAF (Africa), was not a Capitular, Br. Alvaro contacted him by phone in the Ivory Coast, where he is living, to confirm his acceptance.

There followed the election of the General Councilors resident in Rome.

With the Pope two days after his re-election

Wednesday, 30.05.07

On May 30th, two days after his re-election, Br. Alvaro personally greeted Pope Benedict XVI and passed on to him the greetings of the Brothers, reiterating our communion with the Church. The photos and videos on the La Salle web show what this Capitular presence in the Vatican was like.

The words of the Pope to Br. Alvaro leave no doubt about our evangelizing presence: "The Brothers are very important for the Church".

The Chapter approves the document on Association

Thursday 31.05.07

The document on Association was the one which required most time for debate. It is a theme for which the Brothers and Lay Lasallians were hoping for a pronouncement and some clear Lines of Action. The paths traveled in the different Regions in regard to Association and the new structures for the Lasallian Education Mission have not been the same. The different rhythms followed in recent years were reflected in the debates and had an influence at the moment of reaching consensus on the final document.

Meetings of the new General Council

Friday 01.06.2007

From the moment when Br. Thomas Johnson was elected as Vicar General, Br. Alvaro maintained frequent contact with him. The new General Council also had its first meeting.



Mosaic of Photos with the Face of De La Salle

Saturday, June 2, 2007

A large poster with the well-known image of De La Salle was placed in the sanctuary of the Church. This image often appeared on the large projection screen in the Chapter Hall. Its originality lies in the fact that it made up of a large number of small photos. This is an image that will serve as a reminder of this Chapter (see back cover).

The Capitulants knew the history of this composition. They saw a five-minute video presentation that required 56 hours of recording time. This video was an assignment given by the Brothers in California to Mr. Scott Gibbs to show the significance of the Lasallian charism. Over the course of three months, Mr. Gibbs, accompanied by a photographer, traveled to seven countries covering more than 80,000 kilometers on the journey.

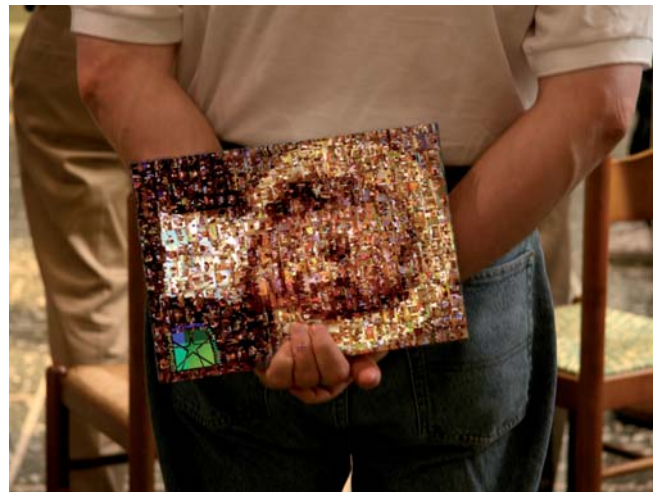
The Final Documents are approved

The Thematic Groups have been gathering up the suggestions and corrections offered by the Capitulants. They were contrasted with the first drafts of the pertinent texts and the results have been a marked improvement. The discussions and debates have been very good. At the end of the Institute will have a series of Documents that will provide inspiration for the next seven years.

The results, projected electronically on to the big screen, largely reflected consensus as shown by the majority of "affirmative" votes. In the case of "Service of the Poor" there was unanimity of "yes" "votes". Now the Committee of Listening and Writing will be editing all the documents for uniformity of style. The documents will finally be published and sent throughout the Institute in official form, in mid-September, by Brother Superior General and his Council.

The last day – tomorrow it's the journey home

"Being Brothers Today: with eyes open and hearts on fire" will be the general title which will introduce all the work of the Chapter. Two messages were approved by the Chapter Assembly – the "Message to the Brothers" and the "Message to the Lasallian Family". They are two stimulating texts; they are the feelings of the Capitulants on reaching the end of the Chapter.



The Chapter comes to an end

From April 30th 2007, 112 Brothers coming from the five continents have participated in this event which takes place every seven years. In their debates they took on themes proper to their state of being religious, looking from the present reality towards the future and education-pastoral themes proper to their mission. In the Lines of Action which were proposed, social changes which affect the family and education, were taken into account. On June 3rd 2007 it will be the day for airports and heading back to their respective nations of origin. The inter-capitular period of seven years has begun. May God be blessed. Once again He has been present, in admirable form, among us.



The results of the 44th General Chapter

The Chapter Documents

The Br. Superior, with the approval of the Chapter Assembly, entrusted to the *Listening and Writing Committee* the task of polishing up the Chapter Documents and revising their translations. In early September the collection of the 11 Chapter Documents was presented to Br. Superior and his General Council for final approval. The entire text can be found in Circular 455. Br. Alain Houry of the Listening and Writing Committee did the analysis and the following synthesis of the Chapter Documents.

A General Chapter rich in perspectives

The 44th General Chapter – inspiring itself from the biblical episode of the Burning Bush (*“I heard the cry of my people”*) and the Gospel scene of the disciples at Emmaus (*“Was not our heart burning...?”*) – looked to discern the calls which God is addressing to us today concerning the needs of our world, of the Church, of the Consecrated Life and of the Institute, and above all in the exercise of our ministry of Christian education. Important themes surfaced but the manner of their presentation was not very familiar to those who had known previous Chapters.

The different themes were in fact introduced by “Challenges” which evoked the difficulties encountered and which force us to raise

our eyes towards the “horizons”, towards paths glimpsed for surmounting these difficulties; some ‘lines of action’ sketched out steps to be followed for travelling along these paths, inviting us to creativity in the situations in which we find ourselves.

Some would have preferred to start out from the desires which we have in ourselves, horizons which open up new roads for us: this would be more positive than beginning by looking at what is not going well! But the will to come out of ourselves in order to respond to real needs and the certainty that God was calling us in the concrete aspect of our lives (*“to look at all things through the eyes of faith”*), led the Chapter to take the time to examine the ‘challenges’, not in order to deplore the lamentable state of our era, but to discern, in the new dynamisms which run across it, the action of the Spirit and the invitation to go towards a corresponding “horizon”. Let us take an example.

Community Life

On May 12th 2007, each Capitulant expressed what was for him the top priority. Community life came out clearly on top. The Chapter writes on this subject: “This world – the adults and young people at our side and the Church – throws before us *the challenge of fraternity* and challenges our persons and our communities to live with more authenticity”. It is therefore a question of:

- responding in community to the needs of children and young people and especially the poor (Challenge 1), by leading a simple life in solidarity with the poor and by going where basic education and the announcing of the Word of God are deficient (Horizons);
- to be welcoming communities, the human face of the Church and an invitation to follow Jesus (Challenge 2), especially by forming some international Lasallian communities or by sharing the faith in a manner accessible to the young and to Lasallians who wish to deepen their spiritual lives (Lines of action) – which fits in with a Line of Action from the



Reflections of the young Brothers Capitulants;

- to live in community “together and by association” for the Mission (Challenge 3), according to our Vow of Association for the service of the poor (Horizon);
- to live in community an authentic life of fraternity, in an age so many people are expressing a more profound need for belonging (Challenge 4), by sharing – in mutual knowledge and esteem – the life, faith and merciful love of God (Horizon).



Transversal themes

It is not a question here of examining, even in summary, all the documents of the Chapter: they can be found in full in Circular 455. Let us note that in speaking only of community Life we have intersected with the themes of educational service of the poor, pastoral ministry of vocations, association and the spiritual life, which were dealt with in other Thematic Groups, as well as in the reflections of the young Brothers.

So, **Association for the educational service of the poor** appeared central to the identity of the Brothers (Challenge 1) and a request was made for a modification of the formula of vows in order to place at the top the vow of association for the educational service of the poor (Line of action) – one of the rare decisions of the Chapter on a precise point...along with that of changing the composition of the General Council (Government and Animation) and that of launching a revision of the Rule (Annex). Association with the other Lasallians to know and to fulfill the role which they have to play, as consecrated persons, in supporting the work of all in the Lasallian Mission (Challenge 2): various *recommendations from the International Assembly 2006* were kept as Lines of Action, as well as for Challenge 3 concerning the structures which this required at local, continental and world level.

The IA 2006 had in fact taken place with a view to preparing for the 44th General Chapter. **Government and Animation** (*Lasallian Education Mission*, Lines of Action) and above all the **Educational Service of the Poor** also took from it the recommendations for the renovation of our educational works (Challenge 2), concern

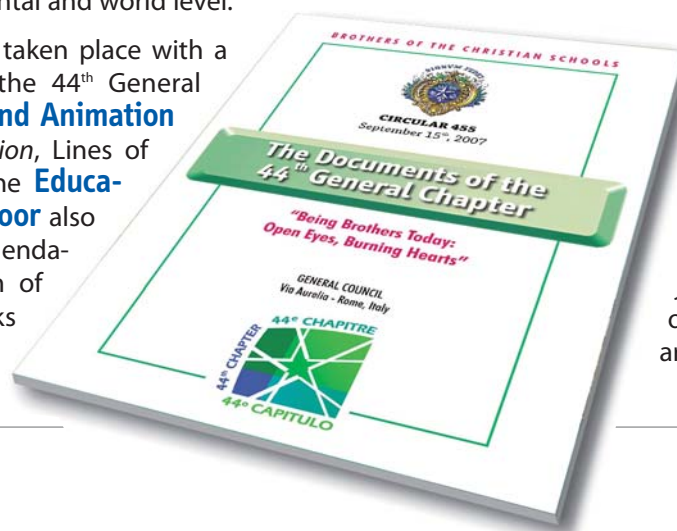
for the rights of the child to education (Challenge 4) and the necessity for a solidarity commitment (Challenge 5). Other challenges for the educational service of the poor concerned effective solidarity for fairness and equality in education (3rd) as well as the educational responses to be brought to the problems linked to the movement of migrants (6th). But what came first was the need for conversion towards the poor (Challenge 1), up to the point of going to meet them (Horizon).

This last orientation matches up with the 3rd Line of Action of the **Interior Life**: becoming those poor Brothers looked for by the poor. Perhaps it would be clearer to speak of “spiritual life” when it is

a question of nourishing the contemplative dimension of our life following John Baptist de La Salle (1st Line of Action), to free a process of spiritual renewal at all levels of the Institute (6th). To promote a new formation for living in these times of uncertainty (2nd) or to create communities which will be a spiritual reference point for children, young people and adults (4th). This matches up with certain preoccupations of the **Pastoral Ministry of Vocations for the Brothers and Lasallians**: depending on evangelical communities (3rd Challenge), creating places for the educational service of the poor (Horizon 4) – as well as the **Accompanying of Young Brothers in Community**: favouring experiences which allow for making a vital synthesis between consecration, community life and association for the educational service of the poor (3rd Line of Action).

A way out or a call to creativity?

One might ask what will be achieved from all these perspectives in the years to come. Some might think that the texts of this Chapter since they contain almost no propositions voted after amendments, have no force of law: this would be to forget the appeal for creativity so as to advance to “horizons” – especially in prayer (*Interior Life* 3.1), in the Community Project (*Community Life* 4.3.3), in the structures of the shared mission (III 1.3). Since the Chapter hardly offers a list of things to do, one might fear that each one will retain from these texts just what he wishes to take out of them. Other attitudes are possible.

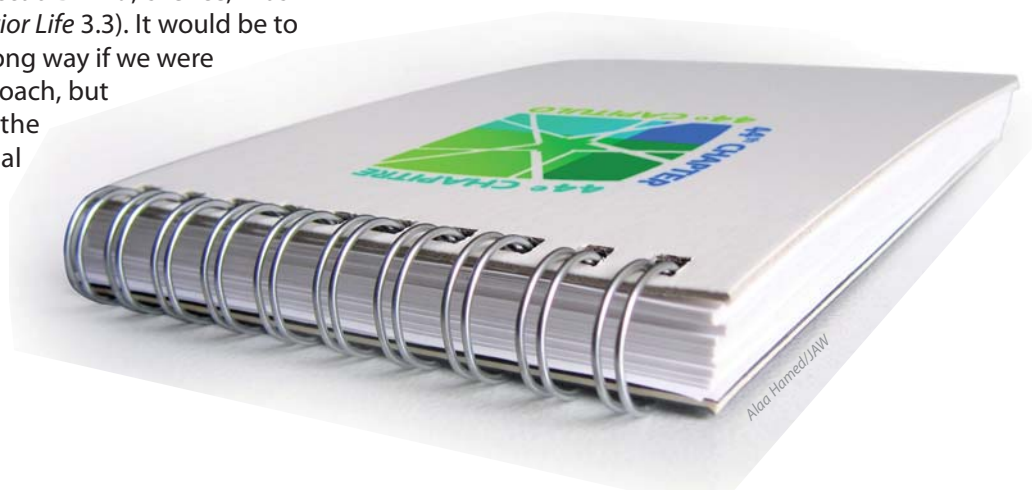


One could, for example, examine Circular 455 while leaving to the different people in charge what concerns them and concentrating on the actions to be included **in the Community Project**. For example: putting the poor, especially the young, at the centre of our projects in order to better know their reality (*Community Life* 1.3.1); profiting from it in order to have discussions on technological and other means at our disposal (*Community Life* 4.3.3) and looking for new ways of sharing our assets (*Interior Life* 3.3); planning occasions for telling each other how much we appreciate those with whom we live and sharing with them the experience of God (*Interior Life* 3.5 and 3.4; *Community Life* 2.3.2); praying for vocations so that everyone can participate in this pastoral ministry (*Pastoral Ministry of Vocations* 4.3.1).

Another way of going into the texts picks out what is connected with the **Personal Project**: revising it and sharing in community one's situation and one's spiritual itinerary (*Community Life* 4.3.3); including in one's formation means such as the *Lectio Divina*, silence, mastery of self and humility (*Interior Life* 3.3). It would be to look at the Chapter in the wrong way if we were to limit ourselves to this approach, but that adds to the reading the serious matter of a personal commitment.

In his closing talk, Br. Superior picked out a general perspective of the Chapter: "The Fraternity lived by the Brothers in community" This shows clearly from which angle the questions were mainly aimed. But is there a '**directing line**' which unites all the texts of the 44th Chapter? In my opinion, it is difficult to find it. The Preparatory Commission proposed the approach; "Associated to build the reign of God, journeying together in hope". This is how the Capitulants journeyed. A large bouquet of orientations emerged from it; it will be up to the Institute to produce unity from it by putting these orientations into practice in the spirit which saw their birth, "*Being Brothers Today, with eyes open and hearts burning*".

Br. Alain Houry,
of The Listening and Writing Committee





What was experienced at the 44th General Chapter

What did we hear and see?

With a fraternal glance and from a realistic perspective, the Brothers of the Listening and Writing Committee presented to the Chapter Assembly their perception of the exodal path travelled during the weeks of the General Chapter. They identified challenges, discerned horizons, detected lines of action; the fruit of reflection, of dialogues and debates, all lived in a prayerful environment. There were joys and sufferings, difficulties and triumphs.

What follows is the path taken by the Chapter, as seen by the Listening and Writing Committee and by the Secretary General.

1. An Exodus Path.

The opening liturgy, with columns of Brothers converging towards the entrance from various directions in the garden, and the symbolic crossing of the Red Sea with Bro. Alvaro carrying the staff, set the tone for the Exodus experience of the 44th General Chapter. The liturgies for all groups together were significant occasions of unity in the paschal mystery, a new experience of the Emmaus story providing a Christian angle to the biblical Exodus.

The first challenge this Chapter faced was to understand and to function as an "alternative" Chapter as mandated by the 43rd General Chapter with Capitulants who were familiar with other ways of running a Chapter. How to follow the movement of the Spirit with a schedule already prepared? How to make amendments? Without specific propositions how to translate the results of the Chapter to the Institute?

The Chapter adopted a procedure structured around "*Challenges*," "*Horizons*," and "*Lines of Action*." How to distinguish one from the other, how to formulate them? Finally, how to verify that a "consensus" has been arrived at without it being a subjective call of the Moderator?

Estas aprehensiones vividas sobre todo al inicio del

Capítulo se fueron disipando, para la mayoría, en el transcurso del Capítulo: es justo destacar el esfuerzo de la Comisión Central por guiar y recalcar el enfoque alternativo del consenso, y la voluntad de los Capitulares para esforzarse en este sistema. Sin embargo, no siempre fue clara la interpretación del sistema de consenso propuesto, y la técnica de votaciones empleada. These initial uncertainties were dissipated, for the majority, as the Chapter evolved. We note the effort of the Central Commission to remind the Capitulants of this process and the good will of the Capitulants to



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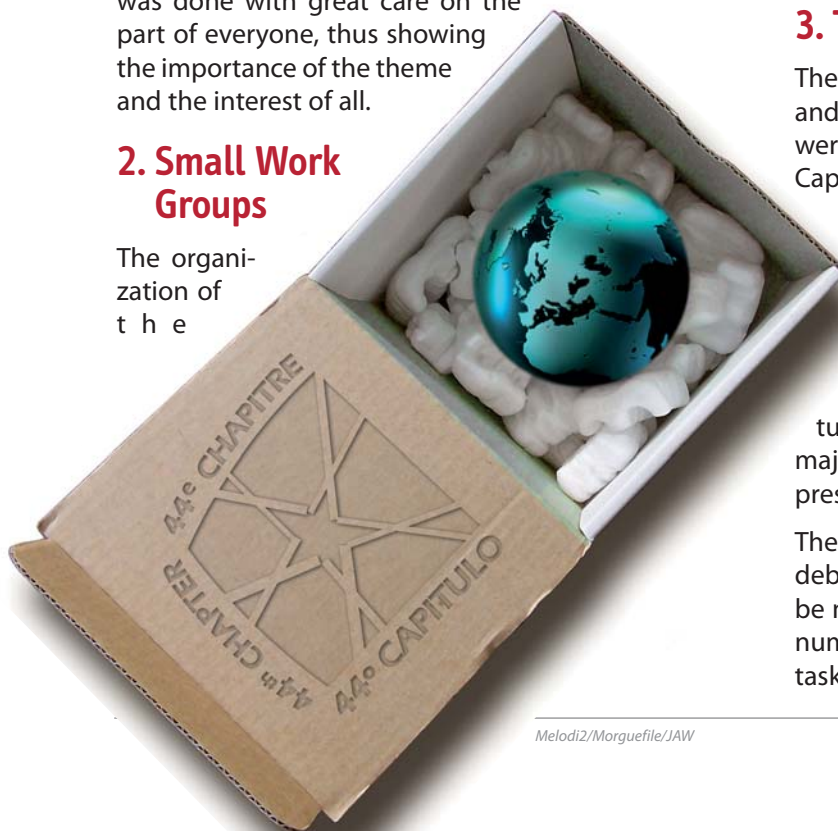
follow it. Obviously the interpretation of the system of consensus proposed was not always clear nor the voting techniques employed. There was also the option of some to resist because minorities were not sufficiently taken into account the choice of one Thematic Group to adapt the process quite liberally. The challenge, which will go well beyond the time of the Chapter, will be to help all the Brothers to deepen by dialogue the Chapter documents and to be assertive and creative in applying them!

A second challenge was certainly that of languages. The website, in order to get information out quickly, at times printed translations which were defective. Several discussions in the General Assembly could have been shortened if the texts under consideration had been translated more accurately. Translations, well intentioned, which were not always faithful to the text of reference and some of the material distributed to the Assembly which did not reflect the changes in the revised translation, translators who because of the urgency had to continue translating well into the night, translators who were obliged, on certain days, to do four sessions of simultaneous translation... but in spite of all the problems serenity reigned; the effort of everyone deserves to be recognized.

Fear of time constraints also emerged during the evolution of the Chapter. Some Capitulants felt that the time for the Discernment Phase could have been shortened to allow more time for the work of the Thematic Groups. We note, however, that the discernment of priority themes – first priority, provisional grouping, other priorities, final classification – was done with great care on the part of everyone, thus showing the importance of the theme and the interest of all.

2. Small Work Groups

The organization of the



Capitulants into small groups whether language, inter-cultural, Regional or Thematic, favored rich exchanges and effective results.

The work began as soon as they reached their meeting places. The exchanges took place in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere which was not one of recreation but of Brothers who shared common concerns and ideals. The technique employed was based on the suggestion of Rev. Eric Law, according to which whoever finished speaking invited someone else to give his opinion. This method, proved well accepted and effective in encouraging participation in the discussion by all members of the group.

We noticed from the very beginning that the members in the groups showed great attentiveness to each other, respect for diversity in culture and thought, patience and understanding of language difficulties. The translators kindly helped inter-cultural groups when they were asked.

The work of the Thematic Groups was intense and varied. In some open dialogue prevailed and a rich exchange of ideas; in others it was a struggle to overcome the difficulties of understanding different points of view and accepting diversity. The groups required openness and generosity in order to take on the contributions of the General Assembly and often met at times other than the scheduled times to reedit their documents, sometimes several times. As they reworked their reports the Thematic Groups took into careful consideration the observations and suggestions made in the General Assemblies.

3. The General Assembly

The reception in the Mother House, the first exchanges and the workshop on cultural and linguistic sensitivity were positive in beginning the construction of a big Capitular community.

There followed the days of the Second Phase: "looking at reality". The Capitulants showed that they were satisfied both by the themes and by the presenters. Later there were a lot of references to the presentations and some were present in certain final documents. But some Capitulants felt very tired after these early days and the majority were grateful that there would be no more presentations.

The participation of the Capitulants in the Assembly debates was free and abundant but, of course it could be noted that there was considerable difference in the number and length of interventions per Capitulant. The task of the simultaneous translators was made difficult

at times due to the speed of speaking, emotion and lack of pauses by some Capitulants. The Moderators manifested much patience during the proceedings and as the Chapter progressed they held more rigorously to having the Capitulants intervene with one proposal at a time in rounds.

The Capitulants generally respected the time for beginning the sessions and the sessions were conducted with order and discipline; moments of prayer at the beginning or during the session were motivating and profound. There was fraternal respect for each other, although at times the discussions generated much tension including some heatedness in expressing ideas.



CorelDraw

The interventions were generally incisive, well thought out... even some written beforehand. However, occasionally there was excessive repetition of the same ideas, and this needlessly prolonged the discussion.

In spite of the fact that at times the work was tiring, good humor, usually prevailed and there was frequent applause to recognize the work of the Capitulants, to celebrate the approval of reports, or to express gratitude for the frequent gifts given. Yet, it was surprising to find only one unanimous vote during the entire time of the Chapter. There was always a persistent minority that voted in the negative or abstained, including for the approval of the Minutes.

4. “What did you above all speak about on the way?”

At the closing of the 44th General Chapter the question of the Emmaus pilgrim resounds in our heart. What did you speak about on the way?

The reply of the Capitulants was unhesitating: about the call of the Lord, the mission which has been confided to us, the vocation of the Brothers in today’s world, as lay Religious consecrated to God for the evangelizing and educational service, especially of the poor, living fraternally in community and by association, in a shared mission with a large number of other Lasallians. This was the nucleus of dialogue and decision, made concrete in:

– The desire for a simple life, close to the poor, in fraternal communities, nourished by an interior life under the movement of the Spirit, a life that exhibits joy and confidence, whatever our age and even if vocations to our life are few – we go forward in hope.

– The place of the vow of association in the context of our other vows – repositioned as the first in the same formula of vows.

– The new challenges of today’s world, such as the Rights of Children, migratory movements, new and at times hidden forms of poverty ‘of those confided to our care’...and the will to answer these needs, not only by speaking out on these matters, but by definite commitments.

- The concern for unity in diversity, the need for solidarity, for a better of sharing of the human and economic resources of the Institute, the Districts and their institutions.
- The need for structures adapted in view of the participation of all Lasallians in the educational and evangelizing mission, recognizing the right of voice and vote at different levels, as requested by the International Assembly 2006 whose Report was accepted by the Institute.
- The contribution of the Young Brothers who were specifically invited to address the Chapter Assembly. The text presented by them was not composed only by young Brothers - a sign of fraternity, of mutual help regardless of age or culture.

Just tribute needs to be paid to the members of the Central Commission who guided the work of this Chapter. It was attentive in listening but firm when the questions put tended to depart from the alternative style adopted. Progressively its flexibility grew in adapting the agenda to the needs of the groups. There was also the patience of the Moderators in the debates, the efficiency of the Secretary General and his team and the following up of questions by the Coordinator. Tribute must also be paid to this Commission for the respect shown to everyone, for asking Brothers to become more involved in the day-to-day running of the Chapter and for caring constantly about the smooth flow of the work of the Chapter.



Thanking the General Council of 2000 – 2007

Extracts

Just before the end of the 44th General Chapter, Brothers José Maria Agirrezabalaga, Alain Houry and Thomas Johnson expressed thanks to B. Vicar General and the outgoing Councilors in the name of the Institute. Here are some extracts.

The words of Br. Alain Houry

Brother Vicar:

In the service of the Institute, you were Br. Alvaro's main collaborator and he would be much better qualified than I am, to thank you now. You studied various languages and this greatly widened your field of action and of relations. You continually supported the formation of Lasallians in the United States and your library was well stocked on this theme. The International Council of Young Lasallians, which you helped to create, demonstrated that you continued to be close to them. The hundred or so boxes of archives which you left in the Archives of the Institute from these seven years will allow historians to recognize the extent of the reports produced, the large number of persons with whom you kept in touch and the many sectors with which you maintained communications. For all this and above all for the gift of your person, thanks Br. Bill!

Brother Marc:

Your prior work in the world of Swiss finance allowed you to follow up questions of finance and solidarity; your knowledge of German and English, of various countries of Europe and Asia, the retreats given in various places; even your experience for some month in the Swiss Guard. It requires virtue to take on a second term as General Councilor and be of help to the new Councilors by bringing them up to speed but without overemphasizing the achievements of the previous



mandate. For your humility, your availability, your simplicity in relationships and your smile during 14 years which were not always easy, thanks, Br. Marc!

Brother Victor:

The Brothers of the PARC Region could express better than I can what you contributed to this Region and could speak of the celebrations which marked the rhythm of Regional meetings, fruitful in spite of the enormous distances which had to be travelled and the infinite variations of a common language, English, often learnt only in school. Your discreet smile and your care to always say a friendly word are not just a sign of oriental culture but also an indication of a great availability for meeting people and of a sensitive welcome. For your humility and your religious sense, for your discreet and continuous work, thanks, Br. Victor!

Brother Yemanu:

Your good humour, your way of approaching themes,

your concern to put out a little bulletin for RELAF, your trips to places disturbed by events, helped inter-African communication. Perhaps language barriers and the difficulty of travel continue to hinder meetings going beyond the level of the Sub-Region. The Chapter calls for collaboration between countries: if it happens, you will have had something to say in the matter. Thanks, Br. Yemanu!

Brother Juan Pablo:

In the Formation Commission over which you presided, I admired the manner in which you were able to run the meetings, making your contributions and giving a report without losing your welcoming smile and your attention to everyone. Your knowledge of the Latin languages allowed you to carry out a follow up in the Europe Region, especially in the Mediterranean countries as well as with the Union of Catechists. I think you were the youngest Councilor. In any case, your youthful spirit and your availability edified us. Thanks, Br. John Pablo!

Brother Miguel:

Your mastery of three languages allowed you to establish relations in very diverse circles and to build bridges between cultures which you know from within. During Phase 3 we were able to read a part of the oral presentation which you gave on Lasallian discernment during the International Assembly in 2006. The 10 or so boxes which you deposited each year in the Archives bear testimony to the reports analyzed and the relations followed up through your correspondence. Thanks for the great help which you always gave to Lasallian Studies. Thanks for the years spent here, thanks Br. Miguel!

The words of Br. José Manuel Agirrezabalaga.

Thanks Brothers for your availability to the "Body of the Society", which led you to take on this service over the past seven years. It was your concrete manner of living the Vow of Association for the educational service of the poor.

Thanks for the love of the Institute which you have shown during all these years, the love with which you have participated in animating and governing the Institute along with Br. Alvaro, Superior General, participating in the meetings of the General Council and the

love with which you have taken on responsibility for the various services in the Center of the institute.

From my faith I believe that you will have praised God, seeing that the poor are evangelized and that young people grow as human persons and as sons and daughters of God, as the Rule (R 20) tells us. And on more than one occasion you have been accompanied by suffering on experiencing our limitations and weaknesses, which will have led you to trusting in the Lord and in your Brothers. Thanks for all that.

Our big wish at this moment is that the Lord will produce fruit from all that you have sown with generosity during these seven years. May he be your joy and your riches in the present and in the future. We hope that wherever you will be sent you will be promoters of communion in the service of the Lasallian Mission.

The words of Br. Tom Johnson.

Like St. Paul, you General Councilors have journeyed these seven years to spread the Good News of our Lasallian Mission, to celebrate with us occasions of pride and happiness, to mourn with us when it was time to mourn, to challenge us when we needed to be challenged, to encourage us when we were uncertain, and make us conscious of the worldwide mission of the Institute.

Like St. Paul, you have had your share of difficulties and often you had difficult tasks in delicate situations. You lived in some uncertainty in this transitional time in the Institute relying on the gift of Wisdom and Spirit of Faith to know which direction we must take. As in any ministry you had your joys and suffering. Each of you left your own country and District to answer the call of the Brothers and Spirit to serve a wider world. For all this, Brothers, we are very grateful to you.

Each one of you, each in his own way, has been a guide and a councilor, but above all you have been Brothers for us. We wish you the best of God's blessings as you continue to live your vocation to Brotherhood.

Lastly, on behalf of all Lasallians we thank and congratulate Brother Superior for answering the call of the body of the society to serve us and lead us once more.

Brothers, we are grateful to you most of all for being Brothers to us and leaders for us. May God be with you on the next part of your journey.

Closing Ceremony.

On Saturday, June 2, 2007, having finished their Chapter work, Brother Álvaro Rodríguez, Superior General, addressed the Assembly:

- He thanked God and the Founder.
- He thanked the Capitulants, the Chapter assistants, all the Brothers in the Institute and other members of the Lasallian Family for their prayers, support,
- He declared closed the 44th General Chapter of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, held in Rome in the Generalate of our Institute, Via Aurelia 476, in the year of grace 2007.
- The official register recorded in detail all the details of the closing ceremonies. The register was signed by all the Capitulants who were present.

and interest.

Words of farewell and commissioning

“With eyes opened and burning hearts”

By Br. Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, Superior General

*Were not our hearts burning
(within us) while he spoke to us
on the way and opened
the Scriptures to us?
They set out at once
and returned to....*

(Luke 24, 32-33)

Dear Brothers,

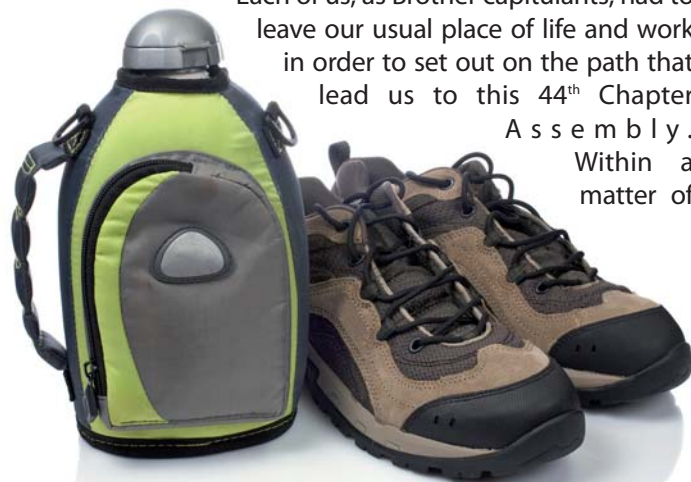
Each of us, as Brother capitulants, had to leave our usual place of life and work in order to set out on the path that lead us to this 44th Chapter

A s s e m b l y .
Within a matter of

hours, we will again be on the return journey to our countries in the Lasallian Regions of French-speaking Canada, USA/Toronto, RELAL, Europe, Africa, and PARC.

In a certain way, that road of “*leaving from and returning to*” our places of origin, recalls the experience of God's action at Easter as lived by the two disciples on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus with that mysterious companion who accompanied them, listened to them, explained to them, and who sat at table with them to share the bread, their brother Jesus, living and risen.

Like those two disillusioned disciples, we came to Rome, having left behind our communities, in some of which we may have found Brothers who, like many of the disciples in the community in Jerusalem, were living in doubt about recent events, were fearful of opposing forces, and who were uncertain about the future. We, together in this assembly, have shared those experiences, we have re-read them in light of Scripture, we have celebrated them with wine and with bread. And our blind eyes were opened. Now, like the disciples





of Emmaus, we also say to ourselves, were not our hearts burning?

We have set out on a journey, but not only the Brother capitulants present here in Rome participated in this revealing conversation with the risen Jesus. In fact, this 44th Chapter was different from other Chapters for various reasons.

First of all, because in the preparation phase many Brothers participated by responding to the preparatory documents, which were used in District Assemblies and other meetings.

But what really made this Chapter different was its openness to the participation of Brothers who were not present in Rome – by means of frequent communication via the Internet.

The great themes which we have identified by an intense process of community discernment in a certain way take up again the themes from the 43rd General Chapter of 2000, but from a different perspective: *that of brotherhood lived by the Brothers in community.*

In recent years I have been fond of saying many times that our brotherhood is our secret “in and for” the Church and the world, especially for those who suffer. Our “union to remain in the society and, together and by association as Brothers, to conduct the project which God has entrusted to us” is our most intimate secret, our “most precious stone,” for which we are “willing to leave everything.”

From that point of view, we reflected on the doubts, fears, and uncertainties of our Brothers and other Lasallians. We identified challenges and defined horizons. We have opted for lines of action that will allow us to journey together.

We return, then, to our continents, countries, Districts, and local communities with burning hearts and eyes opened.

It is my profound wish that, when you return, animated by you, all Lasallians who are living with eyes closed and waning hearts, will awaken. In that way, their eyes will be opened and they will be able to see, their hearts will burn and they will be able to rekindle their lives and ministries with a burning love for God and for those who suffer.

This is the principal task that waits for us as we return to our communities of origin. To encourage all Lasallians, especially the Brothers, to embrace “that which is of the utmost importance in this community” (Preface of the Rule, Chapter 2), as “I said in my opening presentation to the Chapter” to be “*living members of this community*”: to be *men of faith* (mystics with eyes wide open) and *zeal* (impassioned by the love of God and of the poor).

In summary, I would like to remind you that we began this Chapter by entering the Meeting Tent, on the path of Exodus, setting out on the high seas without sails or oars (cf. De La Salle Meditation 134.1).

In the tent, we recalled the Exodus experience of

Joseph, a tortuous journey in which his original dreams were purified. Joseph learned to enter into the dream of his brothers and gradually, he came to understand that in the conflict of dreams an unexpected horizon opened up in the dream of God (cf. Genesis 37 to 50).

This Exodus experience of Joseph and his brothers prepared and prefigured the Exodus experience of Moses and the people of God. In turn, this Exodus of Israel proclaimed prophetically the Exodus of Jesus with his disciples.

Strengthened in this Chapter on the Feast of Pentecost, like the disciples in Jerusalem, we embrace today all this Exodus experiences in the heart of the Exodus of the Church-Communion, the people of God in this new millennium.

Today we leave the Meeting Tent and we are ready to leave the camp, to journey with the high priest, our brother Jesus, to proclaim the year of grace to those who were in darkness, to announce the Gospel to the poor (cf. Luke 4: 18-19).

Together with the Brothers on the General Council, I urge you to embrace intensely with your Brothers this journey of a new Exodus.

In conclusion.

Brothers, this Feast of the Most Holy Trinity which all

the communities of the Institute will celebrate throughout the world in 2007, can be the starting point for a worldwide process in all Districts, by which we actively commit ourselves to implement the Chapter resolutions, as a new Paschal Exodus.

That process should start from our deepest roots, from the consecration that De La Salle and his first Brother associates made to the Most Holy Trinity in 1694, and which formula I take up again:



*Prostrate with the most profound respect
before your infinite and adorable majesty
I consecrate myself entirely to you
to procure your glory as far as I shall be able
and as you will require of me,
For this purpose I promise and vow to unite myself,
and to remain in society with...to conduct, together
and by association,
gratuitous schools...*

*Wherefore, I promise and vow obedience, both to the
body of the society and its superiors...
The vows of association, stability in said society, obe-
dience...I promise to keep...*

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